

Changing Futures Sheffield – Learning Report – Personalisation Budgets

September 2022

Engagement is driven by the relationship with their worker, not by access to financial support

Personalisation budgets were included into the core teams operating model so that support workers could effectively respond to common barriers that this cohort face when navigating the system. This approach was in line with learning from national programmes such as [Fulfilling Lives](#). The only limitations on spend were no cash, no alcohol, no drugs and no gambling.

Appreciative inquiry with the core team shows that most individuals have engaged with the programme based on the relationship with their support worker, rather than having access to a personalisation budget. Analysis of our contact and spend data has not evidenced a significant correlation between engagement with our support and an individual's personal budget being accessed.

18% of our clients have not spent any money despite being aware of their personal budgets being available, this suggests access to the funds are not a driver for engagement. A small proportion of our clients, <4%, have had limited contact with their support worker but spent most of their personal budget. However, those individuals have budget remaining and not enough time has passed to know whether they will continue to contact their worker once their budget has been exhausted.

Personalisation budgets are a powerful empowerment tool for staff

All staff reported that the personal budgets were an effective tool to efficiently address practical barriers, which gave them confidence when initially engaging a hard-to-reach cohort. Autonomy allowed for staff and individuals to be creative, with no 'incorrect' way for the money to be spent. Personal budget expenditure has largely been on meeting basic needs such as food and clothing as well as travel and phones.

Other infrequent uses of budgets have included buying books, TV's and paying for experiences such as the cinema. The flexibility has meant workers have been able to get to know the individuals in atypical environments that break routine and help develop the relationship between the worker and the person receiving support.

Approximately 80% of the cohort have most of their personal budget remaining.

Personalisation budget delivery model needs to be coproduced with those with lived experience

Our review of personal budgets to date has raised questions about the effectiveness and potential risk of an approach with few guidelines. This highlights the importance of coproducing delivery models with those with lived experience to make sure they are as informed as possible and therefore fit for purpose. As a result, we are going to revisit and co-produce our delivery model around personal budgets for the core team.

We will review personal budgets again in the future following the development and delivery of a new co-produced delivery model to determine any potential further learning.