

Personal Budgets
Bromley consultation with parents
Feedback and outcomes
February 2013

L B Bromley, (in partnership with Bexley) are one of 20 local authorities who are acting as 'Pathfinders', testing the proposed changes to support for children with disability and special education needs.

L B Bexley are taking the lead role for Personal Budgets.

Glossary

Personal Budget (PB)	The amount of money allocated by Local Authority to meet needs of young person.
Direct Payments (DP)	Payment given to parent to purchase own services/resources for young person.
SENDIST Green Paper	Government Proposed changes to Special Needs Education

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Copy of Questionnaire

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1. Consultation Process - timescale

August – September 2012	Questionnaire sent to parents
October – November 2012	Consultations with parents
November 2012 – December 2012	Parents testing Personal Budgets
January 2013	Feedback meeting with parents testing Personal Budgets
February 2013	Analysis of questionnaire findings Feedback report from parents testing Personal Budgets

2. Consultations with parents.

Definition of a Personal Budget

The Green Paper proposes to offer parents ‘the option of taking a Personal Budget to spend on services and support’ for children with an EHC plan. These services will include education, health and care.

The questionnaire asked parents for their views on the option of taking a Personal Budget for any of these services: Transport, Therapy, Short Breaks, Education and Medical Equipment. Parents had the opportunity to make suggestions for other services to be included in Personal Budgets.

Questionnaire.

During August 2012 a questionnaire was sent to parents via a range of service providers:

- Burgess Autistic Trust via the ‘Friday email’
- Mencap Newsletter
- Bromley Parent Voice membership database (via email)
- Parkwood Hall School (Bromley Parents) by email to reach parents with children in an out of borough school
- Copies given to parents of children who attended Hollybank, Riverside playscheme and Caspa Youth Club during August

600 questionnaires were sent out (some parents received duplicate copies if they were on multiple mailing lists).

Response to Questionnaire

26 questionnaires were completed and returned.

Summary of questionnaire responses:

Age range 6 – 18 years

Range of disabilities including Autism, ADHD, Complex Medical, Asperger, Downs Syndrome.

75% in special school/20% mainstream school/5% Special Unit in mainstream school

70% in borough schools

30% out of borough schools

Parents were asked if they would be interested in taking Direct Payments to provide some of the services/support for their son or daughter; Transport, Short Breaks, Therapy, Medical Equipment and Education.

Brief summary of parent's views

The main concerns about taking a PB are:

- Threat to block contracts
- Potential reduction in block contract would lead to fewer services and choice in the long term, particularly for children with complex needs
- Concern that taking a PB would not offer as much money as LA services
- Sourcing own services was overwhelming and stressful
- Parents may struggle to make the best choices for their child
- The paperwork and management would be too stressful and time-consuming
- Providing own services/support would lead to increased social isolation for family

Positive views about taking a PB are:

- Support can be personalized to suit child
- Could develop wider choice of services
- Could provide less formulaic therapy service
- Therapy could be tailored to individual needs
- Offer alternative therapies and wider choice
- Could enable families to purchase better type of medical equipment

Presentations

Bromley Parent Voice invited parents to attend a presentation about Personal Budgets. One event was during the daytime, another in the evening.

A further presentation was given at an out of borough maintained residential school, which has a large number of Bromley students.

The presentations explained:

- The role of a Pathfinder
- Personal Budgets
- How parents could become involved
- How Bromley proposed to test Personal Budgets
- How Bexley are testing Personal Budgets
- How parents can give their opinions about the proposals

A Panel including a parent, LA commissioner, Bexley Personal Budget Lead and a representative from RCHL* answered parent's questions and initiated discussion. * RCHL are contracted to manage Bromley's direct payments service and have experience of brokerage services from their work in other local authorities.

Parents concerns and questions about taking a Personal Budget:

Would taking a PB for therapy support mean they would get 1:1 support?

Too much work and stress already, this will add to it.

I am very happy with the support my child receives, I do not want to take a PB.

I need additional medical equipment for my child, will taking a PB cover this?

