



5. Reviewing a Personal Budget

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

Reviews are an important means of monitoring and adapting the use of Personal Budgets in order to get the most out of them. From our research, it is clear that reviews can sometimes be a source of real stress and worry for the person who receives the Personal Budget. It can also be a concern for the mental health workers who conduct the review and who may have to suggest a cut or an end to the Personal Budget.

In this guide, we describe how reviews were both beneficial and problematic for the people in our study, and we suggest some ways that reviews can be made to feel more empowering.

What is the purpose of a Review?

Reviews serve a number of purposes. At different times, different purposes may take priority.

To help the person assess their own progress towards goals

It can be difficult for people to see change for themselves, particularly for those who find it difficult to reflect back on difficult times in their past. Helping them to do this and to recognise what they have achieved can benefit self-esteem and confidence.

To help the person look beyond the Personal Budget

When people have benefited from a Personal Budget, it can be difficult for them to recognise that the Personal Budget may come to an end. A review should encourage people to think about ways of sustaining progress beyond the Personal Budget, even before the Personal Budget has finished.

To monitor needs

Needs change for lots of different reasons. For people with a severe mental illness this will include fluctuating mental health, and changes in living circumstances, available support and personal goals.

To monitor use

Reviews can be a useful way to check that the Personal Budget is being used in the way that was agreed in the Support Plan. Early reviews can help to make sure that the Personal Budget holder understands what is expected of them, and to provide any clarification early in the process.



Common concerns

The practitioners we spoke to often had worries about conducting reviews:

Practitioners worried about what would happen to their client if the Personal Budget came to an end.

Social Worker: “They’ve not got the money to carry on themselves, so they’re a little bit back to where they were before. 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.”

Practitioners worried about the work involved in the process and paperwork for reviews.

Social Worker: “Say, if you are reviewing somebody after a year, all the forms that you have to do, they are really complicated; they all look the same. You have to get bank account details. You spend your time ringing banks, and then you dread it really. You don’t feel comfortable doing it.”

Practitioners felt caught in the middle when they conducted the review but did not have the final say. Some worried that the review process could affect their relationship with the client.

CPN: “We have to do the face-to-face review and check the receipts and check the bank statements, and it feels a bit intrusive and damaging, really, when you have to say, look, you’re not spending it right, or you can’t prove that, so I’m going to have to ask them to stop it.”



Preparing for a Review

Clients can find the idea of a review very scary. It can feel like a test that people pass or fail, with reductions or loss of a Personal Budget sometimes feeling like punishment. Preparing your client for what is involved in the review, and what could change, can help to allay fears. The booklet [Personal Budgets – checking your progress](#) can help Personal Budget holders to think about how a review can help them.

Formal reviews with specific paperwork may be required at set points after the Personal Budget starts. It can be helpful to have informal reviews about how the Personal Budget is working in between these formal reviews. This helps clients to know what is expected of them and can identify any potential problems early.

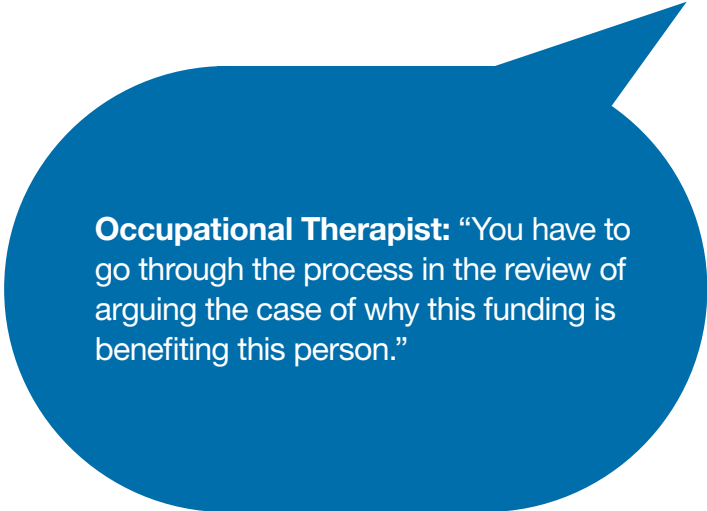
Personal Budget holders may ask for a review, particularly if things have changed for them, or if they are having difficulties. Responding to these requests is likely to make the review more effective.

- Encourage your client to think about what has changed for them in advance of the review meeting;
- Goals should be clearly stated in the Support Plan – going back to what was agreed can provide a good reference point;
- Be clear about what receipts, bank statements or other evidence are needed and for what period;
- Consider who else should be invited to attend, for instance family members and other support workers.


Outcomes from a Review

When the person you support is benefiting from the Personal Budget...

- The Personal Budget may continue unchanged if it is meeting on-going needs. The review may need to cover what reaching their goal might look like and when that might happen.
- The Personal Budget may be reduced if the client's needs are less or if they are able to sustain more of the activity without support.
- The Personal Budget may be stopped if the client has reached their goals.



Occupational Therapist: "You have to go through the process in the review of arguing the case of why this funding is benefiting this person."



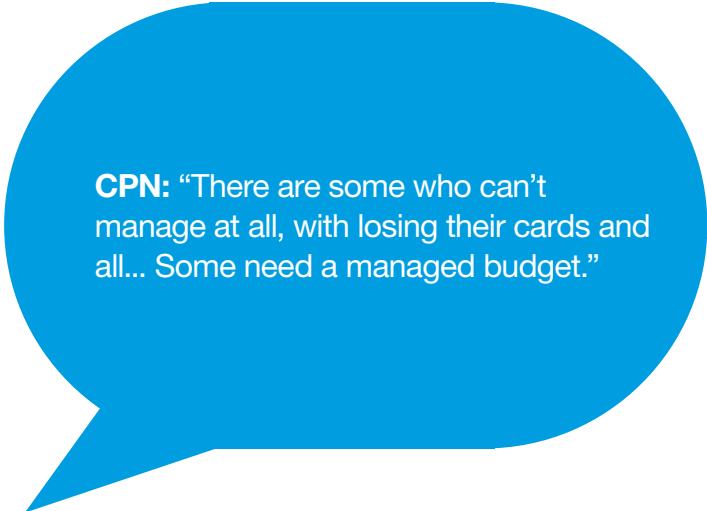
Occupational Therapist: "I think often clients think it's for life. It's been quite difficult to say to them that that's not the case: it's to bring about some goal or aim, and then once that's been achieved it needs to be stopped."

When the person you support is no longer benefiting from the Personal Budget...

- The Personal Budget may continue but with an amended Support Plan to reflect the changes in what the client can use or would find helpful.
- The Personal Budget may increase to help overcome any barriers that the individual is facing.
- The Personal Budget may be suspended for a period while the client is unable to use it, for instance if they are unwell.
- The Personal Budget may be stopped if the client no longer needs it or has been unable to use the Personal Budget.

When the person you support has been unable to manage the Personal Budget...

- The Personal Budget may continue but with additional support and guidance for the client to understand what is expected of them.
- The Personal Budget may be delivered in a different way, for instance as a Managed Budget instead of Direct Payments.
- The Personal Budget may be stopped if the client is felt to be deliberately misusing it.



CPN: "There are some who can't manage at all, with losing their cards and all... Some need a managed budget."

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



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