



My Life Support

A vision and a plan

Introduction

Who we are and what we care about



My Life Support is a community of ordinary people from the towns of Wigan and Leigh, a community which over the past five years has come together to work for a better life for local people. We are passionate about achieving real change.

Our passion stems from the fact that each of us has had direct experience of struggle – struggle because of poverty, disability, the lack of educational opportunities, or sometimes simply as a result of who we are and how others see us. We have struggled to be part of mainstream society, to make a contribution to that society, and very often we have struggled to discover our true identity and how we can live a good life on our own terms. Some of us have experienced these things directly for ourselves, some of us have close family members who have had to struggle and been excluded in this way, and for some it is friends or neighbours.



Members of the team at My Life Support have worked in education or the care system for periods of time, and we have seen that traditional approaches often fail the people we care about. This is not usually because of a lack of compassion, instead it is more often because things start with an unhelpful set of assumptions – a focus on the question of “what’s the matter?” without giving enough thought to “what matters?” to the person seeking help. Traditional services start from the best of intentions, but their staff don’t always seem able to really get to know the person and stick with them, walk with them as we say, when the going gets really tough.

Despite these negative experiences in traditional services, many of us have acquired skills which we are now able to adapt and bring to bear through our work with My Life Support. We find that most of those we work with are very ready to talk, to tell us about their passions and enthusiasms, about the important people in their lives, and to share their hopes and dreams for the future. Asking “what matters” does seem to make sense to people, and it gives us a basis for encouraging a person to think about what they want from life and the support they want and need in order to get there.

As a team, we are proud of the skills we bring and we firmly believe that they provide us with a strong foundation on which to build. The spark for My Life Support was provided by Caroline Tomlinson, whose son Joe was one of those people who, from a young age was excluded by society. In founding My Life, Caroline drew upon her learning in assisting Joe to build a life for himself. She also drew upon her later work for the charity In Control in promoting person-centred approaches and personal budgets in care and health. In this way she was able to lay down the foundations for My Life Support.

Caroline continues as the inspiration and the driving force of the organisation. In this, she is assisted by many members of the local community, including Steve Jones, former chief executive of Wigan Council. Steve supported Caroline in devising and developing what became a “personal budget” for Joe, and is now chair of our Board of Trustees.

In many ways those who work as volunteers and paid staff at My Life are the community

in Wigan and Leigh. They are the people who, through the relationships they forge and the unconditional acceptance that they demonstrate, ensure that we will succeed in our ambitions to build a better life for people as members of a more inclusive, welcoming society. This is the reason why our workforce is our most precious asset in the years ahead.

The plan in the latter part of this document sets out our broad thinking for the next phase of My Life Support’s development. It builds on our work in our two existing sites in Standish and in Leigh and moves us more wholeheartedly into the community, closer to where people live and work. It tries to reflect and incorporate the things that individuals and families have told us they value about our work, as well as the conversations we have had with commissioners in care and health. This plan is about building community in a time of austerity: we know there is less money around for care services, and we know that there are more people than ever who need support. The plan is also about enabling choice and control for all, through providing an infrastructure to make the most of personal budgets, direct payments, personal health budgets and the personalisation of support services – approaches which were introduced over the last ten years or so but which have yet to realize their true potential.

Our hope and our firm belief is that if we do what we know works for people, if we really listen to them, if we see who they are and what they have to offer – each person different – if we walk alongside them, then we can go on to do great things.

