Individualised Funding

General Considerations On Implementation

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1.0   Summary

The availability of Individualised Funding is essential to the empowerment of the disability community. This paper continues an analysis commenced in Williams (2007). Using an approach derived from the McKinsey 7S approach (Waterman et al 1980) the paper sets out the key considerations underpinning the successful implementation of support arrangements where the person living with disability has control of the funding (here described as *Individualised Funding*). The analysis emphasises a habit of collaboration among a range of stakeholders, and with particular reference to the genuinely heartfelt values that need to be present.

2.0   Considerations for Implementation, Including General Policy Settings

The argument in Williams (2007) puts the view that the concept of Individualised Funding has demonstrated its worth and place as a standard option within a disability support system, and has identified the key elements for success.

The next examination must therefore be the considerations for its implementation, including policy and practice leadership. An effective organisational framework, must have regard for a range of practical issues, including the declaration of values and strategic intent, system and structure arrangements, competencies, staff, and cultural fit.

The following analysis uses as its framework the McKinsey 7S approach (Waterman et al 1980). Consultants at McKinsey developed this model to help administrators effect organisational change. It focuses on the alignment of seven key areas of organisational activity. These can also apply to a collection of organisations, such as those within a service system. Such alignment is essential if Individualised Funding is to take its place successfully in disability support arrangements.

The following analysis offers the sequential elements to which a coalition of stakeholders should commit, if our communities are to make a decent go of Individualised Funding. It also captures a number of the summary recommendations from the UK's Commission for Social Care Inspectorate (CSCI) report in 2004 on Direct Payments.

At the outset, I now make what I consider the *Fundamental Point* underpinning the successful implementation of Individualised Funding. It is this: successful implementation does not lie solely with Government. While government has a considerable role to play in sustaining a vision for change and overseeing the practical arrangements underpinning Individualised Funding (and this is reflected in the language used throughout this paper) it would be wrong to conclude the leadership belongs to Government alone.

Government policy makers and administrators cannot by themselves develop faithfully-built arrangements that deliver the benefits associated with Individualised Funding. Staff within every organisation, including Government, are subject to enormous pressures which compete for time and attention and thereby diminishing capacity for any specific initiative. To deliver the vision and policy of Individualised Funding takes *courage*. People at every level - Government officers, line managers, service staff, people living with disability calling for change - need support to maintain and exercise that courage.

So, the successful implementation of Individualised Funding requires a coalition of effort, where the voices and endeavours from a range of places - people living with disability, their families, their supporters, service providers, local community organisations, and of course Government staff – work together to create a collective momentum. This momentum includes collective leadership and collective courage, to create a framework for Individualised Funding that gives people the genuine means to build authentic lives of personal authority and social inclusion.

As such, the following analysis applies to all of the above stakeholders. We succeed or fail together.

2.1   Shared Values

Our society is shaped by individual values. Each person negotiates their stance in relation to the liberties and constraints they encounter. Within society, where people hold values in common they can support the status quo, engender change or resist change. The shared values become the basis for action. Behind this paper is the assumption that people living with disability do not experience the liberties others in society take for granted and the constraints they face exceed the constraints of others. There is a need for change. In this section, the key values motivating this movement are identified.

Based on evaluations cited in Williams (2007), a cornerstone value for Individualised Funding is the notion of *personal authority (*also linked to concepts such as *informed choice, self-determination, free will* and *independence)*. It is absolutely critical that a wide range of agents - Government policy makers and leaders, service provider staff, and those of other organisations and groupings involved in the lives of people living with disability and their families - commit to this, and fully embrace it intellectually and emotionally. Such a commitment to personal authority infers acceptance of the obligation to support people exercising their discretion and independence. This ability to make choices for ourselves and to give voice to our views is the gateway to full and active citizenship. In other words, each agent (Government and others) welcomes the responsibility and accountability to ensure every person gets the resources and support they need to exercise personal authority and live active lives of citizenship. In the UK, the organisation *in Control* refers to this as 'independent living'.

