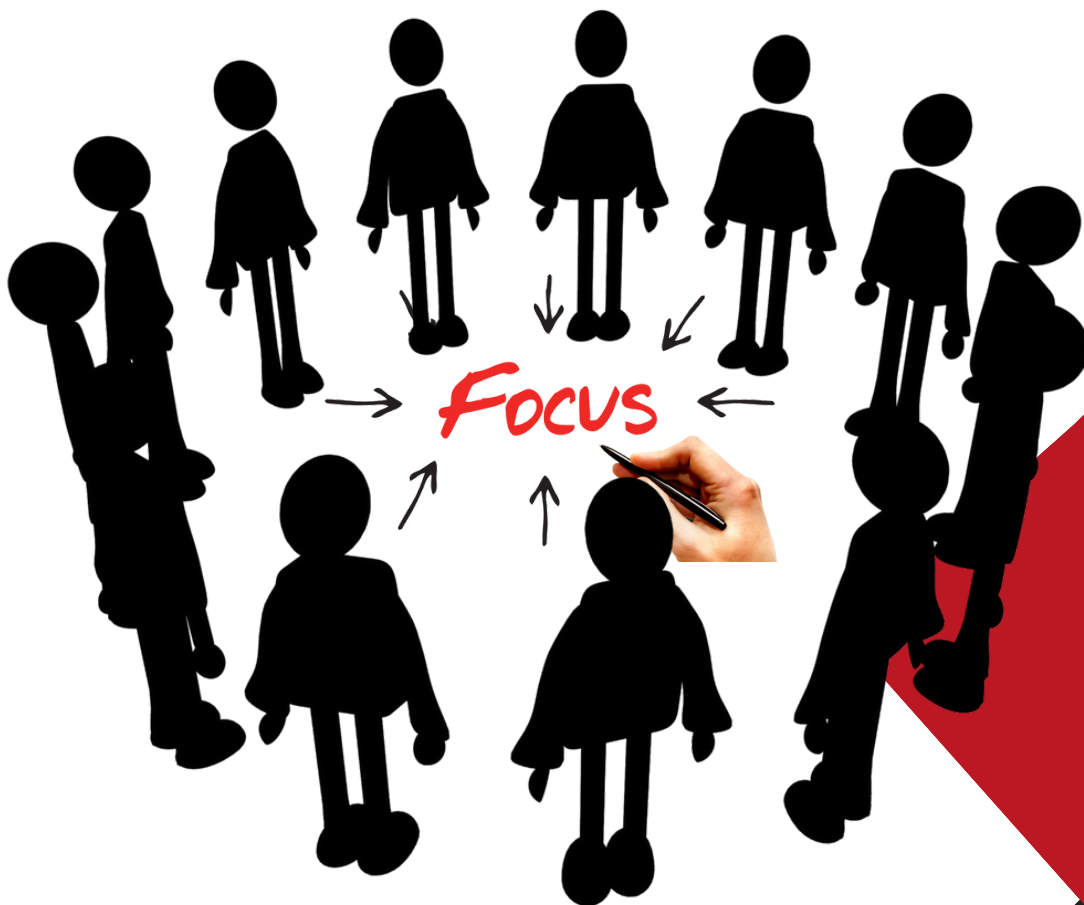


Self-Directed Support Option 2 Focus Groups Feedback Report



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Introduction

Two focus groups were held in January 2024 as part of In Control Scotland's Scottish Government funded work. Prior to the focus groups, a survey was sent out to all providers on our contact list to gain an understanding of where providers knowledge and experience was in terms of confidently providing option 2 of Self-Directed Support (SDS) to the individuals and the families they support.

The survey also helped us gain an understanding of the following about Option 2:

- ***what support providers thought worked well***
- ***what providers thought were the challenges for them***
- ***what providers thought was required for them to feel more confident in providing option 2 of SDS.***



The overall aim of both the survey and the focus groups was to give support providers a voice, as we are aware that their voices aren't often heard when it comes to discussing support provision across Scotland and how the different options of SDS can be successfully implemented.

Both focus groups had common themes that occurred which helped identify key areas in relation to what worked well and what needs to change.

There were several key themes that were discussed in both focus groups. Each focus group focused on 3 main questions (see the following pages for the detail each of these), highlighting the themes that were apparent.



What Works Well With Option 2?

What Are The Challenges Around Option 2?

What Support Providers Would Need To Be Put In Place To Enable Them To Confidently Provide Option 2?

What Works Well With Option 2

Flexibility was highlighted in both focus groups. In relation to this, participants also highlighted the fact that within the flexibility that Option 2 gives, they can accrue support hours that perhaps they don't use when visiting family etc and use the hours for another activity.

The flexibility that Option 2 gives individuals and families who choose this also relates to flexibility around what support provider they use. Often local authorities will encourage individuals and families to choose a support provider that is on their local authority framework. However, with Option 2 this does not need to be their only choice.

