



# INDIVIDUAL SERVICE FUNDS

A look at how iDirect have supported three individuals to meet desired outcomes through the use of an ISF.

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# AN OVERVIEW

Individual Service Funds (ISFs) were introduced by the Care Act in 2014, as a promoted option for commissioning self-directed support. Since then, a number of local authorities have developed an offer around ISFs and have been able to spend time 'testing and learning' from this approach.

When used creatively ISFs move control away from commissioners and closer towards the person and to the organisation that is contracted to help manage their personal budget through what is essentially a flexible form of commissioned support. ISFs can open opportunities for innovation and also for greater collective action, for example, when a group of people using ISFs pool their budgets to pay jointly for support or activities that might be more difficult or costly to commission individually (in some cases reducing the overall costs of support).



An ISF also enables people, families and professionals to have better ongoing conversations about how to make best use of available resources and to identify and agree the outcomes that they will work towards collaboratively, with support providers and social work teams operating in a closer partnership making changes to support in a more adaptive and natural way.







At home and in communities much support is still provided by family and friends on an informal basis. In these scenarios ISFs can provide people with a more secure framework, where budgets can be used flexibly as required (particularly important where there are fluctuating needs), and where the support of friends or family can be used to complement funded support (with the safety net of the unspent personal budget remaining available). Over time the strengthening and development of these networks may enable people to reduce the overall cost of their personal budgets, utilising these more informal supports and wider social capital. Conversely, when councils directly commission services on behalf of people, they retain the ongoing responsibility for finding efficiencies or savings, and adapting support arrangements, with lesser or greater effect.



“

*Individual Service Funds are an essential element to the reform health and social care services. They enable Personal Budgets to be managed on behalf of a person and reduce the complexity and bureaucracy for the people and families.*

”



# HOW IT STARTED

In 2016, we began supporting an individual through an ISF. We were delighted to work alongside Dorset Council as the first provider in Dorset to test and implement the foundations of the approach, which we felt offered people more choice and control over their support. In particular we were able to work in partnership to check legal position, create wording for three-way agreement and Undertake mental Capacity assessments and best Interest meetings where necessary. We also needed to explore Individual fee breakdowns, set up an ISF payment mechanism, facilitate the signing of new ISF agreements and undertake regular ongoing review and troubleshooting.

Individual Service Agreements were developed for the person, based on the agreed resource allocation from the fee breakdown exercise. A template agreement was developed and shared with the Project team to make adjustments to wording. The three-way agreement contains a section for each of the three parties, setting out what each party should expect from the arrangement, and any responsibilities they have in their part of the arrangement. Following the MCA and Best Interests processes, an agreement was drawn up for the person and signed by each of the three parties (which included the representative for each person in their Best Interest process).

Today we support three individuals with an ISF. We have learnt that as an organisation there are four key areas which we need in order to effectively manage an ISF with an individual. A facility to manage the person's individual budget, capacity to support people to plan creatively using their individual budgets, ability to routinely report to the person on how their budget has been spent and what it has achieved and flexibility to change the support arrangement as the person's life changes.

Next we will look at how an ISF has impacted on the people we support:





# BEV



## A BRIEF LOOK AT BEV'S LIFE...

Bev, is a 53-year-old woman with complex mental, and physical health needs and a Learning disability.

Bev experienced a difficult childhood; she was the victim of physical, sexual and emotional abuse from family members and experienced bullying at school. This led to Bev finding life extremely difficult to cope with, which caused her to engage in self-harming behaviours and criminal offences.

Bev would also struggle with frequent depressive episodes and was unable to maintain healthy relationships; often being taken advantage of by others, and finding it difficult to integrate in to her community.

Bev was convicted of offences including damage to property, fire setting/arson and physical assaults which led to her imprisonments in 2006 and 2008.

She was later diagnosed with Emotionally Unstable Personality Disorder after she was admitted to St. Andrews Hospital when it was recognised that her behaviours occurred as a result of her mental health.

Bev spent 7 years as an inpatient at St. Andrews, whereby she began to engage in treatment, therapy and moved in to supported living in 2015.