This is a critical test for any organisation and its support of people with a disability. An agent unable to sign up to this value has no real interest in supporting people living with disability to live decent lives, indicating that independence of thought and action is less important than, say, passive compliance.

A second key value is *interdependence*. In other words, we recognise no person is an island, and that societies and communities have evolved, because of the extent to which every one of us depends on a range of different people for things to help us build our lifestyle. By association, this means communities need to be *inclusive* of all their members, including people who live with disability.

A third key value is *capacity-building.* This value recognises that throughout our lives, we continue to learn and grow. This is true for each of us as individuals, as families, and as communities. This demands that any successful framework for Individualised Funding must have the idea of capacity-building woven into every encounter.

Underpinning this movement is a vision for inclusion and participation that empowers each person within the disability community to exercise personal authority, participate as active citizens, and to grow. Each agent, including Government, needs to express these cornerstone values in the form of a *vision*. This vision and values must then shape public expenditure and public accountability. Similarly, service provider agencies and other relevant organisations, including those involved in advocacy – need to formally express these cornerstone values in ways that guide their work. Critical to

success will be the extent to which the disability community is supported to participate in the ongoing crafting and shaping of this vision and the plans and actions which flow from it.

Referring back to the Fundamental Point, it is important the coalition commonly subscribes to, and embraces, these values at every level, and participates in the development of the vision so there is a shared ownership.

2.2   Strategy

While a clear value base is fundamental to any human enterprise, it is hard to achieve any change without charting a course. So, to give effect to the above shared values, Government, service providers and other relevant agencies need to state in detail what they will do. This is a critical act of formal and psychological commitment.

The strategy needs to clearly describe an intentional pathway to a set of tangible goals with explicit and coherent reference to the values and vision. This description must identify the key policy settings for success. When Governments consider the framework of Individualised Funding, they must address:

> ❑   The extent of collaboration between different funding bodies, to create a single, integrated fund
> ❑   How the amount of available funds is calculated for each person
> ❑   The range of purposes to which those funds may be applied

Again, referring back to the Fundamental Point, Government staff will be significantly aided in this task if they are joined in dialogue with a wide range of stakeholders and as part of a coalition of shared leadership.

In addition, service providers and other agencies will need to evolve their policy settings, for example:

> ❑   How their services will be customised to authentically respond to the individual aspirations of people using those services
> ❑   How they will build the right kind of relationship between agency staff and the people using the services
> ❑   How people using the services are routinely consulted on the organisation's work and are part of the organisation's governance arrangements

Note a strategy is about a clear statement of intent, a description of what is going to happen. It does not have to be pages upon pages of detail, with an attempt to plan for every possibility. Such detailed work is time-consuming and ultimately futile. A degree of uncertainty is inevitable, because the world does not stand still simply because someone wrote a plan.

A good strategy will have the critical support from the coalition of stakeholders, stay true to the values driving it, and contain sufficient flexibility to adapt to a changing environment.

2.3 Systems

To make the strategy come alive, the coalition of stakeholders next needs to identify the systems necessary for the safe and successful introduction of Individualised Funding.

Systems will include, for example, the mechanisms and tools for communicating with and informing people about this option, how eligibility is determined, how people's assessments of their support needs are verified, how the money is made available, how people living with disability and their families make contact with potential support providers, how outcomes are measured, and so on.

Given the extent of individualised funding arrangements elsewhere, the process of developing systems need not be overly onerous. Existing systems in other places can be accessed and adapted to suit the local circumstances (e.g. Waters 2007; in Control 2006). However, a key feature has to be simplicity. If the administration of Individualised Funding is burdensome, then it will reduce the likelihood of success for the people involved.

The coalition can identify system safeguards, such as effective regulatory and audit frameworks, to help ensure people, their support staff, and funds are safeguarded against exploitation. In designing safeguards, it is important the arrangements are proportional to the true risk. This is important because it is not unknown for various agents to develop and maintain cumbersome, top-heavy systems removing value.