How will disagreements and re-assessment and allocation of PB be managed?

Can parents top up a Personal Budget?

If you provide transport, what happens if a child requires an escort?

What do Headteachers think of taking a PB?

What happens if taking a PB affects block contracts?

It is essential that parents are able to work well with service providers and schools, if they take a PB.

It is too difficult to find support and services in the community.

A move towards more personalization is welcome, remember 40 years ago when our children had residential support and no individual choice.

What happens if a parent changes their mind, or their own service does not meet the planned outcomes? Can they return to commissioned services?

What happens if parents who take a PB for a school place or home tutor, and do not deliver a good education to a child? Who monitors?

What happens to students transitioning from one school to another during 2014? Deciding on taking a PB will impact on decision to choose between special and mainstream school.

Do you have to decide in 2014, or can you decide any time after then?

3. Testing Personal Budgets

The presentation explained that the Personal Budget is the total amount of money that the Local Authority allocates to each child to meet the needs identified after Statutory Assessment*. The PB will show how much money is spent on each service. If parents opt to take a PB, they will be given the allocated amount of funding for the service to provide their own support. Their child would cease to receive the LA service for any services provided by taking a PB.

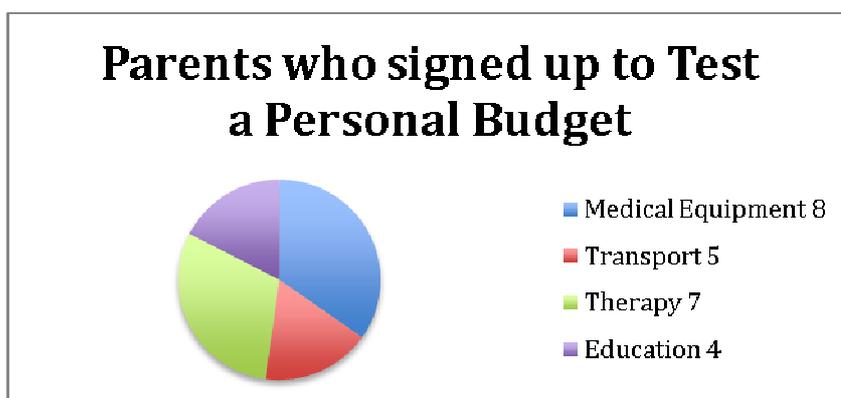
* Please note that further clarification of the term Personal SEN Budget has since been received from the Department of Education and the above statement is no longer correct.

Taking a Personal Budget is not additional funding.

No limits were placed on the number of services parents could test.

The scope of testing a PB in Bromley:

- Parents to test the experience of sourcing their own SEN support
- No money to be given to parents. The testing designed to be 'on paper'
- No risk to the current school placement/services



No parents signed up to test Short Breaks.

15 Parents agreed to test taking a PB. Some parents agreed to test more than one service.

Parents offering to test a PB were sent some information to support their independent searches. They were asked to consider a range of issues including:

- Do I have the time and skills to do this?
- Should I use an agency? Is doing my own advertising safe?
- Compliance with proposed LA monitoring
- Costs and topping up PB
- Making an informed choice
- Becoming an employer
- Outcomes

Parents were sent sample budgets as guidance for costing their own provision.

The testing aimed to:

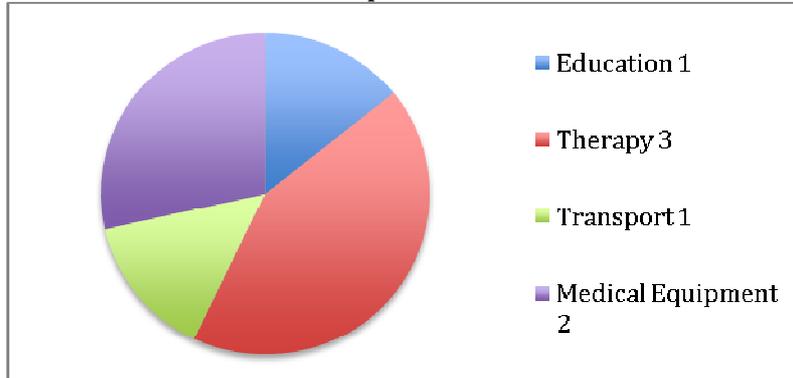
- Offer parents the real experience of working alone to find support/services
- Work within a realistic budget
- Test how easy/difficult it is for parents to source service providers

A small payment was offered to parents completing the trial feedback.

