

# **Review of Flexible Support Packages and Outreach Support Services**

**Department of Human Services**

**Final Report**

**July 2008**

**HDG Consulting Group**



Suite 1  
206 Albert Street  
East Melbourne VIC 3002  
Contact:  
Ro Saxon  
Tel: 03 9416 0447 / 0412537979  
Email: [ro.saxon@hdgconsulting.com.au](mailto:ro.saxon@hdgconsulting.com.au)

## Executive Summary

The Victorian Department of Human Services (DHS), Disability Services Division, aims to improve the quality of life for Victorians with intellectual, physical, sensory and neurological disabilities and acquired brain injury. The Division provides leadership to achieve the policy directions outlined in the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012, funding to non-government service providers, and direct support to people with a disability and their families. The aim of supports is to enhance independence, choice and community membership, advance well-being and promote quality of life of people with disabilities. Supports are provided in accordance with an individual planning and support approach.

In 2007, the DHS Disability Services Division requested a review of the Flexible Support Package activity funded by Disability Services, including those activities known as Making a Difference (MaD), Early Choices (EC), Continuity of Care (CoC), Assisted Community Living (ACL) and Family Options (FO). Outreach Support funded by Disability Services was also included in the review. The purpose of the review was to identify outcomes for people using supports and whether there were any changes that could further improve these services.

Flexible Support Packages funding of \$24.5M for 4,079 support packages and Outreach Support of \$5.5M for support of 1,268 people was within the scope of the review. Over two hundred people (232) receiving supports and 43 service providers participated in the review. This reflected 81% of Flexible Support Packages and 34% of Outreach Support in Victoria. All DHS regions in Victoria were represented.

The review found that individual and responsive planning and flexibility in service provision were key strengths of the supports. Case management, where available, was valued for access to information, general support and advocacy. Planning was valued for goal-setting and understanding the limits of support packages. Brokerage funds, where available, tended to be used for direct practical assistance, for example, individual support, respite care or equipment. With the exception of short-term packages, the duration of supports was medium term or ongoing.

The review found that features of an Individualised Planning and Support approach were demonstrated in service provision, and that opportunities to further enhance this were evident. There is potential for ongoing improvement in self-determination and decision making processes, provision of funding allocation information and skills development, such as for self-management of supports.

Review findings of multiple support package use, varying access to case management and brokerage across different activities, and access issues at key transition points, indicated the opportunity for service system improvements – such as streamlined access pathways, integrated planning processes, improved response capacity for people seeking short-term support, consistent priority determination and integrated waiting list management practices for people seeking ongoing support.

Implementation of the recommendations will contribute to a responsive and quality service system, reflecting the intent of the Disability Act 2006 and the priorities of the Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012 and strengthening application of an individualised planning and support approach.

### **Recommendation 1: Simplify service system access and pathways to respond to immediate, short term and long term needs**

Desired outcome: That people can access a support package relative to their needs, through simple, clear pathways that minimise duplication of assessment and application processes.

- a) Reduce the need for multiple applications and processes and allocate single integrated support packages rather than multiple packages. For example, integrate Continuity of Care packages to eliminate the need for a primary package and 'top up' package.
- b) Differentiate access for immediate or short-term support from those for longer term support. For example, maintain the current access via service providers for the provision of flexible immediate or short-term support to an agreed level, with longer term support accessible through an equitable, central or regional system linked to multiple service providers.
- c) Implement a statewide approach to determining priority to guide long-term or ongoing resource allocation decisions for people including:
  - o Informing people about the DHS Disability Support Register processes.
  - o Minimising differing priority criteria across program guidelines so that access to long-term or ongoing government funded supports is equitable.

### **Recommendation 2: Increase choice, flexibility and responsiveness in meeting people's needs**

Desired outcome: That people are able to exercise choice about services provided based on a continuum of support options from self management to coordinated supports.

