

# Short Break Support through Individual Budgets

Information for Parents and Carers of Children with Disabilities in Middlesbrough



# Welcome

Being a parent/carer is the most rewarding experience but it can also be tough, especially if your child has a disability. Sometimes families need a break from caring, and sometimes families need support to enjoy the same activities and experiences as other families.

Previously called "respite care", short break services provide families with a break from caring and children with the opportunity to take part in social opportunities and activities. Sometimes they support children and their families taking part in activities and outings together. Middlesbrough has produced a "Short Break Statement" which explains the range of short break support available.

These include services directly provided by the Council such as the South Tees Home Support Service and Gleneagles Resource Centre. Other ways of having a short break service include using services purchased on your behalf by the Council, or by you having a Direct Payment to purchase your own support. An Individual Budget is another way in which a short break service can be provided.

Individual budgets change the way services work with families. Instead of a family being provided with a service, a budget is identified using an agreed resource allocation system. Work with the family then takes place to plan how that budget can be used to meet the child's and family's needs. This can be by purchasing existing services or by developing new and imaginative ways of using the money.

This booklet has been put together to explain what an Individual Budget is and what you need to think about if you would like your short break service provided in this way. We hope you find it useful and that it answers your questions.

Other information that you might find helpful is contained in the booklet "Middlesbrough information guide for parents and carers of children and young people with a disability". There are also booklets about "Direct Payments" and "Behaviour" and "Sleep". If you would like a copy of any of these, please ring the Children with Disabilities Team on **01642 579176**.



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# Introduction

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If you feel you need additional help to care for your child, think about asking for an assessment by a social worker. They will try to help you find the right support. You can do this by telephoning the Council on 01642 726004 and requesting a referral for an assessment in connection with support for a child who has a disability.

This assessment will usually be undertaken by a social worker from the Children with Disabilities Team, or by the Transitions Team if your son or daughter is fourteen or older. If you are not sure and just want to talk to someone about this, contact the Children with Disabilities Team on 01642 579160.

When an assessment has identified that a family does need support to enable them to have a 'short break' then there are numerous ways that this support can be provided.

Your child may be offered an in-house service such as the South Tees Home Support Service or Gleneagles Resource Centre which is arranged and managed by the Council. Or you might choose to receive a Direct Payment, which would mean that the Council will pay you the money directly, so that you employ a support worker or buy a service from a private agency or group which can meet the needs of your child.

Alternatively you might be offered or you might choose to request an Individual Budget for your child - the allocation of a budget which can then be used to meet the assessed need.

This booklet will explain in more detail what to expect from the process of setting up an Individual Budget. If your child already has an Individual Budget Plan and you have a question that is not answered in this booklet then please ring the Short Break Facilitator on 01642 579160.



# Background to Individual Budgets in Middlesbrough



Middlesbrough is one of a growing number of local authorities across the country working with an organisation called 'In Control' to explore how Individual Budgets can be provided to families.

A pilot scheme took place, and Middlesbrough is now making Individual Budgets available for more families.

In Adult Social Care these budgets have been in place for a lot longer and are known as Personal Budgets but work in a similar way.

Individual Budgets change the way services work with families. Instead of a family being provided with a service, a budget is identified (using an agreed Resource Allocation System (RAS) – see page 7 for further information) and then

work with the family takes place to plan how that budget can be used to meet the assessed need for a short break. This can be by purchasing existing services or by developing new and imaginative ways of using the money.

The process for setting up and planning an Individual Budget for your child can seem time consuming, but this is necessary to produce a Plan which best meets the needs of your child and family.

This booklet will help you to understand what to expect from the process. If you have any further questions then please ring the Short Break Facilitator on 01642 579160.

# Resource Allocation System (RAS)

When a family has a new or current assessment by a member of the Children with Disabilities Team or the Transitions Team which concludes that the child meets the criteria for a medium to high level of short break support then the family can discuss with the social worker how this support should be provided. If an Individual Budget is being considered a Resource Allocation System (often referred to as a RAS) can be completed with a member of the Team and a professional who knows the child well.

The Resource Allocation System is used to work out the amount of money which will be available to plan support. It is not an assessment, or a self assessment. It is a way of coming to an agreement about the amount of money which needs to be allocated for an individual budget, which can then be used to deliver personal support.

The RAS should be filled in where possible with the child/young person and those who care for them, working with the social worker and another professional who knows the child well. They should discuss and agree the point score in each area. If an agreement can not be reached then the social worker should attend Resource Panel for advice and a member of panel will try to provide independent advice and support.

