

“we identify
new and
innovative
types of
working”

**increasing choice; mapping
the journey for brokerage**

working towards user-led brokerage

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introduction

increasing choice: mapping the journey

To support the Adult Social Care Workforce strategy¹, Skills for Care's 'New Types of Worker' programme has been considering the impact of role redesign within transformed services. In the context of self-directed care services and a new 'customer journey' within a transformed operating model of procurement and care management, brokerage presents a new role to the sector which in turn identifies potential skill gaps and development and training needs particularly in the context of a 'personalised' workforce development and commissioning strategy.

To continue this discussion, and to assist local authorities, social care providers, user-led organisations and individual budget holders consider possible options for improving and developing the 'customer journey', the Coalition for Independent Living (CIL) were commissioned by Skills for Care in London to develop two documents. This, the second, provides the afore-mentioned parties with a detailed overview of the organisational hurdles CIL have overcome in developing their ideas, their model of brokerage, core training and the overall ethos. The first document, 'learn about the challenges faced in becoming an independent broker', takes a personal perspective from the users instrumental in the development of both the training and operational model.

Coalition for Independent Living (CIL) Hub has developed a model to deliver brokerage and self-directed support services in a way that significantly simplifies procedures for both users and brokers. The model was developed via a process of co-production with disabled people and Westminster Action Network on Disability (WAND – a user-led organisation based in Westminster).

This document outlines the processes and rationale for the development of the CIL Hub. It describes CIL's starting point as an organisation, sets out the challenges that were overcome, and also argues for a new praxis of brokerage which is user-led but with clear recognition of the role for professionals within a reformed health and social care context.

context and background

WAND began as a local user-led disability organisation in Westminster. Having made the decision to remain a grass roots organisation, its main activities focussed on information, advocacy and user engagement. While many other user-led organisations moved into service delivery either through choice or by necessity WAND felt strongly that this would detract from their primary role of representing users.

Some service providers struggled with empowering the users to direct the service, as this might encroach on management function and costs. This could result in the reduction of choice and in some cases, making users over dependent, institutionalised and passive recipients.

However, the demands of some contracts were too burdensome for users to truly control and direct, and it was realised that the *necessary skills* to run and manage contracts, would require development.

Overall, service users expressed little or no interest in running services, although they did express interest in providing more influence in service governance and design.

Clearly, one size does not fit all and the cycle of service delivery, re-provision and tendering has not empowered individuals. While direct payments are enabling some users to have more choice and control over the care received many individuals continue to rely on traditional service delivery for community support and access.

Breaking this cycle and establishing clear pathways towards genuine empowerment for individual users to self-direct became the primary goal; a new model began to emerge. CIL was established specifically to address the issue of how capacity can be brought to each individual to self-direct. It faced a number of challenges in the process of investigating what a genuine user-led brokerage model would look like, outlined on page 2.

1. http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/documents/digitalasset/dh_098494.pdf

the challenges & the brokerage gap

the challenges

- Bottom up change via user-led local organisations in partnership with councils
- Citizenship model and access to broader universal services
- Absence of a standard definition of brokerage (including quality standards)
- A need to 'marry' national standards with local governance and involvement
- The need for independent brokers without conflicts of interest (while recognising the need to work collaboratively to share information and standards)
- The challenge of block contracts within an individually funded system
- Over complicated systems for users managing budgets from various sources

To help tackle these challenges and provide pathways for individuals to exercise better choice and control and to develop an understanding around what brokerage entails, WAND participated in a local Individual Budget Pilot. Participation in the pilot intended to establish an action research approach that would look specifically at tackling these challenges.

Maintaining the independence of WAND's advocacy provision during the pilot was important and as such the disabled participants determined what role, if any, the advocates should play throughout the pilot.

It was agreed that the advocates should assist with the self assessment stage that identified need. The council produced a sophisticated resource allocation tool which was married with the self assessment questionnaire to provide indicative budgets.

To demonstrate the value of advocacy support, disabled people were split into two groups. As a control, one group was provided with advocacy support in the completion of the self assessment and the other group was asked to do the self assessment on their own. Results found that those who had not received support had underestimated their needs, therefore concluding that for genuine self assessment to take place users would require support and would benefit from training. Advocacy could enable this gradual transfer of responsibility from professional to user. It was however, appreciated that due to statutory safeguarding responsibilities the needs assessment would be supported by social workers and advocates via co-production techniques with the user.

the brokerage gap

There is the potential of a 'brokerage gap' in anticipating the next phase of the pilot with demand for both support planning and ongoing brokerage.

