What are we learning about developing Individual Service Funds?

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What is an Individual Service Fund?

An Individual Service Fund (ISF) is when someone wants to use their individual budget to buy supports from a provider. ISFs mean that:

- The money is held by the provider on the individuals behalf.
- The individual decides how to spend the money.
- The provider is accountable to the individual.
- The provider commits to spend the money only on the individual's service and the management and support necessary to provide that service (not into a general pooled budget).

There are two ways that providers can develop ISFs. One is to respond to individual commissions from care managers, individuals or their family or through the commissioning process. The other is to proactively transform the block contract monies that they receive and commit to using that money in an individualised way. Ideally this would be done in partnership with the commissioner. IAS (a provider in Greater Manchester) is moving towards delivering ISFs using both of these approaches. In this paper we describe what IAS has tried and how they have done this. This work is a natural extension of the work that IAS has been doing to deconstruct group homes and provides individualised services.

Individualising Services
Deconstruction of a group home: Down Street[1]

Down Street was a four-person shared tenancy that had seen three new people move in during the last three years. Considerable effort had gone into assessing compatibility, but the reality was that living like that wouldn't have been anyone's real choice.

One man was gradually finding it difficult to live with the others, as well as making it difficult for others to live with him. This led to us using a person centred review process ('Important to/Important for') for each person. Using person centred thinking tools to reveal 'below the surface' information is only productive when the environment is conducive to acting on that information. Relationships with Wigan Social Services Department (as with Salford Social Services Department) are such that change can happen when proposals are put forward that reuse resources in line with the commissioners overall strategy i.e. redistributing resources to deconstruct group homes and provide individually designed services.

There were sufficient resources already allocated to the four men which allowed one man to move into his own 24/7 service, and another to move into his own place with a few hours of support per day. This left two men living at Down Street with 10 hours of support a day.
"One of these two men had lived at Down Street from the beginning (1994) and the belief that this would be a 'home for life' was one of several beliefs that initially got in the way of thinking more creatively," explained Owen. "Beliefs about a person's capacity, as well as vulnerability, also need to be reflected upon; otherwise we become guilty of over-protecting people in a way we are usually more inclined to accuse others of. Circumstances can jolt you into thinking differently and thankfully a senior manager who knew the men really well decided to talk with them about other possibilities."

These two men got on really well and wanted to carry on living together. Staying at Down Street and having two 'strangers' move in wasn't the only option. They could also look for a place nearby, just for the two of them, and choose who'd support them, and when they wanted to be supported. They were as keen as mustard, but were asked to sleep on it for a few days. Two days later they were keener yet. Owen says, "The key learning for us was: When change happens, what opportunities to do things differently arise, as opposed to returning to as was?"

[1] The name has been changed

The two men will move into their house next month. For all four men resources have been identified and ring-fenced and will only be used to implement their support plan. For the two men living together, this presents a new challenge for IAS. ISFs are established for each man, yet the support plans need to recognise the shared support they want, as well as individually tailored support.

Using a person centred review process the ISFs are reviewed annually with the individual. Creating circles of support around each of the four men, as we are for many others, will ensure that the support is also independently reviewed.

Supported Living and Beyond

We're working on formalising many of the arrangements that have evolved as we've experimented with ways of putting more choice and control into people's hands. Paul's story brings this to life.

Paul moved from a long-stay institution into a shared tenancy for four people in 1994. He was on a Home Office section and this acted to curb any thoughts about other possibilities. Paul was aware of other people moving on from the 'group home' model, and he began to talk about his aspirations and dreams. Paul invited key people in his life to a PATH meeting, and this person centred planning revealed, amongst other things, that Paul 'wanted freedom'.

Paul had been supported to dream and his vision of an ideal life enthused us to overcome the many obstacles that existed. Paul moved into his own 2 bed terraced house in September 2004, two years after his PATH meeting and ten years after moving back to Wigan.

"Really working in partnership from a shared set of values, and jointly figuring out how to make things happen, has been at the heart of our work in Wigan," explained Ruth Gorman, Head of Operations in Wigan North. "We looked at the resource being used for four people, and worked out how it could be better used to support 'three plus one' people. Paul took 30 hours of contact time from the allocation of 210 hours with the remaining 180 hours providing the right level of support for the other three people." Paul got the support needed for his life, and the three men benefited from an improved living environment. The Housing Association played their part in reconfiguring the rents to make it all stack up.

