



# 2. Thinking about outcomes: effective support planning

This guide is for professionals who support someone with a severe mental illness who has, or is thinking about applying for, a Personal Budget. It draws on people's real experiences. We have brought these together to offer you advice and guidance on supporting the person in this process.



This is one of six guides for mental health workers:

1. Considering a Personal Budget
- 2. Thinking about outcomes: effective support planning**
3. Supporting your client through the process
4. Working with families
5. Reviewing a Personal Budget
6. Reaching goals and moving on

In creating this guide, we asked 54 people with a severe mental illness about what it was like to get and use a Personal Budget. We also spoke to 18 family members of people with a mental illness and 30 mental health practitioners. Each group told us the good and the bad things about getting and using Personal Budgets. They told us that some steps were easy but others were more difficult.

For more information about the study see our website [www.rethink.org/personalbudgets](http://www.rethink.org/personalbudgets)

## Setting goals and outcomes

Mental health workers are important in helping their clients to benefit from Personal Budgets. This includes helping people to set goals, describing relevant rules and conditions, and making sure that the expectations are realistic. It is important for a support plan to be co-produced by the client and the people who will support him or her through the process, e.g. care coordinator, support worker, broker, or a family member.

In this guide we highlight some key features to consider in the support planning process. We draw on the experiences of real mental health workers.

One of the mental health workers in our study described support planning as a three-step process:

1. “Supporting the individual to identify what it is they need or want”



2. “Bringing in your own assessment into that mix”



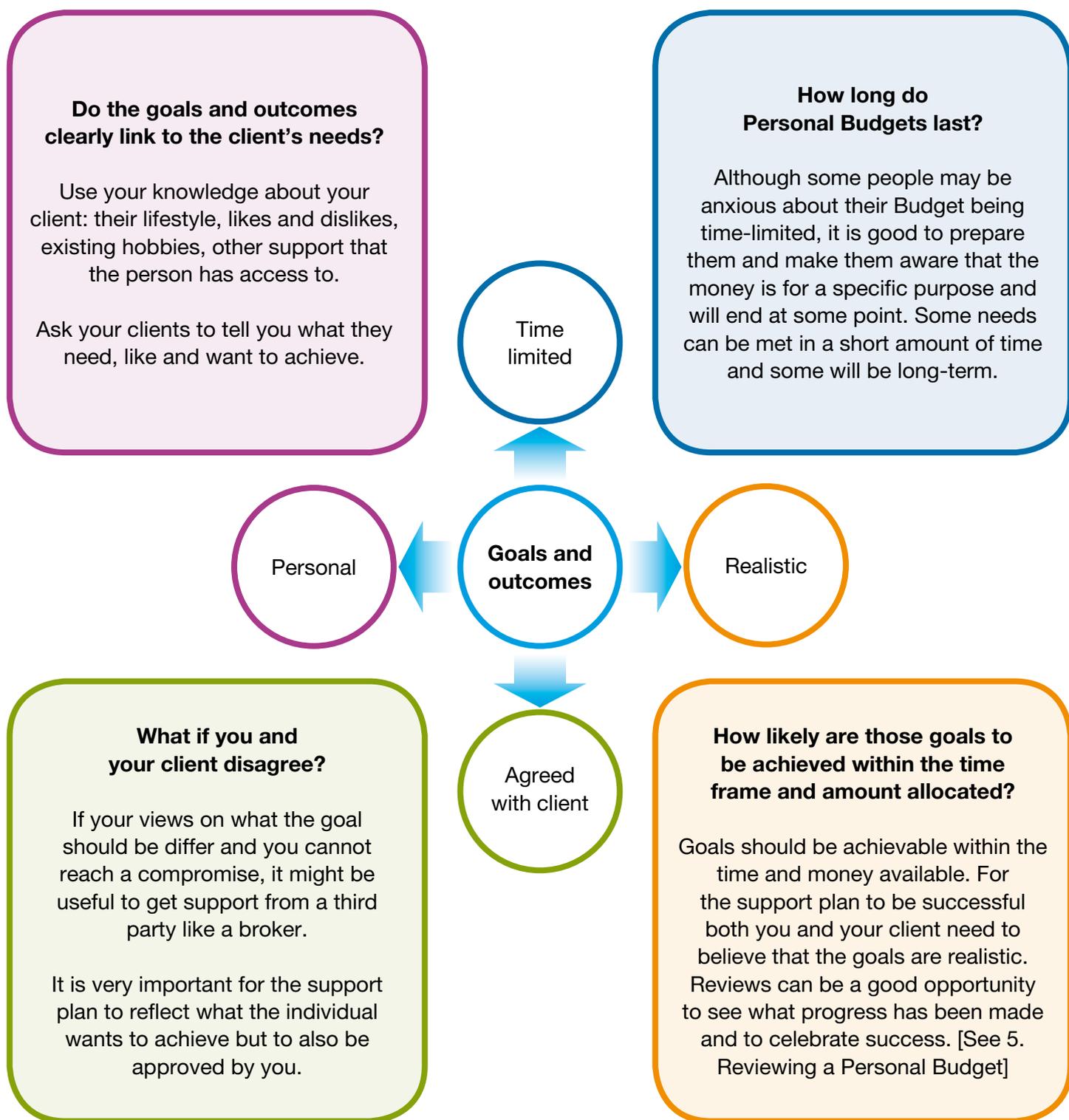
3. “What do we actually have available?”

