

Transcript of self-directed support video

Issac Samuels (IS): Self-directed support is a wonderful thing. I know lots of people don't even know about it. I come across people all the time who don't know that they can choose a direct payment, that they can self-direct their support. I think it enables people to not only commission support that meets their needs, it enables them to manage and control that.

Martin Walker, TLAP (MW): It's proved difficult for councils to deliver for a variety of reasons. Some places have got further than others, and we've been very encouraged that recently a good number of places are approaching TLAP saying 'can you give us some pointers to the sort of things we can do to help people experience self-directed support in a much better way.

MW: Self-directed care and support came from a movement across the world where disabled people wanted more control over the care and support that they received. That notion was taken up by the Department of Health in the early 2000s, and promoted change the way in which adult social care worked.

IS: So my experience of social care probably goes back to around 1996 and I was really unwell, I ended up in hospital there was lots of support put around me or put in place for me that just didn't work. So I had a support worker, I had supported accommodation, I had social workers, OTs... just so many people involved in my life. Many years down the line after having all these difficulties, a social worker suggested a direct payment. You could get a budget and you could find your own support that would meet your need. I thought 'I'm not sure I can do all that', but I did. And it's been life changing. For me it meant that I could employ a number of individuals but I could actually decide what kind of person I wanted to support me, what they did on a daily basis. It was flexible it could be provided in a way that made sense to me and my family....

MW: Self-directed support was always envisaged to change the way care and support should work for all. The idea was to bring in a range of choices and actually to change the whole system, the whole perspective, the whole culture within adult social care so that people could self-direct their support whether they were in a care home, whether in supported living, whether they go to a day centre, or take a direct payment and do something very, very different with that direct payment.

IS: My condition is really one that fluctuates, and the support needs to be provided in a way that can respond to that, but also it was really important that the support was really enabling and empowering so the people I have employed over the years, and there's been many people, I've looked for particular qualities. I've employed quite a few people that have had their own experiences of mental health, because they actually get it, and I don't need to tell them I'm having a really bad day. They've been on these big journeys with me from a time where I wasn't really doing much with my life didn't have many hopes, dreams and aspirations, to now – I'm happily married, got a great job, have really nice life, and manage my health and social care needs really well.

MW: whether or not you take a direct payment, whether you have a personal budget and get the council to arrange services for you, or an individual service fund, where a provider looks after the pot of money, and works with the person to deliver outcomes with them, people should experience the ability to self-direct their own support. We do see that those who take direct payments are far more likely to self-direct their own support than where councils arrange services for them.

IS: So under the traditional care that I was receiving I'd have different people coming all the time, there was no trust in the relationship. It had always been with traditional services and support very 'time and task' and '15 minutes would do this'. It was very de-humanising, not all person-centred, didn't recognise me, or my own support network, as part of the solutions for overcoming some of these challenges. There was often inconsistency and the quality overall was not of a quality that enabled me to move beyond the day to day support that I needed to think about what, actually, is a good life. I was also conscious that it was very costly to the system and taxpayers ultimately, and for me it needs to make sense, it needs to be flexible, it needs to work, it needs to be compassionate, it needs to be challenging, it needs to be human, and that's what I've been able to achieve through self-directing my own support.

MW: We have heard repeatedly concerns that self-directed support is a more expensive option. But that's a myth. Individual people who take a direct payment very articulately describe the ways in which they spent money much more efficiently than the council could ever do, and get much more for the money. The notion of being more permissive, allowing people freedom to spend public money with relatively light touch oversight is the ideal. It's been a difficult thing for council leaders to square off really. There are perceptions around public money being spent inappropriately. Safety is another key area, worries that people spending money on things that make sense to them, that actually might not be the same as the things that the council could or would put in place.

IS: For me, I would say to councils that there is a role for both traditional and self-directed support, but for me self-directed support is the one that makes sense and is the only way that I could do the things that I want to do.

MW: The lessons from Covid have been positive. Councils started to learn stuff about trusting people more, and the way in which people can be very creative and responsive with full control over their care and support. We are hearing from councils: 'We need to get on with this now'.

MW: At Think Local Act Personal we've stayed closely connected to ADASS East of England region, thinking about personalisation, thinking about self-direction. It's been very encouraging to us to see a whole group of councils wanting to try and make self-direction a reality.

MW: Essex, we've worked closely with Essex over the last couple of years. [We've taken a] hard look at the way in which personalisation as a whole was working, to co-produce what was needed for change in Essex, with citizens. We'd already seen significant change and transformation happening, it's been a reality in Thurrock. We've also talked with Norfolk.

Norfolk was very involved in a piece of work we did for the Innovation Networks to take self-directed support back to its roots and we were really pleased to see ADASS East region want to build on that.

MW: Cultures take a long time to shift, but with determined leadership we are seeing those changes starting to happen.