



CUSTOM *and* **CONTROL**

**The training and accreditation of
independent support brokers**

Custom and Control: The training and accreditation of independent support brokers

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Although I have no reason to suppose that anyone would be embarrassed to be associated with the views they expressed, I did not feel that it was right for me to name the people who offered the views that I have quoted in the text. However, it did seem useful to give some indication of the perspective of the person being quoted – whether broker, carer, and so on.

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Steve Dowson
May 2008

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Summary

- 1 This report is a discussion paper which draws on the views of people who are involved, in a variety of ways, in the development of individual budgets and/or brokerage support.
- 2 The main aim of the report is to assist the development of policy in England for the training and accreditation of independent support brokers. The report examines whether there is a need to establish standards for the training of independent brokers, and for a system to decide who can offer their services as an independent broker.
- 3 The best way forward for training and accreditation depends on the nature and scope of the role of independent broker, and there is a lack of agreement on these issues. The report argues that independent brokers should be independent of the council and support providers, and should provide a task-focused service, based on a customer-contractor relationship, that is delivered to meet the requirements of each individual. Brokers should not provide 'secondary supports' that people may require after their plan has been implemented.
- 4 There is widespread concern that independent brokers will become professionalised in undesirable ways, so that they become remote and self-serving, and disempower the people they are intended to serve. A common fear is that a system of regulation will hasten this process.
- 5 There are only a small number of people – probably not more than 100 – currently working as independent brokers in England. A significant increase is very likely, but the rate of growth is difficult to predict. Any system of regulation that is put in place now needs to be appropriate, in complexity and cost, to the small size of the workforce, and reviewed in about three years.
- 6 The report recommends inter-linked regulatory systems for broker training and broker accreditation. Both systems would be voluntary, but would offer incentives to brokers and training providers to move within the regulated system. While providing a means to safeguard the quality of broker services, the systems are designed to allow variation in local broker arrangements, and encourage training providers to develop 'value-added' training.
- 7 It is proposed that broker accreditation should be through local accreditation bodies, under the control of users and carers, in each council area. Each accreditation would be responsible for promoting and monitoring independent broker services, and decide the level of training that accredited brokers must possess. This would put the accreditation bodies in the position of intermediate customers of the training provider organisations.
- 8 It is proposed that, as part of this initial regulatory system, a single organisation should be responsible for accrediting training courses. This agency would not only assess whether a training course met minimum standards, but also check whether the training delivered 'value-added' components. This information would assist local accreditation bodies in setting training requirements.

1 Introduction

1.1 The aim of this report

This report is concerned with a new kind of worker in social care, commonly called an independent support broker. The ultimate aim of the report is assist the development of national policy for the training and accreditation, and it includes (in Section 6) a set of recommendations which have implications for central government policy-makers.

The right way forward for the training and accreditation of brokers can only be decided when the nature and scope of the role of independent broker has been agreed. It needs to be acknowledged that, at present, no such agreement has been reached within the community of people concerned with these issues. So the first aim of the report is to assist discussion that will lead to a higher level of consensus. For this reason, Section 2 provides a summary of the emergence of individual funding as an alternative to care-managed services, and the challenges it presents. This section also offers a review of current thinking, as expressed in both policy statements and in contributions from other organisations and individuals, and highlights the common threads, contradictions, and areas of confusion. Section 3 then sets out the arguments for a particular definition of the role, taking account of the views of people from a wider range of stakeholder groups. The final sections consider the training of brokers (Section 4), accreditation within a framework of regulation (Section 5), and recommendations are set out in Section 6.

1.2 The focus of the report

The report has been produced to help thinking and discussion about two main issues:

- Is there a need to agree standards for the kind of training that independent support brokers should have – and, if so, what kind of standards should they

be, and how should the training be provided?

- Is there a need to form a system of accreditation of independent support brokers, so that people requiring the help of a support broker can be reasonably sure that the broker they choose meets some basic standards of skill, knowledge, and trustworthiness? And, if so, what sort of system would work best?

These are complicated questions. Finding the answers is made a little easier by the fact that similar questions have been asked many times before. There are well-established systems of nationally approved training, not only for social care workers, but for most categories of worker. And the main recognised professions all have systems to make sure people cannot claim to belong to the profession unless they meet clear standards of competence and trustworthiness. The systems that have been established for these groups of workers highlight important principles, elements, and options for the training and accreditation of independent support brokers. It also seems likely that, at least in the longer term, the training for brokers can be placed within the existing national training structure.

On the other hand, finding the right answers for independent support brokers is made more difficult because –

- The role of independent support broker is very new to the UK (and has not been well established elsewhere). At the moment there is very little agreement about how this role fits into the larger system of social care, and the range of jobs that fall within the role. People who all describe themselves as independent support brokers may be doing very different kinds of work. Until there is some general agreement about the role, they

can all equally claim to be doing the work of an independent support broker.

- The role of broker is closely linked, in the UK, to rapid and major changes in the social care system. These changes began in 2003 with a small number of local *In Control* projects, but are now endorsed by central government, and being put in place by most councils. If the role of support broker is defined by the individual budget system in which it operates, then the definition will change as the system changes. Moreover, although the basic structures and procedures of this new system have been defined nationally, local councils are adding their own local 'flavours' to the system – so the role of the broker is being seen differently in different places.
- Individual Budgets enable people to have more control over their own supports and services, and this in turn has provoked a much wider debate about the relationship between people who use social care and the social care industry. That system includes, alongside council social services, and service provider agencies, a large sub-system that is concerned with the development and monitoring of the social care workforce. Personalisation of social care involves moving away from the assumption that people should be given standardised packages of care that have been determined by professionals. If that is so, perhaps it is also time to move away from the assumption that social care workers should be 'delivered' in fixed packages of skills and knowledge, and measured by standards that professionals have set. And, if that is true, then the whole notion of training and accreditation for support brokers (and other workers in social care) is called into question.

These factors raise questions that will have to be explored over many years, as Individual Budgets are developed and more widely implemented, and the full

meaning of personalisation in social care is understood. But it isn't possible to identify the right way forward for the training and accreditation of independent support brokers without being more clear about -

- What work they do
- What is distinctive and valuable about their role
- Who they work for
- How they fit into a system of social care that is based on individual budgets

So this report also examines these issues.

1.3 The views gathered for this report

This report draws on conversations and group discussion with people who have been involved in developing, receiving, and/or contributing to the national debate about, Individual Budgets. The lack of agreed definitions, as described earlier, made it difficult to decide how widely to seek out opinions:

Firstly, it made it difficult to decide which projects and viewpoints to *include*. Should the range of information and opinions be decided simply by the use of the term 'independent support broker' – so that it included any practice development, or any viewpoint, which was identified by that name?

Secondly, it made it difficult to include the viewpoints of people who have not had any involvement in individual budgets, or experienced anything broadly comparable to the services of a support broker. Without being given a definition of the support broker role, they could not offer an opinion, so this would have to be the starting point for a discussion with them. But the definition they were given would then shape the opinion they offered.

The project dealt with the first of these problems by keeping the scope fairly wide. This reduced the risk that the discussions and conclusions of the report would be shaped by one particular view of the support broker role.

The second problem mainly limited the opportunity to include the viewpoints of people who use services and their families/carers. The number of people who are using an Individual Budget is still small, and strongly biased towards people who have learning disabilities and older people. Moreover, most people in other user groups who have an individual budget are linked to the Individual Budget pilot sites. The evaluation of these pilots has created demands on the people involved in them, not least the recipients of individual budgets. There was reluctance at various levels to provide access to the same groups of people in connection with this project on support brokers, out of concern that it would add yet further demands.

These factors, in combination, have meant that the views of people who use services, and their families/carers (with the exception of the families of people with learning disabilities) are under-represented. The inclusion of the views of people in organisations representing the views of users is some compensation, but it has to be acknowledged that these views do not necessarily mirror the diversity of experience and opinion of individual social care users. That said, the range of views and perspectives that were gathered, as indicated by the list in Table 1, provides reasonable confidence that the main issues, hopes, and concerns were highlighted.

TABLE 1: Contributors to the views described in the report

The development of this report involved interviews and seminars which involved a wide range of people, as indicated by the following list. In order to preserve the anonymity of views quoted in the text, the interviews/participants have not been named. Several people had more than one relevant role (for example as individual budget recipient and as a worker assisting IB recipients), but these have only each been listed once.

- Two seminars to discuss the topic, with participants who were mainly carers or social services professionals involved in the implementation of *In Control* projects.
- Senior staff from a national organisation concerned with people who have learning disabilities.
- Senior staff from a national organisation concerned with older people.
- Senior staff from a national organisation concerned with people who have mental health problems.
- The chief executive of a local independent agency that is offering broker services as an extension of direct payment support services.
- Three self-employed brokers.
- A broker working for a user-led organisation offering brokerage and other support to individual budget users.
- The relative of an older person who is receiving an Individual Budget.
- The chief executive of a local organisation that is offering broker services for older people.
- A senior member of a local organisation of disabled people which offers brokerage services.
- Representatives of two organisations offering training for brokers.
- A regional organisation involved in stimulating a range of brokerage support for people using Individual Budgets.
- A senior officer of a national independent development agency.
- An independent consultant who, as a writer, has contributed to the national discussion on brokers and brokerage.

In addition, a variety of organisations and individuals were contacted for advice and information relevant to the development of the proposals in the report.

2 Starting points

2.1 The support broker in context

Although the project set wide boundaries on the information, developments, and viewpoints that were relevant, it was still necessary to start from some assumptions about the role of support broker. It is a role that has become significant, and increasingly debated, as individual budgets have developed – first as local initiatives, and now as the driving force in national social care policy. This section aims to set the emergence of the support broker role within the context of the efforts to create a social care system that upholds the self-determination of people who rely on it for assistance. These efforts have been under way internationally for three decades, but took hold in England in 2003 through the *In Control* initiative.

2.2 Transferring control of purchasing

Individual Budgets are a form of individualised funding (IF). In essence, IF replaces systems where a professional – for example, a care manager – assesses the needs of a disabled person, and then arranges services to meet those needs. In an IF system, people who require assistance because they are disabled are given public funds that they can use to buy services or employ support workers.

There is, of course, another government system that provides public funding to assist people who face higher costs due to age or disability: the welfare benefits system. As a system that is separate from council social services, disability benefits operate very differently from social care, but a key difference is that each benefit is paid as an entitlement, provided that the individual meets certain criteria. If they ‘tick the boxes’ then they receive the benefit, and there are no restrictions on the use that is made of the money. There may be more than one rate of allowance (three in the case of Disability Living Allowance, for example) but the rates are only very

roughly linked to the particularly needs of the individual.

Individualised funding is different because it is individualised. The level of funding is linked much more closely to each person’s particular needs and circumstances.

Experiments with individualised funding systems began at least thirty years ago, and since then many IF projects have been developed in North America, Europe, and Australia. In the UK, the Direct Payments system introduced through the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act in 1996 is a form of individualised funding, though it is placed within the care-managed assessment procedure.

Although the basic concept is simple, individualised funding presents a set of issues that have to be addressed in the way the system is designed. In particular –

- How will the amount of money allocated to each person be decided?
- How will the allocations be kept within the overall budget that is available?
- Who will help people decide how to use the money they have been given, and organise the services they need?
- What limits should there be to the ways in which people may choose to spend the money?
- How – and how far – should checks be made to ensure that people use their money in ways that are deemed acceptable?

Different individualised funding programmes opt for different answers to these questions.

The *In Control* programme, which began in 2003, established a set of procedures that represented one set of answers. The main elements are as follows:

- The appropriate level of funding is identified using a self-assessment form that examines the individual’s level of

need. The form yields a total score of points.

- The monetary value of one point is calculated using a system – the Resource Allocation System (RAS) – that is based on the current service costs of a sample of service users, and the total number of points scored when the self-assessment procedure is applied to this sample group.
- Once the cash value of each point has been established, each person entering the programme (having first being assessed through Fair Access to Care Services as eligible to receive social services from the council) completes the self-assessment, and the score is converted into an indication of the amount of money that will be available. With this knowledge, the person then plans how to use the money.
- These plans must be submitted to the council, in the form of a Support Plan, in order for the council to agree the funding. *In Control* offers a set of seven key questions that need to be answered by the Support Plan. Provided that the questions are answered adequately, the plan should be approved, and the money placed under the person's control.
- The questions that need to be answered in the Support Plan do not oblige people to use specialist services. *In Control's* intention has been to encourage people to find creative ways of using the funding to improve their lives.

Since its inception, *In Control* has revised some of the details in these procedures, particularly the self-assessment form and the Resource Allocation System. But the overall process, with its key stages, remains unchanged, and has been used in the thirteen Individual Budget pilot sites that ran from April 2006 until the end of 2007. Within this framework, local interpretation has become more common,

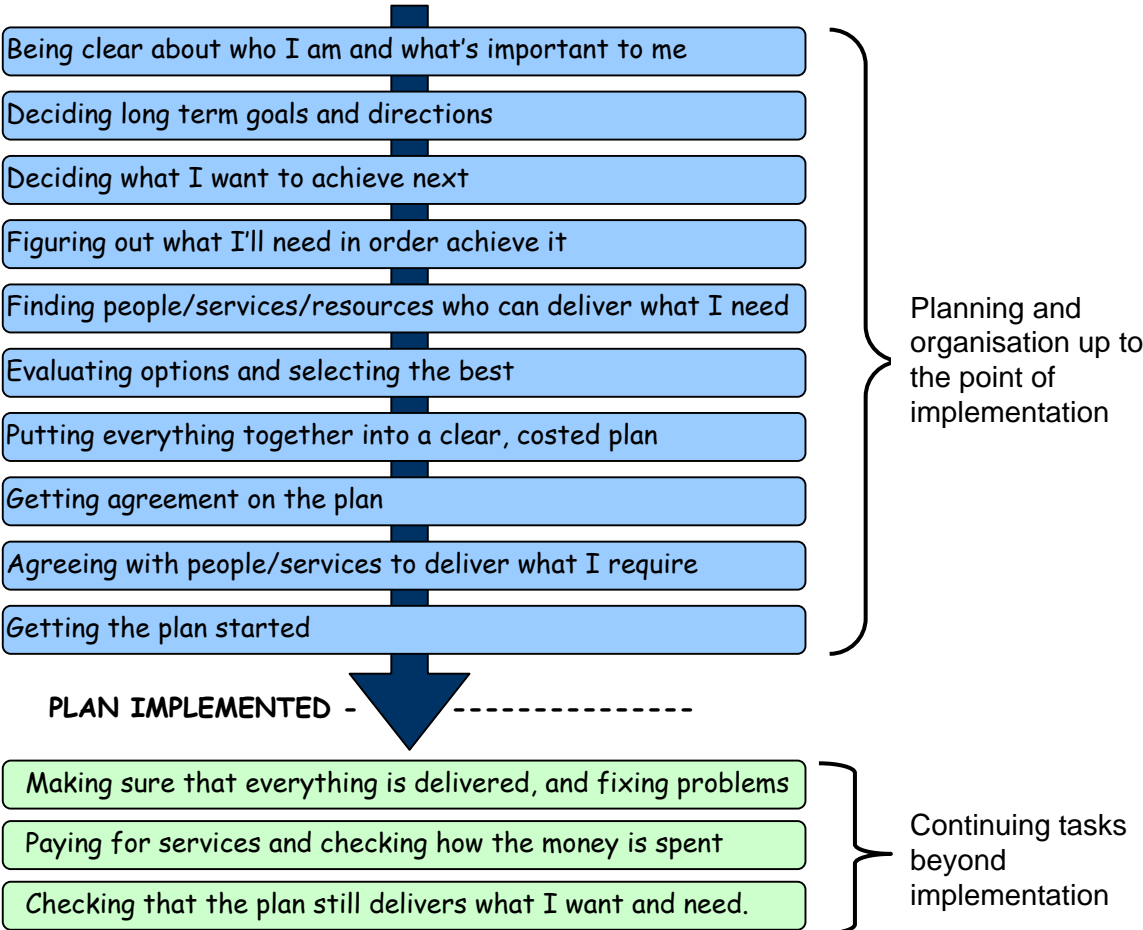
and more pronounced, as *In Control* projects have spread rapidly to two thirds of all English councils. There is also some unease about the loose connection between the ways that people use their Individual Budgets and their 'assessed need', where the latter continues to be the statutory foundation of entitlement to local authority adult social services (Clements 2007). Contact with some councils suggest that there is now a tendency to tighten up or augment the criteria used when considering support plans for approval, but the general intention to allow flexibility in the use of funding remains.

