



NEWSLETTER

MAY 2010

Welcome to this update on the work of In Control Australia

First, apologies that things seem to have gone quiet. They haven't really, but our modest resourcing has been a bit stretched, especially since our valued Executive Officer Sam Jenkinson moved on to another job in WA (the job with In Control was only for several hours a week – not really enough for a talented person looking for more substantial work). We are very grateful to Sam for her efforts, and Sam remains a valued member of the movement.

About *In Control Australia*

In Control Australia is a group of individuals and organisations who seek policy change in Australia so that people living with disability, or other types of vulnerability can choose how their allocated public funding is spent on their support. In Australia and overseas, there are growing numbers of people accessing Individualised Funding arrangements, so that they can choose support arrangements tailored to their circumstances. We think that this level of choice and control should be available to everyone receiving publicly funded support.

In Control Australia is something a little different in the disability sector. We are not a service provider or an advocacy group. We are not a peak body or a representative group of only one part of the sector. We are a movement, a collective, a portal for information, a facilitator of dialogue and critique. Our members are people living with disability (or other types of impairment that bring vulnerability), family members, service providers, government workers and other interested citizens. As our membership and role evolve so will we.

Becoming a member is as simple as you sending us your email address or other preferred contact details. That way we can keep you informed of developments and events in your area, and also hear from you about what you want from Individualised Funding. There is currently no charge for membership.

NEWS

Spreading the word

We've remained active in spreading the word about the fundamentals of Individualised Funding (aka self-directed funding etc). Since we started, the numbers of people hearing the message has moved into the thousands. Recent events included speech presentations at the Australian Council Of Social Services (ACOSS) conference in Canberra and the National Disability Summit in Melbourne.

Topics that come up again and again include:

- ***Do I have to run the whole thing myself***

There is a need to emphasise that being 'in control' does not have to mean you have to employ the support staff yourself, and do all the financial reports and other accountabilities. Those are options, according to people's personal preferences. The fundamental common factor is that people have control over how their allocated public funding is spent. For example, this can include someone deciding what they want, deciding on a preferred support agency, and directing government to send their public funding allocation directly to that agency.

- ***Do there need to be lots of rules about how the funding can be spent?***

We keep having to emphasise that the fewer the constraints, the greater the likelihood of a creative solution for the person concerned, that will be just right for them. While many people might wish to use their funding to pay for paid staff support, some people might want to use some of their funding for other things that they feel will be helpful. While there need to be some rules about this, these can be kept simple by ruling out anything that is illegal, gambling, and by making sure that the person's plan for how to use their money will demonstrably help their situation.

- ***Will Individualised Funding mean that some agencies go out of business because there is no sustainability built into the funding?***

Individualised Funding does not mean the sky will necessarily fall for service agencies and professional staff. Good support agencies have nothing to fear, because their reputation will bring people to them. All that really changes is the nature of the relationship, where the person with the funding becomes a more active partner in the relationship, because it's *their* support arrangements. Evidence suggests that those agencies and professionals who adapt sooner to Individualised Funding arrangements do well.

There are practical challenges for any service agency making the transition, but if an agency is genuinely committed to building personalised supports for people, then these changes will come organically. In Control Australia is available to assist support agencies to think these issues through.

We can also call upon Government to look at what it can do to assist service agencies with transition.

- ***How is the funding allocated to a person?***

The best mechanism we've come across so far is the Resource Allocation System, or RAS. It is too detailed to explain in one paragraph but here's a flavour. RAS involves a jurisdiction (e.g. a state or territory) mapping all the people living with disability in their area, in terms of their level of support needs and the dollar amount of funds being spent in response (this often unsettles government staff who may not easily be able to access such information, but they can make a start by mapping a representative sample of say 100-200 people, and this only need take a few days). Armed with this information, a table is developed showing what levels of disability attract what levels of support funding. Then a simple self-assessment is used so that people can find out their indicative allocation. The state or territory can adjust the way the self-assessment scoring works, so that their public funding is targeted towards the people they're most concerned about.

If you'd like an In Control Australia representative to come and talk with a group of people in your area, contact us and we'll see what we can do.

SUCCESSFUL NSW EVENT

Family Advocacy hosted an In Control Australia seminar in Burwood on 22 March 2010. Entitled "What self directed planning, funding and support means for people with high and complex needs?", the seminar attracted 160 participants including people living with disability, families, service providers and government representatives.

The seminar opened with Robert Manga, a man who has recently acquired a disability, Judith Ellis, a parent and long time advocate, and Margaret Ward of Mamre Support Services, Brisbane, discussing the individual, family and service perspectives on a self directed approach. This was followed by a stimulating facilitated conversation in which Judith Ellis and Trudy Van Dam of the Australian Catholic University discussed the challenges of implementing a self directed approach sharing the journey and the challenges when a family and a service provider are committed to handing over control.