Vision and Mission

What we do now and how we do it



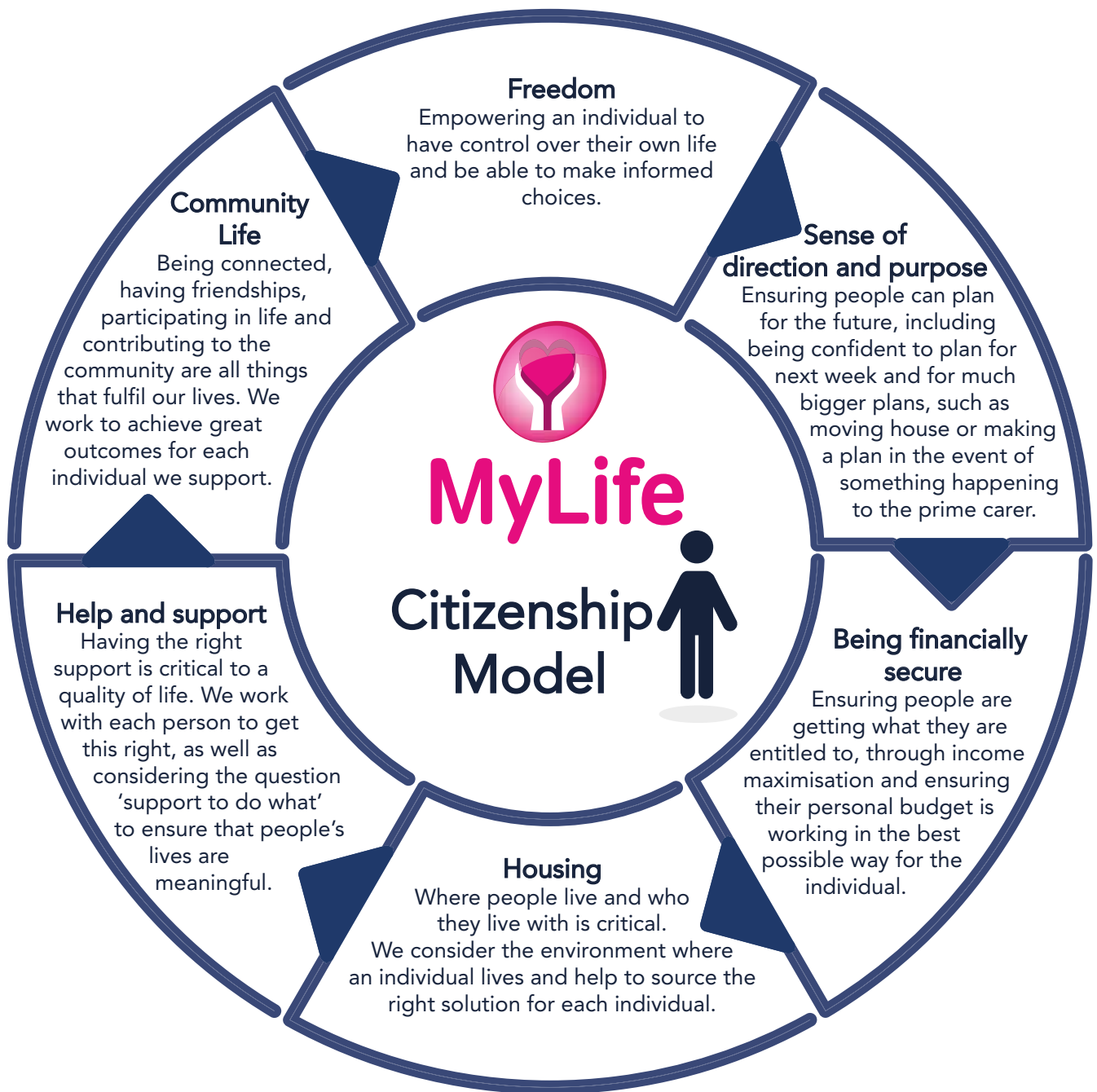
Our vision for My Life Support is simple: for people who need support to have a good life. Our belief is if we all give a little, we will all gain and grow together.

Our goals are based on the Citizenship Model and focuses on six key themes:

- **Self-determination** – to have real choice and control, but understanding that the more choice and control you have, the more responsibility you need to take.
- **Direction** – to have a plan for the future, no matter what age you are.
- **Money** – to be financially secure by having a sustainable income and money for support, as required.
- **Housing** – to live in the right environment, with people you choose to be with.
- **Support** – to have support provided in a way which makes sense to you.
- **Community** – to have friendships, relationships and be able to contribute to you community in a meaningful way.



Our mission for My Life Support is to work in a person-centred way with people of all ages who may need support to achieve a good life for themselves, and to enable people feel in control of their own lives, have the emotional support to get through the tough times and have all the information and help they need to work out their own solutions.



What we do now

What are the main things we do today? And how have these things been shaped by our vision?

Some of the things we do are very much “on-site” in our two locations in Standish and Leigh.

1. For young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND), My Life provides an alternative to traditional further education.

We offer a large range of courses for between 38 and 48 weeks of the year, including: animal care, dog grooming, equine studies, performing arts, confidence building, independent living skills, bushcraft, horticulture, artisan crafts, cooking, hospitality, photography, and much more. We focus on what the young person can do (not what they can't) and we provide a learning experience tailored to ensuring that the young person achieves the outcomes they have set for themselves. We provide the young person with an opportunity to gain qualifications and, for those who want it, to work towards a Duke of Edinburgh Award.

These courses seek to provide genuine “preparation for adulthood” for young people with particular challenges at this stage of their development. They seek to give them a focus in life, no matter how complex or challenging their needs, a focus on who they are and who they might become – and to help them to map out a future for themselves and to do this in their own time and in their own way.

My Life can provide 1:1, 2:1 or group support if needed, or the young person



can bring their own PA/support worker. The young person can use their personal budget to pay for activities and support; we also welcome self-funders.

2. We support young people with learning difficulties and/or disabilities, including those with more complex needs, to develop the skills and gain the qualifications and experience they need to get paid employment (supported internships).

