

Adult Services Green Paper Independence, Well Being and Choice (ref 30)

- 1.** This recent Green Paper was published for consultation in March 2005 and provides a new framework for adult services for the 21st century. The aims are good:
 - Services to maintain people's independence, choice and control over how their needs are met.
 - The Director of Adult Social Services to integrate services and resources.
 - Better use of technology and a wider range of supported housing options.
 - Preventive work and maintaining independence but those with higher needs receiving support and protection.
- 2.** The proposals are good: providing machinery for choice, creating a market for services, more flexibility and a range of services, moving away from service led solutions and underlining the need for strategic and cross department working.
- 3.** The paper relies on new methods for self assessing need and purchasing services while allowing that complex needs require skilled social work assessment. This is expected to deliver more choice, greater efficiency and other cost savings by reducing back office functions and bureaucracy. Some of the hoped for cost savings appear to come from stripping out the management and supervision of the service which would be of concern.
- 4.** The use of direct payments or individual budgets is to be developed bringing together different income streams including Independent Living Fund (ILF) and benefits but not yet Supporting People Grant.
- 5.** There is thought to be a role for support from the wider community but the practical form this will take is under-developed.
- 6.** Needs and expectations are generally expected to rise but there is no allowance for increased funding. It is recognised that Local Authorities will have to control budgets while at the same time suggesting that Fair Access to Care, the eligibility criteria, may change. If there is to be quite strict financial rationing it is difficult to square this with self assessment and putting the client in control of the process?
- 7.** Many parents contacting Housing Options on behalf of those with a learning disability find it difficult even to get a care assessment or are told they are not eligible for a service. Their experience of the delivery of the commendable aims of Valuing People for rights, inclusion and choice of where and how you live is still very poor.
- 8.** People with learning disabilities struggle to gain access to mainstream housing. They cannot easily move home from one area to another. Direct Payments after many years are having marginal impact for people with learning disability - they can't usually be used to pay relatives who are the main source of informal support. There are not the resources to match demand and the Supporting People programme has been problematic. ILF is helpful but for people with learning disability has a high threshold and low ceiling.
- 9.** The Green Paper is well intentioned. If its aims are achievable it will represent a great step forward. Local authority responses have identified some internal contradictions: freeing up assessment while limiting spending, reducing management while maintaining standards. Work is needed on the practicalities of 'joined up' government and administration, service planning and delivery, realistic assumptions about needs, costs and resources.

If you require further information or have other queries contact Housing Options.

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