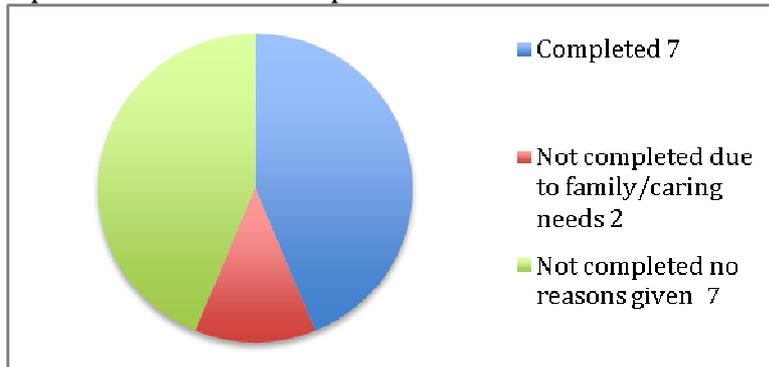
They were given 8 weeks to complete the testing.

4. Feedback from parents

7 out of 24 tests were completed.



7 parents out of 15 completed the tests.



Therapy

	CHILD A	CHILD B	CHILD C
Why did parent consider taking a PB to provide service?	Parent considered child regressing with LA service. Incorrect assessment of child's abilities. Mis-match of SALT provided.	Child's needs were perceived as too high for LA support. Parents already provided additional therapy.	Parent wants to explore alternative therapy in addition to Physiotherapy and OT support
What research did parent do?	Statement. Speech therapy assessment/report had identified needs. Internet search.	Reports from independent and LA therapists resulting in an additional diagnosis. Had taken parents 2 years to find	Sourced appropriately qualified therapist. Parent would expect sourcing therapist to get easier over time if 'new market'

		specialist therapist.	emerges if Direct Payment became popular.
How did parents choose therapy provider?	Shortlisted 3 therapists. Used pres-school SALT reports to make decision.	Recommendation from specialist charity. Diagnosis and assessment reports. Parents wanted to be certain therapist had right experience and expertise.	Recommendations from people or seeking information from other people. Parent would check qualifications and evidence of professional work.
What relationship did parents have with the school?	Parents did not want school's SALT. Wanted school to follow SALT strategy as per own therapist and that of professional reports pertaining to child. School in agreement with strategy and working together with home.	School in agreement with therapy.	Therapy would not be provided in school. Child currently pre-school. When of school age parent would re-assess therapy support.
How would parent measure success of using PB for therapy?	Child's success.	Assessment and progress of child.	Parent concerned about how to quantify amount of therapy needed.
Why did you want to provide your own therapy support?	To ensure appropriateness of SALT to child's needs as opposed to the group offering that was not accessible to the child.	Specialist support needed as scarce in borough.	To use alternative therapy

General issues/comments raised by parents:

- There are ongoing concerns about LA therapy provision, particularly for some specific learning/disability needs
- Parents said they needed to have professional input to support their decisions about therapy support e.g. Assessment reports, health reports, SALT diagnosis and assessment
- Parents said there was not enough LA therapy provision but were reminded that a PB would not mean more funding

- Children’s needs had already been identified by professional assessment which supported parents sourcing support and decision making
- Disagreements around how much therapy support is needed? E.g. Parent might source 1:1 but LA might disagree with this level of support
- If 1:1 requested by parent, school might say no, as support provided throughout the day as part of the learning/curriculum
- Practicalities – whether it would be workable to withdraw a child from school therapy? Therapy often delivered in small groups and all around the school all day. How would child be withdrawn from this?
- If a number of parents in a school wanted to provide independent therapy support, would this result in individual therapists working with individual children? Would this work in school?
- How do parents set targets and outcomes for independent therapy support?
- Parents still wanted to have more involvement and control around therapy
- Does providing independent therapy work in mainstream schools? Are there more challenges to it working well in special schools?