2.3 From budget to better life

In any social care system, someone has to translate the individual's needs – however defined – into a set of services or support arrangements to meet those needs. In a care-managed system, the task rests, by default, with professionals inside the social care system (and with the care manager in particular). However, in an individualised funding system that aims to promote self-determination, the default position falls instead on the person who is receiving the money. Within the process established by *In Control*, the person is told the allocation of funding they can expect to receive, and then has responsibility to develop a costed Support Plan. Once the Support Plan is agreed, they also, by default, have responsibility to implement the Plan. It is also the responsibility of the person to make sure that arrangements identified in the Plan operate successfully after implementation.

In principle, the process of making and implementing a plan involves a set of tasks, in the form of questions to be answered, and actions to be completed. There is also an inevitable logic that determines the ordering of these tasks, as shown in Diagram 1 (opposite). If tasks are omitted, or completed in the wrong order, the plan that results may not be as effective as it could have been in using the money to improve the person's life. For example, planning that is not driven

Diagram 1: the logical sequence of tasks in planning and implementation



from the outset by a clear sense of the person, and their hopes and needs, is not likely to achieve changes that meet the person's requirements. In the same way, failure to explore a variety of options will create the risk that plans will be channelled into solutions based on specialist services, when other options might offer better outcomes, perhaps at lower cost. The process may involve repeatedly exploring and evaluating, and there are several points in the planning process where it may be necessary to cycle through a sub-set of tasks several times.

A well-written Support Plan will help to guide the implementation process, and serve as a benchmark in monitoring the success of the plan in operation. However, because the critical purpose of the Support Plan is to win agreement for the release of funding, both the document and the process of Support Planning tend to be geared to deliver this result. In any case, some activities cannot be completed until the funding has been approved – including, of course, the action necessary to implement the plan. Firm contracts cannot be agreed with support providers, and detailed negotiations with provider agencies may not be worthwhile, until the funding has been approved. Moreover, if Individual Budget holders are to have real customer power, then they cannot be tied to support providers identified in the Support Plan. For all these reasons, a series of tasks, broadly concerned with converting the Support Plan into a set of practical and contractual arrangements, coordinated and readied for implementation, falls outside the scope of Support Planning.

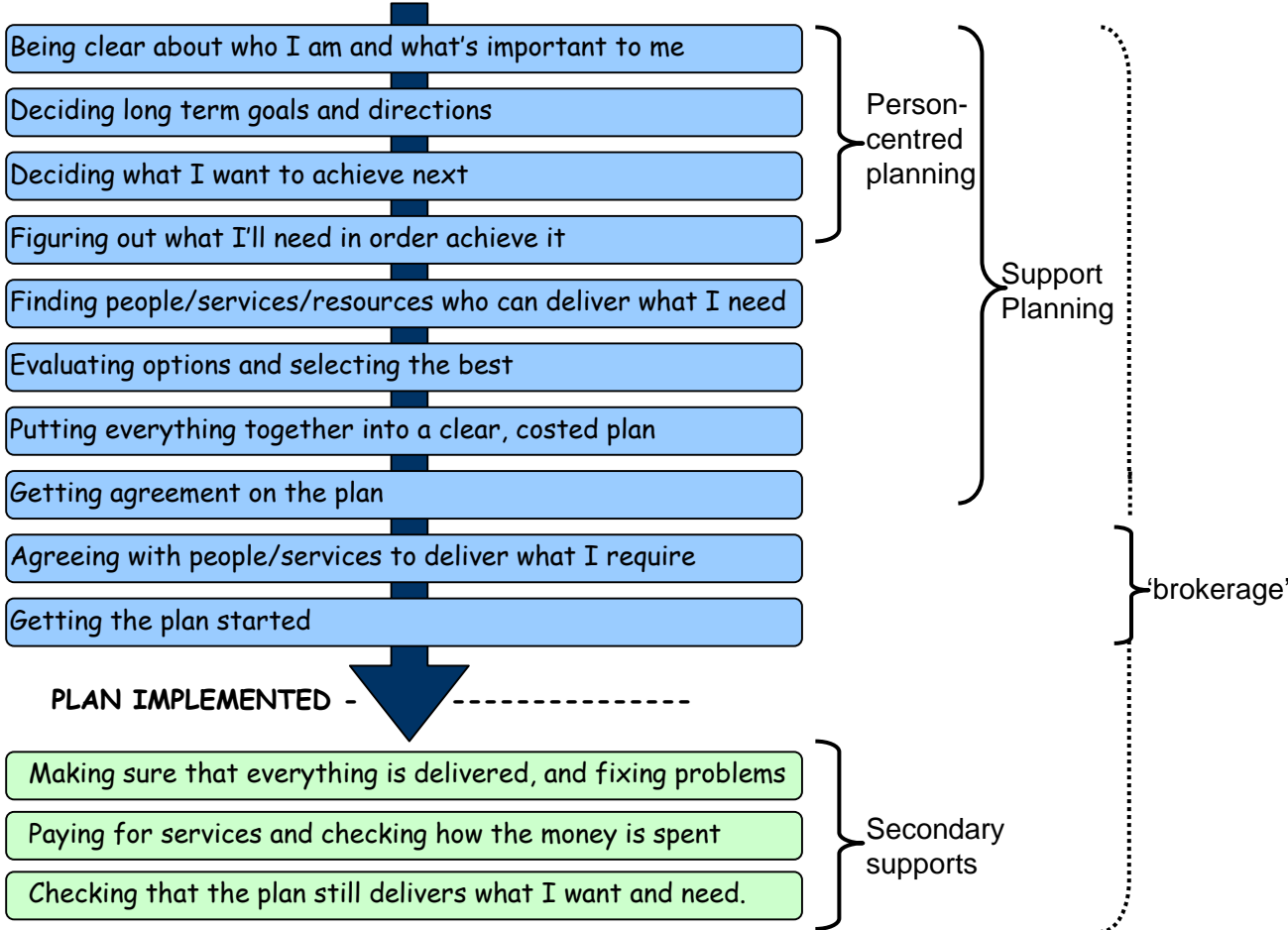
There are also the tasks required to sustain the arrangements once they have been implemented. These are sometimes, and usefully, described as *secondary supports*, because they underpin the primary supports that are provided directly to the person. Effective Support Planning will take account of the need for secondary supports, and build any that are required into the plan itself. However, the *delivery*

of these supports, as an ongoing requirement after implementation, cannot be part of the planning process.

Another term that is used in this context is *brokerage*. This is a term that is used in other contexts – for example in travel and financial services – but the parallels, though worth considering, are not always helpful. In self-directed support systems, as elsewhere, it may be identified with choosing and purchasing specific services: in other words, with the tasks that fall between the end of support planning and implementation. Alternatively, it may be used to cover all the tasks up to the point of implementation, or all tasks including the delivery of secondary supports.

Diagram 2 (opposite) summarises this logic by indicating where these groups of activities fall within the overall logic of planning and implementation.

Diagram 2: Mapping groups of activities onto the planning and implementation process



2.4 Help with the tasks

In Control, as discussed earlier, shifts the responsibility for all these tasks from the social care professional to the person who is receiving the Individual Budget:

“Autonomous support planning is the default option” (Duffy 2007). But that does not mean people have to complete the tasks on their own.

This raises a series of questions. Do people need or want help with these tasks? If so, where can they get help? How far is it the responsibility of government (nationally and locally) to make sure the help is available?

The Social Care White Paper, *Our health, our care, our say*, acknowledged that people will need help, and committed the government to making sure that help is available:

Individuals, their families and other carers need to understand the services that are available in order to make good choices, and they need to receive maximum support in obtaining their chosen service – wherever it is provided. We will develop competencies for workers specifically trained to help individuals with health or social care needs to ‘navigate’ their way through the system, and ensure that the competencies are built into other key roles where people who use services require support.

(Dept. of Health 2006, S8.42)

Although *In Control* began as an initiative focused on people with learning disabilities, its aim has been to establish a universal system, suitable for the whole range of people using social care. (Duffy 2007). The Social Care White Paper reflects this aim in policy, and adopted the *In Control* system in the thirteen IB pilot sites, which tested it across all the main categories of adult social care users.

If such a universal system is to be created, then the need for help, and the form of help

that is appropriate, will vary enormously. For example, an older person may get a very small individual budget, and it may be obvious from the outset that this money will be best used to pay for help at home for a few hours a week. Some advice about employing someone, or contracting with an agency, may be helpful. But if the person is intellectually alert and able to communicate, they may be able to set up the arrangements entirely by themselves.

At the other extreme, a person with profound and multiple impairments may be allocated funding of £60,000 a year, and in some instances substantially more. With a budget of this size there may be an opportunity for radical changes to the person’s life, and yet it may be difficult to know what changes would truly match the person’s desires. Many different plans might be considered, each with different combinations of paid services, employed personal assistants, and informal supports. The selected plan may involve several support workers, new housing arrangements, specialised equipment, access to community resources, and close coordination with health services; and the entire arrangement may fail if any of these do not operate reliably.

While in principle the process of planning and organising the use of the individual budget is the same in both instances, the amount of work and the level of expertise required is very different.

As an initiative that seeks to support self-determination for social care users, *In Control* has avoided suggesting any limit to the range of sources of help that people may choose, or the basis on which that help should be provided. It also regards self-directed support as a “universal system with ‘conservative’ choices” (Duffy 2007), meaning that people using IBs are still free to turn to the care manager for help in supporting planning, and to hold the IB on their behalf. The only clear view from *In Control* on this topic has been a preference for people to make and implement plans for themselves:

It is the view of In Control that whenever possible, disabled people, and their family members and allies, should be encouraged to plan for themselves. There must be no assumption that disabled people and their allies simply lack the capacity to develop their own support plans.

This does not mean that everybody can develop their own support plan without any professional assistance. Some people will certainly need help.

However, some people have proved that they can do just as good a job at planning, and sometimes a much better job, without professional assistance.

Hence imposing professional assistance on everybody will tend to be both wasteful and disempowering.

(In Control 2006)

2.5 Current national thinking on support brokers

Where people do need help from people other than their own friends and family, *In Control* offers a wide list of options:

- *Support brokers – independent people who could help with planning and who are not involved in providing support or in rationing resources.*
- *Support providers – local service providers who can be trusted to develop good and appropriate services.*
- *Advocates – independent professionals who help individuals express their wishes and support them in dealing with problems.*
- *Centres for Independent Living (CILs) – organisations led by disabled people and who already provide help and advice to people who manage Direct Payments.*
- *Person-centred planning facilitators – individuals who are already appointed in some areas to help disabled people as part of a local person-centred planning framework.*
- *Other individuals and families – other disabled people and their families*

may be very willing to offer advice and help to people developing their own plan.

- *Other local services or organisations – there may be other local services or individuals who either could or do provide helpful advice and support to people developing their own support plan (e.g. housing brokers, employment advisors, benefits advisors, etc.).*

(In Control 2006i, p9)

Other papers setting out policy in this area have similarly adopted an approach based on listing options, rather than evaluating them. The paper published by the Care Services Improvement Partnership, *Self-Directed Support: The Role of Support Brokerage within Individual Budgets*, suggested that brokerage “can be simultaneously developed in 5 connected but distinct areas:

1. *Individuals and their families*
2. *Neighbourhoods and local network*
3. *‘User-led’ organisations, for example, Centres for Independent Living*
4. *Key workers, care staff and care managers*
5. *Paid brokers advocates and advice givers*

(Care Services Improvement Partnership 2007)

Here, brokerage is defined as:

the assistance that people need to work out what their choices will be, and the support required to make it happen.
(*ibid*)

The CSIP and In Control categories, in combination, offer some hints about the distinctive characteristics of support brokers, but these fall well short of an adequate definition. Support brokers, it would seem, are people who receive

payment to provide help (unlike families and, presumably, neighbourhoods and networks), and do not work for the council or for support provider agencies.

Although the lack of clear definition persists, there are signs of a growing recognition that, firstly, people often need help to plan and organise the use of their individual budget; and, secondly, that independent support brokers offers distinct advantages as a source of this help. A report in 2006 from the Commission for Social Care Inspection – apparently using ‘brokerage’ to mean the services of support brokers – concluded:

The attractions of brokerage are many. There would appear to be scope for developing a model which is genuinely empowering, and would indeed shift the focus of power from systems to individuals. The model offers great flexibility, the chance to tailor support to personal needs and aspirations, and to get away from the limitations of a restricted and often inappropriate service menu. It is wholly consistent, therefore, with current policy objectives around promoting independence, person-centred support, and maximising choice and control.

(Commission for Social Care Inspection 2006, p30)

The importance of help with the tasks of brokerage has emerged from implementation of individual budgets. The interim report from the team responsible for evaluating the IB pilots stated:

A strong theme to emerge was the importance of support outside of the users’ own caring networks. Access to free brokerage, professional advocates and/or mentoring by someone who has been through the process were seen as crucial to getting the most out of IBs. (Individual Budgets Evaluation Network 2006)

The evaluation of *In Control’s* second phase found that almost every IB user had received help in planning how to use their funding (Hatton 2008 p16). The great majority had turned for this help to family and friends, or to their social worker, with only 18% of people using paid help specifically for this purpose. The people offering this paid help could include independent support brokers, but this is not specified. So there is evidence here that people welcome, and perhaps need, help in support planning, but not evidence of a strong demand for support brokers. However, in a discussion of these findings (ibid p61) there is an acknowledgement that the use of different kinds of help will be constrained by the choices available, and also that the role of the social worker or care manager in checking the support plans may ‘spill over’ into helping to produce the plan; in other words, that the potential demand for people like brokers might be much higher than these figures suggest.

The same evaluation report also indicates a shift in *In Control’s* position on independent support brokers. While continuing (like CSIP) to identify brokers as one of several potential sources of brokerage, *In Control* for the first time offers a discussion which differentiates between these sources and their strengths. Independent brokers are acknowledged to have particular merits:

Engaging a specialist support broker may have advantages. Support brokers are, one hopes, professional, competent, independent and have a clear and distinct role.

(ibid, p70)

Equally, however, there is recognition of problems associated with some alternative sources. While arguing that care managers or social workers are still the best source of help in some situations, there is a risk that

the involvement of care managers and social workers in support planning

could play a role that inhibits the healthy growth of Self-Directed Support.

(ibid, p69)

Similarly, it is recognised that broker services provided by agencies that also provide support services may create a conflict of interest, though, it is argued, potential problems that result can be monitored and managed.

In the light of the second *In Control* evaluation, and these arguments, *In Control* recommends that the promotion of independent support brokerage (i.e the role) should be one element of a five-point strategy for the development of support brokerage (i.e. the function).

The new paper, *Good Practice in Support Planning and Brokerage* (Dept of Health 2008), like earlier statements sponsored by government, supports the view that brokerage can be offered in many ways, and by many sources. This position is so strongly maintained that the paper, notwithstanding its title, offers no clear criteria by which to judge whether any approach or initiative constitutes good practice.

The paper defines brokerage in terms of features, functions, and common activities. The features include a value base, and independence from decision-making about funding in the resource allocation process (but not independence from service provision). The functions cover research to find out what is available and what is possible, provision of information and technical advice, help with person-centred planning and support planning, the development of informal supports. It also includes assistance beyond the point of implementation, i.e. to coordinate supports and resources, and to assist the person to manage their obligations and responsibilities in relation to the budget. The common activities conform to these functions, and also identify secondary support activities as part of brokerage.

