

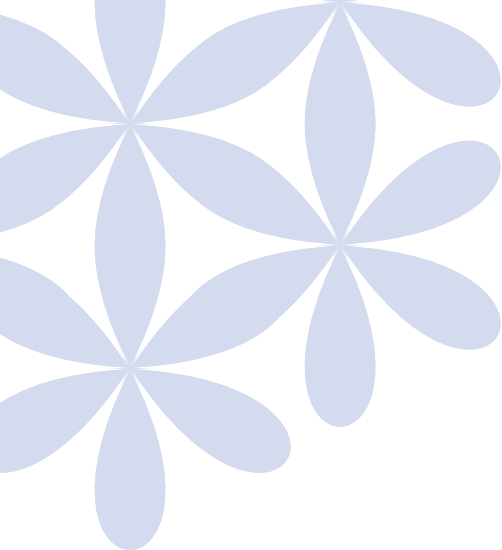


Should we ban brokerage?

By **Simon Duffy** and **Kate Fulton**



Produced in
association with
Paradigm



About the authors

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Between 1990 and 1994 Simon led the development of a system of brokerage and individualised funding in Southwark. In 1996 he founded Inclusion Glasgow and developed Individual Budgets. In 2000 he began working with North Lanarkshire Council on the development of Self-Directed Support. Simon then led In Control from 2003 to 2009; during this time he proposed a functional model of brokerage, to replace the professional model that had become dominant in Canada and the USA. Simon is now establishing the Centre for Welfare Reform in order to promote a welfare system that promotes citizenship, family and community.

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Kate is a Senior Consultant for Paradigm, with a particular interest in support brokerage. She has worked in a variety of settings, supporting people with learning disabilities and people who experience mental ill health. Kate's work has included working in the statutory, private and independent sector. Kate also spent many years in the advocacy field exploring planning and service design. Kate co-developed and led Paradigm's Brokerage for Change development programme in 2007 and more recently co-authored the CSIP guidance on best practice in support planning and brokerage in 2008. Much of Kate's work focuses on the development of support brokerage and she is keen to ensure that the new system empowers citizens to really direct their support.



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A discussion paper from the Centre for Welfare Reform
in association with Paradigm





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Should We Ban Brokerage?

Summary

This discussion paper aims to encourage more thinking and discussion about the development of a support structure for Self-Directed Support. The paper is split into three parts: first, we set out our concerns at the development of a narrowly defined model of Independent Professional Brokerage; second, we explore an alternative community-based model of support; and finally we offer 10 practical strategies for local action.

We believe that a community-based model of support offers an approach which is more open, effective and efficient. In fact a shift towards such a community-based model may even reduce the funding necessary for infrastructure and increase the funding available for direct support - putting more money directly in the control of older people and disabled people.

A community-based model:

- encourages and supports people to do more for themselves
- makes peer-to-peer support easily available
- makes better use of the current investment in community services
- encourages service providers to design and develop personalised support
- builds on the skills and abilities of existing professionals

We are only just beginning to understand how best to support and develop Self-Directed Support. But progress to date has been made without the need for a new profession of Independent Professional Brokers. Instead progress has been made by taking an inclusive approach, one that enables everyone to take advantage of the flexibilities and benefits of Self-Directed Support.



Introduction

This paper has been written at an important time in the development of Self-Directed Support in England. Self-Directed Support evolved from the leadership of disabled people, motivated by a desire to move away from institutionalised care and towards Independent Living.¹ There are many models that have been developed internationally over the last few decades, but the model that has become prevalent in England was first developed in Scotland in 2000 and then brought to England by In Control in 2003.²

The early testing of this model of Self-Directed Support demonstrated that there could be great improvements in people's lives when people were given control over their own Individual Budget. After a further period of testing and policy debate Self-Directed Support became central to social care policy with the publication of the *Putting People First* concordat in late 2007.³

One of the interesting and unusual features of this particular model of Self-Directed Support, compared to those tested in other countries, was that it was defined in such a way that Independent Professional Brokers were *not* treated as an essential part of the model. Moreover, in practice, the positive changes that were achieved during the early piloting took place without any significant use of Independent Professional Brokers.⁴

However there is a model of Independent Professional Brokerage emerging within the UK which we feel could become a dominant model of support, and which would put at the risk the opportunity to create a system that is truly empowering and economically viable. This paper proposes an alternative, community-based approach, to support and offers some

ideas to Local Authorities and their partners to begin this work.

As we will go on to discuss, the term 'brokerage' is now used in many different, confused and conflicting ways. However the focus of our concern is the distinct idea of Independent Professional Brokerage. None of our criticism should be taken as applying to other forms of support that may also be called 'brokerage' but with a different meaning. Nor do we intend to criticise those people currently working as Independent Professional Brokers. Our argument is that Independent Professional Brokerage is not an essential component of Self-Directed Support.

We believe that we should not be frightened to debate, discuss and even disagree. The implementation of Self-Directed Support involves major cultural and systemic changes and there are no guarantees that these changes will be implemented well or that progress is inevitable. Often progress is undermined by unduly simplistic and overly professionalised responses. It is for these reasons that we wish to explore whether we should ban brokerage.

Concerning Independent Professional Brokerage

1. Terminological confusion

One problem in discussing ‘brokerage’ is the confusion which surrounds the use of the word. Currently there are at least three different ways in which the term ‘brokerage’ is used (see Figure 1):

1. Brokerage 1: the broad function -

Sometimes the term brokerage is used just to describe the kind of support (whoever provides it) that is used to enable the citizen to be in control of their own support.⁵ This would include advising, planning, organising, managing or reviewing support.

