



Individual Budgets Consultation

A consultation with disabled young people exploring their views about individual budgets.

September 2009

Consultation with Disabled Young People

Background

The Children's Participation Consultancy was asked by Nottingham City Council to consult with a group of disabled young people regarding the introduction of individual budgets, to contribute to a spotlight review. This report reflects the young people's feedback.

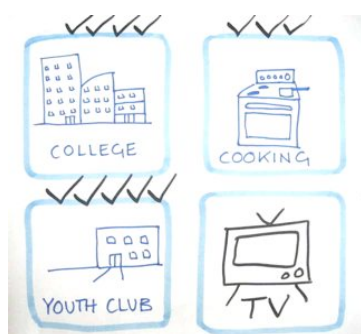
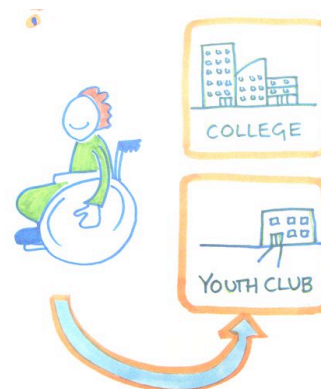
Method

We worked with six disabled young people (3 males, 3 females) aged from 15 to 19 who had a range of additional needs. The young people attend a disabled youth group which is supported by 'Speaking Up', a national organisation that runs programmes for young people. Two councillors from Nottingham City Council also attended the consultation session.

We used a variety of activities that explained the concept of individual budgets and direct payments, and introduced them to how they might use such a process. Using pictures and activities the group undertook voting, small group discussions and making choices. The young people were able to give us valuable views on whether the process was a good idea and their thoughts on what would be important for the council to consider when implementing this. At the end of the session they had the opportunity to ask the councillors questions.

We consulted with the young people on the following:

- Are Individual Budgets a good idea?
- What resources they might need to undertake their favourite activities?
- Who should make the decisions about what they do, when they do it and whom they do it with?
- Do they prefer individual budgets or direct payments?
- What might be their worries about the proposal?
- How would they want the Local Authority to let them know about individual budgets?



Are individual budgets a good idea?

The young people were very positive about the idea of having an individual budget, with a unanimous vote for it. What they particularly liked was that it would give them more independence and mean that they would be able to choose what help they would need and when. This is consistent with the views of disabled young people nationally (Abbot, 2003).

'I think it's a good idea because it's giving me independence'

19 year old girl

What resources would they need?

When asked about what they wanted to do in their lives, 5 out of the 6 young people indicated that they would like to live independently in the future. They identified activities they would like to be involved in. The majority wanted to access activities in the community with both their friends and family and go to college. Having identified this, they then indicated what resources they thought they would need to make this happen.

The young people were very aware of what resources they would need, with transport and the ability to access friends being raised by all of the young people. They also raised the issue of needing multiple resources to access activities, for example one young person noted that she wanted to live independently, and that for her to go out with friends she would want a choice of accessible venues, would need transport, a helper to support her, and money to help her pay for things once she arrived.



"I should decide who I go with so if one friend can't go then I could go with another"

15-year-old boy



Who should make the decisions about what disabled young people do, when and with whom they do it?

All of the young people were clear that they should be able to decide what they do, but wanted help and support from workers to know what was available to them.

The views about who should decide when they went out and with whom were more varied. The majority of the young people emphasised that they valued the help of family and workers in helping them to make decisions about what days or times they went to activities and input into who they went with.



Individual budget or direct payment?

There were mixed views regarding who should hold the money. Half felt that they would prefer to have the money themselves and manage their own support (direct payment), while the other half wanted to make decisions about how money was spent but preferred not to have to take on that level of responsibility, wanting someone else to help them manage their money (individual budget)

Nationally research into young people's views has found that many young people reported the level of responsibility and management involved in the use of direct payments as the reason they did not want to apply for them (Mitchell, 2007).

What might young people worry about?

The group were asked to think of what might worry disabled young people if they were to have an individual budget. They suggested the following issues might be a worry:

- What to spend it on
- You might pay for something that you thought you needed, and only realise afterwards that you didn't need it
- Keeping the money safe
- The transport might not meet your needs if you were to organise it, whereas the council would send an adapted bus/taxi
- Doing the maths

The majority of the young people suggested that they would like to have someone to help them with deciding how to spend their budget and the organising of resources, but would still want to be able to make the decisions.

This highlighted a recurring theme in the session; young people were keen to have someone to help them make the choices and help them to decide how they should spend their money, and the majority wanted the help to come from their family.



“ My family helps me make decisions’

19 year old girl



‘my worker has good ideas’

16 year old boy



Advertising the Service

We asked the young people how they would like to find out about individual budgets and gave them a range of options. The most popular was having someone tell them about it face to face, as well as posters and leaflets. Some liked the idea of having a telephone line that would give you information, or perhaps have someone call them. The entire group had access to the internet, and two thirds would look at a web page on the idea. The young people were less positive about the idea of receiving texts; as they did not all have mobile phones.

This reflects consultation undertaken previously with young people in Nottingham City, 83% of who preferred to find out about a new service via a person telling them about it and 66% via posters and leaflets (Hayes & Holland, 2008).

Summary

The young people were very positive about the idea of having an individual budget and being given more say in what they do, but were also keen to have support from their families and workers to make these choices and manage these decisions. The majority want to live independently in the future and were very aware of the often multiple levels of support they would need to access activities and services. Concerns raised by the young people included ensuring they had the support to manage the budget and to help them decide what support would best suit their individual needs. They want to find out about developments in individual budgets through having someone to tell them face to face, leaflets and posters, as well as a web page.

'It's your life, so you should decide what to do'

15-year-old boy

References

Abbot, D (2003) Direct payments for young disabled people Joseph Rowntree Foundation

Mitchell, J (2007) The Ask Us about Direct Payments Project: A review of its development, learning and Outcomes Children's Society

Hayes, J and Holland, C (2008) Empowerment Contract Children's Consultation Report Children's Participation Consultancy

Individual Budgets Consultation
Children's Participation Consultancy 2009

This consultation was designed and undertaken by
Cara Holland and Julia Hayes

The authors would like to thank
Speaking Up and the young people who contributed their views.

info@childrensparticipation.co.uk
www.childrensparticipation.co.uk