CIL participated in externally commissioned brokerage training from a variety of organisations with social care professionals and when evaluated, the feedback indicated that it lacked practice based learning opportunities. For instance, the disabled people involved had not previously participated in writing and developing plans, it typically being an activity undertaken by social care professionals.

The evaluation additionally identified a gap in professionals making particular assumptions about individual understanding. It identified a gap in professionals' understanding and their *expectations of disabled people* on an individual budget and that there was a need to develop an approach to bridge this gap.

Doing so would mean offering both theoretical and practice based opportunities to become brokers and develop the service.

links with information and advocacy

National individual budget pilots provided feedback on a number of approaches to brokerage, however the actual approach remained intangible. It was argued that brokerage could be seen in layers and that the activities could be carried out in equal measure by any or all of the groups illustrated in Figure 1. CIL were keen to test these assertions locally with disabled people.

Fig 1. layers of brokerage



links with information and advocacy

It is the view of CIL that effective support brokerage has access to and is linked into networks and services where information and advocacy are readily accessible as part of an overall package of support.

The pilot demonstrated that information and advocacy emerge from the same value base as brokerage, or rather one that promotes the path towards self-determination and social inclusion. Equally, it is important to note that information and advocacy are seen within the context of basic rights. This in turn infers that seeking out independent and impartial information and advocacy is integral to preserving the independence of support brokerage when it is viewed as a *facilitative exercise*.

It has been suggested that the three elements of information, advocacy and brokerage can be combined into one function; however, advocates should play a distinct role to that of the broker. Advocacy is a vital support service for disabled people to utilise when addressing any issues with a service provider. Essentially an advocate is deployed to represent and/or negotiate the view of the client and as such may be called upon if a client has an issue with the brokerage service they are receiving.

Information and resource gathering can and should be carried out by support brokers however, it is important that the information gathered and shared is within the context of support planning, advice giving and providing options which fall within the scope of support brokerage. Support brokerage should endeavour to be facilitative, not directional in practice. It can demonstrate objectivity by seeking independent advocacy and information to enrich the planning process. This approach leads to better inter-agency collaboration and grounds support brokerage functions within a professional context and one of quality assurance and ongoing improvement.

challenging the current praxis

challenging the current praxis

approaches to support brokerage

In social care, brokerage is grounded in a person-centred approach. Ideally it should be working towards enabling individuals to carry out the function of support brokerage for themselves.

In the context of transformation, support brokerage is a new concept as outlined in Putting People First². It's important though to realise that it is not a means to an end in achieving personalised support. Unless it eventually moves from traditional organisational structures to individuals, personalisation, in the spirit of self-direct care, may not actually occur.

Adding an additional layer of process, be it within, or external to, statutory services may not assist in redressing the power balance between traditional organisations and the end users.

The capacity, knowledge and expertise should shift from local authorities to the third sector. CIL has defined a sliding scale to illustrate this (Figure 2) and would assert that the development of support brokerage should move towards the dicleft, rather than the right end, of the scale below.

power shift

Support brokerage can be carried out by a number of individuals:

- The individual themselves/family or friends
- Independent peer brokers
- User-led organisations
- Voluntary sector organisations
- Paid staff operating within a traditional setting

One of the challenges was to facilitate a shift of power from organisational control towards those in receipt of individual budgets. Having developed the training it would have been easy to recruit and train one or two individuals to act as brokers within organisations, however, it was not clear how this would empower individuals to self direct or provide genuine choice to individuals about who would broker for them if needed. It is important that the individual budget holders are provided with a choice of brokerage service; CIL offers this choice, providing disabled people with both the means to become a broker, or to choose from a selection of brokers should they prefer to purchase the service.

This led to a re-working of the 'user-led' definition within the context of self directed care.

The 'self' being referred to within the SDS context is not a 'user-led organisation' but the *individual who is in receipt of the package or budget*. Therefore empowering the individual to manage their own 'individualised package' is critical, having total choice and control over who their broker is. As such, a mechanism which removes this active choice via traditional procurement practice is therefore not user-led in terms of optimising choice and thus limited in its scope of being able to offer a personalised service.

our voice our choice

Those participating in the individual budget pilot expressed a number of issues:

- The issue of brokerage capacity & lack of choice
- Determining how to practically give users active choice over a broker
- Empowering individual users to self direct
- Empowering brokers to be independent
- Complicated and cumbersome systems for managing different pots of funding

The challenge set by the users was to devise a new way of working which would enable them to have choice and control over their brokers.

self-directed support market

The physical social care 'marketplace' has traditionally developed within the medical model of disability. The primary reason for this is the funding that would enable innovation has remained within health and social care infrastructure and it is unsurprising that brokers faced no issues in finding equipment such as aids and adaptations or 'assistive technologies'.