2. Brokerage 2: budget management -

In this model a professional manages someone else’s budget for them - but does not provide all the direct support. For instance, the *Budget Minder* service in Wigan provides an excellent service using this model.⁶

3. Brokerage 3: independent organising -

This is the model which we refer to as Independent Professional Brokerage and which proposes that the broker is someone who plans and (initially) organises support - but who must not act as a budget manager, a care manager or as a provider of support.⁷

In this paper we are particularly concerned to examine the third concept of brokerage - the Independent Professional Broker. For it is this model which is often promoted as a systemic response to the development of Self-Directed Support and it is this model that seems most problematic. In particular we believe that the arguments which are sometimes deployed in order to advocate for Independent Professional

Brokerage are plausible, weak and potentially damaging to the development of Self-Directed Support. As John O’Brien puts it:

*“Requiring Independent Professional Brokerage, in an important sense, sends a message that undermines confidence that people can usually behave decently and sensibly with occasional breakdowns. It also increases complexity and creates expectations of incapacity in people, families, and community members.”*⁸

However, before beginning, it is also worth asking whether all these discussions would be advanced by ending the use of the words ‘broker’ and ‘brokerage’. The *Oxford English Dictionary* defines a broker as “a person who buys and sells goods and assets for others”.⁹

This means the dictionary definition of brokerage is actually different to all of the three contradictory definitions currently used in public policy. It may be better to use more accurate and candid terms to describe the different kinds of practical support that people know and to breakdown the different kinds of support that people need and to examine how and when people will need such support and how to ensure it is available when necessary.

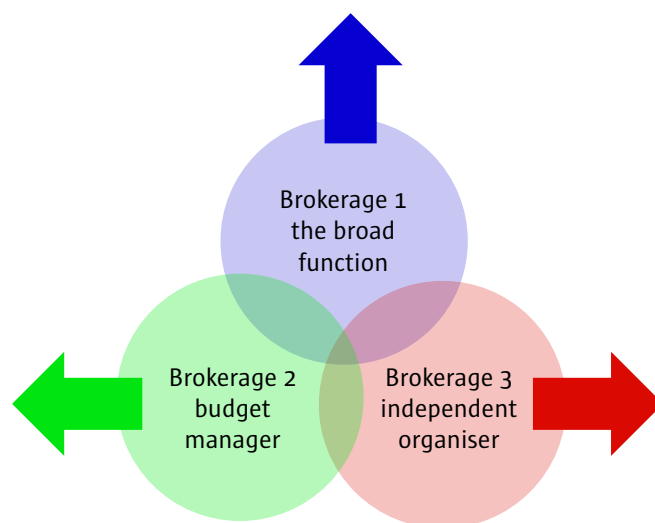


Figure 1 Competing Conceptions of Brokerage

2. The comfort of creating new roles

It is always comforting to think that a problem will be solved by some knight in shining armour who will come riding to the rescue. The desire for such a 'saviour' is entirely human and natural; but it can also become a dangerous delusion if it is used to guide public policy. Instead of focusing on the difficult job of redesigning the systems and structures that currently obstruct people's citizenship we pretend that some new professional role could easily be created to make everything okay. However the creation of a new role will always add to the complexity and fragmentation of the current system and it may actually make things worse.

Certainly those of us who have worked in adult social care will remember that the creation of the care manager was heralded as a new and improved role that would resolve a whole series of difficulties. The reality has proved far more complex and today many feel that the development of Self-Directed Support actually creates an opportunity to undo some of the mistakes inherent in this policy by returning social work to the role it played before the creation of care management.

In a similar way many disabled people will suspect that a new professional role will either make no significant difference or will actually make things worse. In the past the long-stay institutions were themselves often presented as the new professional response to the needs of disabled people. But the history of the institutions suggests that good intentions are not enough and that putting people in positions of power and control over disabled people quickly leads to abuse and disempowerment.

If the role of the Independent Professional Broker does start to become legitimised then there certainly will be many excellent and well-intentioned people who will step forward to fill that role. But such a role should not be judged by the qualities of the early enthusiasts. Instead we must ask whether the role is really necessary at all.

3. The lesson of Self-Directed Support

The arguments presented for Independent Professional Brokerage are often underpinned by a silent assumption that we can explain the problems of the welfare state in terms of some excess of *bad* people. Unhelpful and thoughtless exaggerations abound: 'social workers have a conflict of interest', 'families exploit people', 'service providers will just look after themselves', 'people can't cope with control' etc. It is then proposed that all we have to do is then identify some new group of *good* people - who can always be trusted, who are always reliable and who have all the gifts and skills necessary.

But there is no group of superior, well-intentioned, talented and reliable people just waiting around - hoping for some new role to be identified. There are good people everywhere, in every role and any new role is simply going to be filled by some of those previously in those other roles. A more sensible approach is to assume that those people who are here already are sufficiently talented and well-intentioned.

In fact the most important lesson from the early developments in Self-Directed Support is that there is already a deep well of talent, energy and good intentions already waiting to be tapped inside citizens, families and



Figure 2 Self-Directed Support and 'Pull Economics'



communities. This process is described as 'Pull Economics' and is represented in Figure 2 below.¹⁰ If we can give people the means to take control themselves they make better decisions, make better use of family and community and form better and more productive relationships with professionals. The primary focus of change must surely be to make it easier for people to be in control themselves, not to pass this work on to a new hypothetical professional.

4. The ambiguity of independent advice

The central argument for Independent Professional Brokerage is that independence is essential to good advice and support. To support this argument, advocates of brokerage cite examples from ordinary life: lawyers, estate agents, independent financial advisors, stock brokers etc. But these examples suggest three important ambiguities within the concept of independent advice:

1. **The need for dependency** - The independent advisor is also very aware that their role only exists if you feel that you really need them. We turn to lawyers when we fear that, without their expert advice, we will be somehow manipulated or misused by others.
2. **The need for complexity** - We seek such independent advice when the environment we are forced to enter is dangerously complex. We need a lawyer because the law is complex. But we can also note that the lawyer needs the law to be complex in order to earn a living.
3. **The need for conflict** - Independent advisors can also have a vested interest in promoting conflict, increasing transaction costs and encouraging a sense of fear and suspicion. Lawyers benefit financially when cases become more conflicted and where trust breaks down.

