



In Control Scotland

Choice. Control. Community. Change.

Self-Directed Support (SDS) For Children and Families Easy Read Version

About In Control Scotland



In Control Scotland is a Scottish charity.

They work with people to try to improve social care support.

They work on making self-directed support better for everyone.

What is SDS?



Self-Directed Support (SDS) is a way for people with support needs to get help that works best for them. This includes children and families.

With SDS, families can have more choice and control over their support.

We did some research to find out:



- how SDS is being used with children and families
- what is working well
- what is making things harder
- what could help in the future

How we did the research



We worked with a researcher called Rhiann McLean.

Rhiann works for a company called Three Sisters Consultancy.

They do research to find out how to make social care support better.



Rhiann spoke to 12 workers from 9 places across Scotland.

She asked them about how they use SDS with families.



People told us about the good things, the difficult things, and shared real stories from their work (case studies).

What makes SDS hard? (Barriers)

People told us there are some things that make SDS hard to do well.



SDS is not always seen as “for everyone”

Some workers think SDS is only for disabled children, not all families.

Not enough services to choose from



In some places, especially rural areas, there are very few clubs, helpers, or support providers.

This means families have less real choice.

Money worries



Local authority budgets are very tight.

Families are also struggling with the cost of living.

What makes SDS hard? (Barriers)



SDS paperwork can be confusing

Some families find it hard to manage money or hire a Personal Assistant.

Some workers feel the process takes too long.



Difficulties at transition (moving to adult services)

Many young people do not get the support they need when they turn 18.

Families call this “falling off a cliff”.

What makes SDS work well? (Enablers)



Good conversations

When workers take time to talk and listen, families understand their choices better.



Flexible support

Some places let families spend SDS in different ways, like:

- hiring a Personal Assistant
- going to clubs
- buying sensory or play equipment
- creating safe or calm spaces at home



Working with the whole family

Support works best when everyone's needs are understood — the child, parents, and siblings.

What makes SDS work well? (Enablers)



Different teams working together

Schools, health staff, carers centres, and social workers working as a team helps families get the right support.



Clear and simple systems

Some places use short, simple forms and quicker decisions so families don't have to wait long.

What we learned from the case studies

We heard about different local areas trying new ideas.

Case study 1: Using SDS for more than disability



One area tested using small, flexible SDS budgets for all kinds of family needs — not just disability.

They used simple paperwork and quick decisions to help families sooner.



Case study 2: Life in rural areas

Families in rural areas often have no providers nearby.

Some places created new local clubs and groups so families had something to choose.



Case study 3: Helping young people move to adult services

One area has a special Transitions Team.

They start planning early (age 15).

They help young people think about their goals and what support they need for adult life.

What needs to happen next?

We have some ideas for how to make things better.



Make SDS part of everyday children's services

SDS should be seen as for all families, not just some.



Build workers' confidence

Workers need support and training so they feel sure about using SDS.



Listen to children, young people and families

We need to hear more from families about what SDS is really like for them.

What needs to happen next?



Fix gaps in services

Families need real choices — clubs, helpers, and support that actually exist.



Use information to learn and improve

Local and national teams need better data about who is getting SDS and what difference it makes.



Make transitions better

Young people should get the right support as they become adults, without it suddenly stopping.



If you would like to talk to us about this research you can email us:

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Or phone us:

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If you would like to find out more about
In Control Scotland you can visit their website:
www.in-controlscotland.org



If you would like to find out more about Three Sisters
Consultancy you can visit their website:
<https://threesistersconsultancy.org>



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