In other words, Government agencies, service providers and other relevant entities involved in setting constraints, need to presume the majority of people will make sensible decisions about their funds and service choices. These people need to be resourced to seek out information and support when they need it. Where individual circumstances suggest a person needs additional

support, the support must be informed first by the value of capacity-building – how the person and those who support them can grow their capacity, for example in terms of knowledge and confidence, to make quality choices. The removal of control and autonomy must be seen as antithetical to these core values and occur only in rare and generally temporary circumstances. By using this approach, every agency will avoid burdening the many with onerous 'safeguards' that are really only helpful to the very few. A critical component in this process is the generation of affirmative and appropriate accountability where people are enabled to accept responsibility for their choices. Again, the assumption should be most people recognise their decisions have consequences and are content to live with those consequences.

Key to all this is the easy flow of information. All agencies within the coalition will need to review and simplify their systems so people can easily access, understand, *and measure*, what the agency offers.

2.4   Structure

These systems, and the decision-making they support, need to take place within a formal framework, or *structure*. Structures are the formal organisational arrangements showing how accountabilities are managed. This is a key issue, particularly when organisations become larger.

For example, a Government department administering disability funding may have a formal structure based on divisions of activity. This is a relatively neat approach for being able to easily coalesce, quantify and account for a particular area of endeavour.   However, it does not necessarily make it easy for staff within one division to move freely through, and collaborate with, other divisions.

Good funding mechanisms demand the capacity for people to think and act through a spectrum of organisational structures. Structures that support *networking* and fast movement will be an important boost to the implementation of Individualised Funding.

This does not necessarily mean there has to be wholesale reform in Government or agency administration before Individualised Funding can work. It simply means thought should be given to how existing structures can provide sufficient wiggle room so people can work quickly across different areas in support of a well-integrated funding solution.

In practice, this will mean Government departments will need to support activities across existing streams and promote conversations among various areas. Similarly, service providers should avoid developing 'silo' structures where communications go up and down through formal line management accountabilities. Such structures teach staff the only valued communications in the organisation are those going up and down the silo, and if the silo is long enough (and three line-managers is often long enough) then communications can be lost or diluted even within the silo.

An essential feature of Individualised Funding is that people should not need to shape their life by regular and routine contact with Government agencies and service providers. Instead, wherever contact with the various Government agencies and service providers is necessary, it should happen in a smooth and connected way, enabling a person to get on with their life without undue waiting or re-telling.

The notion of structure extends beyond Government to the range of agencies involved in disability support and their relationship with each other. Often a person will relate to a number of different agencies; it is vital these agencies collaborate in support of the goals the person has set for herself or himself.

It is not necessary to anchor key sector-wide structural mechanisms to support Individualised Funding within a Government structure. In the spirit of coalition as set out in the Fundamental Point, the structural arrangements could be anchored with another stakeholder or at various points within the coalition. For example, the UK-based organisation *in Control* provides support for several aspects of the Self-Directed Support framework in the UK.

It is essential that all structural arrangements should reflect the key values of self-determination, interdependency and capacity-building. As Individualised Funding comes to life, new organisations are likely to emerge, such as those supporting Circles initiatives (Russell 1995), Microboards (Vela Microboard Association 1997), and similar structures available to assist people to grow in their choice-making.

It is critically important Government fosters the emergence of 'consumer-led' organisations (where people living with disability and their family members are centrally involved in the governance arrangements). It is clear from people's experiences (for example see Williams 2007) such entities are often valued highly by people living with disability and their families, because they comprise people on the same journey, and with similar experiences, with natural insight to the aspirations people have and the issues they encounter. Such organisations can have the capacity to support the person and their family

with information, planning, brokerage, and management of support arrangements. Their presence is an important affirmation that people living with disability and their families are taking control and leadership of disability support arrangements.

The structural arrangements should include the formal involvement of people living with disability participating in the overall stewardship (governance) of the arrangements. Indeed this will be critical because running a framework of Individualised Funding is likely to be an ongoing journey, and there will be a variety of issues needing resolution along the way. Some of these issues will be practical in nature, some strategic in nature, and still others will be ethical in nature; all will have the capacity to either strengthen or weaken the framework. A coalition steering group comprising a range of skills and perspectives, including people living with disability and their family members, can be an effective mechanism to navigate through such issues.