The paper uses the model of five areas of brokerage that was first offered by CSIP (see above). It recognises independent brokers as one of these areas, and argues that councils

need to support the development of independent brokerage, but not to the extent that other forms of brokerage suffer.

The *Good Practice* paper defines an independent broker as

someone whose role may include some or all of these things:

- *has the role of helping people plan and organise the support they need*
- *does not have the job of rationing resources*
- *does not have the job of providing direct support services*
- *provides one, some, or all of the brokerage functions described in this paper*
- *an accountability to the person and to act in their best interests*
- *typically paid for their work.*

(Dept of Health 2008, pp31-32)

With each of these characteristics identified as optional, and payment for the work no more than 'typical', this provides a weak and unsatisfactory definition. But the underlying problem is that the focus of the paper on the functions of brokerage ignores issues concerning the nature of the role, and its place within the larger system. It presents sources of brokerage as no more than people or organisations where some of the functions of brokerage happen to have converged.

A parallel can be drawn with the role of the family doctor (general practitioner) in health services. If the family doctor's role is analysed purely in terms of the activities

and functions that the doctor provides, it is apparent that other people possess some of the same skills, and provide some of the same services. These include pharmacists, nurses, counsellors – and, of course, patients themselves. The doctor does not have a monopoly of expertise, or service provided, in any area. Moreover, a family doctor may reach the limit of her/his expertise, and have to refer to specialists. In spite of that, the family doctor has an important, acknowledged, and widely valued role. This is partly because the role is understood, defined, monitored, and regulated; but also because it serves a particular purpose within the healthcare system.

This is not to suggest that the role of the independent support broker is similar in nature, or equal in importance, to that of the family doctor. The point is that an analysis which maps sources of assistance as no more than clusters of relevant skills may not be adequate.

2.6 Evidence from practice

Beyond the UK, and particularly in North America, there have been at least forty projects that have implemented comparable versions of individualised funding, mostly on a small scale. Many of these have included support brokers. Informed opinion arising from these projects leans strongly towards the view that brokers (or “independent planning supports”) are an important, and perhaps essential, element of effective IF systems. (Dowson and Salisbury 2001; Lord Hutchinson 2003; Roeher Institute 2000). However, the evidence to support this view has been questioned (Social Care Institute for Excellence 2007), and this learning has had little impact on UK policy or thinking.

Firm evidence that demonstrates the particular benefits of the independent support broker is not available in the UK, and would be difficult to gather while the number of support brokers who are active in England is small, and the role so poorly defined. Indeed, it is almost impossible to gauge how many independent brokers there are – not least because people may be doing the job without using the term to describe their activities. The National Brokerage Network Website (<http://www.nationalbrokeragenetwork.org.uk>) provides a list of independent brokers across England and Wales, which at March 2008 consisted of nine people. Inclusion in the list is entirely voluntary, and likely to appeal mostly to people who aspire to extend their work as self-employed brokers outside their own council area. It seems unlikely, nevertheless, that there are more than one hundred people, including people working for independent organisations, who would describe themselves as independent support brokers.

3 Towards a clearer picture of the role of independent support broker

As shown in the previous section, the literature emerging from organisations linked to government, and from *In Control*, now identifies the independent support broker as one possible source of assistance to people who are using, or planning to use, an Individual Budget. There is, furthermore, a gentle movement of opinion towards the view that independent brokers have distinctive qualities and advantages, and that they ought to be included in the range of supports that are available in each area.

On the other hand, it is also apparent that there is very little clarity about the role, and useful debate is also impeded by confusion between the role of broker and the tasks of brokerage.

If we are to determine whether there is a need to establish standards for the training and practice of support brokers, then we require a clearer understanding of the independent support broker: the characteristics of the role; its place in the social care system; and the scope of the broker's work. If there is a need to set standards, then the role, and the competencies required to perform the role, will also have to be defined.

This section aims to develop that clearer understanding. It highlights critical issues that need to be addressed, and suggests a logical way forward on each one. It also draws extensively on the wide-ranging views that were gathered for the development of the report.

It needs to be made clear that is *not* the aim of this section, or indeed of the report, to argue the case for the development of independent support broker services. And although it is useful to know whether a particular viewpoint was commonly expressed by interviewees/participants, there was no intention to hold a 'popularity vote' on support brokers. The views that

were gathered served to highlight the variety of views and perspectives, and the issues that people consider important.

3.1 A starting definition

Some generally accepted characteristics of the independent support broker role can be gleaned from the literature described in the previous section. These provide a starting point for further exploration. Specifically, independent support brokers are people –

- **who assist individuals to make use of an individual budget or direct payment**
While the term broker might fit many activities in health and social care, support brokers provide help that that individuals may want or need in order to make use of an individual budget. This help covers the planning and organisation of supports, resources, and other opportunities that the person requires. Whether it also includes continuing assistance after implementation – i.e. secondary support – was an issue for examination within the project.
- **are assisting people as a service**
Family and friends can provide this help, but in that context it is offered on the basis of personal commitment arising from an existing relationship. In contrast, a service is provided on request (subject to general conditions on each side), and the relationship may only exist within the context of service delivery.
- **are paid for the service they provide**
Although it may not define the nature of the relationship, the fact that the broker is receiving money underlines the notion of help as a service. Payment may be made by the person receiving the service (from their IB or

otherwise), or through a grant of contract with an agency. The broker may receive the money as a salary, or as payment for services delivered.

- **are independent**

The requirement of independence may have implications for loyalties and perspectives, as well as accountability. However, it is generally acknowledged that support brokers are not independent if they work for the council social services, or for support providers.

3.2 What kind of a person is a 'support broker'?

People who encounter a new idea, or a new kind of job, inevitably try link it with something that is already familiar. This is very likely to affect the way they understand it. This process is evident in the way that the work of the support broker, and the position of the broker within the social care system, is being described and implemented.

Associations with the word 'broker'.

For some people, the point of similarity is the term 'broker' itself, which is familiar in contexts such as the travel and finance industries. When this is taken as the starting point, it leads to a view of support brokers as people who act as intermediaries between individual customers seeking a product or service, and the marketplace of organisations offering products or services that may be relevant. In essence, the broker provides expert knowledge of the marketplace to help the customer make the choice that meets their requirements, and guides them through the procedures (filling forms, etc.) required to make their purchase.

This makes the role of the support broker appear familiar and straightforward:

Brokerage then is just a way of getting what you want by using a third party to act on your behalf. This works in the same way as an insurance broker or a

travel agent, and it does not need to be any more complicated than that. In this context the 'traded' goods are insurance policies, holidays and support packages.

(Key 2006)

Some comments from interviewees identified this aspect of the support broker's job, identifying the broker as:

- *A signposter*
- *Someone who provides information on options*
- *Someone who 'gets widgets'*
- *Someone who provides links to community resources*
- *People connectors*
- *Good co-ordinators*

One interviewee felt that one of the valuable features of the broker role is that it offers 'one port of call', avoiding the need to approach several agencies or organisations. Another interviewee, however, suggested that the need for 'general-purpose' support brokers would be limited, and that most of the time people would prefer to access brokers with specialist areas such as housing, community resources, or specialist services.

Association with the role of advocate

An alternative way people may find meaning in the term 'support broker' by associating it with other roles and services in social care. The independent position of the broker particularly invites comparison with the role of advocate, leading to a view of the broker as an advocate working specifically within the arena of individual budgets. Cast in this light, the broker's task is to promote and defend the individual's rights and needs through the processes of self-assessment, approval of the Support Plan, and where there is dispute about the adequacy of the funding that has been allocated. When the broker is seen in this way, as someone needed to defend rights, it implicitly emphasises the potential of the social care system to infringe those rights. The association with advocacy also tends

to emphasis the relationship between the broker and disabled person as a relationship between two people, even where the broker is employed by an organisation.

Some remarks from people interviewed for the project put a different slant on the promotion of rights and needs. Here the issue was not so much the active denial of rights by the social care system, but the accumulated effects of poor services and a disabling, excluding society:

Brokers are people who bring imagination to the process.

People have lowered their standards so much they need brokers to encourage them to raise their sights.

Our work is mainly about helping people plan outside the usual box.

Having high expectations, and insisting on good standards, can be important at any stage in making plans, negotiating for services, and in the relationship with support staff after the plans have been implemented. But helping people to 'raise their sights' is crucial in the early stages of planning, when people are thinking about how they want to change their lives. The assumptions that are made about the choices that are possible will set the direction of the rest of the planning process. If brokers have a role in helping people to think more ambitiously about their futures, then they need to be in at the beginning of planning.

Brokerage as an extension of Direct Payments support

The term 'secondary supports' was introduced earlier (subsection 2.6) as a useful shorthand for a variety of supports that underpin the primary supports delivered directly to the person. Secondary support services have developed extensively since the introduction, in 1997, of Direct Payments. These services, commonly known as Direct Payment support schemes, typically provide help

with recruiting personal assistants, financial management, and payroll services. For people trying to make sense of the support broker role, Direct Payment support schemes offer an alternative starting point. Discussion both within and beyond the project indicate that this tends to lead to a conception of the role that is centred on the later stages of the planning process – on the practicalities of organising and recruiting support services (i.e. the green boxes in Diagram 2). For people who use Direct Payment support schemes as the starting point for their understanding of the support broker role, the element of the role that is concerned with helping people decide how to use their individual budget is likely to be regarded as a straightforward and relatively minor addition to a range of services that is mostly focused on support after implementation. Discussions with people as part of the project also suggested that this view of the broker's role also played down the one-to-one nature of the relationship between broker and disabled person, instead seeing it as one element of the services provided by the organisation.

This viewpoint may be linked to other factors. Although there has been growing take-up of Direct Payments by other groups of social care users, Direct Payments first emerged in response to the demands of people with physical impairments, and the support services that grew up around Direct Payments were shaped by their requirements. Although is certainly not always the case, many people in this user group are very capable of deciding for themselves how they want to use the funds they have been allocated. Moreover, the procedures and conventions of Direct Payments – with care assessment leading to agreement on the hours of support the person needs, and the money typically being used to hire personal assistance – means that the range of choices is limited.

So, in the historical context of Direct Payments, deciding how to use the money has been a relatively simple task, and one

that many people could do for themselves. Support with planning was therefore far less significant than support with the chores associated with employing and managing personal assistance. In contrast, Individual Budgets provide a much wider range of choices, and are being taken up by the full range of service users – some of whom will require much help to make plans to match their real wishes and needs.

One other influence on this perception of the broker's work as an extension of the organisation's support may arise from the fact that the organisations of this type that were involved in the project interviews, like many others offering secondary supports, were either user-led organisations, or closely associated with user organisations. These organisations often have traditions and ideological positions that do not sit easily with the idea of the broker as someone who contracts as an individual to provide a service. This issue is discussed further in Section 3.5.

Leaving the market to decide

Another way to find a definition of the support broker role is to leave it to the people who are moving to individual budgets to decide what help they want, and then include this help within the role. For some participants in the project, this is the only valid route to a definition. While most of the participants with this view agreed that in the future – in five years, one person suggested – it might be right to define the role more tightly, for the moment it should be allowed to evolve to meet 'customer' demand.

This introduces a dilemma that runs through the report: whether to agree some definitions standards and definitions for the broker role, or leave it free to evolve. Although the dilemma is explored later in this report, it is worth noting some comments from participants that illustrate the ways in which the evolution of the role can be influenced by factors that may not be helpful.

Firstly, someone aiming to develop a business as an independent, self-employed broker remarked that he had found that some parents of people with learning disabilities are looking to brokers to provide long-term assistance that will bring a sense of continuity. Families of people with learning disabilities often complain about the many social workers who pass through their lives in rapid succession. Older parents often worry about the lack of someone they can count on to watch over their disabled son or daughter when they are gone. So it is very understandable that families will look to this new role - the support broker - to provide the long-term commitment that they so much want. Whether it is an appropriate service for brokers to provide, or remotely feasible, is an entirely different matter. Nevertheless, it is tempting for brokers to try to meet the need – not only out of a genuine desire to offer the help that is requested, but also because it is financially attractive. Helping people to make and implement plans is short-term work. In business terms it means a high turnover of customers, and a constant need to find new ones. On the other hand, long-term involvement – whether it means substantial secondary support services or occasional reviews and trouble-shooting - makes it possible to develop a portfolio of customers and a steady income.

Secondly, and in contrast, information was provided about a broker service delivered by an agency that receives funding from the local council. The agency is strongly committed to the principle of empowering social care users, and this implies supporting people to do things for themselves, rather than doing things *to* them. The funding for brokers encourages this 'light touch' approach, because the funding for the service remains the same, whatever the number of people assisted or the amount of help given to each person. Although there is no rationing system, there is a financial incentive - backed up by a principle - not to deliver more than necessary. As a result, most of the help provided by brokers goes no further than

support planning. Brokers are particularly reluctant to take people to visit resources that they might use as part of their Support Plan, because (it is considered) this would be using brokers to provide transport services.

While it is helpful to understand the factors and influences that shape the different perceptions and interpretations of the broker role, it does not mean that the views are unreasonable, or that the people who offered them have unethical motives. As far as it is possible to judge, they have all – the people requiring help, brokers, broker agencies, social care professionals – done their best to balance their own legitimate needs, intentions, and responsibilities within the constraints and pressures that face them. The version of the broker role that results is a consequence of the interplay of all these factors, and not solely the needs of people who use social care and their families.

3.3 Independence and professionalisation

Independence is built into the definition of the independent support broker. So it is not necessarily meaningful that most people who gave their views for the project identified independence as a distinctive characteristic of the role. However, the majority of people also regarded it as a valuable quality. This view was particularly marked amongst (though not limited to) people who use social care, and family members, who appeared to consider it self-evident that a broker will be a more trustworthy source of help and advice if they are independent.

Some views on this issue specifically identified concerns about conflict of interest: brokers acting as a second layer of gate-keeping to council funds, or brokers with a vested interest in recommending particular service providers. But there was a more general, and more deeply-felt, concern about brokers being drawn into a professional culture that many people associate with the social care system, and

with social workers in particular, and which was deeply resented by a substantial number of people who shared their views. In this negative sense, ‘professional’ seems to mean someone –

- whose loyalty is to the system, and who is distanced from the people who rely on the system and their communities
- who ‘does to’ rather than ‘works with’

One interviewee remarked that

the council is an organisation that operates by control – the only way it knows how to operate

- Who engages in a ‘professional discourse’ that excludes the users of services
- Who expects people to fit into the system’s language and structures

As one person described the experience of explaining his elderly mother’s needs to care managers:

You’ve got to fill in the terminology they expect

- Who hides their individuality.

An interviewee who is involved in advocacy remarked:

I don’t see why things have to be endlessly professionalised – advocates have diverse backgrounds, and that is an asset.

Whether or not this is a fair representation of social care professionals, concerns about brokers becoming professionals in this sense were a thread that ran through the discussions, and have implications for training and accreditation.

In spite of this concern, interviews and discussions yielded very few ideas about

how brokers could be anchored in their independent role, so that they would not drift into alliance with providers or council staff, or from acquiring negative 'professional' characteristics. When interviewees were asked about the relationship between brokers and other actors in the social care system, most responses emphasised the importance of close working relationships with care managers and service providers. These respondents believe that the danger of a close relationship turning into an unhealthy cosy relationship can be avoided by making sure that brokers have a strong value base, underpinned by training and/or oversight by user-led organisations.

