



## **Putting People First case study: effective partnerships with people using services, carers and other local citizens**

### **Summary**

1. The City of Westminster<sup>1</sup> is working with Westminster Action Network on Disability (WAND) - the user-led organisation for Westminster, which is controlled and managed by people with a range of disabilities who live, work or study in the City - to pilot a user led brokerage service.

### **Key learning for other councils**

2. This case study highlights the unique contribution that user led organisations can make in helping local authorities to design and develop services that meet the needs of users. Key factors which can impact on the success of such relationships include ensuring that authority staff and the user led organisation have a shared understanding of the definitions and concepts involved with personalisation, and of what the work they are undertaking is aiming to achieve. It is also important for the user led organisation and authority to appreciate each others organisational context and ways of working and the constraints that this may place on each of them.

### **Working in partnership**

3. Personal budgets aim to offer service users flexibility and control over their own care, however identifying and purchasing such support can be a challenge for some. Brokerage services (which inform, advise and enable people to select or purchase their preferred support) are therefore fundamental to the effectiveness of personal budgets, as they enable clients to identify their needs and appropriate solutions. The City of Westminster is working with WAND - the user-led organisation for Westminster - to pilot a user led brokerage service.
4. This was part of a wider personal budget pilot being undertaken by Westminster, with the other aspect of the pilot involving older people who were able to choose between a broker from Age Concern Westminster, a broker from Penderels Trust<sup>2</sup> and an internal care manager.
5. The WAND aspect of the pilot was in two stages and involved ten younger physically disabled people. The unique role of WAND in the pilot was that, whilst the other organisations (Age Concern etc) have users on their boards, WAND was the only one which was a user led organisation, meaning they have first hand experience of accessing Westminster's services.

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<sup>1</sup> A London Borough Council

<sup>2</sup> The direct payment support provider that is used in Westminster.

6. The process of the first stage of the pilot was as follows:
  - WAND spent time training and awareness raising with the users who were participating in the pilot, to help them understand core concepts such as what a direct payment is and what a personal budget is. This was important as there had been some initial feedback that participants didn't understand the benefits of being involved with the pilot and what benefits personal budgets could bring for them.
  - Local authority care managers carried out reassessments of pilot participants and linked this in with their self assessments, after which WAND carried out the brokerage function. The model was one of peer brokerage, with participants working as a group and in pairs on each others care plans.
  - A support plan was produced for each participant. This group produced support plans which were very creative in thinking about how they might use their personal budgets and which, compared with the ones which had been produced by the other part of the pilot, were very in depth.
  - As these participants had been thinking more creatively about how they would use their money, the support plans have taken quite a long time to agree. In contrast the care packages for the people in the other part of the pilot were more straightforward.
7. The ten users involved in the pilot with WAND enjoyed the experience as it enabled them to be involved with their support process and creative in their thinking about the support they receive. As a result, the users and WAND decided to extend the brokerage model and formed a 'coalition for independent living' to move the project on.
8. This coalition felt that they would like to explore further the peer brokerage model. This led to a proposal for a second stage of the pilot, which involved the coalition developing a web based brokerage portal which allows a web space for support planning. The portal is in the development stage, however it is envisaged that the process would be as follows:
  - Portal users (initially up to 50 pilot users) will be given training both on how to use the portal and on the concepts involved with personalisation.
  - Users go through their supported self assessment with a care manager, and this will then be put on to the portal.
  - The portal brings together the different brokers that are available and the user chooses a broker to work with. The coalition have been training some users to be brokers, working with Skills for Care to develop accredited training. The broker then helps the user with support planning via the portal.
  - When the support plan is complete and the care manager needs to agree it, the portal will generate an email to the care manager.
9. In terms of funding the portal, the authority has asked the coalition to discuss with the Department of Health whether this is something that they could help fund initially. The authority is also currently looking at how much it would cost to run the pilot and how much they themselves would expect to contribute. In the longer term, the coalition envisages the portal would be self funding – this is still being clarified but an option would be for brokers to pay a fee to register on the portal.
10. The authority also needs to consider how, going forward, they want to fund brokerage, for example whether they want to include money for this with the amount allocated through the Resource Allocation System (RAS) or whether this money should be kept separately. The portal pilot will help Westminster start to clarify this.

## ***Rationale***

11. The driving force behind this work was to develop a viable project that would help the authority make decisions about how to develop brokerage. This is important for the authority because they had initially thought that by this point, brokerage would have developed because there would be a demand for it but in practice, the demand has not been as high as expected. Much of this is because clients choose to have their care manager as their broker because they already know them, and the purpose of the pilot was to develop ideas on how to deal with this.
12. This work also contributes to achieving the PPF milestone 'effective partnerships with people using services, carers and other local citizens', which requires service users to work in a co-productive relationship with local authorities and their partners at all levels in the design, planning and delivery of new personalised systems and services.