It is naive to believe that Independent Professional Brokers are not without their own 'conflict of interest', just like all other

professions (and people). But with Independent Professional Brokerage the risk of promoting dependency is *greater* because what the broker has to offer is primarily their 'transactional' skills as a 'navigator' and therefore they need people to feel they need a 'navigator'. This creates a dependency at the most critical point - the point at which the individual shapes and determines their own life course.

Moreover it is also likely, if we promote Independent Professional Brokerage as a dominant model, that we will be distracted from the more important task of designing systems that people find easy to navigate. Furthermore adding Independent Professional Brokers into the current system means adding another level of complexity to a system that is already too complex. And it risks creating a role that has vested-interest in maintaining that complexity.

5. The problem of expertise

Of course, in the case of lawyers and doctors, there is genuine expertise and a need for suitable training and accreditation, and this justifies the creation of a specialist profession. But not every kind of knowledge justifies the creation of a distinct profession and there are significant risks inherent within any model of professionalised knowledge which assumes that key skills and information do not belong to ordinary citizens, families and communities.

We can identify 5 kinds of expertise that are relevant to the creation of high quality individual support (see Figure 3):

1. **Individual** - The most important things you need to know to design a good support service are the interests, gifts, capacities and desires of the individual who needs support. Typically it is the person, and those who love them, who know these best.
2. **Community** - The second most important thing to know is the person's community: families, friends, neighbourhoods and community organisations. Most successful support

systems are constructed from these community resources and knowledge of these resources is primarily located in the individual and their own networks.

3. **Services** - The third most important kind of knowledge - and one that is not always essential - is knowledge of services, supports, adaptations etc. No one knows everything about all of the options available - especially given that in an innovative and flexible market what is available should be constantly changing. It is primarily service providers who hold this knowledge and they communicate their expertise by marketing their services in order that people can see the possibilities that they can provide.
4. **Funding & regulations** - It is also sometimes important to know about funding, entitlements and how the system works. This is particularly important in highly bureaucratic systems. For example, in the US one of the central roles of brokers is to complete the complex paperwork necessary in order to claim payments for support.¹¹ However, this is also why in the UK we designed Self-Directed Support to be as simple as possible and why we designed Individual Budgets as up-front entitlements that would let everyone know the funding available from the beginning.¹²

5. **Planning** - Skills in planning and facilitation are found in all walks of life and some specialisation may quite naturally and properly evolve. But mostly people will not need specialist support to plan or make their own decisions. Although it may be useful to attend training and learn about planning techniques.

The fear that Independent Professional Brokerage is not founded on any genuine body of expertise deepens when one examines early data around Independent Professional Brokers in the UK. Paradigm researched early models of brokerage within England and found little clarity on both role definition and expertise.¹³

Moreover the current role definition of an Independent Professional Broker excludes any long term management and problem solving function. It is solely focused upon the initial stages of supporting someone to set up their support. In this context the Independent Professional Broker will struggle to achieve any meaningful expertise as their role excludes the management and problem-solving that happens when a real support service is set up. For it is the actual implementation and management of support which provides the opportunity for genuine learning to take place.

It may be that the error here has been to define the role within the 'placement paradigm' of the old social care system. For in the old system

the primary emphasis of assessment and planning was to *place* someone in a service. But in Self-Directed Support we want people to be changing, developing and improving their lives and supports *all the time*. And when there is a real problem we don't want to find that the broker who 'wrote our plan' isn't allowed to get their hands dirty and sort out the really difficult stuff. Brokerage which simply plans and sets up a service is actually

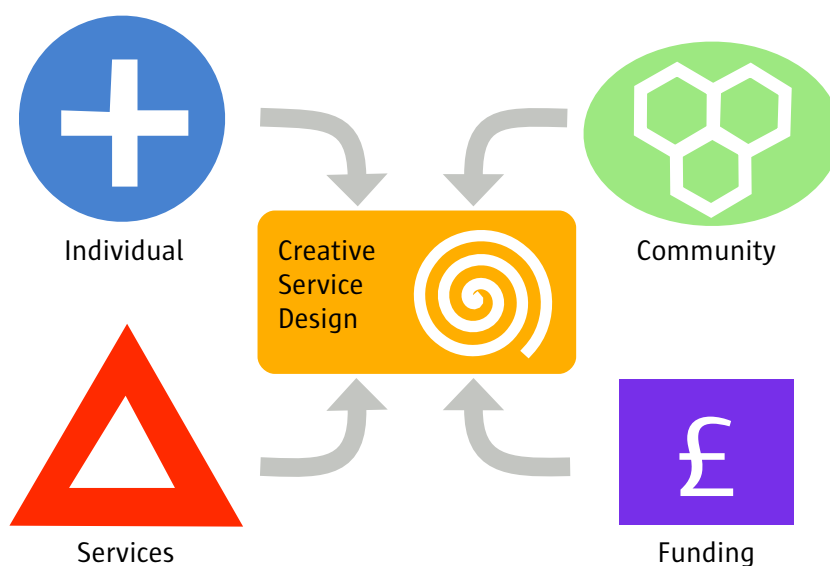


Figure 3 The Sources of creativity in Individual Service Design



more likely to create service failures because it will not prioritise the creation of the kind of robust personal leadership (whether that is provided by the person, their network or a professional) that is at the heart of all good service design. This narrow role definition seems to be a quick-fix solution whose long-term cost will be the weakening of leadership by the citizen and their allies.