Medical Equipment

MDT Multi disciplinary Team

	CHILD A	CHILD B	
Why did parent consider taking a PB to provide service?	Limited range of wheelchairs offered by NHS.	To provide wheelchair. Health offer basic model and only offered choice of wheel hub colour. Needs of carer not always taken into account when Health purchase wheelchair.	
What research did parent do?	Started with wheelchair clinic at school. LA receptive to parent looking at alternatives on the market. Used a private agency for advice. In this instance the agency gave free advice but would normally charge £750 for an assessment. Parent impressed by the Quick response rate of the private agency. Health advice generally takes longer to get as	Internet search. Different sites Showed widely different price range from £300 - £1200. Looked at websites for 2 nd hand wheelchairs. Parent searched for bath aids. Hard to source – only 2 websites offering child’s bath aids were found. Range of prices confusing and	

	<p>staff work at a variety of different locations and clinics are few and far between. Similarly, messages do not appear to always be passed onto the relevant therapist.</p> <p>Multi disciplinary team expertise from school based health staff highly valued by parent- they know child and can work together to come up with a workable solution. LA happy to assess suitability of a wheelchair sourced by parent and gave good advice as to its suitability.</p>	<p>quality of equipment was poor.</p>	
How did parent identify best advice?	<p>Parent felt NHS would not offer best model due to costs (initial cost of wheelchair and repair contract costs).</p> <p>Parent highly valued MDT advice and support at school and would not want to lose this.</p> <p>Agency also offered good advice and gave the impression of having more breadth of knowledge of possible options.</p>	<p>Parent did not have time to source from multiple companies.</p> <p>Parent confused by huge variation of price range. Needed OT and Physio advice.</p>	
Would there be any practical challenges to providing own equipment?	<p>Maintenance contracts would have to be purchased separately.</p> <p>Equipment may need to be sent away for repair (some repairs currently done at school with others needing the chair to be sent away).</p> <p>Maintenance contracts Purchased separately Promised quicker repair times than that currently offered by LA.</p>	<p>Maintenance contracts. School offer service on specific days for minor servicing. If bought new, parent would have to purchase a contract at extra cost.</p>	
Why did you want to provide your	<p>To be able to purchase a higher spec wheelchair for child to join in</p>	<p>To try and increase choice.</p>	

own equipment?	specific family activities.		

General issues/comments raised by parents:

- Parents expressed wish for increased level of choice and involvement with choosing equipment
- Parents want wheelchair service to search the market more than they do and offer more choice
- Parents did not have time to source from multiple companies
- Professional support, advice and involvement of professionals (OT and Physio) valued by parents and they would not want to lose this
- MDT valued as they work together, know the child and offer expert advice in one place – can bounce ideas of each other
- School wheelchair clinic considered very important – minimizes travel time and pupil absence from school
- Parents wanted to be given best advice, funding for basic model and then be able to top up if necessary. Voucher scheme which is in place works well and is quick to access
- Once a decision is made as to which chair to go for, parents appreciate quick provision of that equipment (needs of child and family being met as soon as possible)
- Issues around parents trusting Health advice as assumption is that, given current funding shortages, they would want to purchase cheapest equipment
- Some equipment for children very hard to source by parents
- Parent purchasing power not as great as Health's

Transport

	CHILD A
Why did parent consider taking a PB To provide service?	Child identified as needing specialist support.
What research did parents do?	Local paper to advertise.
How would parent choose service provider?	Talk to them, assess and see interaction with child. Parent would expect to interview a number of candidates.
Would there be any practical challenges to providing own support?	If service provider unreliable or unavailable, parent would have to provide service instead. Parents would have to pay for and arrange CRB checks

