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## Personalisation briefing



August 2009

# Implications for advocacy workers

### Key messages

Personalisation for advocacy workers means:

- working alongside people who use services to ensure that there is a genuine shift of control and decision-making in their favour, rather than falling back to traditional, service-centred ways
- increasing the scope of advocacy activity to ensure that advocacy is available to people who fund their own care, or fall below eligibility criteria for public funding
- possible changes to the type of support that people ask their advocates for – there may be a greater need for support from advocates to enable people to consider how money is spent and support organised
- enabling people to access support beyond that offered by conventional, more traditional services – this could mean supporting people to increase their contribution to and participation in community life; enriching both the life of the individual and the community
- considering the implications of – and opportunities for – developing specialist support brokerage roles
- having a key frontline role in ensuring that personal choice and control is achieved.

This At a glance briefing examines the implications of the personalisation agenda for advocacy workers.

Personalisation means thinking about care and support services in an entirely different way. It means starting with the person as an individual with strengths, preferences and aspirations, and putting them at the centre of the process of identifying their needs and making choices about how and when they are supported to live their lives. It requires a significant transformation of adult social care so that all systems, processes, staff and services are geared up to put people first.

The traditional service-led approach has often meant that people have not received the right help at the right time and have been unable to shape the kind of support they need. Personalisation is about giving people much more choice and control over their lives and goes well beyond simply giving personal budgets to people eligible for council funding. Personalisation means addressing the needs and aspirations of whole communities to ensure everyone has access to the right information, advice and advocacy to make good decisions about the support they need. It means ensuring that people have wider choice in how their needs are met and are able to access universal services such as transport, leisure and education, housing, health and opportunities for employment, regardless of age or disability.

## What are the implications for advocacy workers?

Personalisation provides the opportunity for a radically better deal for people who may need additional support. Achieving this will involve a change in many individual and professional roles, including those of advocates.

Real choice and control depends on people having the right information to take decisions, and on getting support if it is needed. This is where advocacy comes into its own. For this reason the role of advocates will become more important as the transformation of social care gathers pace.



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Advocacy workers have a key role in helping people to understand options, including those opened up by personal budgets, and to make choices. There may also be major changes to the role of advocates, some of which are described below.

### Advocacy

Advocacy workers have long prided themselves on supporting and empowering people to take their own decisions and to have real control. However, the reality is that a considerable part of advocacy is at present more about enabling people to challenge decisions made by others. Going forward, there could be the opportunity for advocacy workers to focus increasingly on enabling people to be in control, rather than supporting people to argue their case. There is a clear role for advocacy workers in working alongside people to ensure that there is a genuine shift of control and decision-making, rather than falling back to traditional service-centred ways.

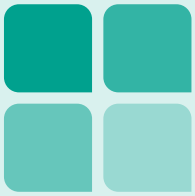
### Example: Sita

Faced with the decision of whether to receive support that she was uncomfortable with, or no support, Sita decided to do without. She was concerned that the support agency's policies and personnel did not enable her to have a support worker with the cultural understanding that she required. Sita's advocate enabled her to use a personal budget to hire personal assistants of her choice. This meant approaching members of her own network of friends and family, with back-up provided by an agency in a neighbouring borough with personal assistants that she wished to use.

Personalisation applies to all adults who may require social care or support, regardless of eligibility for public funding. To enable this to happen, advocacy, as well as information and advice services, need to be appropriately available. This includes ensuring advocacy is available to people who fund their own care, or fall below eligibility criteria for public funding. This could increase the scope of the activities of advocacy organisations and advocates, which in turn will require local arrangements to be in place.

Personalisation, including personal budgets, requires new ways of doing things. This may change the type of support that people ask their advocacy workers to provide. In particular there may be a greater need for support from advocates to enable people to consider how money is spent and support organised. Other people may wish to use a part of their personal budget to buy support from an advocate, additional to that which should be freely provided as part of a universal information and advice service. Advocates and their organisations may want to consider whether and how they change in view of the potential changing requests.

Personalisation is about living a life rather than just about receiving a service. Advocates frequently have skills to enable people to access support beyond that offered by more conventional or traditional services. They may be experienced in finding ways to support people to increase their contribution to and participation in community life; enriching both the life of the individual and the community. These skills may become even more important in the future.



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### Example: Jenny

Over the years Jenny had become increasingly frustrated with life in a residential care home for people with learning disabilities. Her chosen life did not fit with the needs of people with whom she shared or the schedules and requirements of the service. Jenny's advocate helped her to consider who and what was most important to her. After exploring different options, Jenny was supported to discuss her hopes for the future with a close friend. They were supported to approach a local housing provider to purchase a flat for them and to identify a support provider prepared to meet their requirements. Jenny says that she is now happier and has much greater control over what she does day to day.

### Support brokerage

There is much discussion about the role of 'support brokerage' in enabling people to receive personalised support and some uncertainty about its definition. Support brokerage can probably be best understood as a set of tasks to enable people to plan and arrange social care. Some people may, however, want to specialise in these tasks and take up support brokerage as a career. There are similarities and differences between advocacy and support brokerage (as it is often understood). Advocates and their organisations may want to consider the full range of tasks needed to enable people to plan and arrange social care and support so that they can decide where their contribution is best made. Some might wish to consider the implications of, and opportunities for, developing specialist support brokerage roles.

Finally, personalisation is about enabling people to have greater choice and control. This is the same aim that has always been at the heart of advocacy. Advocacy workers have a key role in ensuring this agenda really delivers. To fulfil this role, advocates and their organisations would be well advised to ensure they have a good understanding of personalisation and what's working in practice. This, together with existing advocacy skills and values, may equip them well to get involved fully in supporting individuals to obtain more personalised support, as well as to help positively inform developments and emerging thinking in their areas.

### Example: Sam

Sam gained confidence from participating in his self-advocacy group. He understood more about what he had a right to expect and felt more able to speak out. Sam decided that he was not prepared to put up with an unreliable domiciliary care service. Bringing things to a head, he called a meeting with the service provider. Drawing on the planning he did with the self-advocacy group ahead of the meeting, he was able to agree with the provider that in future he would choose who supported him and when.



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### Further information

Advocacy Partners is leading the development and delivery of independent advocacy services in London and the south east. [www.advocacypartners.org](http://www.advocacypartners.org)

Action for Advocacy, the support and resource agency for the advocacy sector provides information, training and advice for advocacy organisations. [www.actionforadvocacy.org.uk](http://www.actionforadvocacy.org.uk)

In Control is an independent third sector organisation which has spear-headed the concept and development of personal budgets and has a large number of resources and publications. [www.in-control.org.uk](http://www.in-control.org.uk)

### Acknowledgements

Written by SCIE, in conjunction with Advocacy Partners

*Personalisation: a rough guide* tells the personalisation story so far – exploring what it is, where the idea came from and where it sits within wider public service reform. It is freely available online at [www.scie.org.uk](http://www.scie.org.uk). This briefing is one of a series explaining the personalisation agenda and what it means for different groups.

Briefings in this series:

At a glance 06: Personalisation briefing for commissioners

At a glance 07: Personalisation briefing for home care providers

At a glance 08: Personalisation briefing for housing providers

At a glance 10: Personalisation briefing for carers

At a glance 12: Personalisation briefing for advocacy workers

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We want to ensure that our resources meet your needs and we would welcome your feedback on this summary. Please send comments to [info@scie.org.uk](mailto:info@scie.org.uk), or write to Publications at the address below.

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