



## Introduction

Self-directed support has been Scotland's national social care policy since 2014, and aims to promote choice, control, and flexibility for people receiving support, enabling them to use a budget allocated to their care in creative ways to reach their outcomes. With four options available to them, with varying degrees of choice and control across each, there should be significant flexibility available to supported people to design and deliver support that works for them, beyond just traditional hours of support.

This case study is part of a series which looks at organisations which have successfully provided non-traditional support services through self-directed support, with a focus on option 2 (sometimes called an Individual Service Fund). In this case study we spoke to Neil Frier, Manager of Fairway Fife.

To read more about option 2, and about self-directed support more generally, visit our website: [www.in-controlscotland.org](http://www.in-controlscotland.org)

## The national context

The Self-Directed Support Scotland Act 2013 had, and still has, the potential to change the landscape of social care across the country. However, one of the main challenges around this is that the legislation is implemented differently across all of the 32 local authorities in Scotland.

Our SDS legislation promotes the flexibility that people receiving support should have around how their support is delivered. However, there is

often a misconception that support has to be delivered from registered care and support services. This assumption minimises choice and control individuals and families have around their budgets. In the current landscape of diminishing budgets and scarcity of services, exacerbated by the recruitment and retention crisis that is plaguing social care providers, it is more important than ever for us to consider how unregulated and non-traditional services like Fairway Fife, which go beyond time-and-task approaches, can be an important and accessible way of supporting people to achieve their outcomes.



## **Who are Fairway Fife and what do they do?**

Fairway Fife is a peer mentoring charity based in West Fife providing a service to young adults 16+ with learning disabilities and/or autism.

Their facilitators plan, prepare and facilitate community-based activities, events, and experiences. They professionally recruit and train Volunteer Peer Mentors of the same age who have similar interests as their members to ensure the experience is as natural as possible for everyone.

Events/Activities that Fairway Fife host for the young people they support might include Kayaking, Paddle Boarding and or going to a café or cinema.

Fairway Fife have created a Travel Training Programme, All Ability Biking Experience and an Outdoor Activity Experience which offers individuals with learning disabilities and autism the opportunity to try new activities,

learn new skills, meet new friends and be more engaged in the local community. Outdoor activities include Paddle Boarding, Kayaking, Orienteering & Team Building. These are short term opportunities.

They outline their approach on their website as:

*“Many young adults with disabilities spend most of their time with family members or paid carers, by facilitating activities in safe supported environments in the local community we create much more natural experiences for our members and the opportunity for them to become more independent, build friendships, learn new skills, to live active and fulfilled lives and to be valued members of our local community. We engage with other local organisations and offer a range of opportunities for our members to access social, sports & leisure experiences. These partnerships ensure that we deliver the highest quality service and that we create links and a variety of opportunities that benefit all our members.”*

## **A non-traditional support service**

Unlike the more traditional support providers Fairway Fife don't consider themselves to be an ongoing support service. They adopt the approach of supporting the young people they support to build connections in the community and then move on to more independent lives. Fairway Fife prides itself on promoting the independence of the young adults they support and in not over-supporting them. The charity steers away from creating dependencies for the young adults and instead create community connections. They encourage the young Adults to interact and spend time with their peers as opposed to staff. All of these are key to what differentiates the charity from other support provision.

Neil acknowledged that this approach might not be suitable for everyone and that there may be times where support is required for a longer period. However, the fact that Fairway Fife's ethos is to promote a young

adult's independence and support them in moving on from their service has resulted in the organisation not having long waiting lists, like a lot of other support providers.

## **Why Fairway Fife started to explore SDS and option 2**

Fairway Fife has been funded in the past by donations and grants from various foundations and National Lottery Funding. Neil was employed as Manager to develop the service and to explore the possibilities of securing funding using self-directed support budgets and other funding opportunities including the Independent Living Fund (ILF) Transitions Fund. Neil found that although their first SDS referrals came through option 1, option 2 was easier to navigate for families as it gave them choice and control around their support but less of the responsibility of managing their budget. Option 2 also meant that there was less of a need to be concerned about a young person's guardianship. Neil was conscious of ensuring that conversations did not become consumed by the money element of SDS and more on the young adults and their outcomes.

## **A brief timeline of how they became an option 2 provider**

- **Sept 2021** - On Neil's second day in post, he and the chair of Fairway Fife's board arranged a meeting with Fife Council's SDS Team to introduce themselves, explain more about the services that Fairway Fife provides, to detail their criteria and to notify Fife Council about their intention to explore the possibility of young adults accessing their service using Direct Payments/SDS.
- **Jan 2022** – Neil and the board received a copy of Fife Council's most up to date Option 2 agreement to read and familiarise themselves with.