## ***Challenges***

13. Westminster and WAND have a well established relationship, however personalisation is a complex agenda and it was therefore important to ensure that WAND fully understood how Westminster were dealing with the various aspects of the agenda, such as self assessment and the Resource Allocation System (RAS).
14. Related to this, it was important to ensure a shared understanding of the different terms that are used. So for the pilot this meant agreeing exactly what was meant by brokerage and exactly what the brokerage role in the pilot would involve. This has been a two way dialogue, with WAND sometimes challenging Westminster on the definitions they are using, as they worked towards a common understanding of what they were trying to achieve.
15. A further challenge has been to balance the two different ways of working that WAND and Westminster have. WAND have a lot of energy and passion which has been really helpful for driving the project forward, however Westminster has at times had to work to balance this enthusiasm with an appraisal of what can be delivered, ensuring the work progresses at a manageable rate and that all relevant stakeholders are in agreement.
16. An ongoing challenge is gaining clarity on how much money the authority could or should put in to the second stage of the pilot and connected to this, ensuring that the work is as cost effective as possible.
17. Finally, there is a wider challenge for the authority in making sure that the team doesn't focus so much on the model that they are piloting that the collective thinking about the best way to operate brokerage moves on without them. Therefore it is important for them to ensure that they keep up with the latest thinking of the sector on this issue.

## ***Outcomes and impact***

18. A major outcome that the authority had hoped to achieve from this work was to build an evidence base as to how they should develop brokerage going forward. Service users in the authority currently tend to choose to stay with their existing care manager for support planning because they don't understand the benefits of external brokerage. The pilot offers evidence of what service users are likely to choose if they have been given a good idea about the benefits of the different types of brokerage, and this will then start to influence what sort of brokerage the authority could offer.

19. For example, currently Westminster uses two suppliers to support direct payments, but users are not given a choice of which provider supports them. Some participants in the pilot felt that if their money was being used for this, they would like a choice of provider. They wanted a peer model where by some users put their direct payments into a limited company account, with the brokerage money being deposited into the account with the money for everything else. The brokerage portal then links in to this because this would support users in this process. This is going to be piloted but there have been some issues such as whether it was legally possible to pay this money into a limited company, how the authority would deal with a situation where the money was misspent or not used, and what the safeguards are in this situation if a direct payment or related service goes wrong.
20. The pilot also offered some feedback which allowed the authority to improve their processes. For example, participants fed back that the self assessment document was too long (at 50 pages) and as a result, they have modified the document and halved its length.
21. In terms of outcomes for the ten service users involved in the first pilot, it has enabled them to be part of the process, co-producing and developing services that are meaningful for them. This is a key aspect of the requirements of PPF. The service users have been invigorated by participating in the first stage of the pilot and welcomed being involved, and the proposal for the second part of the pilot came out of this.
22. Further, whilst some of the pilot participants already felt that they had the control and flexibility they required, there are examples of other participants who were prompted to choose different services as a result of the pilot. For example the authority has agreed a direct payment for a Deaf person to directly buy some British Sign Language (BSL) interpretation which he can use in variety of ways to meet his outcomes. This is not something that had been offered in the past, and was a direct result of the pilot. Further, through the pilot, some people set themselves outcomes that could affect what they asked their Personal Assistant to assist them with, such as getting more physically fit, or pursuing a particular interest.
23. A further outcome that was achieved was for WAND as an organisation, in that the process of participating in the pilot has given them a better understanding of how adult services works. This is important because, at least initially, any work that is done on personalisation needs to fit into the way that local authority adult services work, so this information enables both organisations to work together effectively.

### ***What could have been done better?***

24. The authority would not have done anything differently in hindsight, however they are aware that a big part of why they are doing the pilot in this particular way is because WAND are a well organised and active group who are keen to work with them.
25. For this reason, it will be important to make full use of the Westminster choice and control board, which represents all client groups, because as they move on with this work, it is becoming more apparent that different things seem to work better for different client groups and any developments will need to take account of this.

### ***Next Steps***

26. The second stage of the pilot is only just beginning and as this develops, the learning from it will enable Westminster to make decisions about how they take brokerage forward. However the authority is aware that their work on the portal may actually be a step towards something bigger - both Westminster and WAND have been involved with work on the Common Assessment Framework (CAF) for adults which is about improved

information sharing across health, social care and wider community support services and it may be that this takes over as the way forward. However if this does become the case, the pilot work will have provided useful learning along the way.

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