Some councils have developed, or are developing, 'in house' brokers. And at present there is nothing to prevent agencies that deliver support services from offering broker services as well – presenting a business opportunity that a number of agencies are taking up. However, no one in any of the discussions suggested that independent support brokers are either unnecessary, or inferior to brokers employed by councils or provider agencies. But a few people expressed the view that independence is not a characteristic that needs to be enshrined in the role and protected. One person argued that independence is an illusion, as everyone will bring their personal perspective to the role. Others suggested that brokers would quickly lose their customers if their advice was coloured by conflicts of interest. By the same argument, brokers who showed negative 'professional' characteristics would not be tolerated by their customers. In other words, they believed that the market can be trusted to determine what independence means, and whether it matters.

One other comment from an interviewee sheds light on this aspect of the broker's role, though it also raises issues beyond the scope of the paper. The interviewee – a senior professional in an independent

(but not user-led) national organisation – remarked that brokers should always act in the person's best interests, and should state that they will not do otherwise. The remark was not offered in the context of people with profound intellectual impairments, but as a general principle governing the work of support brokers. At first sight it may seem to be a reasonable and ethical position to take. However, if brokers can, at any point in their work with an IB recipient, lay claim to the argument of 'best interest' in order to ignore the individual's choices, the principle of accountability to the customer is severely undermined, if not destroyed. The broker starts to look, instead, more like the agent of a paternalistic social care system. This illustrates how easily and subtly the role of the broker can be distorted, and can acquire the negative 'professional' characteristic of divided loyalties.

3.4 The scope of the broker's role

As discussed in Section 2, the range of tasks that a broker can undertake is not clearly and consistently defined. An *In Control* paper, *Top Tips on supporting people to plan*, states -

Brokers specialise in helping to organise and purchase support. They don't offer any further support than that.

(In Control 2006ii)

Elsewhere, *In Control* is less clear on its position. The diagrams used by *In Control* (In Control 2007) consistently include brokers within the range of people who can provide assistance beyond the point of implementation. More specifically, they also identify the broker as someone who may hold the individual budget on behalf of the person to whom it is allocated - a responsibility which clearly lies outside the planning support role. This position is reflected in the some local *In Control* policies (West Sussex Council 2008). However, in other guidance, *In Control* distinguishes between a broker and the 'brokered arrangement' that is proposed as

a way to hold funding, with the cautionary note:

It is important, however, to not see this form of independent budget management as the defining characteristic of brokerage; because many individuals and organisations that would see themselves delivering brokerage would not see themselves playing this role, or would only play this role in extreme circumstances.

Duffy S. (2007)

CSIP, on the other hand identifies brokers as one source of brokerage, where brokerage covers not only “the assistance that people need to work out what their choices will be” but also “the support required to make it happen” (CSIP 2007).

In view of this it is hardly surprising that few people who offered their views for the project brought well-formed opinions about the appropriate scope of the broker role. Views tended, instead, to emerge in the course of the interview or group discussion. Some interviewees – those who believe that the broker role should be allowed to evolve in response to demand – objected in principle to the imposition of any limits on the broker’s role. For others it was less a matter of principle than a heartfelt commitment to stand alongside disabled people and support them in any way that they required. This was summed up in one word by the manager of an organisation that offers brokerage as an extension of its main role in delivering secondary support services. When asked what brokers should do, he replied

“Everything!”

Other discussions – especially those at the seminars attended by carers of people with learning disabilities, and professionals working in *In Control* projects – led to the view that it is important to place secondary support services outside the scope of the broker’s role. Essentially the reasons were as follows:

- When the broker’s role is limited to the work of planning and organisation up to the point of implementation, it becomes a role with a clear focus and end point.
- Secondary support tasks require very different skills – in some cases (e.g. accountancy) skills that have little to do with social care.
- Secondary support services are components of the support package, alongside primary supports such as personal assistance. If brokers help to assemble this package, and also have an interest in the delivery of secondary supports, there is potential for conflict of interest.

Some people did not find the last of these arguments convincing. On the other hand, carers at the seminar very obviously warmed to the clarification of the role of the broker as someone who is contracted to assist in a process that is episodic, and is completed when an outcome (a plan readied for implementation) has been achieved.

3.5 Brokers and the customer relationship

The starting definition of the broker’s role included the assumption that brokers were being paid, in one way or another, for providing their assistance. That implies that a broker delivers a service, with the individual IB recipient as their customer.

As the project developed it became apparent that this did not distinguish adequately between independent support brokers and others who provide brokerage; and that some people do not identify broker services in terms of a customer-contractor relationship.

From its inception, *In Control* took the view that it would be wrong to set aside funding for broker services, as it would run contrary to the principle of self-determination:

In Control has argued that the work of brokers should be funded predominantly from people's Personal Budgets. To do otherwise would reduce the choice and flexibility of that is at the heart of Personal Budgets. Creating a system of brokerage that is paid directly by the local authority may impose this support on those that do not need it and lock funds into a new professional-led system.

(Senker in Hatton et al, 2008, p70)

In its second phase evaluation report, *In Control* acknowledges a counter-argument that this may be unfair to people who cannot plan without the use of a broker, and also foresees a possible need for councils to invest in order to stimulate the development of broker services. Others have argued that leaving funding for broker services within the budget allocation discourages people from using a broker, and if this leads to poor quality planning the outcome will serve neither the IB recipient nor the taxpayer (Dowson 2007). It is also possible to envisage funding mechanisms for broker services that would leave IB recipients with the choices and powers as customers of broker services without requiring them to pay for the service from their allocation. (For example, an allocation of hours for broker services could be offered separately, with the number of hours linked to the size of the overall indicative allocation, and leaving the recipient free to 'spend' it on the broker of their choice.)

These disadvantages aside, leaving people to contract and pay directly for broker services does strongly encourage a customer-contractor relationship: a relationship where the customer dictates the work to be done; the contractor has to compete for business; and the customer has the ultimate option of firing the contractor if the work is not satisfactory. (Paying for services is not enough to *guarantee* this relationship. It also requires enough brokers to provide a competitive market, sufficient funds available to the customer to allow the market to function on

quality as well as price, and customers who are able and willing to use their power as customers.) If people purchase broker services from the IB allocation, they are as much customers as the people – 'self-funders' - who buy support and broker services using their own private finances.

At the present time, however, broker services in England are often not being funded in this way. They are being delivered by agencies that are funded through grants or contracts. And there are signs that councils, as they see the need to promote independent broker services, are often responding through this familiar commissioning route. There are three obvious types of local organisation that may be selected for funding: a voluntary organisation; a user-led organisation; or an organisation that is already providing secondary support services (typically a Direct Payments support scheme). Some organisations may, of course, fall into all three categories.

One obvious problem that can arise with this type of arrangement is that these agencies may also be providing services, which will undermine the independence of the broker. Another problem is that (unless the brokers still charge for the service) it takes the payment for service out of the relationship between the broker and the IB recipient, and so weakens the customer-contractor relationship. But there is yet another, and more subtle problem: the organisation receiving funding may be committed to an ideological position which does not easily accommodate the customer-contractor relationship, and may even be hostile to the consumerist values associated with it.

The investigations undertaken for this project revealed two ideological or values positions where this could cause difficulty. The first was most clearly illustrated by a local voluntary organisation that offered a variety of services for older people. The organisation had also accepted funding from the council to provide brokerage. However, as the chief executive

acknowledged, the delivery of brokerage had simply been absorbed within a culture based on a charitable ethos. Moving to an agency culture that would support the delivery of brokerage on a contractual basis to customers would be difficult. In particular, people currently providing the service on a voluntary basis would not find the change acceptable – perhaps partly because they would no longer be giving their time freely to help others, and also because it would define their responsibilities more personally and tightly.

The second set of values that may not fit with a customer relationship were found in organisations led by disabled people, and especially those which emphasised the provision of peer support. Peer support suggests a relationship based on people standing alongside others in solidarity – a relationship that is potentially far richer than one based on contract for service. As a relationship between two peers it may also involve strong personal commitment. Then again, it may be seen more in terms of collective solidarity: the support of the group to the individual needing help. One person working as a broker within a user-led organisation seemed to see herself as an agent for the organisation, rather than as someone with a personal commitment to helping another person.

Closely connected with these values is the concept of *co-production*, which identifies the users of services as partners with the state in the production of welfare, rather than as passive recipients. Co-production upholds the position of people as citizens who act to support each other, and their community, outside the state system. In practice, the state may need to support these activities, though there is an obvious danger that the activities will then become subsumed within government systems. Researchers who studied a number of UK projects based on co-production principles remarked:

There was also some evidence that too much grant funding and too many paid staff can undermine the co-production

dynamic – the paid staff take over. They need to justify their jobs and, since co-production thinking is inevitably new to some of them, there is a tendency to slip back into dependency culture.

(Boyle, Clark, and Burns 2006)

The co-production model fits peer support schemes, and similar activities facilitated by user-led organisations. Equally, these organisations will be well aware of the dangers of being drawn too closely into the council service. However, the spirit of peer and reciprocal support, when applied to the relationship between the organisation and each individual needing help, may not sit easily with a customer-contractor relationship.

It needs to be said none of the respondents from organisations that highlighted these issues was actively hostile to the notion of brokers serving people as customers. There is also no suggestion being made here that the customer relationship is inherently superior to co-production, partnership, or (in its different place) the charitable ethos. But, if the customer relationship is the most useful way to frame the relationship between brokers and the people they support, organisations that accept funding for broker services may need to consider how brokerage as a service fits within their values and culture.

The starting definition for the project assumed that payment for service was a characteristic that defined the boundaries of the independent broker role. It supposed that there were two contexts for brokerage. On the one hand, there are people 'doing brokerage' as an unpaid activity for family and friends. The state is not entirely absent from these activities, because it requires that the output from the process – the Support Plan – meets standards that the state has set. However, it would be inappropriate, and probably impossible, to regulate how the brokerage was done. On the other, there are people being paid to deliver brokerage as a

service. As a commercial service it can be made subject to market forces. If appropriate, it can also be regulated.

The real picture is more complicated, and not only because broker services are being funded by grants and contracts. Instead of two contexts – informal brokerage and broker services – brokerage delivery arrangements lies on a continuum from totally informal through to fee-for-service brokers. A variety of organisations sit in the middle, many but not all of them in receipt of funding to deliver brokerage. (see Diagram 3, below.)

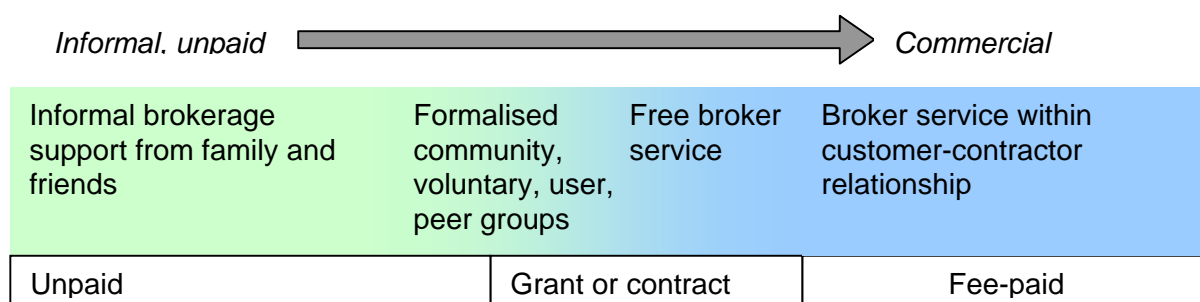
Moreover, as discussed earlier, they may not readily accept, and adapt to, the delivery of a service which follows the conventions of commerce. They may argue – perhaps rightly – that they deliver brokerage within a relationship that is stronger and more accountable than the relationship of a broker serving a customer. However, there is also a danger that the relationship will lose its focus on the task, and on the duty of the broker to complete the task as the individual requires.

The point was illustrated by the manager of an agency that provides peer support, and has, more recently, included brokerage within the peer support arrangements. The agency receives funding from the council for this work. The manager did not object to broker services being delivered locally

by other people and agencies. He believed, however, that the services of his agency should continue to be funded, and so be free at the point of delivery. In his view, if people wanted to use another broker, they should pay from their own funding allocation. This would plainly put the agency in an advantageous position, but he did not consider this unfair. It also implied that he considered it acceptable for the agency to be exempted from the pressures of the marketplace to meet customer requirements.

The significance of this blurring of the boundaries of paid broker services did not become fully apparent until late in the project, and so was not directly addressed in most interviews. But, towards the end of the project, it was raised with two people who have senior positions in national user-led organisations – people who are no doubt committed to the values of co-production. Both of them considered that, when there was money involved in the delivery of brokerage, whether through grants, council contracts, or by fee for service – it should be regarded as a service being delivered to the IB recipient as customer, with all the expectations of quality and accountability that implies.

Diagram 3: A continuum of arrangements for the delivery of brokerage



3.6 Brokers and the level of contact

As discussed in Section 2, the process of deciding how to make use of an individual budget will be far more lengthy and complex for some people than for others. The need for skilled help to complete this process will also be affected by the person's access to help from family and friends, and to information online and in print. If the broker's role is extended to include secondary supports, then the level and length of involvement will of course extend much further.

With opinion affected by so many factors, it was not possible to gather clear views on how the broker role might be characterised in terms of the type and length of involvement. Logically, nevertheless, this must be a consideration. If an IB recipient makes a one-off phone call to a helpline for information on Support Planning, would the person offering the information be a support broker? Would they need the same expertise as a broker who delivers a service to an individual over several weeks or then the level and length of involvement will of course extend much further.

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A useful comparison can be made with people who act as brokers in other spheres. A travel agent can offer information and advice on package holidays, and make a holiday reservation, to anyone who walks through the agency door. The same customers are welcome to return a month later, to make further enquiries or request a change their

booking. The agent (broker) needs the interpersonal skills to help the customers clarify their requirements, an understanding of common holiday choice-making behaviours, some knowledge of the travel services and locations, and competence in checking and making reservations.

The situation is different when the customer wants the agent to plan a highly individualised and complex tour. The difference is only partly because the agent will need a higher level of knowledge. When the requirements are more individual, it becomes tedious, even impracticable, to keep explaining them to different agents. Furthermore, the agent may be carrying out tasks in the time between contacts with the customer, with an obligation to report back to the customer. This implies the need for a continuing relationship between the agent and the customer, with a strong sense of personal accountability (even if the agent is, technically, acting for the agency as a whole).

In the same way, there is a need for one-off information and advice to assist people in completing the task of brokerage. The quality of the service will need to be adequate, and should be focused on the needs of the individual (not, for example, biased by conflicts of interest towards particular service providers). Standards for this kind of service have been developed in other contexts (e.g. the National Occupational Standards for Advice and Guidance 2006), which are very relevant. However, the quality of the relationship, with firm accountability to the individual as customer, becomes critical when the broker –

- is acting on behalf of the person to gather information, make arrangements, or conduct negotiations; and
- needs detailed information about the individual and their requirements in order to carry out this work effectively.

3.7 The future number of independent support brokers

The number of independent support brokers who may be practising in a few years' time is likely to be a factor in deciding whether, and how, their work should be regulated. Higher numbers will raise the significance and influence of brokers as a workforce, and encourage the growth of an associated training industry. Unless checked, this will, in turn, hasten brokers towards a profession of the kind that is held in low regard. If the numbers are small, on the other hand, brokers will remain in an isolated backwater with few opportunities for training or support.

Unfortunately, it is very difficult at this point to predict how many brokers there might be, because too many factors are unknown. Some of these factors, and their influence, are shown in Diagram 4.

It also has to be recognised, of course, that all assumptions about the development of independent broker services are based on the assumption that the strong shift of social care policy towards individual budgets will continue.