General issues/comments raised by parents:

- Safeguarding issues around sourcing service provider from local press

Education

	CHILD A
Why did parent consider taking a PB to	Parent concerned with LA school

provide service?	provision and child's progress.
What education support did parent identify as needed?	Teaching Assistant to provide 1:1 support in school
What research did parent do to find service?	Professional assessment and report from Educational Psychologist. Discussions with school staff. Specialist paediatric support.
Would there be any practical challenges to providing own support in school?	Parent being able to assess progress of child.
How would parent measure success of using a PB for education support?	Progress of child.
Are there any specific issues providing education support with a PB?	Parent must have good working relationship with school. Challenge of setting targets and outcomes in school.

5. Conclusion

It is clear from the feedback that there is some level of frustration with LA service delivery and parents are asking for some level of change.

Parents were not certain about how that would be best delivered and wanted further consultation and discussion.

Some parents talked about what they see as formulaic support, that is not focused enough on their child's specific needs. They asked for a more personalized approach to service delivery. Parents want services that can maximize their child's progress, and they see that they have a role to play in trying to ensure this happens. Parents asked to be more involved and consulted around decisions about the support their child's receives.

Parents who tested PB's were aware of the challenges and barriers to finding and purchasing their own services. Professional assessment, advice and support were highly valued. Parents stated they would not want to lose this level of support. 60% of parents did not complete their PB Test, some of whom stated that the challenges of caring and family demands 'got in the way' and they were unable to find time to finish.

Further consultations with parents are needed to discuss how best to implement the changes they want and what role they see Personal Budgets playing in successfully achieving these.

Mary Shrimpton
Hilary Rogers

Appendix 1: Questionnaire about Personal Budgets – SENDIST Green Paper



The Bromley Children and Young People Partnership is a partnership of the following organisations:
Bromley College of Further and Higher Education | Bromley Mytime | Bromley Safeguarding Children Board |
Children and Families Voluntary Sector Forum | Connexions South London Sub Regional Unit |
Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership | Jobcentre Plus | London Borough of Bromley |
London Probation Trust | Metropolitan Police Service (Bromley) | NHS Bromley | Orpington College |
Oxleas NHS Foundation Trust | Primary and Special Schools | Secondary Schools |
South London Healthcare NHS Trust

18 July 2012

Dear Parent/Carer

Questionnaire about Personal Budgets: SEND Green Paper

In March 2011, the Government published proposals to make changes to the current system of supporting children and young people with disabilities and special education needs and their families. This is called the SEND Green Paper.

A number of local authorities, including Bromley (in partnership with LB Bromley), are now 'SEND Pathfinders'. Bromley Parent Voice is working as a voluntary sector partner with Bromley as part of the Pathfinder project. The role of the Pathfinder is to trial new ideas and test how well they work.

A leaflet explaining the SEND Green Paper is attached.

The SEND Green Paper is proposing some broad changes to the support provided to children and young people with disabilities. A Single Plan including Education, Health and Care would replace the current Statement of Special Education Needs. A Resource Plan will be drawn up showing how much money the local authority will spend on the child or young person. This will be called the Personal Budget.

The SEND Green Paper proposes to offer parents the option of taking a Personal Budget to spend on services and support for their son or daughter. These services will include education, health and care.

The aim of this is to offer parents the opportunity to have direct control over the support their son or daughter receives.

The role of the Pathfinders is to trial new ideas and test how well they work, and to work with parents and families of children and young people with disabilities. Your views are important and will help shape decision-making.

Please take time to complete the attached questionnaire on Personal Budgets and return to info@bromleyparentvoice.org.uk by Tuesday 21st August 2012. You may receive duplicate copies of this questionnaire from different providers.

Mary Shrimpton
Parent, Joint Lead, Personal Budgets (SEND Pathfinder)

The SEND Green Paper is proposing that each child or young person with a disability, aged 0 – 25 years, will have a Resource Plan. This will show parents how much money the local authority will spend on the child or young person to support them.

