

Introduction to personalisation

My research hopes to contribute to debates surrounding the personalisation of care for older people using self directed support. This is being reshaped from Direct Payments (DP), towards Individual Budgets (IB), which are intended to stimulate more diverse and consumer responsive markets for care. Recently piloted in 18 local authorities (IBSEN, SPRU, 2008), Individual Budgets should be fully implemented nationally by 2011.

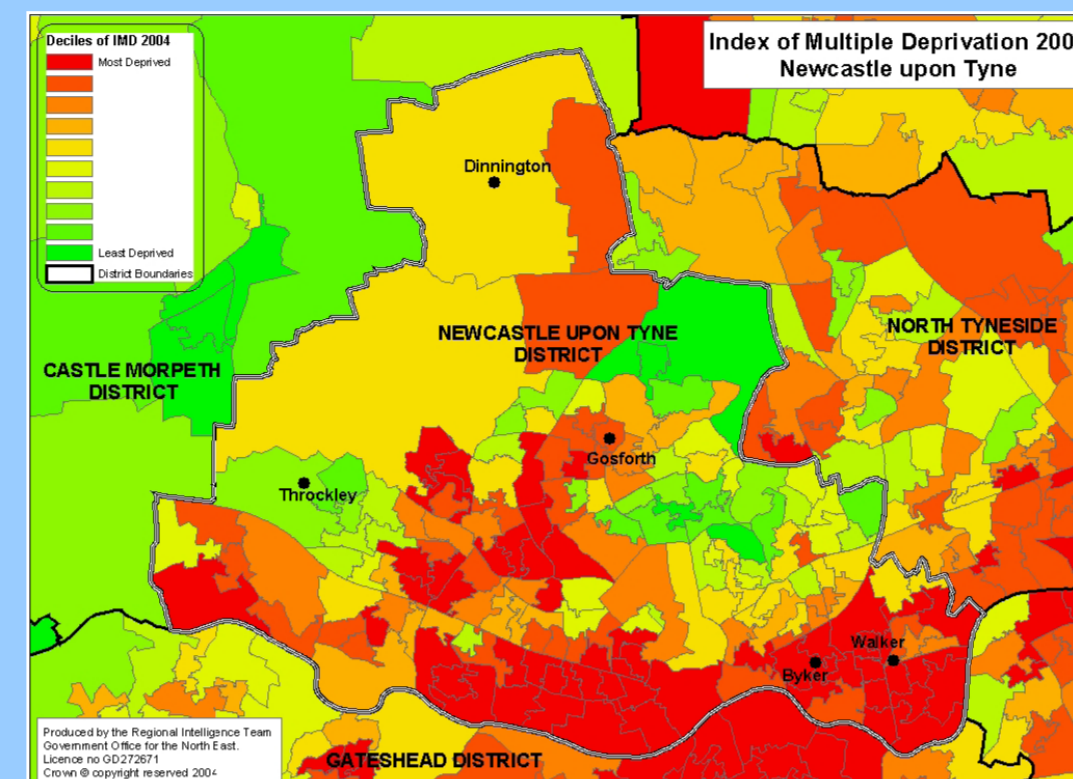
A new element of IB is the option of involving Support Brokers to assist budget holders in managing their budgets, as this has been a major deterrent to take up of Direct Payments system, particular among lower income groups (Leece, 2006).



Support Brokerage

Support brokers are emerging from the non-profit and private sectors, but the industry has not developed sufficiently within Tyne & Wear. Consequently, this service is being provided by Social Services, who, it is argued, do not have the capability of achieving personalised care due to large scale contract commissioning behaviour, which is difficult for public sector organisations to move away from (IBSEN Report, SPRU, 2008).

The role of an individual Support Broker is to create personalised support, to manage personnel and finance issues, and to maximise support to their client. One strategy among Support Brokers in the South of England (e.g. Real-Life Trust, Life Through Friends) is to increase care capacity by encouraging informal volunteering in local communities, and coordinating networks of support and information from voluntary organisations.



Research aims

My research aims are intended to broadly mirror those that should be considered by Support Brokers to ensure their service is effective and appropriate to local context.

In order for personalisation to be effective in Tyne & Wear, Support Brokers will need to be attentive to social geographies of everyday life in working class communities. They will need to take account of local labour markets, moral rationalities and physical infrastructures to effectively generate capacity and ensure services are personalised, appropriate and sustainable.

Therefore, my research aims to understand the identities and practices of a wide range of carers in working class communities in Tyne and Wear. These may be family members, agency workers, friends, neighbours and volunteers. I am considering how the infrastructures of everyday life (Jarvis, 2005) are negotiated and coordinated by these carers. These could be managing routine events such as paid work, using public transport, or dealing with crisis events, such as hospitalisation. Different moral rationalities, motivations and emotional labour will also be considered within these identities and practices.

I am also seeking views from key stakeholders/voluntary organisations about their capacity and responsiveness to self-directed support. This approach should allow identification of gaps, omissions and overlaps in provision of services, expectations or information between sectors in any one locale. To assist with understanding carer routines and choices, I will map these geographies using some of my participant's local areas.

Research questions

- 1) How do local economic context, institutional practices and physical infrastructures affect carer identities and practices in Tyne & Wear?
- 2) How does the life-course shape experiences, subjective meanings and identity of carers from a variety of sectors?
- 3) In what ways are voluntary organisations affected by and responding to personalisation and marketization of care for older people in Tyne & Wear?

Methods

My sample is drawn by general recruitment focusing upon wards positioned in the lowest 10% in the Index of Multiple Deprivation (2004) within Tyne & Wear.

I am accessing voluntary organisations and culturally appropriate venues in local communities to attract hard to reach groups. I am using qualitative research methods, including:

- solicited carer diaries
- biographical interviews
- focus groups.



References

1. Leece, D and J Leece (2006) Direct Payments: Creating a two-tiered system in social care?, BJSW 36:8, 1379-1393
2. Jarvis, H Moving to London Time: Household co-ordination and the infrastructure of everyday life. Time and Society 2005, 14(1), 133-154.