

**IMPROVING THE LIFE CHANCES OF DISABLED PEOPLE. PRIME  
MINISTER'S STRATEGY UNIT  
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Disabled people currently out of work represent a significant pool of potential skills and abilities – if only that potential could be tapped, and expectations raised.

Disabled people's experience of government support and services needs to change. Too often disabled people feel that they are fighting a system which is fragmented, complex and bureaucratic, and which does not put the needs of disabled people at the heart of service provision.

Disabled people should have the biggest say in what they do, how they live their lives, and should be helped to take responsibility.

A new way of supporting disabled people is needed, focused on the goal of independent living. This should bring together existing funding streams that are currently fragmented, and which require disabled people to go through multiple assessments in order to access different forms of support.

Allocations should be in the form of individualised budgets, and disabled people – and the families of disabled children – should be able to choose whether they take their individualised budget in cash, in some combination of services and cash payments, or entirely as services commissioned by their local authority. The budgets should be used to get whatever type of support the individual needs – whether it is equipment, personal assistance, housing adaptations, help with transport to work or something else entirely.

The overall aim of the new approach should be to make sure that resources are allocated and services delivered in ways that: personalise responses to need; enable people to have choice and to be empowered over responses to need; and support disabled people to help themselves.

Some needs of disabled people are so acute that it would be inappropriate to wait until the long-term to implement changes. This report therefore recommends specific changes to secure:

- Improvements to the availability of independent advocacy.
- Easier access to advice and information – so that all disabled people and their families understand their entitlements and rights.

Just like disabled adults, families of disabled children should be able to access individualised family budgets to meet the additional needs arising from the child's impairment. These would address the needs of the family as a whole arising from the child's impairment, and so give the family choice and control over the support and services they receive.

The benefits of early years intervention will be lost if the transition through childhood and into adulthood is not managed effectively. There are three key ingredients needed for effective support for disabled young people at the transition to adulthood.

- Planning for transition focused on individual needs.
- Continuous service provision.
- Access to a more transparent and more appropriate menu of opportunities and choices.

**Disabled people should be able to have ready access to the personal support they need in order to work – this would require further improvements to the already successful Access to Work programme.**