- **Feb 2022** - Neil had contact from Fife Council's SDS Team to ask specific questions relating to individuals using Direct Payments to purchase a service from Fairway Fife through option 1 and Option 2 e.g. Costings, Dependency Levels, Staff to Young Adult ratios and staffing/capacity.
- **March 2022** - Neil received the first referral from a young adult interested in accessing Fairway Fife's service using SDS Option 1.
- **May 2022** - Fairway Fife signed Fife Council's Option 2 agreement which put the charity on Fife Council's list of service providers.
- **August 2022** Neil received the first referral for a young adult to receive support from Fairway Fife under option 2 of SDS.

## **What they had to change, internally and externally**

**Staffing:** Neil secured funding through the Fife Council's ILM Fund which enabled Fairway Fife to employ one of their Volunteer Peer Mentors on a 6-month 20 hour per week Trainee Facilitator post. This enabled the charity to support people through SDS without diluting the service that they were already providing. This grew over time and resulted in more young adults accessing the service using SDS. Since then, Fairway Fife have employed 2 full Time Facilitators.

**Financial systems:** Neil opened a new bank account for the charity specifically for SDS & ILF Payments. Invoices & receipts were created specifically for SDS payments. Neil advised that accommodating SDS within Fairway Fife was straightforward and not any more work than they had before. Neil made a conscious decision around not wanting the SDS payment process to be complicated and instead for the charity to use systems that were already in place.

Neil worked alongside a member of the charity's board to send out quarterly invoices to the families they support or to the SDS team within Fife Council. The SDS teams within the council also contact Neil on a

regular basis to ensure that the level of support delivered match with the invoices and payments made. This is part of the council's ongoing SDS monitoring system.

**Recording systems, risk management and matching:** As a service Fairway Fife already had recording systems in place for existing members which they could use for any young adults accessing the service using SDS budgets. These included Referral Applications, Service Agreements, Monitoring & Recording of Hours, Policies, Procedures and Risk Assessments.

**Engaging with families:** During Neil's first few months in post as Manager, he contacted the charity's existing members and families to introduce himself, to gather feedback and to notify everyone that they had plans to explore the opportunity of individuals accessing the service using direct payments and SDS budgets. This gave Neil the opportunity to gather information about their members' current situation and their knowledge of SDS, how it could be used & to see how and where existing members were using their budgets (if families were happy to discuss it).

**Promoting the service:** They carried out some promotional activities including:

- Updating their website with an SDS Page and using their social media accounts to raise their profile.
- Ordering new business cards and leaflets designed detailing what service they can offer & handing them out at Fayres and other promotional events.
- The charity updated Fife Council's 'On Your Doorstep' web page with more up to date information about the service.
- Developing a QR Code which directs people straight to Fairway Fife's website and easy read referral forms.

- The Charity worked in partnership with organisations such as Outdoor Education Fife, Disability Sports Fife, The Pars Foundation, Grow West Fife, Fife College, Fife Employability, Career Ready & Local Schools.
- Fairway Fife also contacted local colleges and school DAS units to discuss having more structure around transitions, recruit volunteer peer mentors and to highlight their intention to accept Direct Payments /SDS.

## **The steps they took and challenges they faced along the way**

### **Procurement**

The procurement process through the health and social care partnership was reasonably straightforward. The forward thinking and future planning that Neil already envisaged and highlighted when he was interviewed for the Manager role assisted with the process. Neil was confident from the very early stages that his proposal for Fairway Fife would achieve the outcomes for the organisation that he had set out. Neil was already aware of young people who would benefit from receiving support from Fairway Fife. He was also aware of existing members of the organisation who would benefit from receiving support more support from Fairway Fife and of young adults who were receiving support from another organisation who would benefit from receiving support from Fairway Fife.

Neil was aware of that that West Fife Community Services were working in partnership with a Glasgow company, who were at that time running a pilot supporting young people to transition from their community support service to another support service, and Neil felt strongly that Fairway Fife could offer more through a local organisation.

## **Time**

Neil found the time that the process took was challenging. Particularly the time it took between local authority enquiring whether Fairway Fife had capacity to support a young adult to the time it took for a young adult to have their needs assessment completed and a budget agreed. At times this end-to-end process was taking anything up to a year.

Potentially this could have resulted in Fairway Fife having capacity to support an individual when they were approached and asked to do so, but by the time a SDS assessment was completed, and a budget allocated they may have no longer had the capacity to provide support to the person. Fortunately, this situation didn't arise, but it was noted as a potential risk.

West Fife Community Services also went through a restructure after the Covid19 pandemic which could have impacted on the level of support that young adults in Fife received. Neil felt that the challenges around this were around knowing who had a budget and who didn't, how much it was for, could Fairway Fife help individuals meet their outcomes and did the individuals meet Fairway Fife's criteria to be able to receive a service from them.

## **Knowledge**

The gap in knowledge of SDS for the young adults and families was also a barrier as those receiving a budget didn't have knowledge of the fact that budgets can be used in innovative ways. As a result of this there was a barrier in individuals and families being able to access and use SDS budgets innovatively due to their lack of knowledge.