6. The costs of brokerage

If Independent Professional Brokerage is normalised then the extra costs that will be added to the adult social care system are enormous and they are created in a number of different ways:

- 1. Direct costs** - Independent brokers will have to be paid, and currently the small number of brokers that exist are charging anywhere from £25 - £50 per hour, with some charging an overall percentage of a person's budget. As a new service, with perceived high value, it is possible for brokers to charge rates which exceed those of social workers or support providers. Moreover, the 'independence' of the broker also means that they need to be paid for the time they take to form a relationship with the disabled person and their family.
- 2. Transaction costs** - The existence of a new set of professionals will also add to the transaction costs of the system.¹⁴ More money will need to be spent having more meetings and processing more information. Furthermore there is a risk that the creation of a new professional role will antagonise other professions - reducing their reliability and effectiveness.
- 3. Regulations** - The inherent moral risks created by Independent Professional Brokerage will also lead to a system of regulation, with all its inherent costs. Already regulators are talking about creating regulations for brokerage, even when only a tiny number of independent brokers exist.

4. Accreditation - Along with regulation will come systems of accreditation. This will add a further layer of costs.

5. Training and consultancy - In order to train brokers and develop local and national systems consultancy agencies will come forward to provide specialist training and advice.¹⁵

We are not suggesting that some of these costs would not be incurred in other system of support. But, as we will go on to explore, the current infrastructure costs for social care are already high. It seems dangerous to go down a path of professionalised support that will almost inevitably drive up infrastructure costs, rather than building upon the capacities of citizens, families, communities and existing professional groups.

7. Evidence on outcomes

There is one further reason to exercise caution in promoting Independent Professional Brokerage: There is currently no evidence to suggest that it is a more effective way of improving people's lives.¹⁶ No evidence has been presented to show that it is a better way of improving personal outcomes, and what evidence we do have suggests that it is the support of families, friends and peers that tends to have the biggest positive impact on outcomes.

This means that promoting Independent Professional Brokerage as a strategic response to Self-Directed Support must be viewed with caution. Given that Independent Professional Brokerage is likely to be the most expensive intervention and given that there is no evidence that it produces better outcomes than it is almost inevitably going to be the least efficient intervention.

Clearly it is not good enough to simply identify our concerns about this narrow version of Independent Professional Brokerage. It is also necessary to explore how an alternative support system might avoid any undue reliance on the role of the Independent Professional Broker.

1. Understanding the need for help

The case for Independent Professional Brokerage starts with a natural assumption. We imagine that, as people take on more control of their own money and their own support, then they must *need more help*. But it is easy to make a number of mistakes at this point:

- We may all say we *want* help - but we don't always *need* help. Help is not always good and often people just need to be encouraged in order to do more for themselves.
- Social care is part of a broader welfare system that systematically under-estimates the capacities of citizens, families and communities. In fact most people have a range of internal and external resources that can be activated if the right systems and incentives are in place.
- All the current services should *already*

be 'helping' and if they are not then the challenge is to help them change into the sort of services that *do* provide the right help rather than creating a new profession.

If we examine the model Self-Directed Support we find that there are already many systems that can and do help people with some or all of the citizen's journey (see Figure 4).¹⁷

Our proposal is that the effective implementation of Self-Directed Support will depend upon (a) making the journey of Self-Directed Support as simple and as easy to navigate as possible and (b) making sure that support is available, at every stage of that journey, from anyone and everyone. There is no data to suggest we need to artificially limit the involvement of any members of the current support system. Our proposal is that we do not need a new professional solution, instead we need an efficient community-based solution, one that promotes empowerment and stronger communities.

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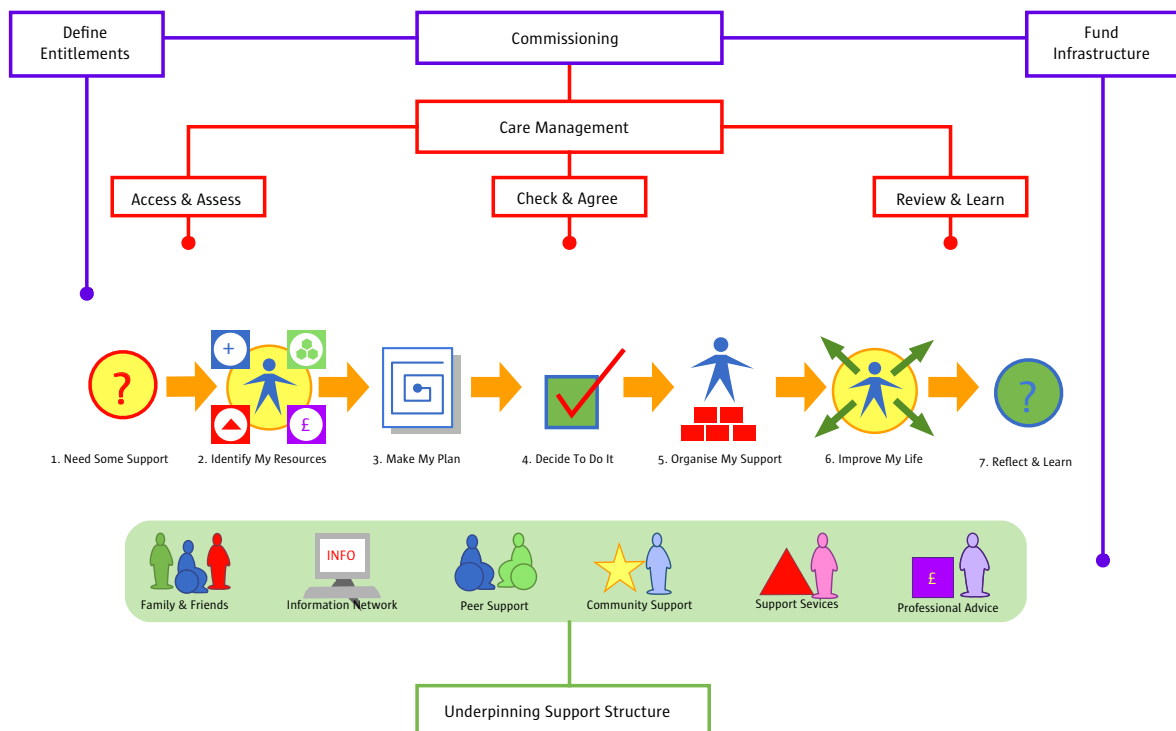