To complete accurately the RAS should be completed 'as if there was no paid support' already in place for this child or young person. This means that if a service

is already being provided, then it should be completed as if this service was not in place.

## **Completing a RAS can take some time - it can not be rushed**

The questions are quite straightforward and prompt those completing them to think about how much support this child or young person receives to do all the things which you would expect a child or young person of this age to do.

For example one of the questions is:

### **"To get ready for school I need....."**

There are three possible answers

- "No more support than any child/ young person of this age might need" - this would score no points
- "Some additional support" - this would score 1 or 2 points
- "A lot of additional support" - this would score 3 or 4 points

So, a baby or small child would score 0 points in this area as they do not need support to attend school or because all children of this age need someone to help them.

A child of eight who needs some prompts or help might also score 0 points as all children of eight need some oversight as they get ready for school

But it would be usual to expect that a child of 14 would be able to get ready for school themselves, and so if they needed prompts and support they would score one or two points, and a child of fourteen who had to be prepared for school by their parents washing and dressing them and feeding them would score three points.

**The score achieved will vary from child to child, but roughly:**

- A child/young person who does not need any more support than a child of a similar age will score 0 points.
- A child/young person who needs significant additional support may score up to 100 points
- A child/young person who needs considerable extra support may score over 200 points

Usually very young children have a low point score as all very young children need continuous supervision care and support. Children between the ages of 6 and 12 tend to achieve a higher score as it is expected that a child of this age is becoming more able to care for themselves. A teenager might have a higher score as usually a teenager would be able to have time on their own, go out independently, and enjoy some activities without support.

Once the RAS has been completed the amount of money which can be used to plan support can be confirmed - the amount is calculated by adding the points together and then deducting 12% overhead costs.

The 12 % deducted covers all overheads - this might include time given by workers agreeing and setting up the plan, Introductory visits and time to complete care plans, CRB checks for personal assistants, financial monitoring of the account and any other costs. These costs therefore do not need to be included in the plan.

Once the above has happened the weekly amount which is available for the plan is known - multiplying this by 52 shows the budget available for 12 months.

The next step is to plan how this money can be used to provide a short break service which ensures that the needs identified in the assessment are met.



# The Individual Budget Plan

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Once the Budget has been calculated, the family and the professionals who worked on the Resource Allocation System will work together to produce a plan - or sometimes another person who knows the child or who has some expertise in writing plans can help.

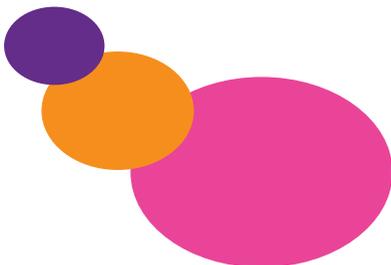
It will use information from the assessment and any other information. The Plan will clearly list the things that are important for the child, the things that are important for the family and the things that are important to the local authority. The local authority will want to be sure that the plan meets the need identified in the assessment, as this is the justification for spending the money allocated in the budget.

For example, if the assessment identifies that the child needs support each morning to help them get ready for school then it is expected that this will be written into the plan. If the assessment says that the child needs to be able to access activities without the parents always being there, then this also should be in the plan.

Individual Budgets give families the flexibility to 'think outside of the box' and include activities which might not otherwise be available. For example if your child has a particular hobby, that is important to them, such as trains or horses then it may be possible to include a train ride or horse riding lessons into the plan (as long as the Budget will cover this).

Alternatively you may choose to spend a proportion of your child's budget on a piece of equipment that will support your child having a short break service such as a specialised travel bed or a piece of sensory equipment.

The plan may not just include the money available from the Local Authority through the RAS. It can also include other funding and resources, or access to activities which are free. For example the plan might include an activity or equipment which might be funded, or part funded by the family. Or it might include something which will be requested from a charity or other organisation such as the Family Fund.



For example the plan might include a young person spending time away from home with a personal assistant – perhaps accessing a sports club. The budget might pay for the personal assistance hours, but the family may choose to pay the entrance fee themselves, as any family would cover this sort of cost. Or the plan might include the child going away for the weekend with the family, but the personal assistant going with them to provide some support. The plan might include the family paying part of the accommodation cost, but the money from the RAS paying for the additional accommodation for the personal assistant and for the hours of the personal assistant.

The plan agreed with the family will state clearly the amount of money available, how the money will be spent, and who will take responsibility for each area of spending.

