

Field – Self Directed Funding Presentation
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At Impact we love self directed funding, and have been doing this for many years. We like to think the reorientation of the services has assisted us to do this better.

The brief history of Impact is: -

- Incorporated in 1992
- Offices in Oakleigh and Frankston
- Both a disability and Mental Health PDRSS provider
- 154 MH clients, or as we call them participants
- 123 disability clients with structured respite
- 30 clients with a neurological illness, provided with a 1 on 1 service
- 20 clients with intellectual and other disabilities provided with a 1 on 1 service
- We have an organizational culture where we believe that we exist to provide services to those people we are here to serve, this is about them, not about us
- Our vision is ‘Your life, your way’ and we move heaven and earth to fulfill this (and I admit that sometimes we cock this up but we never ever intend to!)

If you are wondering about the changes I hope you are thinking from the point of view of the people you work for and how can you, with whatever funds you have, give them the best possible life you can.

I have been a tad annoyed at some forums over the past few years with people getting up and saying “we love the new self directed funding.....BUT.....” and then they bang on about how it might change their workplace, how they might have to lay off staff, people might want something they don’t deliver or can’t deliver and so on. They are not nice people! Within the parameters in my life I get to choose, and the people we are here to serve deserve the same. Yes, some workplaces will change, some people may have the opportunity to look for alternative work, (weasel code for ‘get sacked’) but this is about people with disabilities so embrace it.

So why do we love it? Let me tell you some stories, and everybody I talk about I’ll call Steve. Sometimes Steve will be a man and sometime Steve will be a woman but only I know which one is which. Steve will also range in age from 20 to early 60’s. I’m going to start with some ‘bad’ Steve stories where self directed funding hasn’t worked for us. I’m telling the bad ones first because I want to end with the overwhelming good ones and leave you in a positive frame of mind.

Steve, ABI, acquired in his 20's and now in his 40's, looked after by his mum Steve who is in her 70's decide to change service provider, from us to someone else. I'm Ok with that because this is all about choice. Mummy Steve and client Steve had been with us for many years. Mummy Steve loved us, hated us, loved us, hated us etc. We got 24 hours notice of the change. She told the case manager she'd like to change, they found a new provider 6 weeks prior but we got 24 hours notice and not to us, but to our support worker. No time for hand over, we've got a permanent worker we need to give notice to and so the issues go on. The response to us from DHS was while they sympathized, there was nothing they could do because the client had the money, and we could, should we choose, invoice the client for a months care. They agreed that we should have got more notice, but we didn't, sorry can't help and blah, blah, blah.

We didn't invoice, because if they paid, Steve would be without support for a month and the idea of that is untenable.

Another Steve moved home with aging parents and this time we got 3 days notice, but not of cancelling the service but reducing the support hours we provided from 20 to 5. Bloody hell! More permanent staff to find other work for, renegotiate contracts with, and/or sack etc.

Again the advice, - invoice the family, again the advice rejected.

None of this was the choice of Steve but the aging parents needed to put Steve into a group situation where his funds would provide more hours of care as they needed a break. A tough decision for everyone!

So here's an area for improvement for DHS. DHS provides the funds so DHS needs to insist on notification, in writing, providing a minimum of a months notice to a service provider if someone is changing services. This has to do with employment conditions, workforce retention, quality process and all of the myriad of things DHS expects, quite rightly, we need to have and comply with. Right now they absolve themselves of the responsibility where for me at least the Golden Rule clearly applies, DHS hands out the gold, so DHS has a responsibility to make the rules. Service reorientation is about respect, respect for the client and it must also be about respect for the services as well. Fix it, it is not good enough!

Enough of the 'bad' Steve but let me talk about an 'I don't know how to fix this' Steve. We have a client and their girlfriend and/or boyfriend, both with disabilities, and we have a flat they can move into if only Steve could be assessed by DHS. DHS is going to, the person is on the list but this is an issue of timing and one where the timing is running out.

The analogy is DHS is the monstrous super tanker. OK, these days 2 slightly smaller super tankers but still very gi-normous. Impact on the other hand is the small little boat zipping around, changing tack, stopping here, racing off there, while the big DHS juggernaut ploughs on. Delivering stuff, on a journey, a good journey, but one that finds it hard to change directions. We have zipped and tacked and spun around and have things lined up for Steve but the supertanker plods on, wanting to help but you know, it's the way things are done, we can't stop, it's the system. How do we fix this? As we develop and encourage more and more people to have choice there has to be a way to meet individuals needs. I can't do what DHS does; they can't do what I do. A supertanker is about meeting a communities needs, a small zippy boat is about individuals but somehow we have to work out how we bring these together systematically, and not reliant on whether I can brown nose enough to decision makers to get preferential treatment for my client, probably at the expense of someone else's client who isn't as good at brown nosing.