The afternoon session included a presentation by Trudy Van Dam on *Self directed planning: a review of literature*, Karen Fisher of the Social Policy Research Centre and the UNSW on *Options for self directed funding*, and Peter Shergold of the Centre for Social Impact at UNSW on *What does a self directed approach mean for government?*

UPCOMING EVENTS

IN CONTROL AUSTRALIA'S FIRST 'BIG EVENT'

In Control Australia's first 'THE BIG EVENT' in NSW will be based on 'The International Big Event' in the UK.

Each year, In Control UK hosts its unique 'Big Event' – the largest international convention focused on personalisation in the health and social care sectors.

The event brings together a host of people, all united by a common aim – to help people to be fully in control of their lives. Unlike other events catering solely for professionals, the Big Event encourages people from all walks of life to attend, including family members and carers, key influencers from local government agencies and providers as well as professionals from human service organisations.

It's an invaluable opportunity to network, explore the support and the services on offer, hear real-life experiences, and to find out the latest developments in this fast changing world of personalisation.

So now we are seeing the emergence of a local version, in NSW. Proudly hosted by support agency Sunnyfield during the latter half of 2010 'THE BIG EVENT – NSW' will be a day not to be missed. To ensure you are well informed please forward your contact details to Michaela Kennedy at m.kennedy@sunnyfield.org.au or phone (02) 8977 8860.

NSW - Self directed support in action – supported living – 9 August 2010

Greg Lewis of *My Place* (Western Australia) and Jill Hole of *Homes West* (Queensland) will draw on their experience in supported living to share elements that enable people with disability to have a home of their own. The forum will focus on key learnings that enable others to replicate the experience and outcomes of the people in these two supported living programs.

Eddie Bartnik of the Disability Services Commission in Western Australia will look at the role of the government in facilitating these opportunities.

To ensure you get information about this even, email belinda@family-advocacy.com

FACT SHEET ON SELF-DIRECTED FUNDING

We previously developed a fact sheet on self-directed funding. It's on the In Control Australia website and is proving to be very popular. The FAQ answers questions like 'What is self-directed funding?', 'Will I have to manage my own budget?' and 'Will there be limits on what I can use my funding for?' plus many more. There is also a great example of how self-directed funding can work at the end. Pass it on to politicians and bureaucrats who are still building their understanding of self-directed funding (aka Individualised Funding).

WEBSITE

We try to add new stuff to the website on a regular basis. Here are a couple of summaries of recent reports we've uploaded.

Personalisation – Children, young people and families, published 2010 (An In Control UK Briefing by Nic Crosby)

This paper describes In Control UK's work and vision for personalisation for children and young people. Below are some key messages.

- "Individual Budgets and Self-Directed Support for children complete what can now be described as a whole-life approach to supporting citizens of all ages".
- "Children, young people and their families can draw on many other available resources outside the Individual Budget when thinking about support and life. Money is only one small part of the real wealth available".
- "If Self-Directed Support is to be fully successful, it is of paramount importance that families, children and young people participate at all stages of the process and are involved in the wider, long-term introduction and oversight of personalisation" - equal partnership.
- "The potential of linking strongly and pro-actively with the adult personalisation agenda is very significant". – It has the potential to offer long-term relationships between children, their families and people providing them with support.

A report on In Control's Third Phase – Evaluation and Learning 2008-2009, published 2010 (In Control UK)

"This latest report reflects the way that leading thinking and practice have moved on in the last couple of years to encompass many other aspects of a citizen's life, from before their birth to time of their death".

The report includes discussion about getting ready for self-directed support, the basic tools for change, changes in the purchasing and provision of supports, looking ahead, and an evaluation of the impact of Individualised Funding (also called Individualised Budgets or Personal Budgets in the UK).

BLOG

You may also like to visit the Purple Orange blog at <http://juliafarrrobbi.blogspot.com> for regular postings on a range of issues related to Individualised Funding.

If you know of other blogs that are relevant to the topic, let us know and we will post links.

STAY IN TOUCH

Keep your eye on the coming events section of the In Control website, and other postings.

A REMINDER OF HOW CAN YOU BE INVOLVED?

- Host an In Control Australia Forum in your state or region. Contact Rachel Lawson on admin@in-control.org.au
- Pass on **tools** you have used to self-manage that you can share with others. We will post them on the website.
- Let us know of news and events of self-directed funding in your area.
- Register on the website to become a member www.in-control.org.au

Keep in touch, and do send us questions, information or stories that you'd like to see in a future edition of this newsletter.