At first, Bev received 1:1 support from staff 24 hours per day. After the introduction of an ISF in 2017, she began working towards reducing her support hours.





# OUTCOMES

## MENTAL & PHYSICAL HEALTH

Bev's support & ISF has been paramount in managing her mental health; she recognises certain times of the year are very stressful for her; such as the anniversary of her brother's suicide, so she is able to bank her hours to utilise for additional support at those times. Bev feels this has been essential in keeping her out of hospital - she shared:

*"If I didn't have my staff during some of the bad wobbles, I would have definitely tried to hurt myself and probably ended up back in hospital".*

Bev has also shared her feelings around how iDirect have helped her employ the right people for her team ('the girls') she says:

*"They (iDirect) know what kind of people I like, and get my involved in whatever way I want - I can meet people for a coffee or come to the interview which helps me choose the right people. If I don't get on with staff like in previous places, I can't trust them. My girls' know me well and can help me when I'm having a wobble because I don't always recognise this myself"*



Bev has experienced several difficult periods since moving in to the community, with her brother's suicide, death of another brother and other life events which have been stressful. During these times she has been able to utilise her support and engage in support and strategies which has helped her avoid self-destructive behaviours and relapse.

She has remained compliant of her Ministry of Justice Conditional discharge, built positive relationships with her local CMHT and engaged with prescribed medication. These are all things that Bev has had difficulty with in the past.

Another positive outcome which has been achieved was for us to support Bev with building on skills and techniques she can use independently to help her self-manage any difficult emotions. Over time, as her support has reduced, she has been able to work through things on her own, without support which has been fantastic.



Bev has also engaged with support from iDirect to manage her physical health. Bev has been able to accept regular additional health checks such as mammograms and cervical screenings which is a huge outcome for her, and any new physical health issues have been found and treated which demonstrates meeting one of the desired outcomes for Bev of "Managing my physical and mental health"



# RELATIONSHIPS

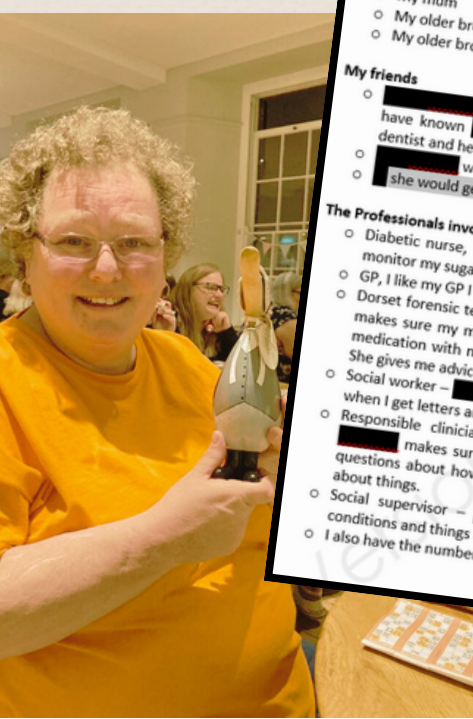
Bev has a history of turbulent relationships; often being taken advantage of by others. She has also found it difficult to maintain relationships.

Since 2015, Bev has established many new friendships - with people in her community, neighbours, through social groups and with others at iDirect. Bev has been able to maintain all of these relationships and has also been able to set boundaries to ensure she is safe - this is something she has found extremely difficult before, which had led to her being taken advantage of financially and emotionally.

Bev has also continued to build on family relationships - these were extremely strained due to the complexities of her family history. She was able to reconnect with her brothers before their deaths, and maintains regular contact and meetings with her mum.

Bev has always found herself a natural care-giver - she loves to help others and this gives her a great sense of purpose. Bev has established a great relationship with her neighbours, who are older and struggle with some tasks, so they will often buy food which Bev will prepare for herself and them. This obviously provides them with help, but also allows Bev to fulfil her need to help others, and also gives her motivation to cook food for herself as she can often find it difficult to do this for herself.

Have a look below at Bev's relationship map before and now!