In the absence of any way to forecast how these factors will play out, the best that can be offered is a rough guide to the scale of the growth in the number of independent brokers that might occur. For this purpose, it is assumed that broker workforce will be generic, though individual brokers may specialise in user groups or areas of provision. Starting with the lowest level of growth, some possible scenarios are as follows:

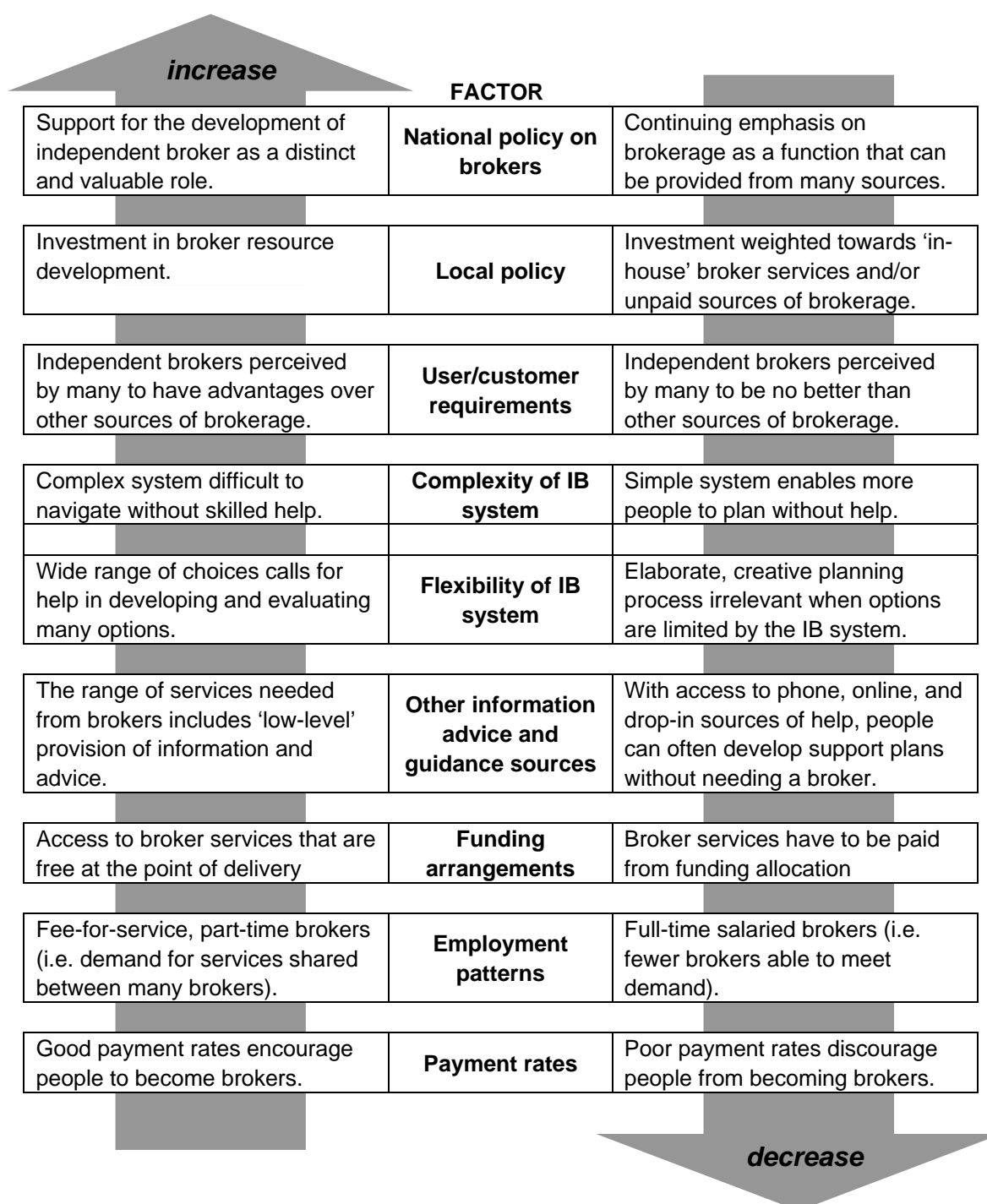
- A 'first step on' from the present low and incomplete coverage would be development to the point where there was a minimal presence of three full-time brokers in each council area. This would create a workforce of around **450** brokers in England.
- While three brokers in one council area might be adequate to meet a low level

of demand from one user group, it would not be sufficient to ensure that independent broker assistance was an option for people across all user groups. Even assuming a very low level of demand, a resource of 15 brokers (perhaps 3 brokers for each of the 4 main user groups, and another three for children in transition to adulthood) in each area seems more realistic. This would imply around **2300** independent brokers in England.

- If brokers were self-employed rather than salaried, and working part-time, more brokers would be needed to meet the same level of demand. If we suppose that, in place of 15 salaried brokers in each council area, there were self-employed brokers each working 2 days a week (0.4fte), it would imply around 5600 brokers in England.
- Predictions that lead to higher numbers than this would have to assume that the balance of factors listed in Diagram 4 will be weighted strongly towards growth. Nevertheless it is not difficult to envisage conditions that would double the number above – i.e to **11,000** brokers in England. That represents 73 part-time brokers working 0.4fte, equivalent to 29 full-time brokers, per area – still a modest resource in comparison to the total workforce in adult social services. If (and of course that is a big 'if') the use of independent brokers became a common choice by people across all the social care groups, a resource of this size could quickly become overstretched. The position might well become unsustainable if the same brokers also committed to the delivery of long-term secondary supports.

It needs to be emphasised that these calculations are not intended as *predictions* of growth in independent broker resources. They simply identify the numbers of brokers that would result from scenarios that are broadly within the realms of possibility.

Diagram 4: Factors influencing the future number of independent support brokers



3.8 Towards a clearer view of the independent support broker

With the broker role at such an early stage of development in the UK, it is not surprising that the seminars and interviews carried out for this project did not yield a consensus view of the independent broker that refines the 'starting point' definition. Some of those who participated would argue that it is not even appropriate to refine the definition, because it would prevent the role from evolving in the light of learning through practice, and in response to customer demand. But, and putting that objection to one side for the moment, the combination of views and arguments (as set out above) suggests a 'middle ground' view of the role. To summarise this view, an independent support broker is someone who . . .

Is independent

Independence certainly means the absence of accountability or loyalty to the council or agencies providing support services. But it also means that the broker is person-centred and community-centred, with a perspective that values and respects the person, their networks, and their experiences.

Has good working relationships with social workers and support providers

Although the broker must have independence, this must not lead to isolation from the rest of the social care system. The broker needs to have up-to-date information about available services, and good contacts with provider agencies will help to facilitate discussions about the requirements of the person that the broker is assisting.

Likewise, the broker will need the expertise of social workers and other professional staff in health and adult social services. These contacts must not, however, contravene the requirements (see below) that the broker's loyalty and accountability is to the person being assisted.

Is professional in the way the assistance is delivered

The broker provides help that is professional in the best sense: task-focused; based on the requirements of the person they are assisting; efficiently and honestly delivered, and accountable to the person.

Is not a 'professional' in the negative sense of remote, impersonal, disempowering, or self-serving.

The broker carries out tasks on the instructions of the person they are assisting. They will offer advice, but do not 'do to' people, judge people or their plans, or make decisions that individuals are entitled to make for themselves. Wherever possible, the broker shares information and skills so the broker's involvement increases, rather than diminishes, the person's ability to complete brokerage tasks for themselves.

As someone independent of the council and service providers, the broker's fundamental loyalty is to the person and their community. Each broker brings different individual gifts to their work. Within the task-focused limits of the relationship, the broker does not hide her/his own individuality.

Assists, as each individual requires, in the tasks of support planning and brokerage up to the point of implementing the plan, and no further.

Restricting the work of the broker to the stages of planning and organising up to the point of implementation gives clarity to the role. It also avoids potential conflicts of interest between planning and the delivery of secondary supports. It means that the help of the broker becomes relevant when people are considering making changes to their lives and/or their support arrangements, and gives the role clear start and end points. This is not to suggest that secondary supports are unimportant; but they are different in nature, and require different sets of skills.

Is available and equipped to act as the person's agent, undertaking research, organisation, and/or negotiation as the person requires, within a relationship in which the broker is accountable to the individual.

People deciding how to use an individual budget or arrange for support services may only need straightforward information and advice that can be obtained from a single meeting or phone call. The broker can provide this kind of help, though other sources may deliver it more efficiently. However, the broker's role is centred on work that continues through two or more meetings, with work being undertaken by the broker between meetings, according to the person's instructions. This implies that the broker will have the skills and ethical standards to follow the instructions, and also that the broker (even when employed by an agency) will recognise their personal accountability to the individual they are assisting.

Offers assistance on the basis that it is a paid service being delivered to a customer.

Independent brokers are paid to deliver a service. When the payment is made by the person requiring the service, then a customer-contractor relationship plainly exists. But the same relationship should be considered to exist even when the payment is made by another route (such as grant funding or a council contract).

The identification of the person as customer not only reflects the reality that a paid service is being provided. Its great benefit is that it references a model that is commonplace and well understood from many areas of life in a consumer society. So it highlights the rights of the recipient as customer, and the expectations they can reasonably have for the way in which the service is delivered. It also points to a set of working practices that should apply: for example, agreeing a contract at the outset, with costs and timetables; reporting on progress; and confirming the customer's satisfaction before the job is concluded. The customer-contractor relationship helps to 'peg down' the relationship, and prevent it sliding into a relationship that it disempowering.

4 The training of independent support brokers

4.1 Views from interviews and seminars

Interviewees and seminar participants were asked what knowledge and skills brokers should have. It was apparent that some immediately recognised a dilemma. On the one hand it would be easy to compile an immensely long list. However, such a need would imply the need for very lengthy training, and many people saw training as a process that turns out people who are 'professional' in all the wrong ways.

This may help to explain why the skill and knowledge areas that were listed were relatively modest, even when combined. (The other obvious reason is that these views were offered 'off the cuff', as only one part of lengthy discussions.) A few people identified that the broker needed to have technical knowledge, for example in -

- Health
- Social care policy
- Local social services
- Housing
- Welfare and disability benefits

More often participants identified the need for training in values and interpersonal skills. Particular items mentioned were –

- Communication
- Confidentiality
- Understanding disability issues
- Values and their impact
- Equal Opportunities training

Of these, communication (or 'listening') skills were mentioned most often.

A few people identified expertise in areas of secondary supports, in particular -

- Financial advice
- Payroll advice
- Recruitment

Even if the broker role does not cover the delivery of secondary support services,

there is still a good case for brokers having enough expertise to advise on how they can be set up, or where they can be obtained.

Lastly, a few people mentioned skills that have particular (though not exclusive) relevance to the brokerage process -

- Support planning
- Negotiation training
- Advocacy
- Research skills

4.2 Existing training courses

Training programmes for brokers offer another set of views on the training that brokers require. The number of courses appears to be increasing, though here again the lack of definition of the independent broker role makes it difficult to determine which courses are relevant. The National Brokerage Network (NBN) identifies three¹ training options for people who want to become brokers:

- A five day support brokerage course provided by Realife (<http://www.realife.org.uk>) for the National Brokerage Network
- A five day course for independent support brokers provided by the National Development Team (<http://www.ndt.org.uk>)
- *Driving your bus: A six day journey in Support Brokerage*, offered by Step-By-Step Living Network (<http://www.livingnetwork.org.uk>) in the North West of England, and elsewhere by Happy Associates (<http://www.happyassociates.co.uk>).

¹ Paradigm has offered training linked to the NBN, but with a different focus.

Table 2: Comparison of identified content of three broker training courses

Training content, as specified <i>NB: Absence of specific reference does not necessarily mean it is not included.</i>	NBN frame- work	Realife / NBN	NDT	Step- by-Step & Happy Assocs.
Historical development of self-directed supports	YES		YES	
Aims and principles of self-directed supports	YES		YES	YES
UK policy context of individual budgets and brokerage	YES	YES	YES	YES
In Control – processes and procedures	NO	YES		YES
Role of brokers	YES		YES	YES
Values underpinning broker role	YES	YES	YES	YES
Contracting for service	YES		YES	YES
Person-centred planning / Support planning	YES	YES	YES	YES
Mental capacity Act / Supported decision-making	NO	YES		YES
Abuse and POVA	NO	¹	YES	
Funding sources	YES	YES	YES	YES
Writing funding bids	NO	YES		
Health and social care provision	NO	¹		
Housing policy and provision	NO	¹		
Working with community & community development	YES	¹	YES	
Working with providers - negotiation	YES	YES	YES	
Organising secondary support needs	NO	¹		
Advocacy and mediation	NO	YES		
Costing the Support Plan	YES	¹	YES	YES
Preparing for implementation	YES	¹	YES	
Delivery of secondary (post-implementation) supports	NO	NO	NO	NO
Ending the contract and closure of the relationship	YES	¹	YES	
Admin issues (referrals, payment, record-keeping for brokers)	YES	YES	YES	
Business issues for brokers	YES	YES	YES	
Assessment of participants	<i>OPTION</i>	YES	YES	
Mentoring/supervision	YES	YES	²	²
Notes:				
1. NBN training includes a four week placement when items not listed within the training content may be covered.				
2. NDT training is typically commissioned by councils. The availability of mentoring supervision is dependent either on the willingness of the council to include it as an addition to the delivery of the training, or on local availability. The same constraints will also affect training by Happy Associates.				

Information about the content of these courses, as supplied by the training developers, is shown in Appendix 1.

All three courses should conform to the training framework (see Appendix 1) developed by the NBN. However, as an unfunded and independent organisation, the NBN has neither the mandate nor the capacity to ensure that this is the case.

A comparison of the content listed for each training course may be misleading, most obviously because the listings are summaries that will not include every item. It can however serve to highlight differences of emphasis, and common themes.

One difference of emphasis reflects the distinction between the *functional* view of brokerage – as tasks which all sorts of people can take on - versus the role of broker as a paid service to others. The course offered by Step-by-Step Living Network and Happy Associates aligns with the *functional* view. The training references a "brokerage map" of people who "can broker". And, while offering practical information in a number of areas, the Step-By-Step/Happy Associates training puts most emphasis on the qualities and values of the person providing brokerage.

The NBN/Realife training appears to fall in the middle. The brief summary of training content includes items – for example, referrals, record-keeping, and supervision – more obviously associated with a paid role than with people doing brokerage on an informal basis. On the other hand, the summary does not mention the contractual nature of the relationship between the broker and the individual.

The NDT training sits at the other end of the spectrum, and is explicitly offered as a course to equip people to work as independent brokers. The training is also distinct in framing the course within the contractual nature of the relationship with the customer, identifying a 12-stage

process which begins with agreeing a contract and ends with closure of the relationship.

The NDT training is the only course of the three that explicitly includes assessment of the participants as a standard feature. This makes use of a table of required characteristics for independent support brokers (see Appendix 2). The commissioner of the training (as well as the participant) will be informed if an individual on the course does not meet these requirements. This is not a robust system, however. Assessment is based on observations by the trainers, plus short test papers, during training; and the trainers' assessments would be open to challenge.

Closer analysis of the summaries of the three courses (see Table 1) reveals that they have some significant common characteristics -

- 1 There are some components that are emphasised by all the courses. These are –
 - UK policy context of individual budgets and brokerage
 - The values of the broker
 - Person-centred planning
 - Sources of funding.
- 2 None of the courses aims to offer substantial training on health, social care, or housing policy and provision.
- 3 All the courses limit their focus to tasks leading up to implementation. This is consistent with the position that delivery of secondary support services is not part of the work of brokers.