This will be called a Personal Budget. The government proposal is to give parents the option of taking the Personal Budget as a Direct Payment to spend on services for their son or daughter.

The key aim of this idea is to give parents more control and real choice over their child's education and the support their family receives. Parents who decide to take the option of a Personal Budget will be offered support and advice on choosing services. Bromley Pathfinder has identified 5 services that could offer Direct Payments:

SEN Transport

Short Breaks

Therapies e.g. Speech Therapy, Occupational Therapy

Medical equipment

Education

We would like to know whether you would consider taking Direct Payments for these services

How old is your son or daughter?

What disability does your son or daughter have?

.....

What type of school does your son or daughter attend?

Special school

Mainstream school

Special Unit

What type of educational support does your son or daughter have?

Statement of Special Educational Need School Action/Action Plus

Health needs without recourse to Statement

Does your son or daughter go to school:

In Bromley

Out of borough

SEN Transport

Is your son or daughter eligible for SEN Transport to school?

Yes

No

If you answered yes:

Does your son or daughter currently travel on SEN Transport?

Yes

No

Would you be interested in using a Direct Payment to provide your own transport to school?

Yes

No

Don't know

Do you think providing your own transport would give you more control over your child's support and offer real choice?

.....
.....

Short Breaks

Is your son or daughter eligible for a Short Break from Bromley?

Yes No

If you answered yes:

Do you currently take a Direct Payment to provide a Short Break?

Yes No

If you answered no:

Would you consider taking a Direct Payment to provide a short break in the future?

Yes No Don't know

Do you think taking a Direct Payment to provide a Short Break offers you greater control and choice over your son or daughter's support?

.....
.....

If you are eligible, would you prefer to continue to use the Local Authority's commissioned provision? e.g. Hollybank, Riverside Playscheme.

Yes No Don't know

Therapeutic support

Would you be interested in taking a Direct Payment to find your own therapy support?

Yes No Don't know

Do you think sourcing your own therapy support would offer the chance to have real choice over your son or daughter's support? If so, how?

.....
.....

Medical Equipment

Does your son or daughter require medical equipment?

Yes No

Would you be interested in taking a Direct Payment to enable you to purchase your medical equipment?

Yes No Don't know

Appendix 2: Data analysis Questionnaire

Bromley Pathfinder **Questionnaire about Personal Budgets: SENDIST Green Paper**

Data analysis

Parents were sent a questionnaire about Personal Budgets in August 2012.

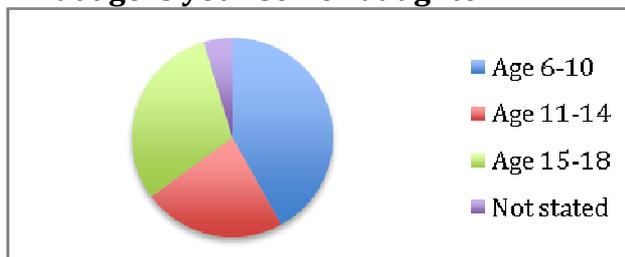
The questionnaire was sent via Bromley Parent Voice membership database, Mencap Newsletter, Burgess Autistic Trust Friday email, Caspa, Hollybank, Riverside Playscheme and Parkwood Hall School (Bromley parents only).

It is estimated 600+ questionnaires were sent out. Parents on more than one database would have received duplicate copies.

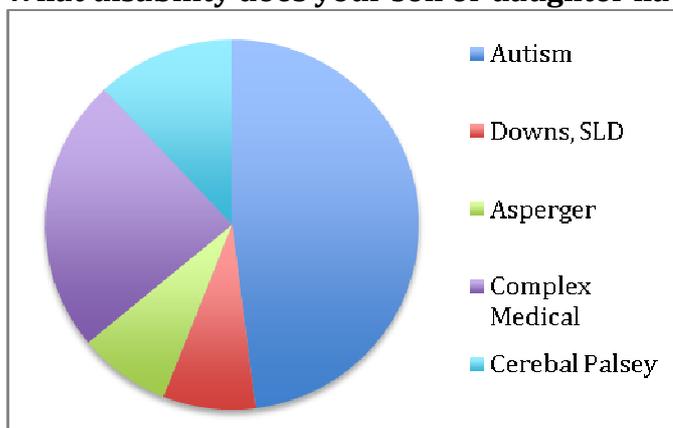
26 completed questionnaires were returned.