Figure 4. The Infrastructure for Self-Directed Support

2. A community-based support system

If we start by thinking first about the person and their family then we can identify 5 distinct ways in which people can get support:

- 1. Information Network** - Many citizens and families take control with very little extra support. They use their native knowledge and understanding and access information that is available from formal and informal information networks. Often the obstacle to citizens and families is the difficulty that professionals can have to 'let go' and to trust that there will be a good outcome without their professional intervention.
- 2. Peer Support** - Many people benefit from support from their peers, for often the best person to give advice is someone who has been through the same or similar experiences themselves. And many people who have already received support also want to give something back to the wider community. Centres for Independent Living, at their best, are excellent structures for promoting peer support.
- 3. Community Support** - Many people can get good support from existing community services. There are a plethora of community services, voluntary organisations, associations and other groups already in existence. Some are funded by Social Services, many are not. However all may have a positive role to play in supporting people to be in control.
- 4. Support Service** - Many people can get good support from existing service providers. In fact most of the money spent in social care is spent on service providers

and most of those providers are willing and able to help people be in control. As long as people know they don't have to stick with a service provider it must make sense to encourage service providers to market, design and develop personalised services directly with people themselves.

- 5. Professional Advisor** - Some people will need the professional advice or support in order to develop their own support. This small but important group will find that none of the 4 previous natural systems will work for them. Their life may be in crisis, they may be being abused, they may be too cut-off. In this circumstance it is important that the local authority has the capacity to provide expert help.¹⁸ Within social care this support is often provided by social workers or care managers, in health care it may be provided by some other kind of care co-ordinator. It would also be possible to purchase that support from a private contractor such as an Independent Professional Broker.

A community-based support system is one that uses all of these 5 systems of support. But which prioritises those approaches which build citizen and community capacity:

- 1.** It starts by assuming and encouraging the capacity of citizens and families and by enabling access to a wide **information network**
- 2.** It then facilitates the early use of **peer support** for everyone
- 3.** Those who need further support find that they can access **community supports** from organisations and associations within their community

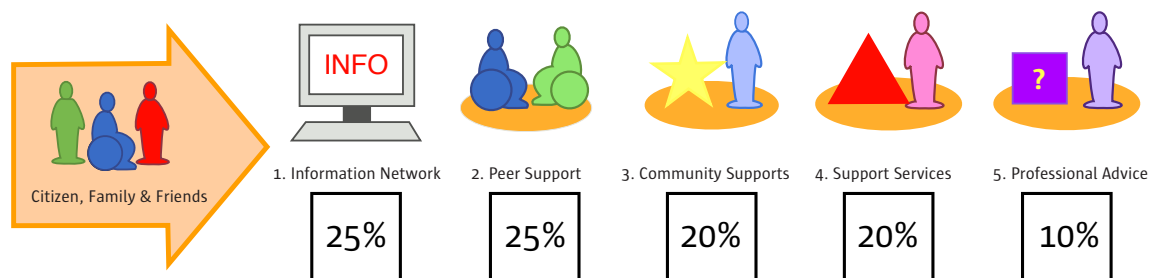


Figure 5. The Community-based Support System



- 4. They can also contact **support services** directly and explore with them what options are available
- 5. Lastly they will go to **professional advisors**, such as social workers or other specialists

Our expectation, based on early innovations in this field, is that the distribution of primary support may look as it is described in Figure 5.

However it is important to note that this community-based approach is the reverse of current system in social care. To shift away from the current emphasis on professional support and to build a system that starts with a presumption of capacity is a long-term project and it will take real leadership and innovation to turn the current system around. But it is also an opportunity to improve outcomes and increase efficiency across the whole system.

3. A balanced approach to support

Although a community-based approach aims to prioritise the empowerment of citizens, families and communities it does not restrict the types of support available. It is permissive and open to further innovations. It is also balanced, making sure that there are a range of different supports available.

In fact it is useful to see that different kinds of support are likely to have some general strengths and weaknesses (as we can see in Table 1).

It would be a mistake to see any one system of support as so strong that it removes the need for other alternatives. Community-based support recognises the complexity of individual situations and the need for a range of alternative options.

Citizens & families...	Strengths	Weaknesses
1. Using information networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real knowledge of individual• Natural commitment• Strong community connections	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Subject to subjectivity• Not always available for all
2. Making use of peer support	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Real knowledge of situation• Real community connections• Credibility & understanding• Builds sense of capacity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Networks can be poor where there is no facilitation• May also be somewhat subjective
3. Using community supports	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Knowledge of community• Funded from mainstream• Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Support may be tightly rationed
4. Working with support services	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Incentive to offer attractive and responsive support• Knowledge of support systems• Possible experience of different solutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Relatively expensive - but often funded 'already' to do this work• Bias towards their own services
5. Taking professional advice	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Possible knowledge of other support solutions• Possibly relevant expert knowledge• Objectivity	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Low community focus• Low natural commitment• Low knowledge of individual

Table 1. Strengths and Weaknesses of Different Support Options



4. Financing the new support system

In our view it is vital that local authorities get real about setting and controlling the infrastructure costs for social care. It is already hard to justify the level of spending on infrastructure within the current system. To make this clear we can look at the average Individual Budget.