What I'm asking for from DHS isn't easy, but a challenge I look forward to working on because I have the joy of knowing good people in DHS who will take on the challenge of working on how a government department with eleventy squillion employees, can establish a culture where all of the people operate with flexibility, creativity, entrepreneuriality and independently while at the same time adhering to all of the processes and directives that come from on high. The term 'from on high' refers to the various egos', both controlled and otherwise from those delightful elected representatives of this fine state. This is called a partnership, but one that recognizes that a supertanker can run over a small yacht and not know about it but a small yacht attempting to run over a supertanker at best will bounce off but will more likely be sucked into the propellers and spat out.

OK, time for Good Steve.

CRISSP, we love it! If you heard it was crap, go to a session and look again and it now has a lot of very clever stuff to assist you manage people, rosters, invoicing and the rest. There are other data management tools out there, but CRISSP is free and comes with great service. As a CEO, the words good and cheap, in the same sentence sit well with me. I wasn't paid to say this but part of the new way of doing things is great accountability to the people you work for and CRISSP can do that. You need to provide a great service and administer a great service. It's a journey we are still on but we nearly have it sorted. They are not mutually exclusive.

I also have a grant from DHS and we are supporting a carer (who to honest is doing 99% of the work) who is building a system from free internet software, to be used by carers and care recipients that does the same, allowing people to track their support shifts, rosters, invoicing and so much more. It is called web2care, so watch out for this next year. Can I say the people from CRISSP

have been terrific in supporting us because I actually do believe in a partnership with our local friendly supertanker!

Now here's why we love self directed funding, and this is the bulk of our experience.

Steve, mild ID and cerebral palsy, prior to this wanted to use funds to get a gym membership. Case manager said 'NO' not in the guidelines, even though this would be terrific in assisting Steve manage his disability. Self directed funding means Steve now pays for the gym membership and we no longer have to lie about what we might, or might not have spent \$900 on. Issue resolved, not to mention a big reduction in stress levels.

Steve, ID, after many years of great work by support workers and Steve, now has social skills and has got a boyfriend and/or girlfriend. Steve is moving up to QLD to see if this is more than just a brief romance. Thanks to self directed funding we can broker far more easily than before his support to QLD and if it doesn't work, because love can be cruel, it will be so much easier to have Steve back to VIC and resuming his former supports.

Steve, ID and chronic gambler, and now with self directed funding we can purchase met cards (fines for travelling without a ticket have stopped), food packages, ad a range of other ways to address the gambling. Still a work in progress!

Steve, ABI and used to be a professional musician wanted, lets say insisted on a support work who was a good musician themselves. We found one and both are happy. Did you hear the one about the professional musician with a regular paying job?.....too cruel? Steve has also converted part of the package to purchasing a car (to be driven by the spouse) as Steve has a range of doctors that need to be seen on a very regular basis.

Steve, ID, wanted to be a volunteer in a hospital, we got a support worker to achieve that aim and now Steve is a tea lady/man.

Steve. ID, wants someone to take them out around the clubs and pubs on a Friday and Saturday night to assist them chat up someone from the opposite sex. OK, we are still looking but have ads out at the various uni's etc and we are getting responses.

Steve and Steve, both employ their own support workers but we do the payroll for them.

I won't go on but because of self directed funding all of these Steve's are asking for and getting people to assist them have supports and lives of their choosing.

We are happy to get them, it means we have to think of how to but for all of these people they are happier, self esteem through the roof and so it goes.

One last thing! Self directed funding is about people with disabilities getting what they want by making decisions about their life. About 3 years ago the people at Impact started to say, 'Can you get me a boyfriend/girlfriend?' Next year, Impact in partnership with EACH and UCCO are running a pilot dating service for people with intellectual disabilities. We are looking for about 160 Steve's, half and half. The program is a series of 8 – 10 training sessions on communication, meeting people, relationships, sex and so forth, combined with a range of supported events to put your skills into practice. We didn't think of it, this came from the people we provide support and services to. They were actively involved in its development. It will be lots of fun and it will be safe and supported.

The program is called Social Impact and next week, there will be a Field Info cast about it. Look out for it if you are interested and let people know.

Like any new thing there are things to work out, bits to refine, and issues to tackle but self directed funding is good, and will be great. Don't be scared of it, embrace it. It is about people with disabilities and their quality of life. We, and I use the royal collective we on behalf of everyone involved in Impact, love it

Thanks!