

Individualised Funding

Individualised Funding arose from the great human need to have control over one's life, often referred to within the human services sector as *self-determination*.

For people with a disability, self-determination is necessary if one is to achieve the same degree of freedom and choice as enjoyed by one's non-disabled peers. In saying this, it is not just about a person with a disability living or working on their own but that they have some control over where they live and work and have the same range of choices as any other person.

In common with the development of person centred approaches, services provided to people with a disability have historically been driven largely by what *others* have considered to be important in the life of a person with a disability. In most cases, "others" have been those professionals and administrators charged with the care and operation of services for people with a disability. Over the past 20-30 years and around the world, this approach has been gradually but consistently challenged by families, people with a disability and their advocates. In some cases legal systems have been asked to challenge systems and procedures as a consequence of people with a disability being abused or poorly served. In a few cases, the death of a person in care has resulted in authorities having to significantly review and adjust the way care, support and services are provided. Needless to say most western governments have been asked to address these issues from a system's approach while on other fronts many families, people with a disability and their advocates have been demanding changes, proposing new ways of doing things and ultimately doing it for themselves.

Individualised funding can be conceived of in two distinct but not mutually exclusive ways:

1. **Self directed funding** is a model whereby the individual or their family/carer select and direct the types of services and supports that are needed but the funding would be provided to an organisation and managed and acquitted by them.
2. **Self managed funding** is a variation on self directed, but in this model the individual or their family/carer manages the funding completely or in consultation with an agency. The individual would still select and direct the types of services and supports that are needed but the funding would be managed and acquitted by them or in consultation with an agency.

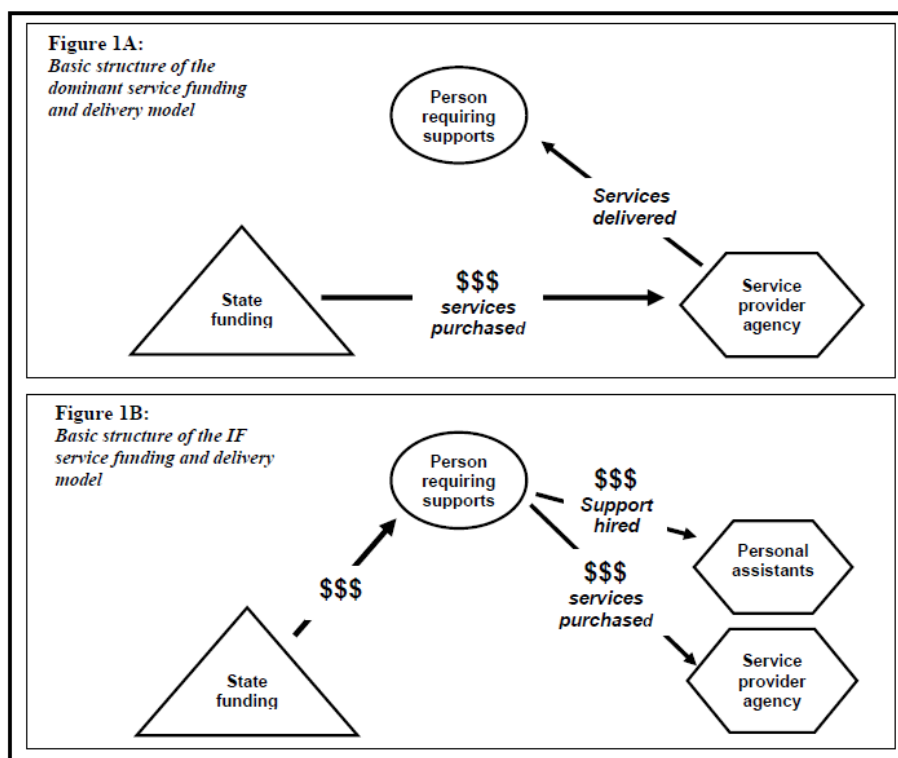
Although individualised funding goes hand-in-hand with person centred thinking and approaches (see Sunnyfield's Person Centred Practices position paper), the system's response to this has needed to be slower. In NSW the vast majority of funding in the disability sector is provided by the NSW Government through a multitude of programs developed and managed by Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC), part of the NSW Department of Human Services. The majority of these funds are annually allocated on a recurrent basis or through tender to non-Government organisations to provide a vast range of services and support to children and adults with a disability.

At a very simple level, an individual funding model effectively changes the way funds would be allocated from being organisationally based to being person based. Using Sunnyfield as an example, instead of Sunnyfield receiving ADHC funding to provide a day program for a group of individuals, ADHC could instead directly fund the individual (or their family/carer) and the individual person would then *choose* to purchase the services or supports they wanted either from Sunnyfield or from other services. Further to this, the individual may choose to manage the funds themselves (self-managed) or ask an organisation like Sunnyfield to manage the funds on their behalf (self-directed).

If an individual chooses to manage their own funds they will be required to accept the responsibilities, accountabilities, risks and liabilities that are currently provided by organisations. The process of how an individual or family can be supported to do this is still being developed.

Figure 1¹ provides diagrammatic representation of how the funding relationship will change.

Figure 1



While the concept expressed in this way seems simple, its implementation and effects are complex:

State fund-holders properly retain their responsibility for ensuring effective and equitable use of public funds, but lose their direct involvement in the spending of funds. NGO's, for their part, must find ways to deliver quality services without the security of block-funded grants...And, last but by no means least, those who choose to receive individualised funding accept not only the power and freedom, but also the very substantial responsibilities of planning, buying and managing their supports.²

Sunnyfield is committed to the development of an individualised funding approach for the people we support and their families. We recognise that this new funding model is totally consistent with a person centred approach but accept that the way forward may be complex and will take time for individuals and families to understand and accept as well as for Sunnyfield. In and of itself, individualised funding is not the ultimate objective, being person centred is. Individualised funding is an important vehicle to achieving a person centred life as it transfers the power to the people we support and their carers and families.

Sunnyfield will engage with the NSW Government, the people we support, their families and carers to achieve a greater level of self-determination in the way services and supports are provided. In saying this, Sunnyfield also accepts that part of this relationship may be as a *facilitator of an individual's plans* and not necessarily as the provider of services.

¹ Dowson, S. & Salisbury, B. (1999). **Individualised Funding: Emergency Policy Issues (p3)**. http://www.communitylivingbc.ca/what_we_do/innovation/pdf/IF_Policy_Implementation_issues.pdf

² National Disability Services (2009). **Individualised Funding: What it requires to work**. <http://www.nds.org.au/members/submissions/archive/2009/IndividualisedFunding.pdf>