



WAVOCC Choice and Control Consultancy May/June 2010

Background: Worcestershire County Council Choice and Control webpage states: 'Choice and Control is Worcestershire County Council's response to recent Government reforms in Adult Social Care services and went 'live' on April 6th 2009 for new users of services. The programme is being implemented gradually and is currently in its learning phase as it begins to support people through this new approach.'

In a radical change to how services are currently delivered, individuals requiring support will have more control over how, when and where they can get the services they need to help them live their daily lives. In order to be able to do this effectively, individuals will also be given the opportunity to take control of the money allocated to support their needs.'

WAVOCC initiated the below consultancy to attempt to ascertain levels of 'roll-out', and the impact upon the VCS (Voluntary and Community Sector) of the Choice and Control initiative in Worcestershire

WAVOCC raised the following five questions, and received a response from 10% of WAVOCC members.

1. [Has your organisation had any approach by service users under the Choice and Control Programme?](#)

All respondents noted that they had not been approached by any service users at this time.

Two member organisations commented that they didn't know what the Choice and Control Programme was. One of these members stated that they thought it was being piloted but not in their area.

One member commented that despite WCC being aware of her organisation and the specialized services it offers, that they (WCC) appeared to keep things 'in house'. The opportunity to discuss with the organisation in question has not been offered to people as an option. The organisation in question stated they 'have experts and a wide range of family involvement that is not being drawn on.'

2. [If so broadly what were the services required?](#)

One member commented that 'perhaps WCC should ask what organisations could have offered.' The member continued, 'that WCC went to another ULO from York to train their care teams'. Other comments included:

- 'Are they (WCC) intending to keep control of budgets by making sure the creativity and choice is limited?'
- 'Will Choice and Control allow people to buy support brokerage from their individual budgets?'
- 'It should not be 'us' and 'them', they (WCC) need to sort out roles and responsibilities and determine who is the most suitable to be doing this work.'

3. What is your current view of the development of the Choice and Control Programme in Worcestershire?

Comments included:

- 'Too statutory based, very slow to involve VCS.'
- 'After a strong beginning where it led, and was seen as a good example, they (WCC) seem to be backtracking and going back on what was initially promised. Examples of this include:
 - Not releasing monies from services into the individual budgets like Day Services
 - Not offering people choice about support for support planning
 - Support plans having to fit systems – now a common support plan template
 - Cutting budgets previously agreed
 - Changing the criteria for what Individual Budgets can be used for
 - Not giving the full interpretation of personal budgets/personalization

One respondent stated:

'Clearly the considerable delay in implementing Choice and Control has had an impact on both service users and service providers. Worcestershire has not been alone in this delay however it is regrettable that the communication to service users and service providers has been so poor. Many service providers will recall the indication in Autumn 2008 and the numbers of people accessing individual budgets would be significant starting in April 2009 and who will have built capacity to address the needs of budget holders only to see the implementation delayed. This has had its consequences for many providers including ourselves.'

Another continued:

'It appears that Worcestershire is further forward than many other local authorities however I am not sure how close they are to their target of 30% of service users being offered Choice and Control by April 2011. I have raised concerns from the outset that the professionals that work with people with certain conditions should have been invited to be more involved and invited to advise as well as service users themselves – the conferences have been about the council telling us what they are

doing not asking for our professional advice on how we could help to shape this to work for everyone.'

Another added:

'The personalization agenda has four quadrants, WCC seems to be concentrating on the individual budgets area most heavily, little information has come out about how and what they are doing to cover the other 3 areas. It was acknowledged at the last conference that these exist but not really how they are dealing with them, in fact the VCS are far better placed to roll out some of the other areas.

4. [Have you had any difficulties with the Choice and Control Programme roll out, if so what were they?](#)

All responses noted poor communication with the VCS.

One respondent commented: 'The general information that was presented at the first few conferences did not appear to highlight that only 30% of service users had to be offered choice and control, this may have made service providers less fearful of the process'.

5. [Any other comments?](#)

Comments included:

'Too much funding spent on setting up processes.'

'Choice and Control is a potentially complex process and the notion of granting control to service users challenges many of the long-held practises in allocating budgets for social and health care.'

'Timely and open communication with both service users and service providers through the development process would have been both welcome and helpful.'

'The council have been very short sighted in setting this up, further work with the voluntary sector may have created a far better system, VCS organizations could have acted as pilots for areas such as brokerage of specialist services. The council needs to recognize that they are not the experts at everything and neither are the VCS but collectively we have a vast amount of information that if combined could produce better services.'