Some people you support may struggle with articulating what their needs, goals and outcomes are, but the aim should be to always include the person you support in a way that works for them:

**Occupational Therapist:** “You need to be able to sit with people [who] are used to being told what sort of support they need and how it’s going to be delivered, and are not very confident at articulating their own support needs and advocating or asking for how they want their needs met. So, it’s about developing the trust and getting to know the person and then trying to draw out from them what help they want and what support they want. Sometimes you need to have a balance between being a little bit directive but also making sure you’re not pushing things on people.”

**Social Worker:** “It depends on the client because some clients are very, very, very articulate, and they can articulate what they want, but some clients, too, are not able to articulate what they want (...). If you find a client who is not very articulate to say what he wants, then what you have to do is, maybe, you have to suggest things because you are selling the thing to the client.”

Our research identified some important features that should guide the process of setting goals and outcomes for people with mental illness.



We have also developed guidance for people who are considering a Personal Budget titled [Setting your goals](#). You may find it useful to share this resource with your client to facilitate your discussion with them about their Personal Budget.

## What can the Personal Budget be spent on?

Mental health workers that we spoke to expressed uncertainty about what the Personal Budgets could and could not be spent on. This uncertainty can create pressure on mental health workers who need to make decisions in line with both the client's needs and the local authority's requirements. In reality, a lot of decisions will depend on local rules, the resources available and professional judgement.

Many local authorities have panels responsible for reviewing applications and deciding about what Personal Budgets can be used for. The final decision will be made by them or a manager.

**Social Worker:** "It's down to your own value judgement in a way. What one person thinks is a good use of money, another person doesn't. You've got the client with their opinion, and then you've got the worker with an opinion, but a different one. **There's no hard and fast rules.** So, it's very much down to discretion. At the end of the day, the manager signs it off."

## Who is responsible for support planning?

Support planning arrangements vary depending on the local authority, access to independent support planners, the client's engagement in the process, and the support planner's experience. The support planning role can be taken on by a mental health worker or a support planner, but should always be prepared in collaboration with the person looking to get a Personal Budget.



# Planning support for people with severe mental illness

Our research identified some important aspects of support plans developed for people with severe mental illness:

**Social worker:** “We put in some extra monies over the dark winter months. When we did the review, I asked for some extra monies so that [my client] could have an extra day’s support during the winter months.”

## Building in flexibility

Flexibility is particularly important for people whose needs tend to fluctuate. Depending on the type of Personal Budget, there are ways of adjusting the amount of support depending on what the person is able to do.

Some people we spoke to described having a **contingency or a crisis plan**, which outlines what should happen if the client becomes unwell. They might help to arrange additional hours of support from a Personal Assistant, or stop payments if the client becomes too unwell to attend support activities or use their Personal Budget appropriately.

This might be difficult with lessons or membership fees which require payment in advance, even when people temporarily can’t use them. It is worth checking if some arrangements can be made in case your client becomes unwell, so that they do not lose a portion of the Personal Budget while unable to use the support.

**Social worker:** “You can see how it benefits them at the time, something like horse-riding lessons, but it’s that worry that when it stops, what do they do then? They’ve not got the money to carry on themselves, so they’re a little bit back to where they were before, but I don’t know what the way is for that. It’s just the nature of it. I don’t know whether we should think more about what it would be like when it stops, or is it something that would last or whether it’s somebody who makes the rules who would oversee that.”