4.3 Training as a force for professionalisation

In principle, the definition of the role of independent broker, as developed in Section 3, could be used, on its own, to define the knowledge and skills that brokers require. Even though that definition excludes some areas of expertise or activities – for example secondary support services – it seems to imply a very

wide range of competencies. It is easy to foresee the arguments for extending the training beyond the level represented by the three courses linked to the National Brokerage Network. For example -

- Each course features elements that might be considered worth adding to a general training specification. These include the history of self-directed services; identifying and responding to abuse; writing funding bids; and the business aspects of working as an independent broker
- Specialist planning tools can enhance the work of the broker, but learning to use them may require several days for each one. Person-centred planning methods such as Essential Lifestyles Planning, PATH, and MAPS each require training courses of two to four days. WRAP, a planning tool designed to assist people with mental health issues, also requires several days' training for facilitators. In contrast, the three broker courses allow less than two days for the entire person-centred planning element.
- It can be argued that people who have to work with health, social care, housing, employment services need to have a good knowledge of relevant policy and provision. Providing help to access funding would similarly suggest that brokers need to be knowledgeable about disability benefits.
- Moreover, policy and provision in health and social care differs between user groups, so it can be argued that training for brokers – if brokers are to be competent beyond the boundaries of single user group categories - should cover each one in detail.
- The promotion of social inclusion – for example by people in the role of 'bridge-builders' - is increasingly being recognised as work that requires knowledge and distinct skills. If brokers are to be effective in helping

people to access community opportunities as well as formal services, then they may need to have training that provides competencies in this area.

- User groups differ in the way they account for their disadvantages, and the solutions that are required. This is reflected in Disability Awareness and Equal Opportunities Training, and in the recovery model. There may be an expectation from these groups that these will be included in training for brokers.

Added together, these could greatly inflate the training specification. Indeed, they suggest a range of knowledge and skills not so different (except, perhaps, on knowledge of social care legislation) from those required by social workers. If that is true, it implies that brokers might need to complete a three year degree course.

This tendency to expand the training requirements of brokers has to be constrained by other considerations.

Firstly, as described in Section 3, there is widespread concern about the prospect of brokers emerging as a new group of workers with negative 'professional' characteristics. Training providers may well argue that these characteristics are not acquired in the process of training, but the provision of extended training would nevertheless be seen by many people as a significant step towards professionalisation. The more extensive the training, the more it will imply that the tasks of brokerage are beyond the reach of 'ordinary' people.

Secondly, the level of training needs to be matched in a realistic way with the prospects of work available to people who have completed it. Though the NBN/Realife training includes a four-week placement, the formal teaching elements of the all the courses are five or six days. This reflects a judgement not only about the material that needs to be covered, but

also about the time commitment and cost that people will consider reasonable. Although there is already some demand for support brokers, and this seems certain to rise as individual budgets become more widespread, the future is too uncertain to expect people, or their employing agencies, to invest months of their time (and, potentially, thousands of pounds) in training.

If entry-level training is too demanding, it will bias the development of independent broker resources towards people who see it as a full-time career option. It will tend to deter people with ambitions and circumstances that, in various ways, would enhance their work as brokers. For example, people who do not wish to work full-time as brokers – people who have young families, are semi-retired, or have a portfolio of other work – may have strong and very valuable connections with local communities. Other people, most obviously disabled people and family members, may see part-time broker work as a way to use their lived experience to help other people. People of these kinds, who supplement their own life experiences and networks with the specialist knowledge and skills of the broker, represent the ‘citizen plus’ conception of the broker that is least likely to slide towards unwanted forms of professionalisation.

The tension between the requirement to ensure that brokers are equipped for their work, and the need to keep the training requirement as low as possible, can be eased in a number of ways:

- **Operate broker services in a way that recognises brokers as individuals with varying areas of expertise.**
Emphasising the individuality of brokers helps to distinguish them from the professionals who are perceived to hide their individuality. In addition, it avoids the expectation that every broker will have the same knowledge and skills. Instead, each broker has particular strengths and areas of

interest, over and above a set of core competencies. They may, for example, have a high level of skills in person-centred planning, or expert knowledge of housing, or a particular interest in working for people who have mental health issues. This is only satisfactory, of course, where there are enough brokers available to offer a real choice; where people requiring a broker have the power to choose; and where that choice is supported by information about the brokers.

- **Regard the broker as a generic resource that may need to be enhanced by specialists.**
However much training brokers are given, they (or strictly speaking, their customers) will still look to other workers for specialist help: to social workers, psychologists, employment workers, speech therapists, and so on. In the same way, it will sometimes be appropriate for a broker to recommend specialist help with a task that falls within the boundaries of the broker role. For example, in some circumstances (for example where the individual has a very negative reputation in addition to severe learning disabilities) it may be very difficult to identify a positive vision for the future. In that situation, a specialist person-centred planning facilitator might be used to supplement the work of the broker. Here again, however, brokers should have the core competencies to make such circumstances exceptional. A parallel can be drawn with the family doctor, who can respond effectively to most patients but sometimes needs to refer to a specialist.
- **Build on the knowledge and skills that people bring to the training.**
Although it does not reduce the skills and knowledge that brokers require, the demands presented by training can be eased if people who already have relevant skills are attracted to becoming brokers. These may include people who already have knowledge of

health and social care, through their work or lived experience, or people who have skills in planning or negotiation developed in other fields.

- **Maximise learning in practice.**

Weighting the training process towards learning in practice, and away from classroom teaching, has a number of advantages. It means that people who are gaining the knowledge and skills to become brokers spend more time grounded in the realities of life for people who use social care, and less time in situations which might foster a distanced, 'professional' culture. It also makes it possible for people to move more quickly into a position where they can begin to earn an income as brokers. In addition, if it is appropriate to determine whether people should be allowed to practice as brokers, the assessment of their competence can be made more reliably from actual practice than in the classroom. Of course, this approach requires competent mentoring and supervision, plus a reliable system of checkpoints as people move toward independent practice as brokers. It also requires that the level of demand for broker services is high enough to provide adequate learning opportunities for the apprentice broker. It is far from certain that this condition exists in many parts of the country.

- **Differentiate between entry-level and higher level(s) of broker competency**

For some time, councils and service providers have made occasional use of specialist help to make and/or implement plans for individuals, typically where the arrangements are exceptionally complex and costly, or where the creation of a good and secure life in the community has to overcome particular obstacles. Typically, this help is provided by people with very extensive professional or management experience in social care. The cost of the assistance may not be paid by the person, but in other

respects the service conforms to the role of broker. People providing this service are obviously offering a level of expertise that is considerably higher than will be needed by most people who want the services of a broker. Recognition that it is unnecessary to train all brokers to this level makes it possible to set entry-level training much lower. On the other hand, it adds complications in terms of payment rates, and the need to provide a professional development pathway between the two (or more) levels. And, as it creates a career route within the role of the broker, it may have unwelcome connotations for people who fear the development of a new profession.

4.4 Developing a specification for broker training

The logical approach to the development of training is first to define the knowledge and skills that brokers require, and *then* to develop training courses that will enable people to acquire them. This approach allows for different forms of training, all capable of delivering brokers with the required competencies, but varying in length and format according to the backgrounds of people entering the training, their preferred learning methods, local conditions, and other factors.

The technical task to develop this list of skills and knowledge, and how they map against other roles in the social care workforce, can begin once there is agreement on a definition of the role of independent broker. Fortunately, Skills for Care (<http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/>) will be addressing this task as part of its New Types of Worker initiative.

The outlines of three training courses discussed earlier appear to be consistent with the definition of the independent broker role offered in Section 3. However, comparison between the courses, combined with the views obtained by the

project, suggests some areas that should be strengthened, as follows:

1 Independent support brokers need to be offered a perspective on their role that is broader than current UK policy and development.

The independent support broker is the only role that has a new and distinct place within a social system based on individual budgets. Other stakeholders and professions have developed in care-managed systems, if not earlier, and are now being asked to change to new ways of working. It is inevitable that some of these stakeholders will find it difficult to change, and some will actively resist change. In these circumstances it is certain that brokers will be under pressure to modify their role: for example, to move into alliance with social workers; accept delegated 'gate-keeping' responsibilities from the council; or manage staff on behalf of provider agencies.

Independent support brokers, though primarily focused on serving individual IB recipients, can play a part in promoting the transition to a social care system that upholds the self-determination of users. They can also challenge local practices and trends that are obstructing or reversing progress, and this is especially important in times of rapid change. However, they cannot do this if they only understand their role in terms of one version of individualised funding; if, in effect, they have been trained as technicians to service the IB system. In order to remain true to their role, as the self-directed support system evolves, brokers require training that provides with a generalised model of individualised funding and its principles.

2 The element of training concerned with the values that underpin the broker role should explicitly include the ideological and emancipatory

models supported by the different user groups.

'Values', in one form or another, were probably the training requirement most commonly identified by people who offered their views on this issue. This topic is identified in the programme outlines of all three broker training courses that were reviewed. Some people, however, specifically identified values training in terms of disability awareness training and equal opportunities training, which were not mentioned in course outlines. When a short training course has to cover a wide range of material there is a risk that the 'values' element will be reduced to little more than the assertion that disabled people have rights and can be included in community life. Moreover, individual budgets and brokerage still bear the marks of their origins in services for people with learning disabilities, where the social model of disability, though acknowledged, has not been so influential as in services for people with physical impairments. If brokers are to stay aligned with the people they serve, then they need to be familiar with the theoretical perspectives (such as the recovery or narrative concepts), as well as the common experiences, of those people.

3 Training should prepare brokers to deliver a task-focused, contractually-based service.

If it is accepted that independent brokers are delivering a paid service, with the people they assist in the position of customers, then brokers need to be able to identify the customer's requirements, agree a contract, and account to the customer as the work is progressed. This implies practical skills as well as appropriate values.

4 Training should ensure that brokers have a basic understanding of social care service, and relevant health service, provision.

Further investigation is needed in order to determine how much detailed knowledge of health and social care is required at entry level for a broker to be effective. It is also true that many people choosing to become independent brokers will already have extensive knowledge through previous personal or professional experience. Nevertheless, it is difficult to see how a broker could work effectively without at least knowing, for example, the main duties of council social services; the distinction between commissioning and service provision; and the range of services and professions available. If this is a required area of knowledge, then it should be reflected in the design of training.

5 Training should equip brokers to recognise the signs and symptoms of abuse and neglect, and to respond appropriately

Like other social care workers, brokers may encounter abusive situations, and should be equally prepared to act competently in those situations. This is one of the learning outcomes within the Common Induction Standards for social care workers (Skills for Care 2006, Standard 5), and there is no reason why it should not be applicable to brokers.

6 Training should enable brokers to communicate effectively

Effective communication is implicit in good person-centred planning. However, it was specifically identified by a number of people as an important area of competence for brokers, and it is also one of the Common Induction Standards (ibid, Standard 4). For these reasons it deserves to be identified as a specific element of training.

7 Training should cover the Mental Capacity Act (2005)

Good independent brokers will have a value base which affirms that people have the right to make their own decisions, and the skills to support people to make choices. They nevertheless need to be sure that their own actions, and the actions of other people, are consistent with the intentions and provision of the Mental Capacity Act.

8 Training should equip brokers to maintain their own safety

Brokers will often be working in community locations, often on their own, and need to be able to safeguard themselves against the risks. This is also a learning outcome that is required by the Common Induction Standards (ibid, Standard 3.7).

Pending further work by Skills for Care, if these suggested additions are incorporated within the outlines of the training courses discussed, the learning outcomes would (in summary) be as shown in Table 3 (below).

Table 3: Enhanced learning outcomes for broker training, as suggested by individual training courses and views expressed by interviewees.

	Learning outcome
1	Understanding of the international historical development of self-directed support and individualised funding (IF)
2	Understanding of the aims and principles of self-directed supports
3	Understanding of the role of the independent support broker within self-direct support
4	Understanding of the values underpinning broker role, including self-determination, the social model of disability, and the recovery model.
5	Understanding of the main responsibilities and structures of health and social care
6	Understanding of UK policy context of individual budgets and brokerage
7	Detailed understanding of the processes and procedures used in In Control and Individualised Budget systems.
8	Understanding of the forms of communication, and the skills to address barriers to communication.
9	The knowledge and skills to establish and sustain an effective contractual relationship with the person requiring the services of a broker.
10	An understanding of the aims and processes required for person-centred planning and support planning, and the ability to use a range of techniques to facilitate these processes.
11	Knowledge of the main intentions, principles and provisions of the Mental Capacity Act (2005)
12	The ability to recognising signs and symptoms of abuse, and to respond effectively when they are encountered.
13	Awareness of funding sources for individuals, and how to access them.
14	Understanding of the benefits of mainstream, informal, and natural supports, and the skills to identify, assess, and work with community resources.
15	The skills in advocacy and negotiation required to represent the customer's interests effectively with commissioners and provider organisations.
16	The ability to identify the need for secondary supports in order to ensure that support plans will be implemented and sustained successfully; and a knowledge of the main kinds of secondary support and potential sources.
17	The ability to cost a support plan.
18	The ability to coordinate the elements of a support plan so that implementation Preparing for implementation
19	The ability to identify risks to personal safety, and to establish safeguards
20	Knowledge of business and admin. tasks that brokers may need to undertake the ability to complete them,

5 The accreditation of independent support brokers

5.1 A brief introduction to regulation and accreditation

Discussions about the possible need to safeguard the quality of broker services has focused on the accreditation of brokers. But accreditation is best seen as one aspect of *regulation*.

In broad terms, *regulation* add rules to a commercial or professional system to control the way in which the system operates. The system may include several different types of element or actor: for example, customer/client; manufacturer; retailer; practitioner or salesperson, training provider. The rules may define -

- who can become part of the system;
- what an element is required to deliver;
- how it is delivered; and/or
- the terms of the relationships between elements in the system.

Accreditation is the mechanism by which individuals and/or organisations are authorised to operate within the system, on condition that they deliver to the standards set by regulation.

Thus regulation may determine who is allowed to call themselves a psychotherapist, or who is authorised to carry out installations or repairs to gas appliances. It may set standards for the quality of a product or service – whether midwifery, railway transport, or college courses. It may also set standards for the way in which a service is delivered, for example by setting ethical standards. Or it may involve rules to ensure that companies which should be in competition do not start to work together to fix prices.

Regulatory arrangements vary in power and scope. In its strongest form, compulsory regulation *requires* organisations or individual practitioners to

be accredited and registered. To be effective, this must be underpinned in law, so that action can be taken against anyone who offers the service without accreditation. This may require *protection of title*. For example, the title ‘social worker’ is legally protected, and can only be used by people registered with the General Social Care council. At the other extreme, some organisations or workers may form a professional or trade association, and commit to a published set of standards. Although these standards provide a benchmark for customers, who can complain if they are not met, the regulatory arrangements within the association (i.e. active procedures to check that members deliver to the standards) may be weak.

Intermediate between these extremes are systems of regulation that gain industry-wide acceptance, and may have government support, though not force in law. If the recipients of the service consistently demand that it is delivered by accredited organisations or individuals, it will generate a strong incentive amongst the service providers to become accredited and to commit to the required standards. And that, in turn, will strengthen the position of the regulatory body. Clearly this will work best where the consumers of the service understand the market well enough to discriminate in favour of accredited suppliers. Typically that will be organisations which frequently obtain the service, rather than private individuals making very occasional purchases. So, for example, employers may make it policy to recruit workers who have received training delivered through a regulated system.

In general, regulation aims to ensure that markets and professional services operate in the interests of their customers, clients, or patients. However, in some systems there may be more than one element that can be seen as the customer. For

example, people who receive vocational training can be seen as the customers of the training provider. But employers are indirectly also customers, because they need to recruit workers with the competencies that the business requires. Yet more indirectly, the government is also a customer, because it has an interest in the development of the skilled national workforce required for a thriving economy.

Arguably, a commercial market (a 'free market', in its most pure form identified by economists as the 'perfect market') can function in the interests of the customer without any regulation. However, this requires special conditions, and it is very unusual for them all to exist. These necessary conditions include a large number of buyers and sellers, all of whom have complete information about the range of products on offer, and buyers with the power to enter and leave the market, and to change at will to a different supplier. In reality, these conditions very rarely exist. For example, commuters may be dependent on one provider of rail services, and obliged to keep using the service however costly the fares or poor the service. Similarly, householders have to take their water supplies from the company that has a local monopoly. People buying cars may want to be certain that they will be protected in the event of a crash, but at the point of purchase would find it difficult to make their own assessment of which car will prove safest.