2015

2023

**People in My Life**

**My family**

- My mum
- My older brother
- My older brother [redacted], his wife [redacted] I do see them but we are not close. he has 4 children

**My friends**

- [redacted] and his wife [redacted] they are very important people to me, I have known [redacted] since I was 18 and he is like a big brother. He was my dentist and he also helped out doing odd jobs.
- [redacted] who I met in prison then again in hospital, she lives in Bristol
- [redacted] she would get into wrong situations, so I sometimes bump into her!

**The Professionals involved in my life:**

- Diabetic nurse, I visit her weekly at the surgery, she helps me learn how to monitor my sugar levels and inject my insulin
- GP, I like my GP I don't feel judged
- Dorset forensic team - Community Psychiatric nurse [redacted] makes sure my mental health is ok and visits me at home. She sorts out my medication with my GP and checks I have my bloods taken for my Clozapine. She gives me advice on what to do if I feel I want to cut myself.
- Social worker - [redacted] visits me at home, she makes phone calls to people when I get letters and don't understand them.
- Responsible clinician - Dr [redacted] makes sure I am ok and checks on my mental health. She asks me about things.
- Consultant forensic psychologist. [redacted] questions about how I am managing now I have left hospital and how I feel about things.
- Social supervisor - [redacted] makes sure I am sticking to my conditions and things are going well.
- I also have the numbers for the crisis team in Dorchester

**FAMILY**

- My mum - Janet
- My dog, Cassie.
- I also have a sister in law, Sarah, and nephews Connor and Kieran who I don't see very often.

**PAID PEOPLE**

- My iDirect core staff team ("the girls") Karen, Trish, Sarah, Shereece, Rosie & Izzy
- Others at iDirect: Katy-Ann, Lucy, Jane, Bev, Georgie, Scarlett
- CPN - Lyndsey Maunder
- Psychiatrist - Amy Slidder
- Social Worker - Sarah Humby
- GP - Dr Bailey
- Dentist

**GOOD FRIENDS**

- Another person supported by iDirect: Sophie
- Kate Hedren - we were in prison and hospital together. She has a son, Harry.
- Pinkie
- Sam, Steve & Harper - old neighbours who I keep in touch with.

**OTHER PEOPLE**

- Other people supported by iDirect: Iona, Holly, Jenny and Kathy
- People on my 'Card List'
- People at Bingo
- People from my local café





## INDEPENDENCE & SUPPORT REDUCTION

A desired outcome highlighted for Bev has been around reducing her support and empowering her to feel confident to be without support. Her ISF allowed this process to go slowly, at her pace. We began with withdrawing support for an episode of Coronation Street, and this slowly increased to where she now has 63.5 hours of support per week, and no sleep-ins! Bev has always been very generous in accrediting her progress to the 'girls' - but this has not been accomplished without her own hard work. Bev used to stay inside if she was unsupported, but has since met with friends, gone out in the community and to activities independently - this is something that Bev would never have considered possible for her in 2016.

Bev's ISF has also been a really useful tool in the reduction of her support, as she has been motivated to 'save' hours so she can utilise those to meet other outcomes. Bev has reduced her support by 1820 hours, and 365 sleeps per year!



## MEANINGFUL ACTIVITY

Bev has also been able to achieve a fulfilled social and purposeful activity schedule since being supported by iDirect. Some of the clubs she has enjoyed include Arts and crafts, bingo, Aquafit, photography and coffee and chatter club. Bev has also enjoyed attending less regular events such as country shows, craft fairs etc., and spend a lot of time with her friends - either at home, out for lunch, shopping or meeting for a coffee. Due to Bev's history of finding it very difficult to integrate in to social settings and groups, this demonstrates how far she has come with the right support.

Bev has always desired to go on Holiday and has been able to enjoy annual holidays in the UK with friends (supported by banking ISF hours to utilise extra support). She regularly visits her friend Kate in Bristol and is planning to venture overseas to Ireland later this year to visit an old friend, Kitty.



Another outcome was being involved in the writing and publication of a book in 2016, around mental health help, and travelling to London for the Launch.

Bev was invited to speak about her experiences of being an ex-offender with support needs for Skills for Care in 2019; this is something she was able to attend due to being able to flex her support. At the convention she spoke so openly and honestly about her experiences, that she was offered a job to advocate for other people, with the National Institute for Inclusion!