"Paul became a little anxious close to moving to his own place. It would have been easy to put a brake on the move and to have kept Paul in the protective environment of a

group home." To get through this difficult time Paul didn't need wrapping in cotton wool, he needed support, as most people do when facing a challenge. Natural tendencies to (over) protect a vulnerable person can get in the way of recognising and developing a person's capacity. "Person centred working is about getting alongside a person, working through the anxieties, and going at their pace."

Paul has a very different lifestyle now, with an expanded range of friends and acquaintances. Likewise, he has a very different relationship with the staff that supports him; he can decide:

- When he's supported.
- Who he's supported by.
- Whether he wants all thirty hours in a particular week.

Paul monitors the use of his thirty hours with his Team Leader and they keep a running total of hours used and therefore a balance. Paul loves to travel. When he's in unfamiliar places, he needs greater support. He can plan a 'City Break' by saving up the additional hours he'll need.

Paul is one example where IAS have managed to identify the resource a person is allocated, to ring-fence it for that person's support, and to work in person centred ways to enable the individual to have real choice and control over their lives. Internally creating an Individual Service Fund means that a Support Plan is developed. Once we know what resources the person is already using, we can then design how these are used with the person, to enable them to get the life they want.

Sally also has an individually designed service. She really enjoys dancing/night clubs, and she needs support for this. She has been able to employ staff that also likes to do this, and they are paid time and a half after 11:00pm. She can convert 'standard hours' into 'enhanced hours' e.g. six standard hours equals four enhanced hours. Sally can plan late nights out knowing what it 'costs' from her allocation of twenty-four standard hours.

Brian also has an individually designed service having taken 35 hours with him when the group home he lived in was no longer needed, with all three people moving out. Brian never has enough money for all the things he likes. He has chosen on occasion to convert unused hours into pounds to purchase personal trainer time at a local gym, massages and computer games.

All these actions - saving up hours for a highly desired activity, converting standard hours into enhanced hours

and converting standard hours into pounds are possible when the provider takes the initiative and is supported by a commissioner who:

- Has similar values and philosophy.
- Believes in working in partnership.
- Supports experimental activity.
- Places value on communication.
- Works on trust.

IAS wanted to formalise their approach and offer ISFs to more people in the service.

What does this mean in practice?

To make this happen in practice, there are three questions that IAS and other providers need to address:

- How much money is spent on each individual service?
- What are our costs and how can we transparently show how much money goes on the individual's direct support, and the management and service functions?
- How can we work with the individual, their family and friends to create a support plan that describes how the person wants to spend their money?

Costing services

This is how IAS has answered these questions.

How much money is spent on each individual service in IAS

When we are asked to cost out a service in IAS, there are three elements:

- Hourly rate.
- Cost of night-time support (if applicable).
- Service Co-ordination Premium (can also be a negative amount).

Hourly rate

A person often knows the number of hours they wish to have paid formal support. We have an inclusive cost, which covers direct support costs, service co-ordination and development, and company costs, and includes a contingency insurance. Calculating the hourly rate:

- The average hourly rate can be worked out for a contract, for an authority or for the whole organisation. Start with the global budget/total income; deduct costs for night-time support (if applicable); then first divide by 52 weeks and then by the agreed number of contract hours that need to be delivered.
- The average hourly rate can also be worked out by building up from the average hourly rate paid to staff:
  - Average hourly rate paid to staff.
  - Add on costs for N.I., pensions and other staff benefits e.g. Death in Service.
  - Add direct support expenses.
  - Add % for service co-ordination and development.
  - Add % for company cost.
  - Finally add % to cover annual leave, sickness, bank holidays and staff development to get contact hour cost.

Cost of night-time support

This might be a sleep in or waking night provision. We have a fixed cost for each provision.

Service co-ordination premium

This is a weighting, as the average hourly rate cannot be applied rigidly. The premium, which can be negative, zero or positive, takes into account the disproportionately higher management input into single 24/7 support, and especially into minimum/partial support.

The premium is flexible and allows for specific additional management input when jointly identified. It generally spans minus one thousand to plus two thousand pounds.

What are our costs?

In IAS, costs for direct support average 77% of the total, service co-ordination and development are normally 13.5% and company costs are normally 9.5%.

Direct support costs include the following:

- Average hourly rate of support.
- National insurance, pensions and other staff benefits.
- Direct support expenses.
- Percentage to cover annual leave, sickness, bank holidays and staff development.