The further a market diverges from ideal conditions, the more important it becomes to have an effective regulatory system. But in fact there are very few areas of commerce or professional services that are not regulated. Regulation is so woven into life that it is taken for granted. We expect goods to be safe and fit for purpose, professional services to be competent; and we assume we have rights as consumers that are protected. Regulation mostly becomes an issue when it is absent or inadequate, and we find ourselves powerless against bureaucracy, or the victims of 'cowboys'.

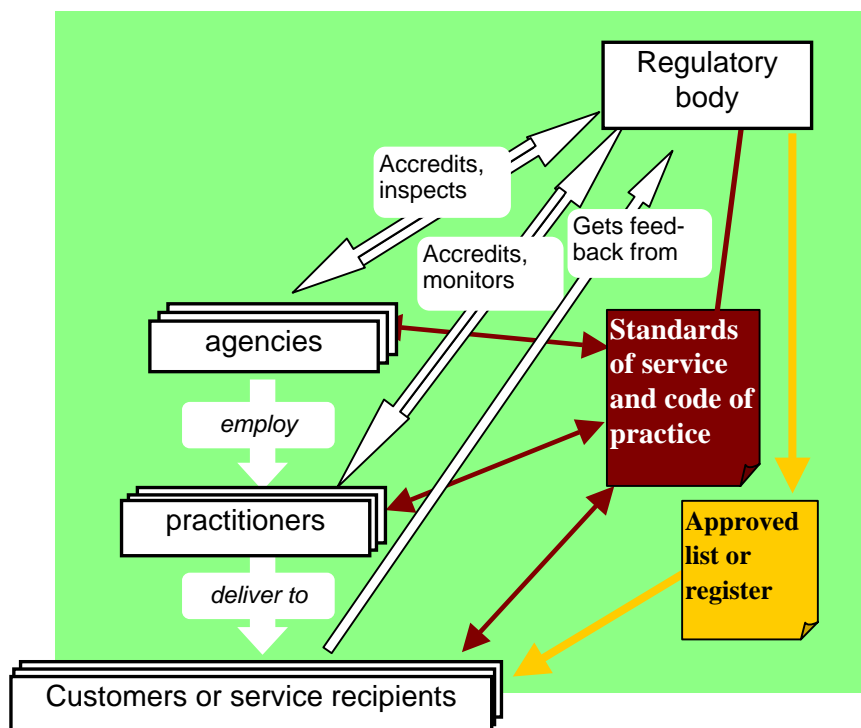
The introduction of regulation adds an extra element to the system, in the form of a regulatory body. This body will determine who can become part of the system, and *accredit* those it allows to join. Accreditation may, according to the market, apply to individuals or organisations. Where accreditation is applied to individual professionals, the list of approved individuals typically takes the form of a professional *register*.

This arrangement cannot work effectively or fairly unless it is based on clear standards that are available to all parties: to the customer as a measure of the quality they can expect; to the seller or professional as a benchmark they must meet; and to the regulatory body as the standard they will enforce. The standards may reference the quality of the service or product, and/or the way it is provided. For professional workers, the latter is often expressed as a *code of practice*.

It is not enough for the regulatory body to exist. If it is to be effective, it has to take on a number of responsibilities -

- It needs a system to assess whether people or organisations that wish to be accredited meet the required standards.
- It needs to maintain the list of accredited organisations or individuals available to people who are interested in obtaining the product or service.
- It needs to provide a way for customers or recipients of service to report unsatisfactory goods or services, and where necessary investigate whether the supplier or practitioner has failed to maintain the required standards.
- It may need to be more pro-active in monitoring standards, and periodically carry out quality checks of goods or inspections of services.

Diagram 5: Basic structure of a system for accreditation of service provision



- It needs to have a procedure to remove suppliers or practitioners from the approved list or register; and the procedure will have to be robust enough to deal with decisions that are contested.

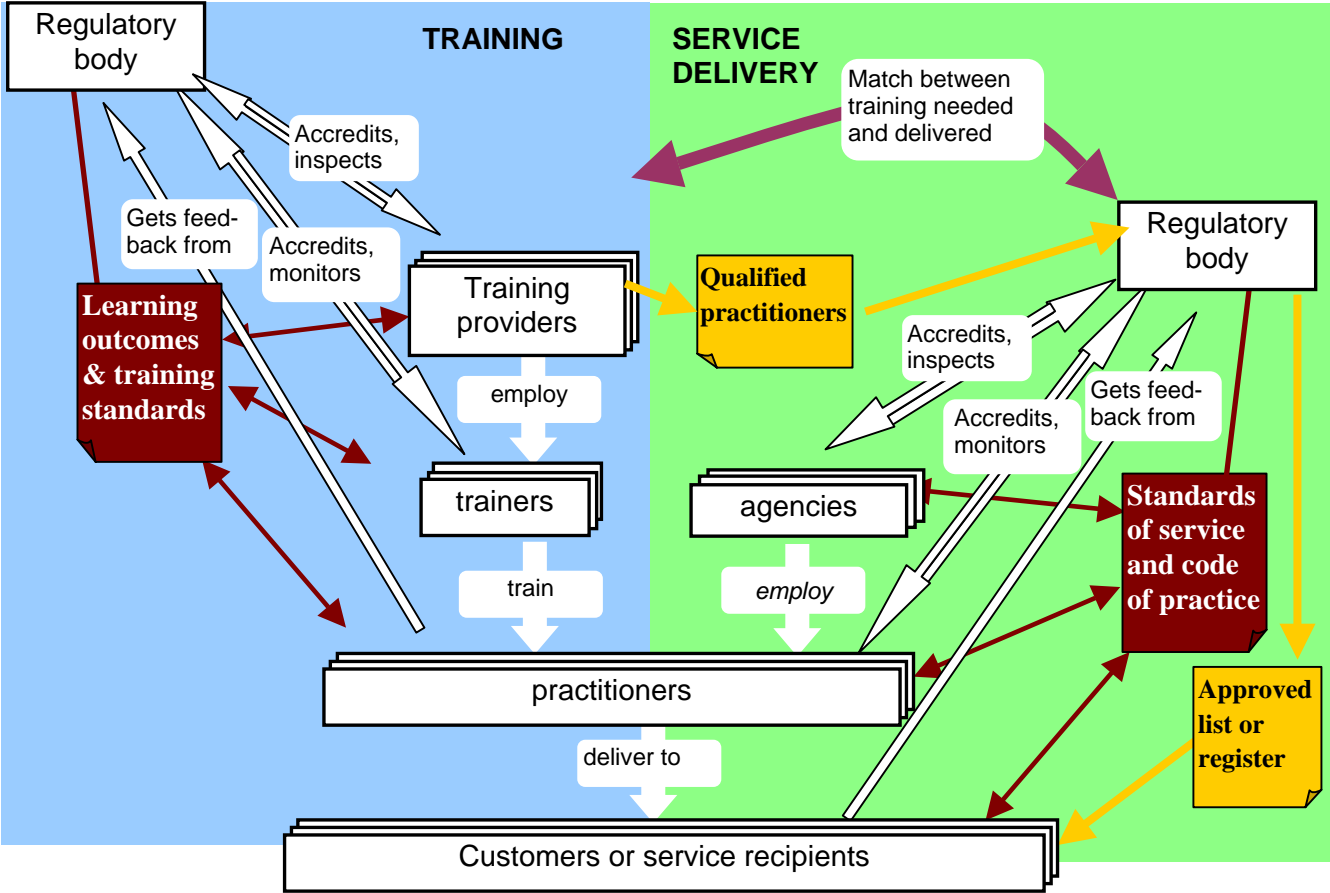
then be a provider as well as a regulator). In most circumstances the better solution will be to look to other organisations and individuals to provide the training required, and to confirm that practitioners possess the required competencies.

The role of the regulatory body is summarised in Diagram 5 (above). It should be noted that accreditation may be focused on practitioners, or – if they are employed – on their employing agencies, which are then responsible for the quality of work delivered.

In principle this system is not complicated. However, accreditation requires reliable information about the skills and knowledge of people who wish to be approved to provide the service. One solution would be for the regulatory body to create its own system to assess the competencies of potential practitioners, but this would put it in the position of passing or failing candidates, with no capacity to improve the skills and knowledge on offer. If the body extended its role to the delivery of training it would greatly extend and blur its role in ways that would not be helpful (as it would

This implies that there will be a second system to provide qualified workers. (See Diagram 6, next page.) The systems, both with their regulatory body, are very similar. In place of standards of service and code of practice, actors in the training system refer to a required set of learning outcomes, plus requirements for the way that these outcomes will be achieved and measured. Although not shown in the diagram, vocational and academic systems in the UK have an additional element, awarding bodies, which are positioned between the regulatory body and the organisations delivering training.

Diagram 6: Combined systems of regulation for training and service delivery



5.2 Is there a case for regulating independent support brokers?

It was clear from the interviews and discussions within the project that there are anxieties about the prospect of controls to determine who can practise as an independent support broker, or what training they should receive. Those people who were most strongly hostile to regulation were those whose general position was that the role (if indeed there is a role) should be left to emerge in response to the demands of people who require help with the tasks of brokerage. Another major strand of concern was that regulation would represent a significant and undesirable step towards professionalisation. Table 4 (below) extends the views that were offered into a comparison of the arguments that might be put forward both for, and against, regulation.

Regulation is not an exciting topic for most people, and is only likely to receive enthusiastic support if stories emerge of poorly trained or unsuitable people acting as brokers and causing harm. There was, nevertheless, agreement amongst a large proportion of people that some form of regulation is necessary. For some people this was no more than reluctant acceptance, in part based on the assumption that regulation implied professional registration with a central organisation (such as the General Social Care Council), and training absorbed within the framework of National Vocational Qualifications. No one was in favour of regulation by these routes. Likewise, no one favoured regulation by local councils.

There was, however, an alternative which did win favour with many people. This was the option of establishing regulatory bodies, controlled by disabled people and carers, in each council area. It should be noted that this option generally only emerged in discussion, and was sometimes offered to the interviewee or discussion group. Nevertheless, amongst those people who considered there was a

need for regulation, the option was generally taken up with enthusiasm. Most strikingly, a broker from a user-led organisation contemplated the options of centralised professional registration and local council registration with obvious distaste. But when offered local, user-led regulation, immediately responded:

That would be wonderful!

Some people nevertheless had qualms about independence of local regulatory bodies that would, almost inevitably, be funded by the council. If independence were compromised, then it would be little better than regulation by the council itself. There are obvious echoes here of the concerns expressed, over many years, about the independence of council-funded advocacy organisations.

The view that there is no need for any regulation whatsoever disregards all that has been learned, over centuries, about the dangers of free markets and unregulated professional services. This learning is evident in the regulatory arrangements that exist in almost all markets and professions. There is no persuasive reason to suppose that independent broker services are immune to these dangers. On the contrary, the circumstances in which brokers and their customers exist are a very long way from ideal free market conditions:

- People who have received services through the care management process are not used to having customer rights in social care. Some will quickly recognise that Individual Budgets have fundamentally changed their status, and make the most of it; but many others will take a long time to realise that they no longer have to be the passive recipients of support services or professional guidance. Unless people are assertive – insisting on the terms of broker services, and sending away brokers who do not deliver – the quality and form of broker services will not change.

- In addition, a substantial proportion of people who will receive Individual Budgets have impairments that will make it very difficult for them to make informed choices about who will provide them with broker services, or to exercise their power as customers.
- Customers need to have a sense of the standards they can expect, in order to judge whether or not the service they receive is satisfactory. They are poorly placed to make this judgment while the scope of the broker's role, and the level of expertise that brokers should possess, remain undefined.
- The social care system will continue to exert its own influence over the choices made by service users, including the choice to use a broker. The speed of change that is now under way set up stress points and pressures, not all of them favouring the self-determination of social care users. A broker market that is left free to evolve could be as much shaped by these factors as by the needs and demands of its intended customers.
- For at least some time to come, the local market of brokers will be small, and this will reduce the ability of customers to shape the market through their individual choices. They will be able to choose whether they use an independent broker (i.e. whether to enter the market), but once in the market will have to accept what is on offer: a case of 'like it or lump it', rather than consumer power.

It is true that some of these problems can be eased, and the need for regulation reduced, if independent brokers are employed by (independent) agencies. In that situation, the agencies become the guardians of quality. This, however, makes it a market of organisations rather

than individual practitioners, reducing the choices available to customers. Where councils commission single agencies to provide broker services, the market is replaced by a monopoly provider.

Self-directed supports aim to move away from the 'command and control' mentality where 'the system' presumes to decide what people's needs are, and to deliver a service that meets those needs. A market of independent brokers, which leaves people to free, if they wish, to contract with the broker of their choice, matches this aim. But moving to a completely free market would be going to the other extreme, trusting in an arrangement that has generally not proved reliable, even where customers are empowered and well informed. So the question is not *whether* to regulate, but *how* to regulate.

Recommendations that offer an answer to this question are set out in the following section.

Table 4: Arguments for and against regulation

Arguments FOR Regulation	Arguments AGAINST Regulation
Regulation will help to make the role clear and distinct.	Regulation will prevent it evolving.
Accreditation of brokers will prevent unsuitable people from becoming independent brokers.	Accreditation may exclude people who have valuable gifts to offer as brokers.
Leaving the role to evolve will allow the conservative tendencies in social care services to adapt it to fit the current system, reducing its value.	Leaving the role to evolve will allow it to develop in response to the demands and needs of people who need the services of a broker.
Regulation will help to ensure that independent brokers stay true to the principle that they work for people who use social care.	Regulation will hasten independent brokers towards a professional identity that will distance them from the people who use social care.
Without defining the purpose and boundaries of the role, it will be very difficult to evaluate it in a way that will provide firm evidence about whether or not it works.	Leaving the role without clear definitions creates opportunities for action research to test different approaches.
Training needs to be designed and delivered so that it reliably equips brokers for their role.	People's life skills and values are their primary assets as brokers. A straightforward training course can easily provide the other knowledge and skills they need.
People need to know what is on offer when they think about using a broker.	Brokers with a wide range of skills can adapt to the requirements of each person who needs their services
Regulation is needed now, before incompetent or unethical practices begin to harm people, and tarnish the image of independent support brokers.	There is, as yet, no evidence of the need for the safeguards offered by regulation.
Regulation exists across almost all commercial sectors and professions. This strongly suggests that it has been found necessary, and there is no reason to suppose that it is any less needed for independent broker services,	It's a fact of life that services sometimes do bad things to people. It makes no difference whether or not there is regulation.

6 Recommendations and conclusions

The arguments in this paper, drawing on the views expressed by people who were consulted, lead to the conclusion that some form of regulation is required, both to protect individual consumers and to guide the development of independent broker resources. Furthermore, there is also a need to put a regulatory framework around the delivery of training for independent brokers, so that there can be some assurance that people working as independent brokers have the necessary competencies.

On the other hand, the concerns that were expressed about the consequences of regulation are understood and fully accepted. The form of regulation should –

- match the size and significance of the workforce to be regulated
- leave ‘space’ for the role to develop in response to the requirements of people who want the services of a broker, and as more is understood about the factors that promote or impede good quality services from brokers
- discourage – or at least avoid encouraging - the development of independent brokers as a group with the undesirable characteristics of ‘professionals’.

The following recommendations aim to set out a regulatory framework that meets these requirements.

RECOMMENDATION 1

Establish regulation of independent brokers, and training for independent brokers that is appropriate for the near future

At this point it is impossible to judge how the development of independent support brokers – or the Individual Budgets system in which they operate – will unfold. A regulatory system that

might be appropriate for a workforce of many thousands would be absurd while there are only a few hundred active. So the following recommendations are envisaged to be appropriate for about the next three years, at which point they will need to be reviewed.

RECOMMENDATION 2

Establish regulation that is not compulsory but has government support, and is designed so that market forces encourage acceptance of regulation.

