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**Re: LINK Report on the Advice and Information Required Personal Budgets**

Dear Johanne

Thanks again for the opportunity to review the final report and for the changes that were agreed by the Board to the earlier draft.

I'd like to respond to each of the key recommendations from the report in turn:

- **The publication of a set of printed materials to support understanding of personal budgets.**

I think this recommendation is at the heart of moving forward with the roll out of Personal Budgets and our customers using them to truly increase their choice and control.

I found the research in the report into what works, extremely useful and as a result we are working with a newly established Carer Reference Group on a new set of customer leaflets. I understand some of these have already been passed to you and the team for review; thanks for this.

I agree with the structure outlined in the report and we have developed a new one page summary with a more detailed guide about all 7 steps of self directed support.

In addition we are developing a new range of facts sheets which answer more specific questions such as - "what can I spend my Direct Payment on?"

Our one page summary and more detailed guide will be made available within the next 4 weeks.

- **The creation of a new distribution systems for printed materials**

The customer leaflets will be made available on the existing Council website and will be printed and circulated around our networks. We are working with our ULO network and the five North Tyneside Commissioning Boards to see where else we need to circulate information.

An overall framework for this work will be included in an advice and information strategy, we are aiming to publish later this year.

- **The development of internet accessible resources**

As the report noted we have been in development for some time on a new web based service for Adult Social Care. We have just completed a procurement exercise for this and aim to announce the preferred solution by the beginning of next week.

The new web service will offer information about Adult Social Care, full details on personal budgets and support planning but more importantly other sources of help and information.

I fully acknowledge that the web service alone is not the answer for everyone. We are working with our ULO network to establish a formal advice and information network that can be trusted and used by everyone in the borough; regardless of funding, eligibility or level of need.

- **The development of new social care market resources and the provision of information on accredited personal assistants**

As I'm sure you will appreciate this is a longer term and ongoing piece of work. The new commissioning structure, implemented earlier this year, is helping to progress the work and to ensure that we are linking with partners across the Third and independent sectors and NHS.

We have not yet seen a demand for Personal Assistants but want to make sure we are stimulating and working with the market for this. The new web based service will eventually offer a way for PAs to register their services.

In addition the new web service will be developed to hold a directory of services that professionals, our customers, their carers and the public are able to use.

- **The use of digital resources especially video and audio**

I fully agree that the use of video and audio can really enhance understanding of what can be a complicated agenda.

We are currently in the process of collating case studies to be transferred to video and want to circulate these on DVD and via the new web service.

I would expect this to be a medium to longer term development, with good progress shown by April 2012.

I hope these responses are useful to you and I'd like to suggest that we use the LINK Third Sector Personalisation Reference Group, as a mechanism to keep you and the Board updated with ongoing progress.

Thanks again and I look forward to our next piece of work together.

Yours sincerely



Haley Hudson  
**Senior Manager Strategic Planning, Partnerships and Transformation**