

My Support, My Choice:

People's Experiences of Self-directed Support and Social Care in Highland

Easy Read Summary

Summary of the research findings



This is an easy read summary of the main points and recommendations of a report talking about peoples experiences of social care and Self-directed Support in Highland.



It uses information from a report called “My Support My Choice: People’s Experiences of Self-directed Support and Social Care in Highland”.



This report is about how Self-directed Support has been for people in Highland



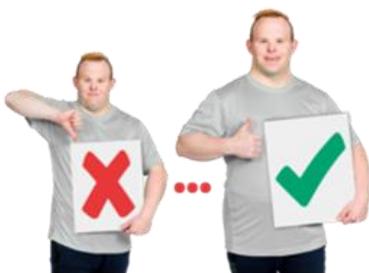
Self-directed Support is a way of organising the support that people get.



For this report 39 people in the Highland who were getting Self-directed Support told the researchers about their experiences.



People getting Self-directed Support in Highland said it had made things better.

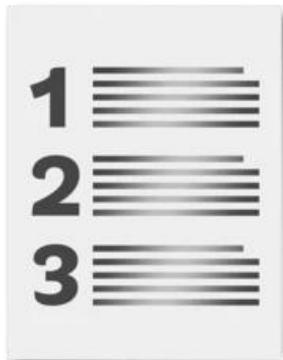


There are some things that could still be made better.

Research Topics



This report has research on a number of different topics.



These topics are listed below.

Poverty



Over half of the people who talked to the researchers live below the **poverty threshold**.



The **poverty threshold** is the amount of money you need to have to live a good life.



If people do not get a Self-directed Support budget or their budget is cut they might not have enough money to get support.



If people do not have enough support they cannot live a good life.



Family or friends might need to give support without being paid.

Collecting information and what it tells us



Not enough information is collected about Self-directed Support.



It is important that we know who has got a budget.



Information does not always tell us why a person needs Self-directed Support.

Experiences of Self-directed Support



Some people in Highland said they had a good experience with Self-directed Support.



Other people said they had a bad experience with Self-directed Support.



Most people said their experience of social care was better since getting Self-directed Support.

Getting information about Self-directed Support



People got information about Self-directed Support from different types of places.



Many people said it was not easy to get information.



Some people said it was difficult to get in touch with social work when you were trying to get Self-directed Support.



Many people said they did not get information early enough.



Most people said they were not told about all four options of Self-directed Support.



Most people said they were told about how much money they can spend on their support.

Making choices and having control



Most people getting Self-directed Support in Highland said they felt fully involved in decisions about their care and support.



Most people said they had chosen their favourite option.



Most people said they were given a choice about who manages their budget.



Most people said that Self-directed Support was easier for them when they had a high enough budget to meet their needs.



Travel costs can be especially high for people who live in the countryside.

Communication and relationships with social work



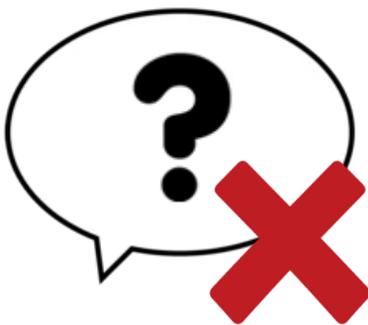
People said that it is important to have good relationships with social workers where there is trust.



Some people said that social workers did not take enough time with them when they were doing needs assessments.



A small number of people said that they were not treated well by social work or social care staff.



Some people said they were not asked about decisions about their care.



Some people said they found it difficult to get paperwork about their support when they asked for it.

Getting good support staff



Many people in Highland found it difficult to recruit new staff.



Some people had difficulty with finding good training for support workers.

Independent advocacy and support



People getting Self-directed Support in Highland said that having an **advocacy worker** is really helpful.



An **advocacy worker** is someone who can help you to understand your rights and to speak up for yourself.

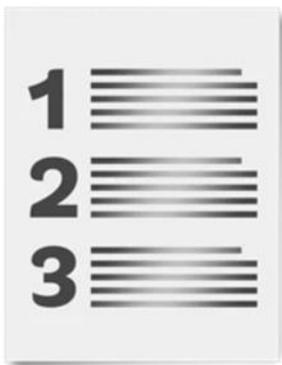


More needs to be done to make sure people know about advocacy workers and can talk to them when they need to.

Recommendations



The report has 46 recommendations on what to do in order to make self-directed support better for the people who are receiving it.



The recommendations are listed below.

Poverty and Self-directed Support



The report recommends that care is taken so cuts to Self-directed Support budgets do not leave people without enough money to get the support they need.



If there are changes to who can get a budget then it is important that this does not leave people missing out on care because they cannot afford it.

Collecting information



The report says it is very important that collecting information gets better.



It is important that we know as much as possible about who is and who is not getting a budget and support.

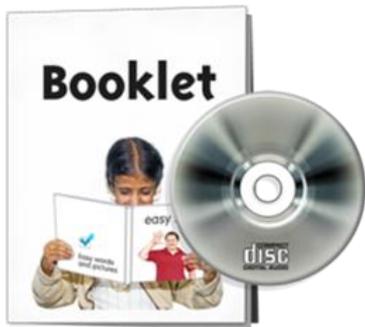


Knowing this information helps us to make sure the system is fair.

Access to Information



People need to be able to get good clear information about Self-directed Support and social care.



Information needs to be available in a range of ways for example Easy Read.



Information should be given to people when they need it.

Information for workers



People who work in health, education, housing, addictions and communities need to be trained so that they can tell people about Self-directed Support and how to apply.

Information on what to expect



There needs to be information for people that tells them what to expect from their social worker.