Service co-ordination and development include the following:

- Senior management team
- Staff development team
- Development officers
- Team leaders
- Consultants

Company costs include the following:

- Offices, office equipment and office running costs.
- Administration and IT team.
- Payroll section.
- Accounting and auditing.
- Bank charges.
- Legal.
- Human resources section.
- Recruitment and selection.
- Insurance.
- CSCI; CRB.
- Contingency insurance.

How do we work with the individual, their family and friends to create a support plan

When individual finances have been worked out, the next step is to create a support plan with the person so that they decide how they want to spend this resource. In this section we look at how IAS has been creating support plans with individuals, using them as a basis for recruiting staff, and how we are beginning to review these.

Creating Support Plans

There are many ways to create support plans that truly reflect how the person wants to use their resources. In the earlier examples, the manager worked with the person to record what was important to them and together

they worked out how to use their resources. In the IAS services in Oldham, managers used a different approach. They recognised that the introduction of in Control and individualised budgets appeared to be having a lesser impact on people who had high support needs and were already tenants in small group homes. Although everyone was individually assessed via the resource allocation system it did not seem to change much, because, in order to receive the support they required, it continued to be necessary for people to pool their budgets. Family members at one house in particular felt that little had changed and that, in some cases, people were worse off.

In order for people to feel they truly did have a say in how they were supported, and by whom, it was felt that we needed to get together and re-look at what support people wanted and needed, how much money was now available and how this was to be shared between four co-tenants. As none of the tenants had a support plan, and best practice suggested that anyone with an individualised budget should have one, we decided that they needed to be developed. We bought in an external consultant to facilitate the Planning Live process which involved pulling together people receiving support, their families and support team and senior management from IAS. People then developed their support plans 'Live' in a facilitated process.

Many people have developed support plans using this approach, but at that time the approach had not been used to develop an ISF when the service had already been commissioned. The service had been funded in a way that meant people needed to continue living together, supported by IAS, and therefore it made sense that their budgets were converted into hours, based on the company's hourly rate. Families in particular found this much easier to understand and were able to identify where they felt hours could be best used to meet the wishes and needs of their sons or daughters. The process was successful in ensuring that the hours available were used as creatively as possible and that everyone's opinions were listened to. The families involved felt that they had had an opportunity to work in partnership with their chosen provider where the focus was on working things out together.

In some situations in IAS, converting existing resources into hours has been a useful first step. This enables the individual and their family to work with the provider and have a real sense of what is being paid for on their behalf, and they decide together how these hours could be spent. It is important to have good person centred information, in the form of a support plan, as a basis for making these decisions. In the other examples shared earlier (Peter, Sally

and Brian) partnership work with the commissioners has meant that it has been possible to convert the service that the person is already receiving into a financial amount, and to develop a support plan or use a person centred plan as the basis for making decisions about spending that resource.

The support plan or person centred plan can then also be used as the basis for recruiting staff to work with the individual. Sometimes the individual is 'recruiting' staff from within the existing staff pool, to be part of his or her individual team. At other times, the individual will be recruiting new staff to the provider, specifically to work with the individual as part of their team.

Using Support Plans as a basis for recruiting staff

Providers need to use the support plan to work with the individual and develop:

- A person specification.
- A job description.
- A local recruitment and selection process.
- A contract for individual staff.
- A contract with the organisation.

We have developed a separate paper, with examples, that describes the contract information we are using. Therefore, in this paper we are focusing on recruitment.

Not unlike many providers, IAS has struggled to recruit staff on behalf of the people we support in a way that feels really inclusive. We have experimented with many different initiatives, some successful, and others were good tries. What we learned was that for some people being meaningfully involved in choosing staff was a real challenge.

We knew that a lot of well-intentioned best-guessing was happening around matching staff skills to people using our services. We decided to have a go at figuring out how we could do this better, particularly for those people who choose not to sit on an interview panel. We needed to learn how we could go from the information in a support plan, to develop a person specification, a job description and to use this to meaningfully select staff.

Our first step was to explore the problem and a working party, made up of people using our service, family members and staff, was set up. The group recognised that sitting on a panel asking questions was not a realistic or desirable option for many of the people we support. What was really important was ensuring that the interview panel knew what

the individual wanted and needed from a new member of staff and what that person's involvement would be in a way that made sense to the individual.

The following is the process that was developed in our Oldham network and works where the person has a person centred plan or individual budget.