Service provider agencies also have an important role to play in ensuring the voice of the disability community is heard and regarded. Service providers need to ensure they have structural arrangements at every level of the organisation enabling the disability community to influence the organisation's decisions.

Finally, it is absolutely critical there are structures associated with advocacy. Each of us has a fundamental need to express our identity, our ideas and our wants. For some people within the disability community, this need may be frustrated, either because of aspects of the person's circumstances or because of the person's history of experience. Given the vulnerability experienced by many people living with disability, it is particularly important to ensure there are supplementary mechanisms, such as advocacy structures, to help ensure people's voices are heard.

2.5 Skills (Competencies)

Competency refers to what people know and how they successfully apply it.

This means the coalition should be clear on the competencies a sector-wide framework for Individualised Funding, and the people working within it, needs to demonstrate.

This will include, for example, competencies associated with giving out information, and with assisting the person and family to establish an

understanding of their needs and issues, including building a hopeful and aspiring vision of the future.

This in turn leads to the exercise of competencies associated with the development of an authentic person-centred plan, built on the person's vision for the good things in life, rather than being built on those existing service programs available in the local area.

The person at the centre and a passion to make it work
In supporting people living with disability, agencies often make one or more of three competency mistakes in planning with that person. The first mistake is the absence of planning. An agency may provide services to a person, but there is no emphasis on goals, growth or individuality. A shared statement of intentions is the first plank in a generative response.

The second mistake is planning but not genuinely involving the person at the centre of the plan. This defeats the purpose - it's somebody else's plan. Open and informed conversation must be the basis for the shared statement of intentions.

The third mistake is that agencies undertake too much planning with someone, and create a sense of orchestration in a person's life that exceeds what someone would typically do when thinking about the future. Finally, the shared statement of intentions based on open and informed conversation must be achievable and empowering.

The key is to ensure the person and their family own the plan and the planning process. This involves making use of the naturally occurring planning opportunities in people's lives. These tend not to be that formalised and tend to be based on the art of simply getting to know someone and their values and their dreams and goals, and how those dreams and goals are tested out with trusted friends and family, to gain feedback and encouragement and support.

So, for a framework of Individualised Funding to assist a person to access the decent things in life, it must include:

- a mechanism to identify with the person what they want,
- the way it will be talked through with people that the person trusts,
- the identification of how to make it a reality, the means of remembering so that people know what to do and stay focused.
- Above all, the planning process, and the people involved, must have the capacity to look beyond what is currently available, to exercise

imagination, and to replace 'why it won't work' thinking with 'how it could work' thinking.

Indeed, ignoring this last competency in person-centred planning will likely mean Individualised Funding will produce underwhelming results that "fail to really address people's needs and potential to the degree they deserve" (Kendrick 2007).

Brokering relationships with and without money
The next set of competencies is associated with brokering arrangements in line with a person-centred plan. This will include developing sustainable informal networks that rely on natural community connections rather than paid relationships.

An implication throughout the framework is that hallmark competencies will be those associated with *relationships* rather than competencies associated with health and safety. Health and safety competencies often appear as hallmarks of traditional systems and are important, but should not be the predominant driver in the agency relationship with a person living with disability.

The prevailing competency for *any* paid staff person involved in Individualised Funding, be that staffer a politician, senior manager, policy worker, accountant, or personal support worker, is the capacity to engage the person living with disability and their family, so that person and their family feel they are respectfully placed at the centre of any decision-making affecting them.

Affirming personal capacity
Finally and most critically*,* while I have identified a range of competencies that feel important to the success of Individualised Funding, it nevertheless has to be assumed that people living with disability have the capacity to successfully administer their own support arrangements, either by themselves or through a nominated other. To *not* assume this will mean that formal and informal structures will collude to *exclude* people from administering their own arrangements.