The questionnaire summarized the main proposals in the SENDIST Green Paper and asked parents a range of questions about the proposal that parents could take a Personal Budget to supply their own SEN services and support for their son or daughter.

What age is your son or daughter?



What disability does your son or daughter have?



What type of school does your son or daughter attend?

I am concerned that Direct Payments cannot offer as much money as LA services purchased by block contracts

I am concerned that if too many parents opt for Direct Payments, the LA services will be reduced which could lead to less choice. Less choice means private care costs go up as no competition

LA's only look at the short term and would not manage this system well

Direct Payments could work for parents with good family support and those with less complex needs

Yes, but more hassle

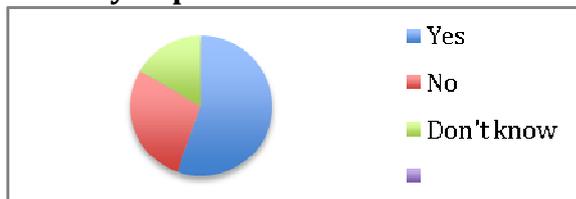
Yes, definitely, the flexibility is invaluable

Yes, but there is not a lot of choice in Bromley borough, so what type of short break?

Yes, I can buy what suits my child

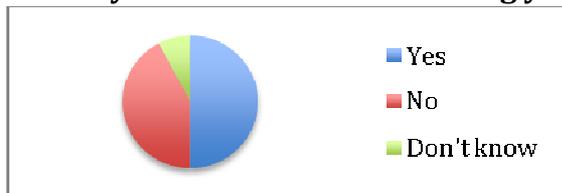
I can choose the type of break suitable for individual child

Would you prefer to use LA commissioned services?



Therapy

Would you be interested in finding your own therapy support?



Do you think providing your own therapy would offer real choice?

Yes, to tailor to individual needs

Yes, to choose mainstream therapies (OT, SALT, Auditory Integration) and also alternative therapies (homeopathy, Bown, picky eating, FastForward etc)

Yes, to ensure therapy provided as needed and tailored to individual needs

Yes, you can choose the type of therapy, rather than have only one choice allocated to you

Yes, to have able to have more specific and specialized support

It would be another major job to do, but would like to have the budget to decide which therapy I would like to focus on for my young person

Probably, yes, it would focus on what was best for him

Yes, I could liaise more closely with the therapist, to ensure a very targeted programme for my child and delivered regularly

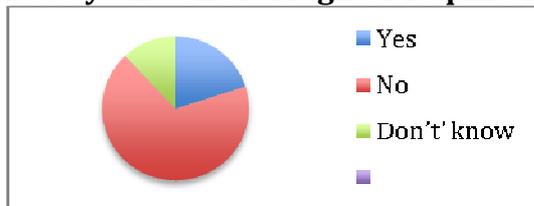
OT yes, but cost dependent

They need different therapies at different times, it always changes. Direct Payments offer more control

Yes, as it would offer greater choice

Medical Equipment

Does your son or daughter require medical equipment?



If yes, would you be interested in using a Direct Payment to provide medical equipment?

Yes 2

Would purchasing your own medical equipment offer more control?