Neil is a strong advocate for families to know they have a SDS budget and how they can use it to get the best out of it for themselves or their family member. He shared a YouTube video explaining SDS and how it gives individuals and families choice and control around their support. In



doing this Neil found that was that none of the families he shared the video with were aware of the level of choice and control SDS can give them. Instead, Neil found that the young adults were leaving school or college to be supported by a more traditional support provider or that they had no support in place to enable them to progress.

## **How many people they are supporting through SDS option 2**

At present Fairway Fife have between 60 and 70 members. Neil had agreed with the board that up to 10% of Fairway Fife's membership can come from young adults using their Self-Directed Support budgets. This percentage is currently made up of 2 young adults accessing the service using SDS budgets through option 1 and 5 young adults accessing our service using SDS budgets through option 2.

Neil knew that the charity had to be mindful to separate those supported through their SDS budgets and those that the charity support through grant funding. However, although the charity are mindful of different sources of funding, these different sources combined have enabled them to open up the activities that Fairway Fife can offer overall.

## **Building connection and resilience**

The support Fairway Fife provides is a different way of providing support that still meets with the principles of SDS. As a result of their peer mentoring support, they are promoting and making connections in the community. As previously mentioned, Fairway Fife make a conscious effort not to over support an individual. Each young adult has an individual plan in place that, with support from the charity, they work towards achieving.

In structuring their services Neil advised that the organisation try to adopt the approach of young adult engaging with them over a longer

period. For example, a young adult could engage with Fairway Fife 3 days a week for 3 hours a day rather than for one full day a week as often this can be overwhelming for a young person. Neil is aware that some young people are allocated large SDS budgets while other young people don't receive a budget, Neil advised he would be interested in finding out more about the allocation of budgets.

## **The difference it has made for Fairway Fife**

Fairway Fife's innovative approach to providing support has not only benefited those using their Self-Directed Support budgets but also those who receive support through the organisations other funding streams:

- Enabled Fairway Fife to employ 2 new full-time facilitators which meant that they could provide more events and activities for the young adults to attend.
- Enabled Fairway Fife to extend the Trainee Facilitator Post.
- Young Adults accessing the service using SDS budgets are now more active, less isolated & more engaged in the local community.
- Families of young adults now have more opportunity to secure employment and to lead active and fulfilled lives.
- Their events and activities have increased, this has opened new opportunities for young adults and peer mentors to become more active in the community.
- Fairway can offer more variety in the events, activities, and experiences they offer.

## **How they promote SDS as a way of accessing support**

In the early stages of Developing Fairway Fife through SDS, they increased their social media presence to promote this new way of accessing their services. Neil also engaged with the charity's existing members. As a result of being able to employ more facilitators, he was

able to increase the amount of time and support young adults received from Fairway Fife. When Neil accepted the post as manager of the charity, he moved from West Fife community support services.

Therefore, the families he had built a professional relationship with over the years were contacting him and asking him what the charity were doing. Over time, it was word of mouth that attracted more young adults to Fairway Fife as more individuals and families heard what they were doing and felt that what they were offering would help them or their family members achieve their outcomes better than the existing support they were receiving.

The first referral received was from an existing member who was very clear on the fact that he wanted to receive a service from Fairway Fife. The second referral was from an individual who was receiving support elsewhere but decided to move his budget to enable Fairway Fife to support him. Once Neil and the charity had signed the option 2 agreement through Fife Council's procurement process, they were encouraging young families to put the request through social work. Neil is also keen for individuals and families to understand that they don't need to give all their budget to Fairway Fife for them to provide this service and that it is not an all or nothing approach. They can choose to split their budget and receive services from another provider or to use the rest of their budget in a different way. In advocating for young adults to access Fairway Fife's services, he also encouraged them to contact SDS Fife to gain advice and guidance around the process including payroll etc.

## **What's next for Fairway Fife?**

- Fairway Fife aim to engage with young adults with SDS requests submitted to Fife Council to access their service using SDS budgets. They are at full capacity at this stage.

- The Charity will focus on delivering a quality blended service between grant funding and SDS funding whilst sticking to their existing model of service.
- They will continue to develop the projects and build on the partnerships that they have created over the past year.
- Engaging more with Outdoor Education Fife & Grow West Fife to develop work experience programmes.
- Fairway Fife will look at opportunities for their members to engage in training, work experience or volunteering opportunities with peer support.
- They will develop more opportunities for our members to access health, well-being, and sport sessions.
- Fairway Fife will work with Fife Council Employability Team at Local schools and recruiting students as volunteer peer mentors who will be completing their Foundation Apprenticeships in Social Services and Healthcare.
- They will work with Career Ready to mentor school students monthly with a view to 1 month's internship work experience over the summer holidays.

### **To find out more:**

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