# DEBBIE



## A BRIEF LOOK AT DEBBIE'S LIFE...

We began supporting Debbie, 46 in 2020, where she transitioned from living at home, to a house with three other people that she knows. Debbie has a diagnosis of a moderate learning disability, cerebral palsy and anxiety which has made life very difficult for her at times. Debbie had always lived with her Mum and Dad, so this move was a huge change for her.

By utilising her ISF to transition at her own pace, she slowly moved in to her home which is not always possible with traditionally commissioned support: this will often result in wasted money or a rushed transition which ultimately fails.

Debbie's anxiety can be very limiting for her, and her ISF allows her more choice over which support staff she has for certain days - this was helpful as certain personal tasks she only felt comfortable with certain people supporting her. Through this, she has been able to develop more confidence and openly accepts more staff now. At first, Debbie would still rely on her mum for support with aspects of personal care and hygiene, but has since built the confidence and trust with her staff team for them to provide this support for her instead. In turn - this helps promote a positive relationship between Debbie and Mum.

An ISF has also provided Debbie with the ability to maintain important relationships; Debbie is extremely close with her parents, and the ISF has given her control to cancel her support so she can go on holiday with them. In many circumstances she either wouldn't have been able to go, would have had to pay for support regardless or take support staff with her. None of these options are particularly empowering or supporting of the desired outcomes for people we support.





# OUTCOMES

## SKILLS

Due to Debbie's cerebral palsy, she experiences tremors and a significant weakness in her hands. This makes many daily living tasks very difficult for her, and of course has affected her confidence. It also meant that she needed support for tasks such as making a cup of tea etc., Debbie was able to use her funding to purchase assistive technology which meant she did not always need support. One example is a 'one-cup' which made it possible for her to safely make a hot drink at home. This has allowed Debbie to experience independence, enjoy time on her own and has helped her confidence - especially around cooking and other kitchen related tasks.

Previously Debbie had not felt able to join in with weekly shopping, and this was highlighted as a desired outcome for her. Debbie is now the person in the home who organises this with everyone; from writing shopping lists, to meal plans and completing the shopping without fail!



## SOCIAL CONNECTIONS

Debbie has also been able to flex her hours to enable her to attend events and activities that would be 'outside' of her commissioned hours; for example discos, trips to nearby towns and has big plans for make on of her ultimate dreams come true; a trip to the theatre!

We can also see a stark difference in her confidence levels, when she'd visit the office before she would often wait in the car, she now comes in a chats to the office staff. Similarly when visiting the home, she used to retreat to her room, but during my last visit with Debbie, she opened the door to me, offered and made a drink. This is a huge accomplishment for Debbie, who struggles with these things due to a mixture of her anxiety and tremor.

Overall we can see how the flexibility and control an ISF offers, has helped Debbie's develop her skills, grow in independence and maintain and develop important relationships to her.





## FUTURE PLANNING

Debbie has also demonstrated progress in being able to engage more actively in her support and planning. Since her confidence has grown, she has actively participated in her planning day and been communicative around her wishes and desires. See below for some photo's from her recent planning day.



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Debbie has also began to enjoy swimming once a week, and this provides her with further opportunity to meet others and is also good for her physical health.

The support that is provided to Debbie has also allowed her family relationships to improve, due the responsibility being removed solely from them - they now have more time to focus on meaningful activities and interactions.

Overall we can see how the flexibility and control an ISF offers, has helped Debbie's develop her skills, grow in independence and maintain and develop important relationships to her.





# ADAM



## A BRIEF LOOK AT ADAM'S LIFE...

Adam is 38 years old and has been supported by iDirect since 2021 in a house he shares with three other friends. Adam has a learning disability, cerebral palsy and struggles with depression. Before we began supporting him, he spent over two months in bed due to a depression and a fear that he would be 'locked up forever' by someone.