Developing a person specification and job description

The person develops their recruitment file from their support plan or person centred plan. The contents of this are:

- My person specification.
- What good things do people say about me? (my positive reputation).
- Who is in my life? (relationship circle).
- Photos of people, places and activities important to me.
- What are the characteristics of the people I'd like to work with me?
- My week to view diary.

Advertising and short-listing

When a new member of staff is needed the position is advertised locally; by word of mouth, in the local newspaper, shop windows, jobcentre etc. Returned applications are short-listed based on the information contained in the person specification and the 'what are the characteristics of the people I'd like to work with me?' sections.

Interviewing

This is seen as a two-step process. New staff are recruited to the organisation first, to ensure that they have the values and talents required to fit the organisation. Only people who meet these requirements are then available to be selected by the individual as part of their own staff team.

Step one - the formal interview (recruiting to the organisation)

The person or people wanting staff take part only if it makes sense to them; otherwise team leaders along with family members or support staff take care of this stage. If the person being interviewed meets our organisational values and standards they are sent on to phase two of the interview. It is usually the case that three or four candidates get this far.

Step two - the informal interview (recruiting to the individual)

Each person or small group of people sharing support determine the best environment for this to take place. It is usually somewhere familiar and comfortable for the person

looking for new staff. The two men who live at 'The Way' chose to use a local pub to check out their prospective staff. People closest to the individual(s) are invited to help with this stage of the process as they would have most likely been involved in the development of the recruitment file and are therefore aware of the person's wishes and what is important to them. An informal series of conversations take place, photos are taken of candidates, then the person chooses which of the candidates they want to join their team.

Although this seems pretty simple, it involved a real shift in our thinking. We needed to balance our legal responsibilities as employers with the belief that recruitment should be lead by those requiring support. In the past we would have chosen the best candidate based on a generic process and what we thought would be a best match. This new process ensures that the people we support are consulted and listened to from the outset and have the final say.
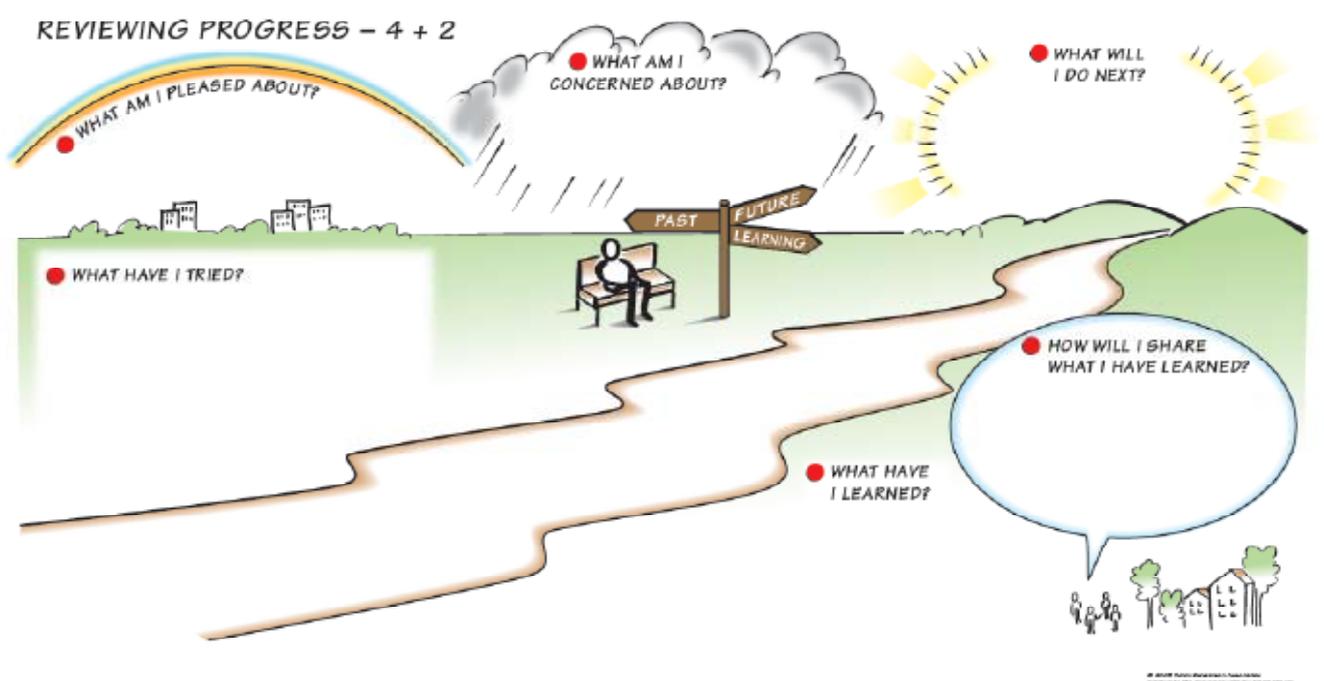
Reviewing Support Plans