All ideas and requests can be considered, as long as it is clear how they will enable the child to meet the outcomes identified in the assessment. The Professional working with a family to produce a plan must agree that any requests are in the best interests of the child as they will need to present the final plan to the Children with Disabilities Team Resource Panel for agreement.



# How might the Individual Budget be delivered?



When planning your child's Individual Budget it is important to think about how you would like this to be delivered. When the Plan is written the worker will discuss this with you and gather your views on how much involvement you would like over the delivery of the plan.

## **Direct Payment**

You may choose to have responsibility for the financial management of the budget by receiving a 'Direct Payment' to buy all or some of the services outlined in your child's plan.

You will have to open a separate bank account to do this, and you will have to keep all the receipts. The account will be audited periodically, and any unspent money has to be returned to the Council.

Receiving a Direct Payment can mean more flexibility around how and when the services are delivered. However, it also entails more responsibility.

If you choose to receive a Direct Payment to buy some of items identified in the plan yourself Middlesbrough Council will ask you to sign an 'Individual Budget Agreement'. The purpose of the agreement is to confirm that you understand how the Direct Payment element of the Individual Budget will operate. It will explain what your responsibilities are as the person receiving

the money and what responsibilities the Council holds in providing the Direct Payment to you.

You must make sure that you have read and understood this Individual Budget Agreement before you sign it. You will need to understand that if you spend the money on anything which has not been agreed then you can be asked to pay it back. Please take time to read the agreement carefully. If you would like to receive a Direct Payment as part of the Individual Budget please ring 01642 579160 and ask for a copy of the Direct Payment Information Guide which explains more about the responsibilities of receiving a Direct Payment.

## **Indirect Delivery**

You may not want to follow a direct delivery plan and may wish to leave the organising to someone else. For example - you may decide to use the money to buy a service that can invoice the Council directly such as an agency or an afterschool club, or you may use your budget for a Council Service

It is important to remember that even when the plan is an 'indirect' plan you will still be responsible for following it. Any changes to the plan must be discussed with the responsible worker.

## Individual Budget Review

Once an Individual Budget is set up it is reviewed every 6 months or sooner in some cases or if circumstances change. The review will be attended by the professional, the family, the child and any service that is being purchased using the Individual Budget. The review will consider the plan and explore how the outcomes identified are being met.

It is expected that the plan will have resulted in some change – your child will have had opportunities to support their development - you will have had the opportunity to have a break or to spend time with other children or family members.

The review will help think about what has changed and how this has happened - it will help planning for the future. If the plan has not resulted in any benefits or change, then this will need to be looked at.

## Flexibility

While it is expected that the plan will be followed, there may be times when circumstances mean that changes have to be made. Small changes can be negotiated between the worker and the family as long as they remain within the agreed budget and the outcomes of the plan. Any major change must be referred back to the Children with Disabilities Resource Panel. If you are unsure about any changes you would like to make to your child's plan, please talk to your social worker, or ring the **Short Break Facilitator at the Children with Disabilities Team on 01642 579160** and they will discuss this with you.



# Frequently asked questions

## **Q: I do not know about services available – what can I spend the money on?**

**A:** The social worker or other professional working with you will help you think of ideas. Start by thinking about your child - what he or she enjoys, and what you would like to help him do or help him learn.

Talk to the person helping you and think about what is important to your child and what is important to you.

### **People have used Budgets to:**

- Employ a personal assistant to take their child out
- Employ a personal assistant to help them go out as a family or to help in the home
- Buy a short break service from an agency
- Buy equipment which helps the child have a good time
- Pay annual membership of groups or clubs
- Pay for the child to go to pop concerts or theatre trips
- Pay for rail journeys
- Pay for garden play or activity equipment
- Pay for an after school club
- Pay for activities such as swimming clubs or ballet sessions
- Pay for an activity weekend

None of these ideas might be right for you – but you know your child best and you can think about the sort of activity they would enjoy and the help you need.

## **Q: I do not really understand the difference between an Individual Budget and a Direct Payment. Can you explain?**

**A:** An Individual Budget is the agreed amount you can use to meet the needs of your child. The budget can be used to purchase a range of services including council services - you do not have to handle the money – the budget can be held for you, and you can control how it is spent. If you wish all or some of the money to be given to you so you can purchase services yourself it will be paid directly to you – this is a Direct Payment. The money is paid to you and you open a separate bank account for it to be paid into. Any money not used is returned to the Council.