Adam's relationship had become very strained with his mother, who he lived at home with. This was due to his low mood and his mum being the closest thing to him. Mum said

*"Adam struggled so much with the concept of leaving home. I knew he would fly and had to stick to my guns, even though I was watching the slow decline of his mental health. It was an incredibly difficult time for Adam, who withdrew in to himself and didn't speak for 5 months.."*

We were able to provide the gentle support he needed to ensure his transition went at his pace, and that as time oved on, that his hours were flexed to suit his needs. Adam was able to build positive relationships with his staff; something that is due to the person-centered planning required with an ISF. Through this process Adam was involved in recruiting the rest of his staff once he had met and developed a good relationship with the first person, he met to help him with his transition and planning.

Adam has been able to learn many techniques and skills to help him live independently, and is enjoying his new independent living. In such a short space of time, we have been able to support Adam to meet many desired outcomes - both personal and ones identified by the local authority.





# OUTCOMES

## INDEPENDENT SKILLS

Adam experiences a lot of difficulty in completing household tasks, due to the left-sided hemiplegia he experiences which significantly affects the strength and grip in his left hand. He has always had a keen passion for cooking which he was unable to do independently, so relied on support staff for this. However, he was able to utilise his budget in order to obtain some assistive technology which enabled Adam to complete a lot of these tasks independently - this has helped his confidence and allowed him to develop his skills through engaging in activities that are meaningful to him. This Christmas, Adam even cooked his family a meal on his own!

Adam has a big passion for cooking so this has been important for him to develop his confidence to allow him to indulge in his passion - Adam has shared how pleased he is to be able to do this.

Adaptions have also been made to his shower which allows him to completely manage his own personal care in a safe way. Again we see these skills being an important part of people feeling empowered and their confidence increasing, which has a positive impact in other areas of their lives.

## PAID EMPLOYMENT

Adam has also been able to use the flexibility offered by an ISF to gain confidence in other areas, in which he now does not require support with. For example, Adam used to require support to attend his job with him, which then decreased to support to and from work and now he independently does this all and can utilise the support hours elsewhere or use the budget for something different - whilst successfully maintaining paid employment!

By doing this, Adam now used his hours for three longer days of support per week, which has allowed him to engage in more meaningful activities, such as day trips and visiting museums. He finds this really beneficial, as it allows him to visit places he wants to which he could not do when his support was spread over his work.





## RELATIONSHIPS

Another thing that Adam identified as being an outcome he'd like to meet, was to find a girlfriend, In 2021 Adam achieved this! Adam flexed his support hours to enable him to have support to attend an iDirect party, where he met a woman who he is now in a happy relationship with. Adam wanted support that day as it was the first party he would attend, and otherwise would not have attended.

Adam is still in a happy relationship with the same lady today, and they are excited to plan the future together! The next goal on the cards is a weekend away!

Other important relationships in Adams life were strained before he moved home. In particular, the relationship with his mum. Adam lived with his mum and relied heavily on her for support. She also found herself being the target of verbal harassment due to the troubles he was experiencing. The relationships have all drastically improved, his mum said:

*"What a transformation! iDirect came on to the scene, they saw how much he was struggling, and when they said "we'll bring him back" I cried. So gentle, so kind.*

*At last, Adam courageously put his hand out for help and before too long, with the guidance and support of those around him, he knew he could make the transition from home to his new home.*

*This was the opportunity of a lifetime. With the support of iDirect, I can now be a mum and not a carer, safe in the knowledge that Adam is well cared for."*

Here is another example of how the use of an ISF and correct support can provide not only positive outcomes for the people we support, but also for their family members and carers too - through their reassurance that the person is receiving the right support, and also from the respite received due to support being in place - oftentimes taking the sole responsibility away from them which helps move their relationship from a 'carer/patient' one to something more appropriate and enjoyable for all parties..

## SOCIAL LIFE

Adam has utilised his support in order to gain confidence in social situations that he would otherwise not feel comfortable in. This has meant he has attended new groups, met new friends and generally finds it easier to socialise with others. This was an identified outcome for Adam which we can also celebrate him achieving!







# BENEFITS FOR THE PERSON

Here we highlight the positive impacts that as ISF has had on the people we support. We understand that the success is ultimately down to the person and their hard work, however an ISF has been an essential tool in allowing them to engage within the process.