Individuals and families in receipt of this SDS Option can choose to contract with a provider who isn't on the local authority framework. This is due to the fact that the contract will be with the person or family receiving this support and the support provider rather than with the local authority.

Option 2 of SDS enables the supported person or family to have more **freedom, choice, and control** over their support in terms of who provides it, when its provided and what they use their support for and how this meets their outcomes they have identified and their needs assessments. The latter means that the support is driven by the supported person and or their family rather than been driven by the system.

In relation to payments of SDS Option 2 means that providers can be paid directly by the individual or family receiving support. This means that they are less hurdles to overcome in relation to payments and that working arrangements or tri-party agreements can be set up to clarify the expectations of each party. These often mean a much more **straightforward payment process** from both the supported individual and their family and the support provider.

Specifically for the support provider Option 2 SDS enables them to provide a much more **person-centred service** around the individual or the family receiving the support. This can make a significant difference to the life of the supported person and or the family due to the services provided being much more person centred and meeting their needs than any other service that they might be able to access through a different option of SDS.



What Are The Challenges Around Option 2

One of the main challenges that was highlighted from the Option 2 focus group, was that although Option 2 should enable greater flexibility around an individual or family support, the reality is that this **flexibility isn't always available to individuals and families**. There could be several reasons for this being the case. However, one of the main reasons is due to staffing of a support provider and the fact that staff still require to be paid even if the supported person or family have different plans than what they would have normally.

For example, if a supported person goes to stay with family over the festive period and does not require support, their staff team still require to be paid. Therefore, this **restricts a supported persons or family's ability to use their budgets in another way**.

Despite the **Self-Directed Support Act 2013** outlining that supported people and families must be given information about all the 4 options of SDS, this is still often not the reality. Instead, it is often the case that the supported people and their families aren't given the good information and choices about what Option 2 could mean for them.



If/when this happens It is often the case that Option 2 won't be offered unless there is a push for it. Informed choices or lack of these often occur as **individuals and families are not given the current or right level of information** to enable them to make an informed choice around what SDS Option they would prefer to receive.

Due to the above it was also highlighted during the focus groups discussion that the spirit of the SDS legislation i.e. enabling people to make choices about how they best want to achieve agreed personal outcomes, is often lost and not centred around those who are actually in receipt of support.

Furthermore, the focus group discussion also highlighted that there was a **lack of clarity and transparency** within many local authorities around Option 2 SDS and often a reluctance to promote this option.

What Support Providers Would Need To Be Put In Place To Enable Them To Confidently Provide Option 2

This question provoked in depth discussions around their being a **need for positive examples** of how to use Option 2 of SDS creatively. If these examples were available more easily and more frequently and in a **designated place or through a designated resource**, then it would be easier for support providers to access these. This in turn would mean that providers who perhaps aren't as experienced as some other providers in proving Option 2 would know where to go to gather information and in turn build their confidence around this.

The focus groups also highlighted the need for **more positivity around Option 2 and what can be achieved when using this option successfully**.

The focus groups discussions highlighted this positivity to come in different ways. As well as sharing examples of how Option 2 can be used, the focus group discussion also highlighted the quality of life that Option 2 can give to supported people and families and that this would make a significant difference to them. At present there often appears there is a **lack of belief** that things can be different in the way the SDS is promoted and the impact this can have. The focus groups discussion also highlighted that this needs to change, that **Option 2 should be person-centred** and around what each individual or family receiving it want to achieve.

A robust tri-party agreement or contract needs to be in place so that all parties understand what happens, should certain situations occur. An example of when a tri-party agreement would be useful is when a supported person is admitted to hospital. If this type of agreement was put in place prior to admission then all parties would know what is expected of them and what needs to happen until the person is discharged from hospital.

Knowledge and information about Guardianship also came up through the focus group discussions. It was highlighted although guardianship is put in place more frequently now than it once was, there is still a lack of knowledge and information in this area. This lack of knowledge doesn't relate to one specific party but rather to all that need to be involved in guardianship discussions.



Next Steps

Following The Option 2 Focus Groups

Following the Option 2 Focus Groups, In Control Scotland have identified the following next steps to help improve implementation of Option 2 for support providers:

In Control Scotland will gather, produce, and share real life stories of people directing their own support, describing works well and what are some of the challenges, including stories of people using option 2. These will be available on the In Control Scotland website in the coming months.

In the next financial year, In Control Scotland will conduct a further piece of research around flexible and creative use of budgets, including potentially pooling budgets. This research will be published and also made available on the website.

There has already been interest in providing further opportunities for different groups, including local authorities, provider organisations and individuals and families, to contribute to the discussion to making Option 2 work as well as possible for all parties, which we will follow up.