There needs to be information for people that tells them about their rights.

Information about timing



People should be given information that tells them when they can expect to get decisions about their budget and support.



Information on timing should be made available in a number of different ways so that everyone can understand it.

Meeting Time



There needs to be enough time for meetings so that people have time to ask questions and get answers.



People need to be given enough time to understand and think about the 4 options.

Information and training for professionals

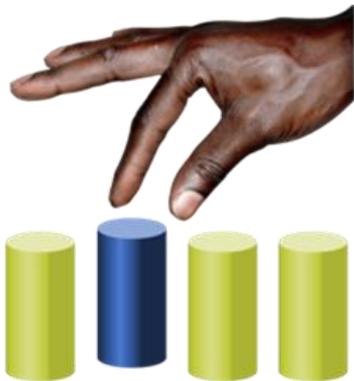


Some professionals need more information and training to help to support people to make decisions.



Some professionals need more information and training to help them to talk to people about all of the options available.

Information about the options



Everyone should be told about all 4 options and be supported to understand what is good and bad about each of the options before they make their decisions.

Making sure to check back



Social work staff should make sure to check with people that everything is going well after their support has started.

Contacting social work



There needs to be different ways to contact social work that suit different communication needs.



These ways to get in touch should include phone, email and online chat.

Access to an advocate



People getting Self-directed Support should have the support of an advocate if they want.

Paperwork information



People should be given copies of all of the paperwork about their assessments in a way that they can understand.

Budget information



People should be offered support to understand and make good decisions about their money and the charges they have to pay for care.

Supported decision making



People might want to have talks with their social worker to make it easier for them to make decisions about things like care charges, their money and the type of care they get.



This is known as **supported decision making**.



Supported decision making is when the person is given the information and support they need to make their own decisions

Information about changes



People should always be told about changes to their care well before they are introduced.

Short waiting times



It is important that people do not have to wait a long time for each part of the process.



Waiting makes people more stressed.



Waiting to get support put in place can make people's health get worse.



People should be given enough notice before they have a review or assessment.

Support should be available everywhere



People living in the countryside and smaller villages in Highland should be offered 4 options just like people in the towns and cities.



People should not have to move house in order to be offered all 4 options.

Choosing Care Workers



It should be made sure that people are always able to choose their own care workers even when other people are organising their care.

Supported Decision Making



Staff should be trained in ways to support people to make their own decisions so that the person always has control over their own support.

Good treatment



The report says people must always be treated with dignity and respect by health and social care workers.



The support that a person gets should always take their way of life into account including their health needs, religion, and culture.

Changes to care packages



People should always be told about cuts to their care budget well before they are introduced.



If a person's package is changed this can be bad for the person's mental health.



Staff need to help the person through this and help them to get support somewhere else if they need it.

Flexibility



People need to be able to change their support if their life changes.



People should be able to choose how and when they want to spend their support budget.

Short breaks



Short breaks are an important part of a package for a lot of people.

Social workers should be encouraging people to use their budget to get short breaks.

Travel costs



People living in the countryside need to have travel costs included in their budgets.

Equality assessments



Social workers need to make sure they are treating everyone fairly.



They should do a type of assessment called an equality assessment to make sure they are being fair to everyone.

Home Support



People should be able to get care in their home if they want it.



They should not have to worry about having to share their care with others or moving into a care home if they don't want to.

Continuing good work



Social workers should continue their good work to make sure people always get good support and have good relationships and conversations with the people getting support.

Building relationships



The report recommends social workers get time and skills to build relationships and trust with people.

Recording peoples opinions



There should be good records kept of what people say in assessments and reviews so that it can be shown that they have made choices themselves.

Feedback



Social work staff need to ask people for their feedback so that they can make things better.

Helping people to complain



Social work staff should tell people how to complain and how to say if they are unhappy with decisions.



Social work staff should tell people how to get support from advocacy and advice places.

Equality and Human Rights Training



Social workers need to get training to help them to support people's human rights and to understand that they might be treating some groups of people differently.

Good practice



The whole process should be easy to understand so that people know how to get a budget, what they can spend it on, how decisions are made and how to complain if they are unhappy.

Carer's assessments



The report recommends that carers are offered assessments and support plans and their rights explained to them.

No assumptions of unpaid care



People said that it is important social workers do not expect families to give care for free.



They should also not always think that a person wants to be given care by their family.



When family members say they want to give less unpaid care they should get support from social work to make this happen.

Respecting peoples wishes



The report says social workers should respect people's wishes if they do not want their family to be their main carer

Providing people with details



The Highland Council and NHS Highland should always tell people when and where the documents they are using are from.



The Highland Council and NHS Highland should tell people more about assessments used to make sure everyone is treated equally and how these are used in Self-directed Support.



The Highland Council should tell people what they have done to involve people using support, unpaid carers, and other groups when making the rules for self-directed support.

Allowing people to discuss their support



There can sometimes be a rule in place which can stop people from discussing their Self-directed Support package with others.



This should be changed so that people can discuss their Self-directed Support Package with others if they want to.

Help in training staff



Some people need more help from local councils to recruit and train care staff.



Local councils need to work with people who get Self-directed Support and their families to make it easier to get good staff.

Staff training costs



Self-directed Support budgets should include enough money for any training that support – workers need.

Resources for advocacy



The report recommends that there is enough money given to make sure that advocacy and advice is available to everyone who wants it.

Information for advocates



The report recommends that people who work for local councils are given training and information about advice, support and advocacy.



This will help to make sure they tell people what is available.

Advocacy information for people



Social workers should give people easy to understand information about advocacy and support.

Local advocacy networks



Local networks of people who have already been through the process should be set up.