

## Disability Services

# Flexible Support Package and Outreach Support Review Outcomes and Next Steps

## Information Sheet – for service providers and regions

### Context for the Review

Since the release of the *Victorian State Disability Plan 2002-2012* there has been progressive reorientation of disability supports to provide greater flexibility, choice and control over the support people with a disability and their families or carers receive. The introduction of an individualised planning and support approach is a key component of the Disability Services reorientation strategy and includes:

- Planning that is directed by the person or is family centred for children
- Supports that are flexible and tailored to individual needs
- A focus on community participation and strengthening informal supports

Changes implemented to date include simplifying Disability Services individual packages by combining the existing individually attached and ongoing support packages into a single Individual Support Package with a consistent set of guidelines. Further work is underway to enhance individualised planning, to develop alternative funding administration arrangements and to transition day services to individually attached supports.

The review of Flexible Support Packages and Outreach Support will inform further service reorientation aimed at strengthening an individualised approach in these services.

### What are Flexible Support Packages and Outreach Support Services?

Flexible Support Packages and Outreach Support provide a wide range of supports including one off, short term and intensive, ongoing supports. Supports are diverse and include alternative family placements, packages of discretionary funding to support living in the community for people with an acquired brain injury, a combination of case management and discretionary funding for families, discretionary funding packages for children with complex needs and the provision of direct support to enable independent living. Support is accessed through a variety of pathways, but mostly by direct request to service providers. There are over eighty providers of Flexible Support Packages and Outreach Support across the State.

Some packages are currently individually attached, but the majority of funding is attached to organisations. About one third of Flexible Support Package funding is used to provide case management. About half of the funding is discretionary funding that enables the purchase of a range of goods, services and supports. Over half of the Flexible Support Packages are provided to children and their families. The aim of these services is to build family resilience and assist access to community supports.

Outreach Supports focus on supporting people to live as independently as possible, either through short term skill development or ongoing support.

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## **Why was a review of Flexible Support Packages and Outreach Support done?**

The review was undertaken to identify practice and outcomes consistent with an individualised planning and support approach, identify opportunities to enhance an individualised approach and to identify consistent access processes and pathways.

The review involved seeking the views of people who use Flexible Support Packages and Outreach Support Services and the disability service providers involved in providing services. Over 200 people (232) and 43 service providers participated in the review.

## **What were the review outcomes?**

People using the services said that they valued:

- Case management that provided good information and emotional support
- Influence over the planning process and consideration of medium and long term goals as well as immediate needs
- Practical assistance purchased through the discretionary funding tailored to their family needs
- Timely responses to requests to change their support when their circumstances changed
- Outreach supports were valued as enabling independent living

Suggested areas for improvement included:

- Access to greater levels of funding for ongoing support needs
- Equitable and transparent processes for access to support
- Improved information about services
- Streamlined services to avoid repeating assessments and applications
- Access to funds for supports, not linked to case management

Service Providers said that they valued:

- Certainty of case management funding to enable retention of skilled staff
- The ability to support families to navigate and access services and well as providing ongoing or intermittent support to coordinate supports
- The ability to make immediate changes to supports and discretionary funding allocated to individuals
- The use of person directed or family centered planning as a key tool in enabling choice and control by people with a disability and their families

Suggested areas for improvement included:

- Defining the various roles case managers provide more clearly
- Enabling choice of package components, that is, case management, discretionary funding or both
- Agreed definitions and approaches across services to priority for access

## **Review Recommendations**

The review outlined recommendations across several key areas that will contribute to the strengthening of an individualised approach and the reorientation of services to enhance opportunities for people with a disability and their families to have influence over the support that best meets their needs and goals, tailors support to needs and enables self management of supports if desired. The recommendations are to:

- Simplify service access and pathways to support that minimise duplication of assessment
- Increase choice, flexibility and responsiveness
- Refine the roles of planning, support co-ordination and case management
- Improve capacity for individual budget allocation and management
- Enhance information and education for service users to support self direction

## **What are the next steps?**

The diverse nature of supports currently provided through these services means that the objectives and features of a number of the service types need to be considered separately.

An implementation plan will be developed that considers actions for the different service types and works towards aligning services with an individualised planning and support approach. Areas of focus for the plan will include:

- Transitioning people who can be supported best through an Individual Support Package to an Individual Support Package.
- Strengthening the approach to area based co-ordination that already exists for some Flexible Support Packages and Outreach Support
- Simplifying the access pathways and introducing greater consistency in access processes.

The capacity for a quick and early response to families seeking information and support can have a preventative effect and build family resilience. Access to information, planning and case management in local communities is an important feature.

The options for choice, control and flexibility can be enhanced while continuing to have support for people who need and want help to access and co-ordinate support.

## **How will this happen?**

The reorientation of disability supports is guided by a number of consultative groups including the DHS Steering Group, the National Disability Services – Disability Services Working Group and an Advisory Group of people with a disability, family members and advocacy organizations. These groups will contribute to the development of the implementation plan.

The implementation plan will be developed by December 2008 and will outline how development of these services will occur over the next two years, through gradual and planned transition. Regular information updates will be provided to service users and providers.

## **For more information**

The Executive Summary of the Review can be found on the Disability Services webpage at: [www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/supports\\_for\\_people/strengthening-individualised-planning-and-support](http://www.dhs.vic.gov.au/disability/supports_for_people/strengthening-individualised-planning-and-support)