Once a support plan or person centred plan is being used, providers need to have a person centred review process. Implementation of a support plan and use of the hours are regularly reviewed to ensure the person is getting the life they want. The person, family member(s), friend(s), social worker and team leader are involved in this. The hours can be creatively used in different ways or even converted into cash where the person wishes to spend their entitlement in a different way. In IAS we are using an annual person centred review process, with more frequent reviews when necessary.

In IAS we try to foster an attitude of continual learning and review. There is a person centred supervision process that means that reviewing how we are doing in supporting the person is a key issue in all supervisions, and a focus for team meetings.

One of the person centred review processes used in IAS is called the 'working/not working' review. This review simply explores what is working and what is not working from both the individual's perspective and other people's perspective. The review ends with an action plan that looks at what needs to happen to maintain what is working, and what needs to change to address what is not working.
Other people providing different perspectives could be the individual and possibly family and friends, and the manager and team members providing support.

Another review process used in IAS is the '4 plus 2' review. This process is recommended by in Control as a way to conduct an annual review. The 4 questions ask what people have tried, learned, are pleased or concerned about in relation to their life and their ISF. These questions are a way of helping individuals and those close to them to reflect on how things are going, and what they want to change. The 'Plus 2' questions relate to what people are going to do next, and how to share what they have learned.

This graphic was developed with two senior managers in IAS as a way to capture the information from this review.

REVIEWING PROGRESS – 4 + 2

WHAT AM I PLEASED ABOUT?

WHAT AM I CONCERNED ABOUT?

WHAT WILL I DO NEXT?

WHAT HAVE I TRIED?

PAST   FUTURE LEARNING

HOW WILL I SHARE WHAT I HAVE LEARNED?

WHAT HAVE I LEARNED?

In Conclusion - Working in Partnership with Commissioners

IAS is on a journey to develop more individualised services, using ISFs. We have found that it is most powerful when done in partnership with commissioners, however steps towards this can be made whatever the commissioning situation. We're particularly happy with a model developed in Wigan. Many years of collaborative working and joint work on developing person centred approaches led to IAS seeking the involvement of the commissioners to explore how we might put real choice and control into people's hands. What initiatives could a provider take with the backing and endorsement of the commissioner?

A whole day was set aside to make explicit:

- What we're trying to achieve.

- Our underpinning values.

- Our hopes and fears.

- Where we are now.

- Milestones to reach along the way.

We kept the group small, with only the Chief Executive, the two senior managers in Wigan, a consultant (Helen) employed by IAS, the commissioner and a facilitator present. Considerable trust and respect existed within the group, which allowed open communication and an opportunity to ambitiously draw out possibilities. Time out to explore and to enthuse each other is crucial when much can be frustrating, distracting and draining. This was very much about further prioritising the self-directed support agenda, and doing this together. This is not easy stuff and figuring it out together strengthens the partnership.

An action plan spelt out tasks that needed to be accomplished, who had lead responsibility and when this would happen by. Quarterly meetings were planned to enable progress reports and to focus the minds of overly busy people.

A major fear that 'we'd look back on what was a good idea but other things got in the way' has partially happened. Having to recognise this is not easy, and one year on from the whole day planning, we've reconvened, recommitted ourselves and adapted our strategy. It's too easy to lose momentum and there's been a need to more clearly identify

the task and from our perspective, identify what is under our control and can be a provider led initiative with the commissioner's backing.

We've now established Individual Service Funds for identified people within the block contract. The cost for each person within a block contract can be calculated, so that a few people help pioneer the learning by having their entitlement ring-fenced. This clear allocation of resource enables support planning to happen. Each ISF is self-contained i.e. all costs are included and the rest of the block contract is also financially sustainable. Service co-ordination and development costs, along with company costs are taken out, and direct support costs can be converted into hours as this is easy to implement and monitor.