## Sustainability

Sustainability is often a problem when introducing new activities and hobbies that people are unable to afford themselves. It is important to consider **what will happen when the Personal Budget stops**, for example:

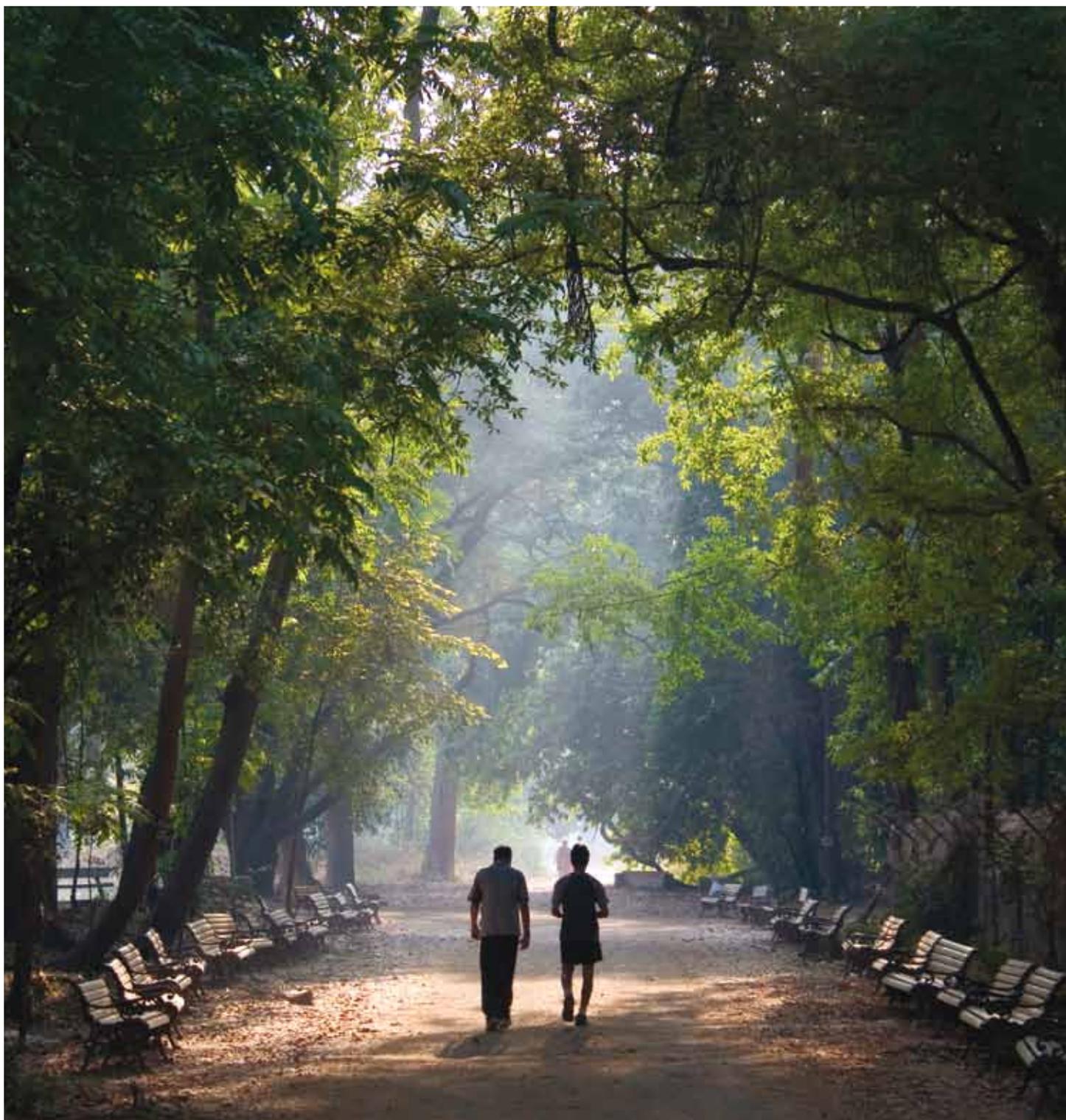
- What is the risk associated with the activity stopping altogether?
- Will the person be able to fund the activity from other sources?
- Are there alternative sources of similar support?
- Is a Personal Budget the best option?

Engaging the person you support in those discussions can be difficult as it might provoke anxiety. However, it is still worth encouraging forward thinking and planning for after their Personal Budget has ended.

## Monitoring arrangements

It is good to be clear with your client from the start about your roles and responsibilities when it comes to the Personal Budget. This will depend on your client, but a lot of people develop confidence and skills that allow them to gradually take control and manage their Personal Budgets with little supervision.

Even when a support plan is prepared by a third party (for example, a broker), the role of different people involved in the process should be made clear. The support plan should be reviewed regularly together with the person you support. Our study found that people rarely revisit their support plans. Try using the support plan as a tool for tracking success in achieving personal goals and also use it in reviews to keep a record of any changes made. More details on reviews can be found in our [Conducting reviews](#) guide.



# About this project

This booklet was developed by researchers at The McPin Foundation and Rethink Mental Illness. We conducted interviews with people using Personal Budgets, families and mental health workers in four areas of England.

The project was paid for by the Big Lottery Fund, and supported by King's College London and the University of Birmingham. For information about how this research was done, visit our website: [www.rethink.org/personalbudgets](http://www.rethink.org/personalbudgets)



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