

Over 65s given choice and control over their social care

A surprisingly large number of adults need some form of help in their day-to-day life. More than 1.5 million people in England use social care services. In Cambridgeshire there are over 16,000 adults who receive social care. This could be due to learning or physical disabilities, poor mental health, or other age-related conditions. Until recently, accessing social care has typically meant receiving one of a small number of pre-commissioned services. Now that has changed.

Self-Directed Support

Self-Directed Support is a new way of providing social care to adults living in Cambridgeshire and eligible for support. It involves identifying a Personal Budget, an upfront sum of money designed to help people take control over their lives, identify their own needs and the things they want to do and, if they wish, to manage their own support – with help if they need it.

In Cambridgeshire, Self-Directed Support was introduced for adults with a learning disability in April 2009 and to adults with a physical disability in June 2009. Because of the numbers involved, for adults over 65 a phased introduction of Self-Directed Support for older people and older people with mental health needs has been taking place.

The first over 65s eligible to receive support for their social care received their Personal Budgets in September 2009. Now, from March 2010, older people living in South Cambridgeshire and Cambridge City will begin the move to Self-Directed Support and Personal Budgets. Those eligible for support for the first time will go through the system as it changes, whilst those already receiving services will be able to discuss the new approach at their next review.

People like June¹ who has used some of her Personal Budget to enrol herself and a close friend at the local health centre. June is a keen swimmer but needs assistance to get in and out of the pool. Her friend is now able to take June swimming every week and this helps her mobility. Charlie² decided to take his Personal Budget as a Direct Payment and uses this to organise his own support so that he can stay in his own home and spend quality time with his daughter when she visits.

Eligibility to receive support is determined using the Fair Access to Care Services criteria that, in Cambridgeshire, is set at 'substantial' or 'critical' need. There will be various ways to take a Personal Budget for those who do not want to receive the money as a Direct Payment. In some cases individuals may also be expected to make a contribution towards the cost of their social care.

Claire Bruin is Director of Adult Support Services at Cambridgeshire County Council, she says: *"Self-Directed Support enables individuals to identify their own needs. It allows them to say what they want to do and what they want to achieve. The challenge for us (County Council and NHS Partners) is to support innovation in the ways that people meet their needs. A Personal Budget will enable them to do this."*

One of the NHS partners involved in the changes is Cambridgeshire Community Services who provide social care to older people across Cambridgeshire. Welcoming the introduction of Self-Directed Support, Alison Gilbert, Associate Clinical Director, Cambridgeshire Community Services says: *“The introduction of Self-Directed Support and Personal Budgets really puts people in control of how their needs are met. We are delighted to be working with the County Council to introduce this national programme locally which will help people maintain their independence and have the best quality of life.”*

Self-Directed Support will be introduced for adults under 65 with mental health need later in 2010. Cambridgeshire and Peterborough NHS Foundation Trust provide services to people who suffer from mental health problems and are another NHS partner involved in the changes. Their Director of Adults, Older People and Specialist Services, Annette Newton adds: *“We are pleased to work with the County Council to implement Self-Directed Support, which will increase choice for people using Mental Health Services.”*

There is a seven-step process for setting up Self-Directed Support, and help and advice is available to support individuals throughout the process. The seven steps are:

1. finding out if you are eligible for support and how much your budget is
2. producing a plan showing how you will spend your budget to meet your social care needs
3. agreeing your plan with the Council
4. deciding how to manage your budget – you can manage it yourself with a Direct Payment or ask the Council to manage it for you
5. organising your support to meet the goals specified in your support plan
6. getting on and living your life
7. reviewing how it is going with your care manager and if needed making changes – this will happen after 12 weeks and then according to individual need.

If you think you are eligible for social care support you should call Cambridgeshire Direct on 0345 045 5202 and ask for an assessment.

More information:

- Self-Directed Support – County Council website: www.cambridgeshire.gov.uk/social/selfdirectedsupport/ or email to: in.controltotal@cambridgeshire.gov.uk
- Fair Access to Care Services – Department of Health website: www.dh.gov.uk

^{1 & 2} Names have been changed.