

November 2021

Costed support planning grid

**Adult Social Care
Digital technology and skills review**

Ipsos MORI, Institute of Public Care and Skills for Care



Ipsos MORI



Costed support planning grid

This case study supports a review of technology and digital skills in adult social care, undertaken by Ipsos MORI, the Institute of Public Care (IPC) at Oxford Brookes University and Skills for Care on behalf of NHSX. Further information is available on the [study webpage](#).

Problem to be solved

Devon County Council had started to look at outcomes in relation to eligible needs under the Care Act, with the intention of giving greater choice and control to adults with care and support needs.

In the past, some adults with care and support needs had received the same commissioned package of care over many years. In moving to a more person-centred approach, Devon County Council introduced individual service funds (ISFs) to enable people with care and support needs to self-direct how their budget was used by their care provider to achieve the outcomes they wanted.

However, to ensure people were fully supported through this process, Devon County Council needed a tool which would enable adults with care and support needs to be fully involved in the planning of their care, while allowing transparency in the management of budgets for the individual, the care providers and the Council.

The project

The Council purchased the license for a colour-coded, costed support planning grid. The tool had been designed by a parent to empower her two disabled adult sons. The software was co-produced and developed with a company which specialised in accessible educational software. The software had been specifically designed to enable adults, who could not necessarily understand their budgets, to become active participants with the Council and their support provider, in deciding how their support could be delivered innovatively and differently.

“The fact that we're providing greater independence to the service user, for their expression to be heard over their budgets is fantastic.” Manager, Technology developer

The tool gave a 24 hour, 7 day week view in a grid format, with 30 minute blocks. The grid could be used to co-design the support around a person's weekly activities, using the allocated budget. There was also a template of consistent colour-coded 'support types' and their costs, that were attached to each activity. As activities were added, the cost was deducted from the budget, giving a running balance to inform choice.

- **Red:** one-to-one support, with four shades to indicate the intensity of support: doing tasks for the person, with the person, offering verbal prompts or background supervision and support
- **Yellow:** shared support, where two or more adults with care needs may be receiving support together from one staff member
- **Green:** use of day opportunities services, education and employment services
- **Grey:** assistive technology, where creative use of digital TEC has replaced other support
- **Blue:** celebrates independence, strengths and skills where funded support is no longer needed.

The grid could also be used as a visual invoicing system for the commissioned care provider that holds the individual service fund. The costing software showed how the budget had been spent and the colour-

coding software showed where and what type of support was being delivered. If support was shared, only a proportion of the support cost was charged.

“So this really gave power back to the person and [gave] them control about how they utilise their budgets that they receive to meet their Care Act eligible needs in a way that best suited them.” Social care assessor, Devon County Council

Implementation

When Devon County Council purchased the license for the grid it came with a half day training package, which covered the technology as well as the co-productive, enabling approach needed to use it effectively.

“Three quarters of the training is about the principles of co-production, the start of a different conversation within social care.” Grid creator and trainer

The Council found that their staff sometimes needed a refresher, so they have developed a step-by-step guide and have introduced grid tool champions to give colleagues and care providers advice and support on using the grid.

The costed support planning grid was initially introduced as a pilot in one area of Devon. The grid was completed as part of a PATH (Planning Alternative Tomorrows with Hope) meeting in which the adult with care and support needs was able to express their hopes, dreams and goals. The initial grid reflected the cost of the package and how the care was being received at that time, however, during ongoing conversations the grid was regularly updated (e.g. fortnightly) to incorporate the activities and outcomes that formed part of the person's long-term goals.

After the initial pilot, senior Council leaders, care providers and Council colleagues in other areas contacted the pilot team to learn more about their experiences and the impact on individuals. The grids were also being requested as a visual summary of a proposed package being presented to assessment panels.

Outcome and impact

Quality of life and outcomes for adults using the grids have been improved and this has been evidenced by changes in the balance of colours on grids over time:

- increased independence, for example in learning how to cook or sharing household cleaning or laundry tasks
- social interactions encouraged through shared care and pooling budgets, which also enables peer support in tackling issues such as social isolation
- self-direction of the budget gives greater choice of activities, such as being supported to go to the cinema with friends independently
- taking part in volunteering or work, with some users of the grid being paid by Devon County Council to train other adults with care and support needs on how to use the grid.

The use of the grid also encouraged greater use of digital technology. Adults with care and support needs were introduced to using a tablet or laptop independently for other activities such as fitness videos or video calls. Use of other assistive technology such as electronic medicine dispensers or digital photo

frames to support everyday tasks like cooking, cleaning, laundry were identified during the planning process, gradually reducing the reliance on the care package over time.

Although the grid was not designed to save money, Devon County Council found the pilot resulted in cost savings, led by the person with care and support needs or their family. The use of the grid to calculate the package and as an invoicing and monitoring tool has made ISFs transparent, has supported reviews and ensured eligible needs were being met. People using this tool expressed their determination to 'have more blue on their grid', often without knowing they were themselves reducing their reliance on the funding they received.

“What I have seen, particularly with the grid and the introduction of self-directed support, is that many people have made savings, but actually, living much more fulfilled lives, doing much more with their time.” Social care assessor, Devon County Council

“It's great for practitioners to monitor and review support packages.” Social care assessor, Devon County Council

Lessons learned

When using ISFs, budgets may be spent in new ways and staff need to work flexibly. A care and support worker described delivering ISFs as making her job 'harder', 'complicated' and 'faster-paced', but also more 'satisfying' and 'rewarding'. It also freed up her time to fill staff shortages elsewhere. When the grid is introduced to support ISF implementation, staff and providers need training on person-centred care and on how to manage the impacts on their working lives.

The grid is accessed online by registering for a secure account and the data is held on a secure server. The Council licence gives all staff with a Council email address their own grid account for their caseloads, enabling them to co-produce assessment and care plans, calculate budgets and review packages with the people they're working with. The adult with care and support needs can own their own account too, and only share it with those they choose to. While this is beneficial for data security and GDPR compliance, it can however reduce interoperability with other care management systems. Tackling this has proved challenging, but the software company can provide the commissioning organisation with an API (application programming interface).

“[The] end user [who owns their grid account] was in control, and took the decision to enable access to the grid to only their circle of support” Manager, Technology developer

The grid is versatile. It is a tool for Council staff, care providers and people who receive care and support. In cases where the person with care and support needs requires help with digital skills, the grid's use can be facilitated by their circle of support, or guided by a care and support worker, even if the adult with care and support needs could not use it by themselves.

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