We know that the average budget is about £10,000 per year.²⁰ However typical management costs for any service provider will be at least 20% (all of which will come from within that budget). So we can split the Individual Budget into £8,000 for direct support and £2,000 for management. In addition Department of Health data indicates that the total spend on care management is £1.6 billion.²¹ This gives a further figure of approximately £1,600 per person. In addition each local community spends money on a range of community organisations and, to some small degree, may fund peer support and information and advice.²²

This means that only 56% of the identified funding is for direct support (see Figure 6). This calculation excludes the funding which is located within the deeper infrastructure of local government (management, personnel, finance etc.) and the costs of regulators and the central government bureaucracy:

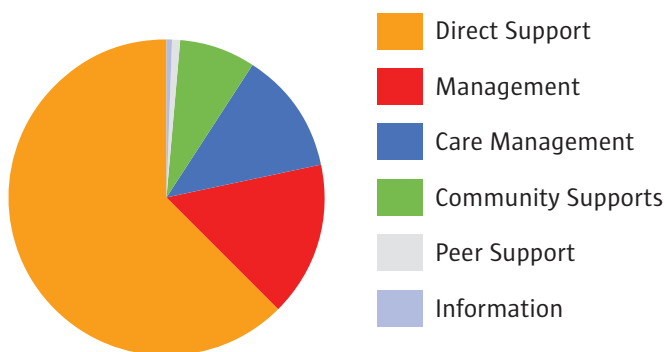


Figure 6. Distribution of Funding for an Individual Budget

However a community-based approach would provide a way of both increasing the quality of support that people receive and of reducing costs. For example, if there were some cuts in

the amount of time social workers had to spend on gathering assessment information then these savings could be reinvested both in up-stream interventions (increasing empowerment, good information and peer support) and also converted into increased funds for Individual Budgets themselves.²³

On the other hand, if the funding committed to professional advice (whether that be care management or Independent Professional Brokerage) were to grow then it would almost inevitably grow at the expense of the direct support element of the Individual Budget. This would add to the overall infrastructure costs within social care.

5. Financing Independent Professional Brokers

There is also one other important matter of detail to consider here. Independent Professional Brokers are, by definition, only providing set-up support. That is, their role is limited to planning and organising support, but their role ends once the support service begins. There is then an important question to consider of whether such set-up costs are to be treated as the responsibility of the individual and should be paid out of their Individual Budget or whether they should be treated as the responsibility of the local authority.

One of the critical principles of Self-Directed Support has been flexibility - that an individual can spend their funding as they see fit (subject to some very limited restrictions). So it could be argued that it is reasonable for someone to spend money on brokerage 'retrospectively' - that is to pay someone for the work they did in the past to set up their service. However, as the Individual Budget is meant to pay for support services going forward, not backwards, this

does seem peculiar. Surely, as a general rule, it would be inappropriate for someone to be paying for this kind of support out of their Individual Budget.



Rather it would make more sense to give the local authorities the responsibility of funding set-up cost, when they are really necessary. In most cases the need for *extra* set-up funding would not arise:

- Citizens and families would organise the set-up of their support using their own time and energy.
- Peer support would be freely given or facilitated and funded through some locally coordinated system.
- Community supports would be funded to provide support as part of their local contracts.

- Support services would provide support for free and hope to pick up enough work to justify this up-front investment of time and effort.

The exception would be when people do need additional professional advice. In this case it will be the local authority who will provide that support from within their own in-house services (e.g. their care managers or social workers) or they will contract for such support (e.g. Independent Professional Brokers or others). This seems a more appropriate way of funding such professional advice.

10 Suggestions for Action

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1. Cap current infrastructure costs

The most important first step in developing a new infrastructure for social care is to make a real commitment to cap the current level of infrastructure spending. The danger of adding more infrastructure costs to the current system are enormous. To take this approach is to ask local authorities to face the same challenge that is asked of disabled people and older people - to make the best use of limited resources.

The evidence suggests that, if managed well, the infrastructure costs for Self-Directed Support could be lower than those in the current system. Any savings could then be returned back to the community - in particular to people who are currently excluded from support by eligibility thresholds or current charging regimes. But this shift of resources away from infrastructure and towards people and families will require innovation, leadership and self-discipline.

2. Make your systems easy to navigate

Local authorities must challenge themselves to keep their own systems simple and easy-to-use. The early experiments in Self-Directed Support depended upon giving people simple and clear information about their budget and a clear outline of what needed to be in a support plan. Many people, as long as they are encouraged, can do this planning with very little support.

It is all too easy to underestimate the potential and benefit of citizens and families doing things for themselves. It will be particularly important for local leaders to listen to local citizens and to hear how they experience the real journey of Self-Directed Support in order to learn how to improve our systems. Less, is very often, more.

One local authority that has focused on this task well is East Ridings of Yorkshire, where the support planning framework has been refined and simplified to make it even easier for people to develop their own support plan - with or without support.



3. Create an information network

It is vital to develop a broad and far-reaching information network that reaches out across the whole community. This will require clear leadership within local authorities for information management and on-going market research to test where and how they are reaching people.

We constantly under-estimate the power of information. Books like *Keys to Citizenship*, *But I Don't Want Elder Care* or *The Essential Family Guide* are much less expensive than the cost of professional time - equivalent to 30 minutes of professional support (or the cost of a typical journey) and yet they can offer far more detailed expertise and may have a much longer lasting impact.²⁴

Local authorities will want to pay particular attention to the use of the internet in providing low cost, high quality information. Initiatives like *Shop4Support*, which create a meaningful market place for service providers are natural and self-reinforcing avenues for increasing the wealth of knowledge available. Even when people lack direct internet access themselves these systems are likely to be the final source of information that is used by their family, friends or other community services.

Another example of good practice is provided by *Help and Care* in Bournemouth, who offer a range of supports to older people including volunteers and an information service. The information service is consistently updated and reviewed by volunteers who have experience of local services and provides handy fact sheets for older people who are being discharged from hospital following ill health. The information service, supported by *Help and Care* workers and volunteers, offers people the chance to think about their own resources and the supports already available in the community. This simple service has significantly reduced the rate of referrals to care management and it gives us an idea of how an effective, good information service can be vital to people and their families.

4. Create an inclusive learning environment

Many people do not know how to cook properly - but as a society we do not pay for people to have a personal chef to cook for them. Instead we try and teach and encourage people to cook for themselves. Think of the different approaches to learning promoted by Jamie Oliver: television, magazine, training courses, high street shops, social action etc.