Brokers are limited in choice given the fewer services which truly embrace the social model of disability. Whilst there is an attempt to create a self directed

'e-market' alongside traditional service development, most users want and use local, more tangible services and desire improved access to mainstream services. In addition there are potential challenges with limited safeguards in place to protect and advise users of the quality of a given product or service. Introducing 'virtual shopping' into this mix could limit choice and leave users as passive consumers.

development of iPlanner (web-based portal)

A web-based services portal, named the iPlanner, has been developed to link brokers with service providers and, potentially, the wider network of services. Brokers can indicate their client's needs via the portal and providers can 'apply to do the job'. iPlanner enables brokers to have access to local goods and services. This will be a major function in the community hubs.

contracts, procurement and commissioning

As has already been described, the contract and commissioning cycle has traditionally been service-led with users, on occasions, playing a consultative role. Within the current context of social care, funding is typically directed towards the traditional service provider via block and spot tendering processes. This methodology has been duplicated in a limited way within the brokerage market.

This transfer of power from the statutory sector to provider organisations threatens independent brokerage and in doing so potentially reduces choice and control for users. CIL believes that older people are particularly at risk of having limited choice as many older peoples organisations who may bid to provide brokerage, also offer other more typical services thereby reducing the potential of changing the 'dependency cycle' whilst possibly limiting the development of new service models which emerge in response to choice and control being exercised.

Fig 2. the brokerage pathway



2. http://www.dh.gov.uk/prod_consum_dh/groups/dh_digitalassets/@dh/@en/documents/digitalasset/dh_081119.pdf

practical solutions to a complex problem

The challenge for commissioners is that many procurement practices value capacity, cost and structure over 'independence', 'customer choice' and 'user-led' initiative. In the design of a new commissioning framework, the user is often excluded in the development and user choice may not therefore be reflected in the end product or range of commissioned options.

overcoming this challenge – a user-led commissioning model

Working outside the traditional commissioning model is challenging for most organisations. In order to achieve genuine independent user-led brokerage, the move incrementally towards providing finance directly to the individual user in order to commission brokerage and therefore be assisted through brokerage to procure and commission bespoke services, will in turn promote a more organic development through market response.

CIL anticipate that independent brokers could act as a conduit between the market and the individual. Facilitating pathways to independence and ensuring that this happens is part of the overall strategy to empower users. Training and supporting users to broker and self direct is the first step towards empowering individuals with skills and experience to share with others, enhance communities and collectively achieve the vision outlined in Putting People First.

Together with Westminster City Council, CIL have developed a model of commissioning which is user-led and outcome focussed (which was awarded Beacon status).

practical solutions to a complex problem

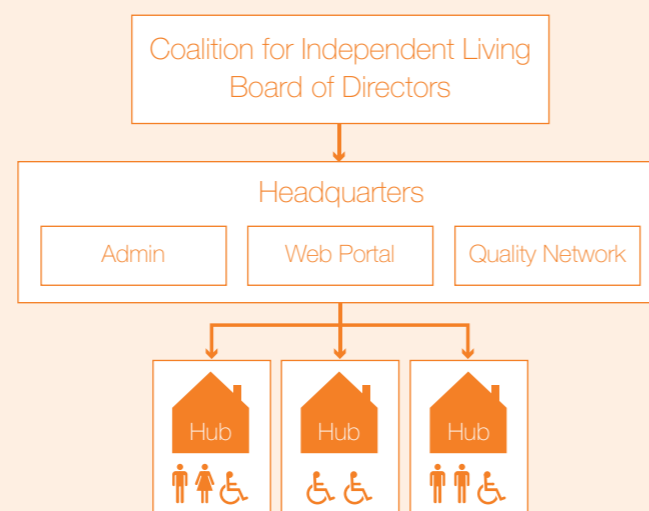
setting up coalition for independent living hub

The CIL Hub is, in essence, an infrastructure organisation that supports the development of brokerage. It facilitates the development of local independent hubs which are then led and managed by brokers. The brokers are supported to establish self-employed status under an accredited CIL infrastructure. CIL provides accredited training, a web portal, quality networks and professional development opportunities through an action learning approach.

In addition, CIL provides a number of ancillary services that allows users to have a choice in their broker and a number of opportunities to self direct through enterprise development.

The Hub is based on a franchise model and provides brokers with the opportunity to establish a franchise within their locality. The centralised function provides products and services to each franchise under an agency agreement. Independent brokers are then enabled to trade as associate brokers within each hub.