We do this by working in partnership with Wigan Council and providing work-based learning on site. We see this as a new type of supported employment. This new type of supported employment teaches marketable skills and it guides the young person's progression into the job market. In doing this, we value the young person as an adult, an equal partner and as an active learner who also has something important to contribute to the process.

3. Our Pathways to Employment training course is for anyone interested in a career in social care. The training is 'values-based' so people don't necessarily need lots of qualifications as we match skills with what the individual or family is looking for. Once more, we seek to get alongside people, nurture their enthusiasms and talents, and turn out graduates from the programme who are thoughtful as well as qualified.
 4. We also offer person-centred workshop-style activities to a wide range of people of different ages from our community. The list of activities is growing all the time. It currently include: arts and crafts, cooking, music, dance and gentle exercise, drama, gardening and growing, animal care, sewing, jewellery making, floristry, cake decorating, photography, sensory therapy, bushcraft, orienteering and outdoor adventure. The purpose of these diverse activities is common: to build confidence, to grow connections and relieve social isolation, to teach new skills, and to provide enjoyment and fun.
 5. A school holidays kids club – a way of supporting families, giving children a different experience in a healthy environment and bringing disabled and non-disabled people together.
 6. We have three accessible chalets located on our site in Standish. Each has two bedrooms, a fully equipped kitchen, walk-in shower and specialist equipment is available on request, eg. hoists and shower chairs. They operate like a holiday-let, where people book the chalet direct with us and bring along their own staff. The chalets are available 7 days a week, 52 weeks of the year.
- My Life Travel is soon to be launched, which aims to source accessible holiday provision as an alternative to traditional respite. For those who need support, we have a bank of personal assistants.

Other things we do already reach beyond the two sites.

7. We offer independent advocacy for those individuals living in Wigan borough who need care and support under The Care Act 2014. Our independent advocates are experienced, skilled individuals who can 'hold your hand' through assessments, reviews, and support people in understanding the process.



8. We organise training and events for those working in the community and who identify with our values – most notably each January/February we run the annual Inclusive Community Experience, a three-day national event for people with disabilities, their families and professionals which celebrates diversity and promotes inclusion.
9. We offer information, training and support on any aspect of getting a good life. Our experience in terms of support planning and working with personal budgets, direct payments and personal health budgets means we are able to help individuals and families navigate the complexities of the care and support system. This and the next area are elements of our work that we want to develop further. See the plan in chapter 3.
10. We also help people to manage their personal budget, direct payment or personal health budget. We help them find and keep the staff they need, and help to match individual and staff member/personal assistant. We also support some people write job descriptions and contracts of employment and help them with the interview process when recruiting staff.



11. We also assist members of the community with new business ideas, and can sometimes help in finding funding to start a business. Young entrepreneurs in particular can benefit from this assistance and we have already supported a number of young people to get going and start to make money doing something they really care about.

How do WE think our services do?

Are they safe?

We support people to think about their lives in terms of taking risks and staying safe. Sometimes people will choose to take risks in order to achieve outcomes and get a good life: such risks should always be thought through. All our staff have received health and safety training. Staying safe is something our community (paid staff, volunteers, people supported) is asked to take very seriously.

Are they effective?

People who use our services tell us that they get a better life as a result. We gather evidence of this in the form of written records of our conversations and consultations. We try all the time to listen actively to what people tell us works and doesn't work for them.

Are they caring?

We seek to walk alongside people who are having a difficult time. We do this by being clear with people that we understand and care about them – and that we truly want to help them make the changes they need to get a good life.

Are they responsive to people's needs?

A conversation about "what matters" to the person is at the heart of what we do. This then takes the form of a support plan and an action plan and these shape the support we provide for the person.

Are they well-led?

We are a community of people driven by our values and our shared desire for a better world. We are all leaders and there is a clear expectation that we all share in the vision. Continual reflection, learning and innovation drive all that we do.

What all of these activities have in common is that they all seek to:

- Build connection between people, disabled and non-disabled and across generations
- Give people real choices
- Build upon people's strengths and passions
- Give people control over the support they require – and over all aspects of their life
- Develop initiative and self-reliance
- Challenge prejudice and discrimination
- Help people make best use of the care and health system to get the best possible life for themselves

This is how our vision translates through our mission into reality. We sum this approach up in the Citizenship Model, which is the foundation of our work at My Life.

The plan which follows explains how we will now extend and expand this work, based on the Citizenship Model. Before setting this out we need to refer to two more building blocks for our work: our workforce and our use of evidence.



Pathways to Employment (P2E)

Pathways to Employment (P2E) is a unique solution to a big problem. The problem is that many people who now have the means to employ their own staff as Personal Assistants to support them, find it difficult to find the right people to do the job. And Personal Assistants for their part, find it hard to find a role that satisfies them, and they find it difficult to get the training, supervision and support they need once they have a job.

