

# Transforming adult social care

As part of a Government-directed initiative to change the way adult social care is provided, Merton Council is transforming its systems to give local people more control and choice over their support arrangements. This nation-wide programme is based on recommendations from the Department of Health paper, 'Putting People First', to establish a more personalised system that better meets the challenges of the future.

The Government has provided local authorities with money to make these changes, and we are working to deliver key outcomes by April 2011:

- Offer appropriate information and advice to all local people about the help that is available to help them stay independent, safe and well
- Offer people early support to help them regain their independence, so as to prevent them needing a lot more help later on
- Offer people with assessed long-term support needs a 'Personal Budget' so they can have more choice and control over the services they use
- Make social care options more flexible and responsive to user needs so people have more choice about how they spend their personal budgets

A big part of Merton's adult social care transformation is the introduction of Self Directed Support (SDS) for residents with assessed, eligible long-term needs. See below for answers to frequently asked questions about our transformation process.

## What's happening in Merton?

We are currently testing SDS with a group of social care customers and creating tools and processes to implement these new systems. In the coming months, SDS will be available to all new people with assessed eligible needs and to existing recipients of social care services, at their review.

## Why the move to Self Directed Support?

We believe people are the best experts in knowing what their needs are and how they can be met. Within the Putting People First transformation there is an emphasis on giving social care customers more control in planning and managing their support, including giving them up-front and transparent personal budgets.

With SDS people will be able to:

- tell us about their care needs
- have greater flexibility and creativity in meeting their outcomes
- be advised early on how much money will be available to spend

- choose how much financial control they have over their personal budget

## How do people apply for Self Directed Support?

SDS is the process that we will be gradually introducing for people who contact us for support or who already receive support from us. Customers will complete a self assessment questionnaire and financial assessment, from which the Council calculates the person's indicative budget allocation which they would use to meet their care needs. Then the customer will develop a personalised, outcome-focused Support Plan detailing what they want to achieve and how their indicative allocation will be used to meet their assessed needs. If the Council agrees that the Support Plan is lawful, effective and affordable the personal budget will be approved and services can be purchased.

Once a personal budget and support plan have been authorised, there will be a review at appropriate intervals to ensure needs continue to be met and individuals are achieving the outcomes they are aiming for.

## What is a Personal Budget?

If someone has ongoing care and support needs and they are eligible for financial support from the council, a personal budget will be calculated and allocated. Merton Council can only meet needs that are assessed as being either critical or substantial, in line with the Fair Access to Care Services Criteria (FACS).

A range of personal budget deployment options are being developed, which will vary according to how much financial control the customer wishes to have. Currently the individual can choose to receive their personal budget from Merton Council as a direct payment, or the council can organise the deployment of the customer's budget on their behalf.

## Who qualifies for a Personal Budget?

A person may be eligible for a personal budget if they are 18 years or above and have a learning disability, physical or sensory impairment, are frail due to their age or have mental health needs. People can apply for an assessment of their needs, or someone can apply on their behalf.

## How can people use their Personal Budgets?

Personal budget can be used flexibly but only in a way that meets a customer's agreed needs and outcomes as shown in their support plan.

Individuals will be able to purchase a wide range of services, products and support solutions.

## Who can assist in applying for a Personal Budget and making a Support Plan?

We believe people are the best experts in knowing what their needs are and how they can be met. However, an individual's family, friends or an informal carer can help think through all aspects of the person's situation to complete their personal assessment forms and support plan. Alternatively, Council staff will be available to support these individuals. It's their choice who they get to help them.

Once a personal budget has been approved, the Council will review the individual's support plan at appropriate intervals to ensure their needs continue to be met, and their outcomes are being achieved.

While these new systems aim to give individuals more independence and control, Merton Council retains its duty of care, safeguarding and risk management responsibilities. We still have a responsibility to ensure residents receive suitable services according to their needs, and safeguard vulnerable people.

## Will every person needing adult social care have to use Self Directed Support?

Everyone eligible for social care funding will be able to receive a personal budget.

How much control an individual wishes to have over their personal budget will depend on their ability and willingness to manage their budget.

## What about people who don't qualify for Self Directed Support?

A greater range of information and advice will be available in the future for all vulnerable people whether they are eligible for financial support or not. Help to identify outcomes and plan and arrange the support individuals need will be available for a range of sources across the community.

## Are Personal Budgets taxable?

No, because the money is for an individual's own support needs. People will need to show that the money (personal budget) has been used to meet the outcomes in their support plan.

## Will a Personal Budget affect an individual's benefits?

No. An individual's personal budget will not affect their benefits.

## What happens if an individual's needs change?

If there is a change in a person's needs so that they require either more or less support, they need to let us know as soon as possible. We may need to review their support with them.

## How are you keeping people informed and involved with the transformation process?

Merton Council is committed to updating current and potential social care customers as we implement these new systems in stages.

We will do this via:

- our website
- voluntary, community and user groups
- resource material and fact sheets explaining concepts such as personal budgets and direct payments

## Contact us

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