Fig 3. Coalition for Independent Living Hub structure



brokerage capacity & giving users an active choice of broker

brokerage capacity

increasing independent user-led brokerage and workforce development

Bridging the gap between social care and introducing a new role that can be shared by both social care professionals and disabled people in genuine partnership was the focus of developing the support plan brokerage training.

CIL have developed an externally validated course through their partnership with the Open College Network. The content was developed by disabled people who self-direct and establishes a knowledge base of both theoretical and practical skills required to self direct and to be a broker.

For further information on the training, refer to document 1 (learn about the challenges faced in becoming an independent broker) or contact CIL.

developing skills

By providing this training, CIL hope to increase brokerage capacity and thereby give users more choice over who assists them with self-direct support.

The course has been designed to be provided to individuals interested in qualifying as a broker. The mission is to provide the course to users of self-direct support so that they may act as brokers. By supporting the capacity of brokerage through training it is hoped to develop the role and collective codes of practice for brokerage.

giving users an active choice of broker

iPlanner – web-based portal

Training is only one element in developing the capacity of brokerage. It is important that once brokers have successfully completed the course, there is a mechanism by which they can be chosen to perform the role.

In response to this requirement a web-based portal (named iPlanner) was developed by both users and trained brokers. It allows users to choose their broker, and facilitates users and brokers to communicate their wishes to the funding authority. The portal additionally allows for users to submit support plans online to social services and other funders.

Social Services and other funding bodies are also given a provision within the portal to communicate with users and brokers about the individual budget and associated plans.

Users expressed the importance of having a 'safe' way in which to select their broker and gain assurance that the brokers were competent and they would be protected from potential exploitation and/or abuse.

empowering brokers to be independent

empowering brokers to be independent

Both users and brokers had identified that they wanted to be genuinely independent. Users pointed out that they had been referred for brokerage through third sector agencies but had felt that this type of brokerage lacked objectivity as the brokers were employed directly by the organisations. This had caused anxiety amongst users who wanted brokers to be *accountable to them* and not the organisations they worked for. Both brokers and users felt that working within an organisational framework bore with it, conflicts of interests.

Empowering brokers to be independent was challenging as establishing a new way of working which did not rely on direct employment arrangements was technically difficult. In addition, being able to assure quality via agreed common standards without employing them directly, presented further concerns.

Through legal consultation, a methodology was established by which brokers could be independent whilst holding them accountable to standards which were written and developed by disabled people. This involved establishing 'associate broker' contracts that allows brokers to set up as independent companies or as a sole trader with CIL support while signing up to the standards.

By working with the business community, CIL was able to provide a number of ancillary services to associate brokers to enable them to broker with confidence.

empowering users to self-direct; enterprise development

Within the hub structure users are supported to set up and manage their own companies. These companies provide a number of benefits for users:

- A meaningful structure from which to manage their Individual Budget
- A simplified process of receiving monies from different sources
- Streamlined monitoring procedures between different agencies
- Enterprise development with users providing services to other users

conclusions

The development of the hub model has seen the emergence of a genuinely co-produced infrastructure that supports the development of brokers and enables users to self-direct their support services.

outcomes for brokers

- Standardised definition of brokerage developed through training and ongoing action learning support
- A sustainable model of independent brokerage without conflict of interest
- A framework for brokers to work together to share information and develop quality standards through hubs
- Partnership working practices

outcomes for users

- Bottom up user-led approach in genuine partnership with councils
- Citizenship model and access to wider universal services
- Marrying up national standards with local governance and involvement
- Simple and sustainable self management structure

Since the training was accredited, twelve disabled people have been supported to become accredited brokers. The first ten have been enabled to establish their own companies under the franchise mechanism. Five further franchise leads to cover North West, North East, South West and South East London will contribute towards increased capacity.

There is a small but growing client base of disabled people, most of whom are managing multiple income streams within their own company.

CIL aims to build on these successes and develop further hubs within other communities, to share experience, expertise and to grow capacity on a regional level via a model of coproduction and community enterprise. Through this ideal we will see this model enable a greater number of disabled people to truly self-direct and exercise genuine choice and control over their life choices.

For further information on the work of the Coalition for Independent Living

T: 0845 604 6860
E: brokerage@c-i-l.org.uk
W: www.c-i-l.org.uk

For further information on Skills for Care and the regional programme of activities for 2010/11

Visit www.skillsforcare.org.uk and click on London

To request a copy of the free 'Transforming services; a guide to action learning' or a copy of document 1 in this 2-part series 'learn about challenges faced in becoming an independent broker' email sfc.london@skillsforcare.org.uk or download the guide and case studies via the regional website.

