

Case Study - Integrated Personalised Budgets: Sandwell

Sandwell have prioritised improving their personal budget offer for children and young people. This work involved developing a shared understanding and commitment to personal budgets and bringing different services together to develop a clear action plan, agree common literature and develop a pilot programme. Expanding integrated personal budgets remains an ongoing commitment for Sandwell, however families are already beginning to experience a more joined-up and personalised approach to care.

What was the challenge?

Following their 2017 joint local area SEND inspection, Sandwell had a Written Statement of Action (WSOA). The SEND inspection highlighted five areas for development, one of which was Personal Budgets. The original inspection letter explained **“very few personal budgets have been agreed and feedback from parents indicates that many are unaware of their rights to request one.”** Senior leadership acknowledged this was a problem and that, of the five areas highlighted, they had the most still to do around Personal Budgets and were committed for that to change as a priority.

Sandwell passed their re-inspection in 2019, however implementing Personal Budgets for children and young people with special education needs and disabilities (SEND) remained a priority.

There were a number of key reasons for this:

- Recognising the importance of considering the holistic needs of each child
- Realising there was more going on within different teams around personalisation than had been appreciated but that data and join-up were not there
- Desire to bring the work of different services together and to develop a common understanding and aims for Personal Budgets rather than continuing with many different focuses
- A focus on improving outcomes for children and young people with SEND

One of the main challenges was knowing where to start and what to prioritise, as developing integrated Personal Budgets seemed like a dauntingly large challenge. There was also a challenge around forming a common understanding within and between services about what was meant by Personal Budgets and personalisation, and cultivating a commitment to this work across teams.

How did we address it?

To bring all partners together on this work, colleagues in Sandwell began by drilling down into what needed to be achieved and where the priorities were, before developing a vision statement.

A whole systems approach was key in making cultural change. At the beginning of the process, partners were brought together in workshops to develop a shared understanding of:

- Personalisation
- What was meant by a personal budget
- The purpose and value of a personal budget
- Co-production
- Current provision
- What the priorities are for the area
- Developing the market

It was also found that there was a wealth of literature from the various different agencies regarding personal budgets, so this was brought together and simplified.

CDC provided support through:

- Acting as a critical friend, facilitating multi-agency discussions and workshops "where we are now" and "where we would like to be"
- Connecting with NHS England regarding the Personalised Care programme
- Developing language for an accessible personal budget leaflet for children and young people
- Support reviewing and developing systems and processes to offer and issue personal budgets
- Facilitating the development of the plan on a page
- Facilitating the development of "I/We" statements
- Facilitating the clarification of the Risks and Issues log

The Plan on a Page

This document set out how to achieve well-integrated personal budgets in Sandwell and broke this down through three lenses: the people who are drawing down the budget; the workforce delivering it; and the system leaders.

It identified outputs and outcomes for these three different lenses as measures of success. CDC then undertook a 'total, partial, not' exercise to identify how far these

measures had been achieved and how much control they had over them, as well as a prioritisation exercise to identify the future actions to focus on.

| People | Workforce | System leadership |
|--|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A graduated approach to personalised assessment and support planning is in place that focuses on improving outcomes for the child/young person and family. - The SEND local offer provides clear information on what personalised care is, what children, young people, and their parents/carers expect from professionals and how they can access a personal budget. There is clarity on what a personal budget can be used for. - There is a strategic commitment to focus on aspirations and the PfA outcomes at all stages in a child/young person's life. - Support plans are co-produced with children, young people and their parents/carers as equal partners and reflects their needs and preferences. - There are a range of options to support children/young people and their parents/carers to develop their support plans and manage their personal budgets. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The workforce has access to training, advice and support in delivering personalised care that is appropriate to their role. - There is a multi-agency personalised care delivery framework with easy access to resources and locally agreed tools. - Digital technology is seen as an enabler to promoting personalised care and support planning. - The SEND local offer is up-to-date and is communicated effectively across all partner organisations to raise awareness of the range of services (both commissioned and non-commissioned) that are available within their local area. - Clear and transparent systems and processes are in place to approve/review personal budgets and resolve disputes. | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A Senior Reporting Officer is identified and the associated governance processes are agreed to enable the strategic vision to be implemented across the system. - There is a co-produced values statement and set of principles on delivering personalised care and support planning that can be applied to all services. - The graduated approach embraces a "one plan" approach to meeting the assessed needs of a child/young person and their family. - The system champions a culture of learning, mentoring, peer support, audit and evaluation. - There is a shared responsibility for managing risk and promoting risk enablement. - The joint commissioning framework enables agencies to work jointly on market development, releasing funds from block contracts, brokerage, management, finance, monitoring and review functions of a personal budget. |

There is a template for this document available [here](#).

