

## Steve Dowson: Background and expertise

Steve provides training and consultancy concerned with the design and delivery of social care for people who have disabilities. He works independently, but often in association with other organisations, especially the National Development Team for Inclusion (NDTi).



Steve has been concerned with social care for almost forty years, in a variety of roles. Originally a social worker, he was involved during the 1970s in enabling people to move from long-stay institutions, and pioneered several alternatives to residential care for people with learning disabilities, including group homes, sheltered housing, and the first co-residence scheme in England. He went on to become a social services researcher, and then served for seven years as national director of the influential campaigning organisation, *Values Into Action* (VIA).

Since leaving VIA in 1994 he has worked as a consultant and trainer, including three years as a partner in *Emprise International Training and Consultancy*, and four years as Director of Development with the National Development Team ([www.ndti.org.uk](http://www.ndti.org.uk)).

### Range of work and expertise

These roles have led to involvement in projects covering a very wide range of topics, and to many published reports and journal articles. The larger publications include –

- Self-advocacy (***Keeping it Safe: Self-advocacy by people with learning difficulties and the professional response***, Values Into Action, 1991); ***On One Side: The role of the adviser in supporting people with learning difficulties in self-advocacy groups***, Values Into Action, 1993) - co-authored with Andrea Whittaker)
- Empowerment of service users (***Empowerment within services: A comfortable delusion*** in ***Empowerment in Everyday Life: Learning Disability***, Ramcharan P. et al, (eds.) Jessica Kingsley, 1997); ***Action for empowerment: A method of self-audit for services to people with learning difficulties or mental health support needs*** National Tenants Resource Centre, 1998)
- The relationship between social services and community (***Moving to the Dance - or - Service Culture and Community Care***, Values Into Action, 1991)
- Alternatives to centre-based day services (***Certainties without Centres? A discussion paper on day services for people who have learning difficulties***, Values Into Action, 1998)
- Implications of genetic technologies for disabled people. (***As Nature Intended? Attitudes to the New Genetics and People with Learning Difficulties*** Values Into Action, 2003)
- Quality Assurance methods. (***Supporting Citizenship: A method of assessing the quality of services for people who have learning difficulties***, Values Into Action, 1996)
- Person-centred planning. (***My Life: A method of individual planning for people supported by social care services***, Commissioned and published by Heritage Care Ltd, London, 1998)

As a trainer, Steve's work has also covered a variety of topics, including social inclusion, advocacy, employment, social role valorisation, and campaigning.

## Work on individualised funding and support brokerage

As a consultant, writer, and campaigner, Steve's underlying aim has been to contribute to the development of a social care system that supports the rights of disabled people as citizens. In particular, he has sought to understand why progress towards this goal has been slow in comparison to the vast investment over the decades in training, new working methods, and new legislation. In 1989 he encountered the twin concepts of individualised funding and support brokers, as first defined by a group of parents in British Columbia, Canada. (In essence, individualised funding enables people to purchase their own services, and covers a variety of initiatives including Direct Payments and Individual Budgets.) These ideas appeared to have unique potential to transform social care.

From these beginnings, Steve has spent much of the last twenty years investigating, advising on, and advocating for, individualised funding. He has undertaken this work in Canada, the U.S., Australia, and Europe, as well as in the UK. Much of the international work was completed in partnership with Brian Salisbury, who was one of the brokers in the original Canadian individualised funding pilot, and who is known internationally as an advocate for independent support brokers. (Work in partnership with Brian Salisbury is asterisked in the list below.) As a result of this work, Steve is recognised internationally as an expert on this area of policy, with a depth and breadth of knowledge that can be equalled by very few in the UK.

Work on this topic has included the following:

- A publication at the time of the Griffiths report arguing that brokerage was a better alternative to care management. (***Who Does What?: the process of enabling people to achieve what they need and want***, Values Into Action, 1990)
- Research commissioned by the Joseph Rowntree Foundation during the 1990s to investigate the development of support brokerage in the UK. (***Means to Control: A review of the service brokerage model in community care***, Values Into Action, 1995)
- Programme Planning for the *First International Conference on Self-determination and Individualised Funding*, held in Seattle in 2000\*. This conference attracted 1200 participants and involved 70 presenters from around the world.
- Production of the report from the Seattle conference\*. (***Foundations for Freedom: International Perspectives on Self-Determination and Individualized Funding***, TASH, USA, 2001)
- Consultant support, over three years, to the development of the Self-determination (individualised funding) project in San Diego, California\*. (2001-2004)
- Training for independent brokers, San Diego (2002)\*
- Research on global innovations in disability policy, carried out for the Roeher Institute, Toronto (2001)\*
- Keynote speaker, on individualised funding, at the *International Congress of Inclusion International*, Melbourne, 2002\*.
- Consultant support to the State of Victoria, Australia, for the development of an individualised funding strategy\*, 2002.
- Author of ***Not Just About the Money: Reshaping social care for self-determination***, published jointly by Community Living and Emprise International Training and Consultancy (2002) – a paper arguing for the development of individualised funding in the UK.
- Architect and project lead for the *Life Planning* Projects in Brent and North Somerset, which piloted the development of individualised funding principles within the framework of Direct Payments.

- Training courses for independent support brokers, UK – so far, delivered to twelve councils.
- A paper contributing to thinking on strategy for the development of local broker resources. (***Independent support brokers: The Why, What, and How***, NDT, 2008)
- Project lead for DH-funded work on the training and accreditation of independent support brokers. (***Custom and Control: the training and accreditation of independent support brokers***, NDT, 2008)
- Presenter and session moderator at the *International conference on Self-Determination*, Detroit, 2008.
- Consultant for an NDT project, in 2008/9, contracted by Skills for Care (London), to develop a detailed specification for the training of independent brokers within the National Qualifications Framework. (***The independent broker role and training requirements - Summary report***, Skills for Care London, 2009  
[http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/\\_library/Resources/Personalisation/Personalisation\\_advice/SfC\\_ISB.pdf](http://www.dhcarenetworks.org.uk/_library/Resources/Personalisation/Personalisation_advice/SfC_ISB.pdf))
- Lead consultant for an NDT contract (2008/9) in Northamptonshire for the development of independent support broker resources.
- Boxall K., Dowson S and Beresford P (2009), Selling individual budgets, choice and control: local and global influences on UK social care policy for people with learning difficulties, *Policy & Politics* vol 37 no 4, pp 499-515, The Policy Press

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