For the reasons described above (Recommendation 1) it would not be appropriate at this point to seek protection of the title ‘independent support broker’. In the absence of that legal measure, there is no way to ensure that people setting themselves up as independent brokers will seek accreditation or complete training. Nevertheless, non-compulsory standards of training, and voluntary accreditation, can go a long way towards ensuring that people who require independent broker assistance can access broker services with reasonable confidence of competence and ethical standards. Government support will encourage training providers, brokerage agencies, and local councils to endorse regulation in their own policies. In addition, however, the structure of regulation – and, in particular, the relationship between the accreditation of brokers and broker training providers – can be established in a way that promotes the delivery of high quality broker services.

RECOMMENDATION 3

Base accreditation on individual brokers, rather than on brokerage agencies.

Independent brokers may operate as salaried employees of independent agencies, but may also work on a self-employed basis. The accreditation arrangements need to be feasible and fair to both groups, and this can only be achieved by accrediting each broker, whether or not they are self-employed. Accreditation of brokers also emphasises the individual responsibility each broker carries for delivering a high quality service.

RECOMMENDATION 4

Support the development of local regulatory bodies for independent broker services in each council area, under the control of people who use social care services and carers, with the freedom to set their own standards for accreditation.

This form of regulation has several benefits:

- It avoids central registration, and will at least slow any trend towards the development of the negative aspects of 'professionalism, i.e. brokers who are more focused on their professional identity and interests than on their role in providing a service to disabled people within their local community.
- It places regulation in the hands of people who use social care, as representatives of social care users who may want the help of an independent broker.
- It allows local users and carers to shape the market of brokers to market local conditions and demands

- It establishes these bodies, with their power to decide what level of training brokers require in order to be accredited, in a position where they are intermediate customers of the training providers. The accreditation policies will therefore shape the training offered by the training organisations.

In addition to accrediting independent brokers to provide a service within the council area, the local regulatory bodies will need to:

- 1 Agree local standards in terms of broker training requirements; code of practice; and payment rates, using national guidelines as starting points.
- 2 Publish a list of accredited independent brokers and make sure it is available to people wanting to use broker services
- 3 Ensure that that appropriate arrangements exist to mentor the brokers and (while ensuring that the broker's primary accountability remains with the customer) monitor the standard of broker services
- 4 Establish an effective and fair system to respond to complaints about brokers, and if necessary to disaccredit brokers.
- 5 Where necessary, encourage the growth of independent broker services through recruitment and training opportunities
- 6 Collate information from brokers about community resources and mainstream services that are lacking or not inclusive, and pass this information to the council or other relevant agencies for action.

RECOMMENDATION 5

Where possible and appropriate, place the local regulatory body under the control of the local user-led groups.

The recent report from the Independent Living Review (Office for Disability Issues 2008), first set out in *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People*, that user-led organisations will have been established in each council area by 2010. In most respects, these organisations – as cross-disability, user-led organisations – are the ideal place to locate the local regulation of independent brokers. However, there will be a need to ensure that –

- broker regulation takes due account of the views and needs of carers, as well as of disabled people;
- the regulatory function is appropriately distanced from the delivery of primary or secondary support services linked to the user-led organisation, and from the delivery of independent broker services, to avoid potential conflicts of interest;
- the culture and ideology of the user-led organisation is able to accommodate the delivery of brokerage services based on a customer relationship.

RECOMMENDATION 6

Establish a voluntary regulatory framework for the training of independent support brokers, with a single regulatory body for England.

Local accreditation bodies will want to know what level of expertise is offered by brokers who seek accreditation. So, although training accreditation may be voluntary, there will be an incentive for training providers to accept regulation. This incentive will be increased if there is government support for regulation, in policy and through financial support for the regulatory body.

The training accreditation body should not also be a training provider, as that would create conflict of interest and a market advantage.

RECOMMENDATION 7

Focus training regulation on entry-level training for brokers based on a core set of knowledge and skills, with training that includes learning from practice as well classroom teaching.

This paper has suggested the outline of the training that is required, and the work being undertaken by Skills for Care will more clearly define the knowledge and skills this implies. As suggested earlier, training may need to involve more formal learning than is typically provided by broker training courses at the moment, but need not be extensive, especially if it is complemented by a period of trainee practice.

RECOMMENDATION 8

Encourage training providers to offer 'added value' elements to the basic entry-level training.

It is generally accepted that the broker role is still emerging, and as a result there are different views of the training that brokers need. Training providers are at liberty to extend their training beyond the core requirements, and to offer this 'added value' training to their two customers: individuals wanting training, and local accreditation agencies concerned to promote high standards of broker services in their area. The added value components might be concerned with higher skills in particular areas, such as mediation; or specialist knowledge on topics such as housing, or specialist health needs; or might put greater emphasis on learning through practice.

RECOMMENDATION 9

Make the regulatory body for training responsible not only for assessing that providers meet the core knowledge and skills, but also for confirming that providers are delivering the elements they have added to the basic training.

A weakness with training to meet a fixed standard (e.g. NVQ) is that the basic standard, as the 'lowest common denominator' of the training delivered by the various providers, reveals little reliable information about the features of each training course that makes it distinctive. The local regulatory bodies, as the intermediate customers of training providers, need to have the information required to discriminate as customers between the 'products on offer'. If this is absent, the training providers will have little incentive to provide 'added value' components. To overcome this problem, the regulatory body should inspect the training courses and provide information to potential trainees, and to local broker accreditation bodies, about these extra items.

These recommendations are designed to produce a system of regulation that will encourage the development and implementation of safeguards for the minimum standards of independent broker services, while still allowing both the market of brokers, and the market of training providers, the latitude to respond to customer demand. Although the regulatory system will not be compulsory, and not supported in law, brokers and training providers will have an incentive to work within the regulatory framework.

The proposed system will leave training providers with the freedom to extend the training they offer beyond the specified core content, and to experiment with different formats of training. On the other hand, the quality of the training, and the value of any enhancements, will be

weighed not only by brokers who seek training, but also by the local accreditation agencies which determine the level of training required by local brokers.

The local broker accreditation agencies act within this regulatory system on behalf of the people who may require independent broker services. They are, in effect, 'expert customers' whose 'purchasing policies' – their decisions about the training that accredited brokers must have completed – will shape the range of training that is provided nationally.

In addition, accreditation of brokers through local accreditation bodies provides opportunities for experimentation and learning, and for variations in policy and practice that reflect local conditions and requirements. They also help to anchor broker services within each community, reducing the risk that brokers will become professionalised in ways that are undesirable.

As set out in this report, there are widely-ranging views on the nature and scope of the independent role, and on the need for a regulatory system. A minority of people who offered their views to assist the development of this report were clearly opposed to regulation on any terms. However, much of the opposition to regulation appeared to be driven by a belief that the heavy hand of regulation would prevent the role of independent broker from evolving in response to demand, and instead hasten brokers towards unwanted professionalisation.

If that is the concern, then a 'light touch' approach to regulation, and one which strengthens the 'bottom up' influence of people who use broker services, should be welcomed. The recommendations set out in this report are offered in the belief that they meet those requirements.

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APPENDIX 1: Content of existing training courses

1. Framework for brokerage training, National Brokerage Network

	Element	Content
1	Understanding the history, aims, and principles of individualised funding and support brokerage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Origins and international historical development • Connections and contrasts with Independent Living movement, Direct Payments. • UK developments - In Control, SC white paper, Individual budgets papers. • Common failings of social care -e.g. lack of information, control, choices; tendency of system to provide standardised solutions; bias against solutions that promote social inclusion. • Values and founding principles of IF systems: user control and self-determination; social inclusion and the rights of disabled people as citizens; systems transparency, role clarity; planning and support based on person-centred principles. • Sources of funding, and the Citizenship Model. • Allocation of social care funding to individual - options and comparative advantages.
2	Understanding the role of the broker	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarification of differences between brokerage as performance of <i>function</i>, and the <i>role</i> of broker. • Overview of tasks within role, and limits to role. • The broker (role) as someone providing service accountable to the person, free of divided loyalties. • Principle of delivering service to the extent and in the way the individual requires. • The tension between allowing the person to have control but also sustaining momentum. • Issues of risk and conflict; e.g. conflicts between individual and carers; conflicts between the individual's wishes and the broker's judgement of risk and benefits. • The position of the broker in relation to the system and the local community. • The range and depth of expertise of the broker: reasonable expectations and anxieties. • Organisational options (e.g. salaried or self-employed), regulation and support of brokers - general principles and advantages/disadvantages, with reference where appropriate to local arrangements.

3	Meeting the person, and their families/allies.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 'Setting the tone' from the outset through personal manner. • Explaining the broker's role • Establishing and asserting accountability to the person.
4	Agreeing a contract for brokerage services.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying what is meant by 'contract' • Issues that may need to be covered in the contract. • Putting the contract in writing.
5	Getting to know the person and their life.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Principles of person-centred planning • Choice of participants in process • Basic concepts and processes • Basic techniques - 'kitchen table planning' • Awareness of more specific pcp methods, e.g. ELP, PATH, PFP and when/how to access them.
6	Developing a plan to make their life more like the one they want	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal support versus informal/mainstream resources. • Researching service options and community resources. • Options for funding sources, and how to access them. • Weighing options in terms of desirability and feasibility • Assessing risks and building in safeguards
7	Converting the PCP into list of required resources (<i>A Service Design</i>)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Service design as necessary starting point for service specifications. • Contracting with an agency versus employing p.a.s • Services that may be needed to sustain implementation, e.g. support coordination, payroll administration
8	Finding and working with community resources and informal opportunities	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Role of broker in developing community resources, and limits to the role. • Basic techniques in mapping and assessing community resources • Identifying potential informal support.
9	Finding and working with support service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Developing a service specification • Items that may need to be covered • Role of broker in extending the range of support options
10	Negotiating with service providers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Understanding the provider perspective • Negotiating with providers • Outputs from negotiations: service delivery plans
11	Preparing and costing the <i>Support Plan</i> .	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Characteristics of a well-presented plan • Choosing 'first person' or 'third person' style. • Technicalities of costing a plan

12	Submitting and presenting the <i>Support Plan</i>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Clarifying and sustaining roles in meetings about the support plan. • Effectiveness presentation techniques
13	Getting implementation started	<p>Ensuring there is a viable plan for implementation</p> <p>Options for oversight of implementation</p> <p>Troubleshooting</p>
14	Saying goodbye.	Importance of 'closure'
15	Administrative issues	<p>Accounting for time spent</p> <p>Fee and expense rates</p>
Additional elements linked to the training		
16	<p>Accreditation/Certification</p> <p>Training providers may wish to issue provide certificates to participants who have met a required standard. In addition, the training may be linked to a local IF/IB programme to provide brokers approved to work as brokers associated with the programme. In either case, the training will need to -</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Develop an explicit set of required knowledge and skills against which the competencies of participants will be assessed. • Explicitly identify how these competencies will be assessed • Identify opportunities beyond the training to strengthen and reassess knowledge or skill where competence is marginal or not demonstrated. 	
17	<p>Mentoring/supervision</p> <p>Arrangement will need to be in place so that brokers starting to provide their services - especially as they begin this work - receive support and monitoring. This may include peer support as well as professional supervision. Where there is no one locally who can offer expert guidance, the local support arrangements may need to be backed up with an additional 'supporting the supporters' arrangement provided by approved NBN sources</p>	

2. Training provided by Realife for the National Brokerage Network (<http://www.realife.org.uk>)

Content of five day course

Part One: **Building a shared vision**

- Building a Team
- Personal and Professional – exploring the boundaries
- Training framework revisited

Person Centred Planning

- Brokerage Update
- Key values and skills

Choice and Change

- Supported decision making
- Managing change

Part Two: **Brokerage in Practice (4 week placement) Practical experience of working as a broker**

- Assessed reflective journal
- Peer and individual supervision available

Part Three: Days Three - Five

Mediation and negotiation

- Key skills
- Conflict, mediation and arbitration

'In Control' and Individual Budgets pilots

- The National Project
- Pilot area updates

Individualised Funding

- Sources checklist
- Key skills inc. bid writing and financial management
- Funding mechanisms (Direct Payments, Third Party Agencies, Trusts etc)

Processes and Systems

- Referrals and paper set
- Process flow chart
- 'In Control' progress monitoring
- Record keeping

Monitoring and standards

- Developing a quality system
- Individual and peer supervision

3. Independent support broker training provided by the National Development Team (<http://www.ndt.org.uk>)

Content of five day course

DAY 1

Introductions and overview of the course

Individualised funding

- Where did it come from?:
- What is it? – the IF model
- Current UK developments
- A critical review of different approaches and options.

Support brokers

- Values and principles
- Overview of stages in the brokerage process
- Broker skills
- Support broker organisation and oversight options

DAY 2

The broker process:

Stage 1: Meeting the person, and their families/allies.

Stage 2: Agreeing a contract

Stage 3: Getting to know the person and their life and

Stage 4: Helping the person decide how they want to live their life

covering -

- What does 'person-centred' mean?
- Person-centred listening and questioning
- Gifts, assets, and resources – relationship mapping
- 'Important to' and 'important for'
- Developing and using dreams
- Establishing 'bottom lines'

DAY 3

Stage 5: Converting the PCP into a plan

- Person-centred versus system-centred thinking
- Evaluating options
- Accessing funding streams

Brokers and abusive situations/risks (inc. POVA essentials)

Stage 6: Finding and accessing community resources

- Developing creative solutions
- Locating resources
- The broker role in developing community capacity

DAY 4

Stage 7: Finding and working with service providers

- Developing a service specification
- Finding providers
- Approaching providers

Stage 8: Negotiating with service providers

Stage 9: Preparing and costing the Support Plan

- Style and 'voice' of plan
- Required content and key questions
- Calculating and presenting costs

DAY 5

Stage 10: Getting agreement to the Support Plan

- Supporting signing off and/or negotiation

Stage 11: Getting implementation started

Stage 12: Saying goodbye

Moving towards practice as a broker

- Profiles
- Registration and Accreditation issues
- Practical admin and finance aspects of the broker's work
- Getting and giving support.

4. Training provided by Step-By-Step Living Network (<http://www.livingnetwork.org.uk>) in the North West and by Happy Associates (<http://www.happyassociates.co.uk>) outside the North West

***Driving your bus:
A six day journey in Support Brokerage***

Module 1

'Driving your bus', understanding the role of self directed support and support brokerage, what support brokerage is, how the system operates: individualised funding v central funding, who can broker (the brokerage map), who do we broker for, exploration of different funding and resources that make self direction work. Informed decision making, the mental capacity act, independent living trusts, support brokerage menu of activity, contracting and payment.

Module 2

"Foundations of Self Directed Support" This looks at the policy that drives self directed support and individualised budgets: National In Control, government policy, quality frameworks, This module also gives a "feel" for the values and core principles that are vital to the support brokerage process, in order to genuinely empower and to create great outcomes.

Module 3

'Support Planning', this is where we create the difference that makes a difference. Focusing on the main areas of support planning we will look at the mechanics of the planning process, finance and the creation of compelling and sustaining futures, formats for support planning. This is an experiential process and participants will get a sense of how support planning feels.

(See also the SDS Personality map on the following page)

Mission & Vision

<p style="text-align: center;">Identity</p> <p>Self Esteem Self Image. Working with the persons unique model of the world. Permissiveness</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Beliefs & Values</p> <p style="text-align: center;">The drivers of self direction Creating core principles as a foundation for ethical and appropriate Support Brokerage activity Motivation Factors</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Capabilities & Skills</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Innate & Learned skills Accessing what we are already able to do and learning what we need to know Being aware of what we do not know or can not do and being able to get alternate resources to create success</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Behaviour</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Audible Visual Action</p> <p>What we do as Support Brokers. How we operate from peoples front room to dealing with organisations. Delivering outcomes</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Environment</p> <p style="text-align: center;">Externals:people,situations,etc Understanding the Social Care scene knowing what can hinder and what can be a resource</p>