And there is every reason to expect that people's success will be enhanced by the simplicity of the system within which their personal authority can operate. In other words, people are more likely to exercise their capacity to manage their own arrangements if the system has been designed to be simple. If the system is kept simple and straightforward, then the required competencies remain so as well. If the system is made to be complicated and sophisticated, then the same is demanded of people's competencies, and this is quite unnecessary.

And unfortunately, as CSCI found in the UK (2004), people's opportunity (as opposed to capacity) to participate in the framework of Individualised Funding can be undermined by those around them, notably professional staff, who doubt the person's capacities and who are thereby reluctant to pass over the control. Therefore, it is of vital importance all key stakeholders *assume* all people have the competence/capacity to self-manage their support arrangements. There must be a corresponding focus supporting this to happen within a system that is easy to understand and move through (see in Control UK 2006).

2.6 Staff

Issues of staff recruitment and retention are prevalent in human services as for anywhere else. In traditional service systems, it is common for there to be difficulties recruiting and retaining staff.

Key to the success of a system of Individualised Funding will be the extent to which the system attracts and retains support staff who genuinely subscribe to the value base. For this to happen, the recruitment messages and associated material need to convey these values with passion and commitment. It follows that it will help enormously if people living with disability and their families are actively involved in the preparation and communication of those recruitment messages.

It is critical to understand the contribution staff make, and where the boundary lies between the contributions of people who are paid to be there (i.e. the staff), and those whose freely-given presence is motivated by things more enduring than money – common values, family ties, friendship, and so on.

It is therefore important any framework of Individualised Funding does not limit itself by assuming paid assistance is the solution to every issue identified. More funding for more paid assistance is not a panacea for many of the issues felt by people living with disability and their families. Financially wealthy people are not necessarily happy or fulfilled. This is not to say that funding is irrelevant. It is simply a matter of recognising that the role of paid staff only goes so far in the achievement of decent lives by people living with disability.

2.7 Style (Cultural fit)

The culture of an organisation/framework/system really comes down to the phrase, "the way we do things around here" and, by association, the way the organisation presents itself to the outside world. An organisation can declare feel-good values in its plans, but if the people in the organisation behave differently, then the true values, the true culture of the organisation, lie in the behaviour of the people rather than in the values written down in a plan.

It follows then, for a framework of Individualised Funding to succeed, the behaviour of those involved must consistently reflect the stated values. This is an ongoing exercise in vigilance and renewal, and places great expectations on those in leadership roles in all agencies within the coalition. This includes the paid staff involved in giving direct support, who must undertake leadership in their own practice and the way they build respectful relationships with the people they serve.

Therefore, the coalition (and the agencies within it) must ensure a common set of values are clearly stated for all to understand, and a commitment to work within them is pursued, exacted and measured within every document. This insistence must be clearly evident in any and all written materials, covering:

- ❑ the promotion of the framework
- ❑ the conditions by which people living with disability and their families are able to participate in the arrangements for Individualised Funding
- ❑ the parameters for what can be purchased within Individualised Funding
- ❑ the role and practice of planning and brokerage support
- ❑ the role and practice of financial /legal support
- ❑ the role and practice of support providers
- ❑ the role and practice of Government

3.0 Summing Up Implementation

Building a new set of arrangements, such as a framework for Individualised Funding, involves a number of considerations, including how to build a pathway from existing service systems.

There is a range of policy and practice questions to work through and plenty of opportunities for the people involved to get it wrong, albeit with the best of intentions. Hopefully, this paper shows the 7S analysis is a useful methodology to assist leaders to attend to the cornerstone issues. Chief among these must be the value base, and the existence of a coalition of stakeholders, to help maintain collective and individual courage in line with that value base. If the value base is clear, coherent and trusting of the disability community, then a robust and remarkably straightforward framework can be built. A thoughtful, well-organised approach, including the active involvement of, and leadership by, people living with disability and their families, will help ensure that the resulting framework has the capacity to add value in people's lives.

To echo a comment made at the outset, we succeed or fail together.

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