## **Q: I am still not sure I understand. Can you give me an example?**

**A:** James is 13 and has autism and learning disabilities. His family love him very much but they need a break sometimes. James loves trains and loves going out. James has been having overnight stays at a Residential Short Break Centre and has also had outings with a worker from a support service. But

James' family now want to try Individual Budgets to look at different experiences for James. The family complete a Resource Allocation System (RAS) and are given a budget. They use some of the money to have a Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant - they choose someone they know from the school – this is someone James likes. They use the rest of the money to plan outings for James using the trains. Every weekend James and his worker go on a train journey. James is learning to use the trains, and is visiting many new places. James loves this and his family have a break each week-end. James is happier and more confident. The budget has paid for a camera and James records the journeys.

**Q: If I buy a service from the Council will I receive the money directly to buy this service?**

**A: No**, if you use some of the budget to buy an in-house service, for example five hours of support from the South Tees Home Support Service per week or one overnight per month at Gleneagles Resource Centre then this money will be reduced from the budget.

**Q: If I choose to include a one-off item such as annual membership of a gym or a piece of equipment in the plan how will this be paid for?**

**A:** If you choose to buy a 'one off item' as part of the plan then this can be purchased directly by the Council on your behalf or you can choose to receive a Direct Payment to buy this yourself. The money would be available soon after the

plan was agreed. Please see the Direct Payment information booklet for further guidance about what to expect.

**Q: Can I spend the whole of my child's budget on a holiday?**

**A: No.** If the outcome of your child's assessment concludes that there is a need for your child to receive an overnight short break on a regular basis then it is expected that this break will happen on a regular basis throughout the year. Support will be given to find an overnight short break that will best meet the needs of your child and your family. It is important to remember that the Individual Budget is there to support your child and your family throughout the year.

However some families do use a part of their budget so that the family can enjoy a short break together – where it can be demonstrated that this is in the interests of the child/young person and where this would not otherwise be possible. Some families use the money to take a support worker or additional family member with them so that the child can be part of a family break, but also so that they can have some additional support, or some time to have a break or spend time doing activities with their other children.

Some families have used the money to cover the full cost of a family short break but this is often only in unusual circumstances and where the plan also includes a range of other activities etc across the year.

The money must be used to meet the needs identified in the assessment.

**Q: Once the budget plan is written can it be changed during the year?**

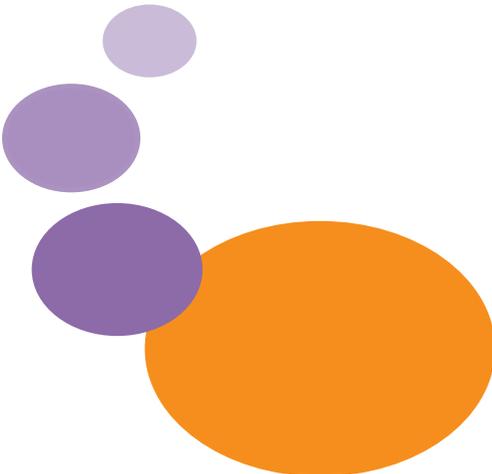
**A: Yes,** as long as there is money left in the budget to make the changes and the changes meet the needs of your child and the outcomes identified in the assessment. Any small changes will be looked at by the worker who completed the plan with you to make sure that the change is in the best interests of your child. For example if the plan was for your child to attend football training, but you decided instead to go to ice skating this would not usually be a problem. However if the plan was for your child to have a weekly service and you wanted to use the money to buy equipment or a holiday instead, then you **MUST** discuss this before going ahead.

**Q: If my Direct Payment worker leaves can I employ an agency to provide the same service?**

**A: Yes,** if you use some of the budget to employ a Personal Assistant and the Personal Assistant leaves their job then you can change the plan to include support from an Agency instead of recruiting another Personal Assistant. However, it is important to be aware that the Agency will probably be more expensive than a Direct Payment worker and so there must be enough money left in the budget to enable you to afford the same number of hours. You must discuss this with your social worker.

**Q: What happens if money is left at the end of the year ?**

**A:** At the end of the year any money left must be repaid to the Council.





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This handbook was given to you by:

Name

Contact No.

The information in this handbook was correct at time of print November 2013.

We can provide this information in other languages,  
large print, Braille, on CD or tape.

سوف نحاول ان نجعل ملخص هذه الوثيقة متوفرة بلغات اخرى, الابزل وكتابة  
كبيرة عند الطلب.

ہم کوشش کریں گے کہ اس دستاویز کا خلاصہ دوسری زبانوں میں مہیا کیا جاسکے مزید  
آپکی درخواست پر اسے بریتل یا موٹے الفاظ میں بھی فراہم کیا جاسکے گا