## Relationships.

The most evident outcome that we have seen through the provision of an ISF is community engagement and increased or renewed relationships. We have seen how an ISF can promote the development of new relationships and the maintenance of relationships already important to the person. This has been through confidence building, flexible hours, groups and even through offering respite for carers which is flexible for them.

## Community Engagement

Often, people we support have had difficulties in engaging in their communities, this has been through anxiety, behaviours or lack of opportunities. This is where we see ISF's have more positive effects - by giving people the tool to reengage with their communities in a way that wish. For example by being supported to go to a group at first until confident to go alone, or through using funding to pay for transport. When people are able to engage in their communities and partake in meaningful activity, it helps their overall wellbeing.

## Inclusion

Having an ISF has also enabled people to feel more included - in their own lives, in their support and in their communities.

People often report feeling isolated from their support, this is not possible with an ISF where it relies so heavily on person-centred planning to establish. This helps the person be more in control of what their support will look like. Once per year, we arrange a person-centred review to celebrate achievements, identify goals and plan actions together for achieving those goals.





# BENEFITS FOR THE PERSON

## Increased motivation

We can see that the flexibility and control people are given with an ISF helps contribute to an increase in motivation – through empowerment, increased confidence and developing skills. When people can have more control over their lives, it improves their overall wellbeing. When people are happier, they have more motivation overall. For example, when people start making decisions and seeing the growth and achievements, it makes them want more.

## Increased Independence

We can see in the above examples just how an ISF can support someone's independence. When the ISF is used for assistive technology, staff training, confidence gaining, developing skills and meaningful activities it helps promote the persons independence. We have seen a reduction in required funding for people due to this too.

## Improved wellbeing and quality of life.

Community involvement, inclusion and motivation are all indicators of improved wellbeing. We are seeing that an ISF has helped promote an improvement in wellbeing in all three individuals we support with an ISF. The examples also suggest that the ISF can help support people to avoid admission to other settings such as prison or hospital.



# BENEFITS FOR THE PROVIDER

## Increased staff motivation and satisfaction

Where rigid funding can someone's block outcomes being met, ISF's work in the opposite way which is fulfilling and motivating. This arises from the improved clarity of focus and purpose that outcome-based work can provide. Staff feel empowered by being given the opportunity not just to provide a service but to make a difference. The increased flexibility they now have allows them to develop their own ways of working. Staff are benefitting from being able to contribute ideas, use their judgment and bring more of themselves to the job.

## Increased Responsiveness:

As changes can be made to the persons support, within their budget, without permission from the commissioner, it allows us to be more responsive to the requests in a timely manner.

## Personalisation & Inclusion

We must ensure that planning and reviews are person centred which allows us to be able to work with the person and/or their family to ensure the support they receive is effective and what the person needs.

## Outcomes

Providers are able to support people to meet outcomes which are otherwise not possible, or very difficult with rigid commissioning. This of course is positive for the person, but also for the provider, too.

## Transparency

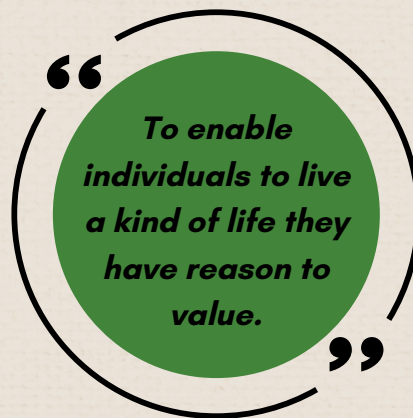
An ISF offers transparency on exactly how the budget is used. This ensures that providers are transparent and using the budget for it's intended purpose.





# COMPANY DETAILS

We are iDirect Independent Living. We are an organisation, founded in 2014, who now support nearly 50 people across Dorset, Wiltshire and Hampshire. The people we support have a learning disability, autism and/or mental health needs. Our vision is simply:



We strive to enable people to pursue active and fulfilling lives, gain increased independence and achieve equal rights as citizens. For the past 8 years, we have been working towards greater choice and control for the people we support through offering self directed support options.


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