In the same way, it is time to re-visit training and education within social care. Currently training is primarily focused on professional staff. This is despite the fact that most care and support is provided by family and friends. Instead we could be training and educating people *together* and, in particular, getting people to share their expertise: bringing together the perspectives of citizens and families with the perspectives of professionals.

This should be an area for immediate action. Local authorities, service providers and community organisations all host training for their own workforce. By simply ring-fencing some places on all training courses for disabled people, older people and their families we could extend access to training and create opportunities for networking and sharing of experiences.

5. Promote self-advocacy & peer support

Rightly, local authorities have placed increasing emphasis on supporting self-advocacy and 'user-led' organisations. In fact the development of a community-based support structure becomes an ideal opportunity for taking these initiatives further - working with people with disabilities and older people to ensure that they get the chance to strengthen each other, to build confidence, to share experiences and to offer support.

One challenge for local authorities is to try and encourage this in a way that does not mimic the weaknesses of traditional systems. There is a vast untapped resource of willing, able and gifted people who just need to be

asked to offer a bit of help to each other. This does not require the development of new bureaucratic organisations - instead we need to tap into people's willingness to provide some voluntary support. Often people feel that being able to help someone else is actually a natural and appropriate way of saying thank you for the help that they received when they needed it.

Again this could happen now, asking people and their families to share their support plans with other families can often make the process so much easier for people – to actually see how others have used their budget. A chat with someone who knows, understands and has experience of directing their support is invaluable. There are a wealth of examples of peer support across the country including *Lancashire Peer Support Service* who have supported many people to direct their own support and are now in the process of exploring a model which will enable long term sustainability.

6. Welcome family support

It will also be important to overcome and challenge some of the professional prejudices against families. Too often families are treated as untrustworthy and unreliable, and they are discouraged from advocating for those they love. This is despite the fact that, as a society, we are completely reliant upon families for the vast majority of care and support for disabled people and older people. This does not mean ignoring those situations where families are acting inappropriately. But it does mean supporting and respecting families.

7. Challenge community & advocacy services

It is natural that many good organisations will come forward to seek funding in order to help provide support to people using Self-Directed Support. But these demands should be resisted. Instead organisations should be challenged to think about how they will *change* their current services.

If advocacy is about helping people to get the best for themselves then, in the new system, advocates will be helping people plan and organise support when people need that kind of help. It does not make sense to see community organisations getting more resources unless they can also demonstrate that they can deliver that support more efficiently than care managers or support services.

Some local areas have now begun to scope their local communities and identify the range and diversity of the approaches that are already available in their communities. This is the vital first step we must take before investing in new services and could easily begin immediately. *Barnsley's Brokerage Hub* has been one innovative way of pulling a range of community organisations and service providers together to explore how to promote community-based support.

8. Encourage providers to market directly

The 1990 'reforms' have led to an unhealthy level of suspicion between 'purchasers' and 'providers' of services. This may explain the very low level of engagement of service providers in the development of Self-Directed Support. This is a serious problem, and if it continues it will drive up costs and reduce quality. One local authority that has not made this mistake is *Lancashire County Council* where work led by Kim Haworth has demonstrated the kind of positive approach to service providers that will both drive up quality and control costs.²⁵ Competent service provision must be based upon the ability to 'market' services to people who use them. And 'market' does not just mean 'sell'. More importantly it means getting to know people, understanding their needs and designing suitable services with them.

It is important that local authorities reinforce the right of the individual to choose their provider and to change their minds and give notice on their current service provider. But all the evidence to date suggests that individuals and families are already better able to negotiate the services that they need.



Separating individuals from service providers is a recipe for waste and inefficiency. It is however important that local authorities work closely with providers to enable them to take on this new role.

9. Free social workers from bureaucracy

One of the most difficult challenges for local authorities is to reorganise their own social work services. This will be particularly difficult because local authorities have been forced, since the 1990s, to work to regulatory systems which are increasingly out of date and which do not measure the key variables in the new system. Moreover these systems have tended to lock social workers into an overly bureaucratic pattern of support - focused more on completing the right paperwork at the right time - focused less on offering timely support to those who really need it.

An improved model will focus social work effort on those who really need it: for most people this will mean less support (because their support will come further upstream, as we have argued above), but an important minority will need much more intensive and personalised support from their social worker. There are already many examples of social workers supporting people to design good supports and

to manage these supports in the new system of Self-Directed Support.

10. Resist Independent Professional Brokerage

It is possible to argue that, however well the community-support system is organised, there may be times when it is necessary to purchase an independent professional to plan and organise a support service. If we don't support and reinvest in the community approaches outlined above, the greater the demand will be for a professional solution. We understand that Independent Professional Brokers may offer a solution when no other system of support seems adequate. However local authorities must be self-critical and thoughtful; if they start to rely upon Independent Professional Brokerage then this possibly indicates a weakness in their local systems.

Moreover it is important for local authorities to understand that where people access this support they should not have to pay for this from their own Individual Budget. It is probably most appropriate if any commissioning of Independent Professional Brokers is left to the local authority itself. For it is the local authority, not the person, who is responsible for funding this support, in the same way as it currently funds its social work team.

Conclusion - should we ban brokerage?

This paper posed the question of whether we should ban brokerage. As the paper has developed we hope that it has become clear that the question needs to be unpicked if it is going to be answered correctly. So to conclude let us return to the possible meanings of the question and our answers to those questions:

Should we ban the broad function of brokerage? No - not only should we not ban brokerage but we need to openly explore, test and develop any form of brokerage that seems likely to better promote citizenship and genuine Self-Directed Support. This does not mean we should increase spending on brokerage - but we must try and make better use of the current level of investment on brokerage - broadly defined.

Should we ban Independent Professional Brokerage? No - but we would be wise to

be circumspect about its benefits and the arguments presented to promote it. It seems one of the least promising approaches to brokerage and people using Individual Budgets should not be encouraged to spend their own money on it.

Should we ban the use of the word 'brokerage'?