No, due to costs

Yes, you can choose the best type of equipment, rather than the standard type selected by the LA, which may not be the best equipment offered

Yes, we are currently addressing medical issues with a private doctor

Yes, for some things. I would like to choose the equipment but would like them to organize

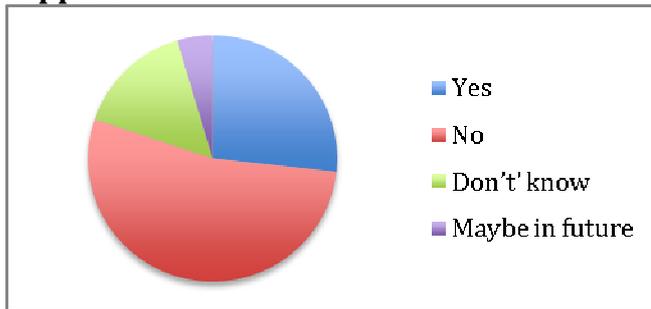
Yes, I would have greater freedom to investigate equipment provided from a wider number of places (not just the preferred provider list)

Yes, more flexible

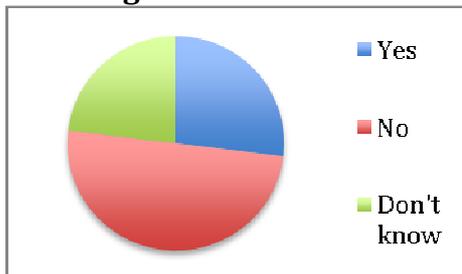
Yes, for nursing support and advice, specialist nurse advice for epilepsy

Education

Would you be interested in taking a Direct Payment to provide educational support?



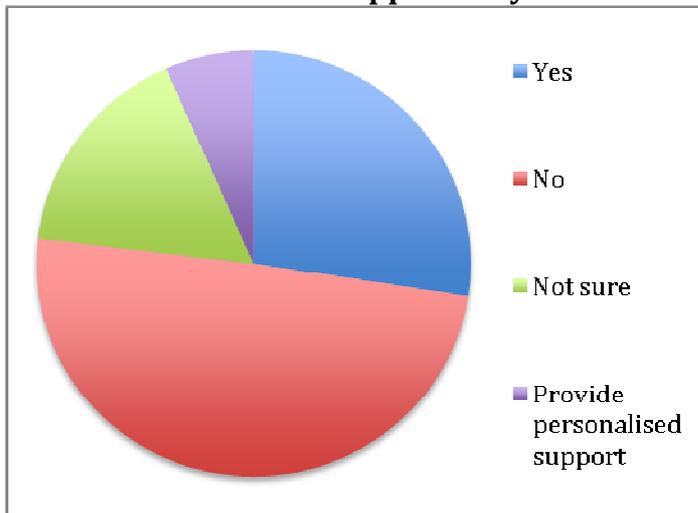
Would you be interested in using a Direct Payment to provide your own Teaching Assistant?



Would you be interested in providing a Direct Payment to provide other educational support?

- After school and home tuition*
- Social learning*
- Music lessons*
- Support for Dyslexia*
- Additional tutor, better equipment*
- Specific educational things*
- I feel this would be difficult to police and manage as a parent*

Do you think taking the option of a Personal Budget is the best way to have more control over the support for your son or daughter?



I worry that taking a Personal Budget would make you become a lone family rather than part of a bigger group. Also you would have less of a voice about services and support

My main concern about Personal Budgets is the threat to LA block contract purchasing power

I am concerned that some parents taking Personal Budgets will lead to fewer services, particularly for those children with complex needs

Parents may struggle to make the best choices for their child due to time restrictions, ability and knowledge

We are happy with what is provided

The idea of Personal Budgets makes me feel stressed and overwhelmed. Parents are already pushed to the limit with no support

I cannot keep up with all the paperwork and organization as it is without being a parent, carer and now a personal budget manager

You can shop around for the best support and specialized help

Freedom and choice to choose when and how support is offered. Parents can be more creative in how their child's care plan is provided. Parents would need help to achieve this.

Yes, for all services except Transport

Provide more relevant, practical education that is more inclusive

Are there any other services that you would consider using a Personal Budget for?

Hobbies

Holidays abroad

Home adaptations and equipment

Out of school clubs, including mainstream e.g. summer camps, Scouts, Guides

Training for Paralympic sponsorship

Training to help with Dyslexia

General development including play activities

Mary Shrimpton

7 February 2013