

Cheshire West & Chester Council

Produced by the Research, Intelligence and Consultation Team

Key Findings

Personal Budgets Survey

December 2010



Over the last 3 years, the Department of Health has been working to transform Adult Social Care in relation to the personalisation of services. Within Cheshire West and Chester Council, personal budgets have been in place for just over a year and it is an opportune time to review how personal budgets have been implemented and how satisfied service users are with the process. A self completion questionnaire was used and 203 completed questionnaires were returned to us (the response rate was 31%). A full copy of the report is available at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/researchpublications.

Definition of a personal budget

A personal budget is the amount of social care funding to meet personalised outcomes and eligible needs. A person can take it as cash through the well regulated Direct Payment Scheme, or the Council can arrange services direct, or people can have a mix of both.

The Personal Budget Questionnaire

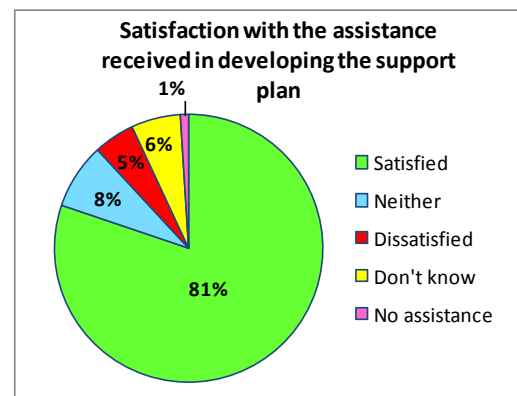
A short questionnaire was developed that looked at:

- the information clients received prior to obtaining a personal budget
- how they found the assessment process
- what involvement they had and what help they had received to develop their support plan
- how they found the process of arranging support
- what impact personal budgets has had on their lives.

The questionnaire was developed with the input of a local group called LINKs to look at the questions to ensure they were clear, relevant and easy to complete.

Agreeing your personal budget

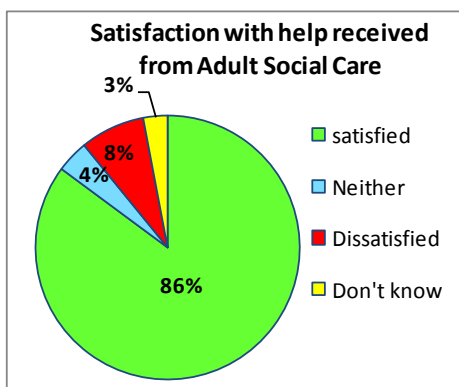
- Two out of three of those who responded had their personal budget paid directly into their bank account as a direct payment.
- The majority of respondents felt fully involved in their assessment and in developing their support plan and over three quarters were satisfied with the development of their support plan.



- Three quarters of those who responded were satisfied with the assistance received in developing their support plan.
- Two out of three respondents thought that the development of their support plan was a positive experience.

Arranging your support

- Three quarters of those who completed their questionnaire were satisfied with the time taken from completing their joint assessment to being able to access their personal budget.
- The main reason for respondent's dissatisfaction with the time taken was that in some instances, it took a long time to setup or transfer their budget.
- The majority of those who responded felt that they were getting all of the support set out in their support plan.
- Over three quarters of those who completed the questionnaire were satisfied with the help they have received from Cheshire West and Chester Council's Adult Social Care.



- Respondents found it easiest to get the support that they need but less easy to find out from Adult Social Care about

services that might help them. About a quarter found it difficult to find information and advice about benefits that are available to them.

The impact of personal budgets on peoples lives

- The top 3 uses of a personal budget are to hire a Personal Assistant, to have help in the house and to have help with personal care.
- Over half of respondents said that their quality of life, respect from those who support them and having choice and control has improved since having a personal budget.

	Improved	Stayed the same	Got worse
Quality of life	58%	32%	10%
Respect from those who support you	56%	44%	1%
Choice and control over your life	55%	39%	6%
Feeling safe	51%	46%	4%
Social and leisure opportunities	44%	47%	10%
Relationship with family and friends	43%	55%	2%
Your health	31%	48%	22%
Taking part in your local community	25%	64%	11%
Having paid work (those in work)	56%	44%	0%

Personal Budget Conclusions

Overall, people's experience of personal budgets was positive, as was the impact on their lives.

- Those who responded liked that personal budgets gave them choice, flexibility, control, improved their quality of life and took pressure off their family members.

'I have control over what I do and the services I choose to link into.'

- They disliked the paperwork and management of personal budgets, the restrictions on how they could be spent and needed more information on how they can be used.

'Complication of keeping accounts and records'

- Respondents would like to see guidelines produced on what personal budgets can be used for and more support with paperwork.

'I would like to know exactly what I can spend my direct payments on'

- There were differences in user experience of personal budgets. Those with a learning disability were less satisfied with their involvement in developing their support plan, in getting the support set out and with information and advice.

What we will do

The responses to the survey are invaluable in helping the Council plan improvements to the personal budget experience for people. These are some of the improvements we are already progressing:

- Producing a new 'Fact Sheet' giving clear guidance on what a personal budget taken as a direct payment can be used for.
- Resources have already been put into staff teams so that all people can now expect an annual review.
- There is investment being made in back office systems so that direct payments will work more quickly and smoothly for

people – these new systems should go live in the summer.

- We will review how much direct payment paperwork is actually required to see if we can reduce it. We are also looking at whether a pre-loaded payment card will help further.
- We are developing use of a single contact number where all queries and concerns about peoples care and their direct payment monies can be dealt with.
- We will support our staff to get better at explaining about personal budgets and giving good general and benefit information, so people can have real choice over their support.

Further Information

- A full copy of the report is available at www.cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk/researchpublications
- For further information please contact Helen Pickin (Research Officer) 01244 977148 or Beverley Wilson (Research, Intelligence & Consultation Manager) 01244 972176.
- Alternatively, you can also send an email research@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk



Accessing Cheshire West and Chester Council information and services

Council information is also available in Audio, Braille and Large Print formats. If you would like a copy in any of these formats or in another language, please email us at equalities@cheshirewestandchester.gov.uk

We are also able to provide a British Sign Language (BSL) interpreter to support customers with accessing Council services.

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and Chester