No - any attempt to dictate how terms are used is likely to fail. However we must all try and use these terms with more precision if we are to avoid confusion and bad practice.

Over the next few months Paradigm (with support from the Centre for Welfare Reform) will be testing out these ideas with the Yorkshire & Humber Region. In the process we hope both to strengthen our understanding of some of the many forms of support that are necessary and to further develop the community-based support system described above.

Notes

1. An excellent overview of the history of Independent Living is provided in **No Pity** by Joseph P. Shapiro (Times, 1993)
2. See **A Report on In Control's First Phase 2003-2005** by Poll et al. (In Control Publications, 2006).
3. See **Putting People First** (2007)
4. In fact during the first phase of testing of Self-Directed Support Independent Professional Brokerage was tested in Essex. However there were enormous difficulties in making progress and by the end of the first phase Essex's strategy had proved to be the least successful of the six local authorities with only 6 people managing their own budget. See **Essex Brokerage Pilot – Report on Research Evaluation** by Essex Social Care Research Team (Essex County Council, 2005)
5. See **Support Brokerage Discussion Paper** by Simon Duffy (In Control Publications, 2004): "In Control will define support brokerage as the function of helping people organise any help that they need. This means that the function of brokerage includes, but is greater than the activities of support brokers."
6. See **Budget Minder** at www.embracewiganandleigh.org.uk. This model of brokerage offers great value to people who don't want to manage their own support. In the authors' view this is a sensible model which will make good sense for an important minority of people needing support.
7. See **Defining The Role of the Independent Support Broker** published by the NDT.
8. John O'Brien, from private correspondence.
9. Also, as Malcolm Thomas has pointed out, a 'broker' is actually a mere intermediary - owing primary obligation to neither buyer or seller. Advocates of brokerage are really promoting the idea of an 'agent' which is a distinct concept. A further fear in any such system is that the broker will actually be influenced by the seller to promote one service or product over another. The creation of such intermediaries does not actually remove the risk of mis-selling.
10. See **Economics of Self-Directed Support** by Simon Duffy (In Control Publications, 2006) and also www.johnseelybrown.com for an exploration of the concept of Pull Economics.
11. State funding in the US is very significant, however the complex insurance-based system which is used to deploy that funding (with bureaucracy at the level of the Federal government, state and county) is extraordinarily wasteful. In the UK we are fortunate to have much more flexibility in our funding systems and local authorities are currently free to set the level of bureaucracy in the system.
12. See **Individual Service Design** by Simon Duffy (In Control Publications, 2007)
13. See **Good Practice in Support Planning and Brokerage** by Paradigm (Department of Health)
14. It is striking to note, for example, that when brokers are built into local systems in the US this has not always led to reductions in care management. Disabled people have then to pay for their broker and their care manager.
15. Paradigm have been developing a more inclusive approach through its national programme **Brokerage for Change**. Many different people were supported to develop skills in designing good support. For example, Choice Support have now begun to offer free brokerage support to the wider community.
16. For example, see **A Report on In Control's Second Phase** (ed. Poll & Duffy) for data and discussion. See in particular the thoughtful chapter written by Jonathan Senker. This report contains the only comparative data that we have been able to find so far on different models of support within the framework of Self-Directed Support. In developing this discussion paper the authors did seek further evidence for the relative effectiveness of Independent Professional Brokerage, but without success.
17. Note that we are using Simon Duffy's Version 2 model of Self-Directed Support in this paper. This introduces some small improvements over the model he published at In Control in 2003.
18. It is worth repeating that the argument which is presented by advocates of Independent Professional Brokerage that social workers cannot be trusted to plan for disabled people or older people is faulty. The argument is that, as employees of the local authority, they have a conflict of interest with the person they are supporting because they also need to ration limited resources. There are several flaws in this argument (a) actual behaviour does not bear this out - often care managers do advocate for more resources for people (b) rationing is a reality in any system and even Independent Professional Brokers will find that they must deal with the constraints this creates (c) with Individual Budgets the rationing process becomes more objective and the budget is not set through the planning process but at the initial assessment.
19. These figures are based on looking at different models of good practice - an integrated approach like this is not in use currently. It would be ideal if some local authorities were willing to start exploring a community-based approach and would share their findings. Note also that some people will get more than one form of support - so the people whose 'primary support' ends up down-stream (say with a service provider) will still benefit from interventions upstream (say a peer support system that actually provides some peer support for everyone.)
20. See **IBSEN Report**, 2008
21. These figures from **Personal Social Services Expenditure and Unit Costs: England: 2004-2005** (Department of Health) where the cost of assessment and care management for social care is cited as £1.6 billion. Given that there are approximately 1 million people using services this a per capita figure £1,600.
22. These figures are conservative estimates based upon the figures within the report **Towards a Common Cause – 'A Compact for Care' - Inspection of Local Authority Social Services and Voluntary Sector Working Relationships** by Social Services Inspectorate (2000).
23. See **What do Care Managers Do?** by Alison Weinberg et al. in the (British Journal of Social Work, 2003) and **Care Management and Self-Directed Support** by Simon Duffy (Journal of Integrated Care, 2007)
24. See **Keys to Citizenship** by Simon Duffy (Paradigm, 2006), **The Essential Family Guide** by Caroline Tomlinson (In Control Publications, 2007) and **But I Don't Want Elder Care** by Terry Lynch (Legal Center, Denver, 2008)
25. See **Self-Directed Support in Lancashire** by Kim Haworth (In Control Publications, 2008)



Centre for Welfare Reform

The Centre for Welfare Reform is an independent research and development network. Its aim is to transform the current welfare state into one that supports citizenship, family & community. It was founded by Simon Duffy and will be officially launched in 2010.

Its primary areas of focus are:

Tax-benefit reform - building a fair and transparent system of entitlements and contributions

Community development - promoting a new relationship between government and civil society

Personalised education - supporting the development of effective education and family responsibility

Self-Directed Support - creating an integrated model of personalised support for health and social care

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