- a) Continue to develop the capacity for a package and package components to respond to varied needs across life stages. For example, improve processes to review people's ongoing needs at transition points but ensure processes do not require waiting list re-entry.
- b) Continue to develop processes responsive to the changing circumstances of individuals – for example, through funding portability (ie. allocation remains with an individual should they move between regions, service providers or support types), direct payment options and self-management.
- c) Develop opportunities for people to choose their support provider and establish pathways and a continuum of support through to self-governance to enable people to manage their own supports if they choose.
- d) Support access to independent advice and advocacy to assist people in their decision-making processes.

### **Recommendation 3: Refine planning, support coordination and case management**

Desired outcome: That people are supported and empowered to lead their planning process, identify their needs, preferences and priorities to the maximum extent possible; and that service provider practices reflect the planning principles outlined in the Disability Act (2006) and DHS Planning Policy (2007).

- a) Continue to develop a shared and comprehensive understanding of an individualised planning and support approach and the multiple ways in which people and service providers can lead and implement this philosophy and approach.
- b) Clarify and define the respective roles and responsibilities for planning, coordination of support packages and case management. In doing so, acknowledge the continuum of support needs and how a person's needs may change over time.
- c) Ensure access to skills development programs for both case managers and those people wishing to self-manage.
- d) Implement a consistent approach for planning in response to total support needs, based on the principles in the Disability Act 2006, to achieve coordinated access to supports.

### **Recommendation 4: Advise people of resource allocation and individual budget management**

Desired outcome: That people are supported to make informed decisions about their needs, priorities and service purchases, and are fully informed of the financial value of their total support package allocation.

- a) Inform people of their total support package budget allocation, including the cost of case management, support workers or discretionary funding.
- b) Develop the capacity of disability service providers to manage individual packages while maintaining overall service provision capacity and ability to respond to individual choice. For example, continue case management block funding to organisations in conjunction with capacity for immediate or short-term support.
- c) Report support package expenditure to people, including via self-accessed (electronic) means.
- d) Continue to develop and offer the option of self-managed packages, where it is the expressed choice of the person. This includes support for people from the point of access (eg. to complete DSR information) through to support for self-management of an allocated support package.

## **Recommendation 5: Facilitate information and education for people seeking or using supports**

Desired outcome: That people are well-informed and are encouraged, enabled and supported to develop skills in planning, accessing and managing their supports, to the maximum extent possible.

- a) Continue to facilitate comprehensive general information provision to people including support available in Victoria, application, allocation and review processes, information resources and service providers.
- b) Increase formal skills development and education opportunities for people in relation to the service system, case coordination management and package self-management (eg: Becoming the boss; How to make your package work for you; Supporting a family member with a disability; Partners in policy making).
- c) Encourage and enable service providers to respond to people that are self-managing.
- d) Improve the understanding of the role of supports in community participation and social support in developing long-term independence and resilience.

### **Implementation of Recommendations**

The review recommendations have been provided at a broad level, aimed at strengthening individualised responses and transparent access processes for people seeking or using services.

The recommendations are not itemised in relation to specific sub-activity types or the characteristics of the person using a service (for example, an adult with an acquired brain injury, a family with a child with a disability). It is therefore important to acknowledge that the way in which the recommendations are implemented may differ in accordance with the range of contextual and operational factors. In addition, other projects, such as work to strengthen individualised planning, will also inform the way in which recommendations are implemented.

The implementation of these review recommendations will require the development of a detailed implementation plan. This should include:

- a) Development of an agreed consultative process and plan for implementation of the recommendations contained in this report, within the broader framework of the Disability Act, State Disability Plan and sector reform.
- b) Development of implementation strategies and timelines that take into account the diverse range of systemic, contextual, operational, workforce and local service delivery factors, to ensure the ongoing sustainability and capacity of service providers to support people and provide immediate responses.
- c) A monitoring process to ensure that implementation achieves the intended aims, and provides evidence of simplified service access and an improved individualised response to people seeking or using services.