"I/We" statements

Building on the [Think Local, Act Personal work by National Voices](#) as well as existing local pledges, a series of "I/We" statements were developed to form a personal budgets pledge relevant to the work in Sandwell. This brought together what children and young people and their families want to see from their personal budgets, and what professionals will do to make this happen and formed the basis of ongoing development.

| I statements | We promise to |
|--|---|
| I can always get and understand the information I need. | Provide helpful information and advice that is clear and meaningful to you. |
| I will know who and where I need to go when I need support. | We will work in partnership and ensure that you have a named worker. |
| I know that the people who support me are honest and talk to each other and we all work as a team. | |
| I have as much choice and control in my life. | Remember that you are the expert about you and your life. |
| I am always listened to. | Listen. |
| I feel confident to develop my own dreams and goals. | Help you plan for your future. |
| The people who are important to me are involved in planning for my future. | Invite the people who you think know you best. |
| My goals are recognised and agreed. | Support you to achieve your goals. |

Transitions task force

- As an offshoot of this project, Sandwell set up a Transitions task force. They conducted a case audit of young people who previously had interactions with health teams, children's social care team and had an EHC plan and who then went into adult social care services.
- After finding out each young adult's current indicative budget, the group met to explore what they could have done earlier in that young person's life if they had put the same money into a personal budget. This was focused on what they could have done to support the young person to reach their further aspirations.
- Ongoing work is being undertaken to link this process to annual reviews and to think more ambitiously and creatively about what to put in place for young people with complex needs likely to go into day care centres.

Pilot scheme

- Identification of possible cohorts of young people
- Cross-matching across teams
- Agreement to focus initially on children whose care needs are met by different services, for example those with an EHC plan, who receive transport budgets and support and who also have personal care in the mornings.
- Work to develop integrated policies and processes to underpin this pilot, for example agreements around joint bank accounts

Enablers and challenges

Melanie Barnett, Group Head of Inclusive Learning in Sandwell, has identified a number of key enablers which have driven this work:

- **Establishing the purpose of integrated personal budgets** early on was key, focusing on the impact on children, young people and their families and the choice and control it can provide
- **Developing a shared understanding** of what personalisation and personal budgets mean, of what provision is in place, and of a shared vision for the future
- **Accurately capturing what each service was already doing** around Personal Budgets is a crucial first step:
 - Robust, meaningful data collection supports this – important to know where you actually are
 - Sandwell found there was more activity than they had realised at the beginning and have strengthened their data collection and communication channels as a result.
- **Senior leadership buy-in** was seen to be crucial to the success of this project:
 - Putting this project as a standing agenda item at the SEND Strategic Board ensured senior leaders were aware and involved and any barriers could be tackled quickly
 - Sends a clear message about the priority of this work and helps drive the cultural change needed
- **Strong relationships across** teams and between key individuals within them, through regular check-ins:
 - Set up a small group with senior management from each service who could make collective decisions quickly
 - CDC workshops stimulated conversation but due to consistent engagement from individuals and teams, this continued beyond the workshop days
- **Prioritisation of quick wins** to create momentum and recognise achievements, supported by the Plan on the Page and strong ongoing planning
- **Learning from other local areas**

There were nevertheless **a number of challenges** encountered along the way:

- Initial differences in understanding, terminology and opinions on personal budgets
- Complexity of involving multi-agency partners; different agencies have different perspectives, interpretations and processes as well as different literature
- Market development can be intimidating; there was an initial perception that the market may not currently be able to provide the solutions sought by families
- However this can encourage creative solutions

What was the impact/ outcomes of implementing the change?

Work on this project continues and remains a priority for Sandwell so the full impact for children, young people and families is yet to be felt and recorded. However, there have been a number of key achievements from this process:

- A positive cultural shift, bringing partners together under a shared vision which has put personal budgets firmly on the agenda and brought about a wider recognition of the value of personalised approaches
- A shift to a more child-centred, outcomes-focused approach in practice
- A manageable plan is in place
- Agreed literature on personal budgets, including shared terminology
- Though implementation has been delayed by Covid-19, the pilot cohort has been identified and plans are in place for the roll-out
- A clearer, more manageable Risk and Issues log
- More thought is being given to particular groups of children, especially those who have complex needs and fall between education, health and social care
- Families will experience a more joined-up, coordinated approach between different teams and services

What are the next steps for Sandwell?

Using the plan on a page as a framework, Sandwell has a number of planned activities to progress this work:

- Sign off of final documents and policies
- Implementation of the pilot scheme
- Strengthen co-production with families
- A review of the local offer to include new information on personal budgets
- Hold a face-to-face event for families, young people and market to publicise personal budgets later in the year
- Develop a process to link personal budgets with annual reviews
- Confirm financial governance arrangements

Useful resources:

- Webinar on Personalisation (email mhunt@ncb.org.uk for details)
- [Plan on the page template](#)