My Life Support is beginning to solve this problem in Wigan and Leigh. We have done so by asking two very simple questions:

- 1) What is it that Personal Assistants need in order to do a good job?
- 2) What is it that potential employers need in order to find the right people to support them?

We have designed the P2E programme to answer these questions. The programme has a number of stages:

1. We bring together local people who think they may want to work as personal assistants.
2. We explain to them what is involved in the work.
3. We ask them to apply by designing a poster, showing their unique skills and qualities.
4. We invite them to a five day training course, which covers values, building self-confidence, teamwork, asset based community development, communication skills and meeting potential employers.
5. We work on matching those who require staff with graduates from the course.

P2E is a hugely popular (oversubscribed!) programme. Graduates describe it as an inspiration; opening their eyes; learning to be appreciated; and as a means to gain trust, confidence and overcome fears.

To date, we have run the course ten times, since Autumn 2013. There has been an average of 30 participants on the each course, of which 95% on average complete the full course and 75% have been matched into work. For those not in work, they have been matched into volunteering roles, or we have worked with them to look at other employment. The other big outcome is that potential employees are much more confident in selecting the job they want.

The P2E programme was born from listening to people. It was supported and funded by Skills for Care. It is a programme which is designed to be replicated elsewhere.

Our Workforce

Our workforce is our most precious asset. Some members of the workforce at My Life are paid; others volunteer their time; many have joined the organisation after graduating from our Pathways to Employment programme, bringing with them valuable experience from outside the care sector; all our workforce are valued equally. We strongly believe in paying our employed workforce a good wage for the job; and we believe in providing the whole workforce (paid and volunteer) with the support they need to do that job well.

We are a community of people, members of a wider community in Wigan and Leigh, who share a vision of a kinder, more inclusive society. We are also conscious that there are other like-minded people in the wider world, this is why there have seen so many exciting

changes in care and health in recent years. This larger community across England and beyond are our friends and allies and many of them visit us and attend our annual Inclusive Community Experience events and exchange ideas and experiences with us. This exchange is an important source of inspiration and innovation for us.

We know that in order to make our ideals come to life we have to ensure that we provide support and challenge for our staff team: our work is often enjoyable, but it is also difficult and stressful from time to time. We are working to support people who have had very difficult life experiences, and walking alongside them can be distressing and challenging.





We support our staff through a variety of formal mechanisms (induction, supervision, staff development review). Continual learning and development are particularly important for us and we call on a mix of approaches to shape this, notably David Straker's work on engaging head heart and hands ("If you get a person's head, heart and hands working together, then you have the person") and the model of social pedagogy, a holistic and relationship centred way of working in care and educational settings.

These formal mechanisms and conceptual approaches help to ensure that we build an identity and a common purpose, with everyone having a clear role. Equally importantly, we are a community which also allows for flexibility, learning, skills exchange and role substitution. Everyone knows what they are responsible for, but just as important everyone mucks in and helps out.

So: the formal mechanisms are complemented by our informal relationships: we rely on the energy, enthusiasm and sense of fun of all concerned to provide each of us with the support and nurturance we need.

Our trustees, staff and associates are experts in the fields of social care, health, education, the law, human resources and business, and all want to give something back to their community. We draw upon this expertise to ensure that the whole workforce is nurtured, supported and challenged in ways that are fully professional and which also reflect our values and ethos - so that everyone is able to give of their best.

Gathering evidence of what works

My Life Support has a strong commitment to learning from experience about what works and what doesn't work, and to applying that learning. We make use of this right through the whole work of the organisation, from the approaches we use to get to know people and to help them think about what they want from life and how they might develop meaningful support plans; through to our organisational strategy and plans to develop the business.

We have a number of tools which we use to help us do this.

- **POET** (the Personal Outcomes Evaluation Tool), developed by the organisation *In Control* and now widely used across England as a way of assessing the impact that personal budgets have on people's lives. The great merit of POET is that it asks people very simple, straightforward questions about their life and about how that life has or has not changed over a

period of time, since they have been using a personal budget; and then it aggregates the responses to produce a clear analysis to show which parts of the process it is that makes a difference and which does not, and what therefore needs to be retained and what needs to be done differently.

- **The Outcomes Star**, a tool to capture and record in a simple, visual format the aspects of someone's life that are most important to them and how those things change (improve or get worse) over time. Stars are completed "collaboratively" with the person and a facilitator, and they provide powerful, visual representations of progress towards agreed goals or outcomes.
- **The Short Warwick-Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale (SWEMWBS)**. This tool was developed to enable the monitoring of mental wellbeing in the general population and the evaluation of projects, programmes and policies which aim to improve mental wellbeing. The SWEMWBS uses seven statements about someone's thoughts and feelings. These can then be aggregated and analysed to assess the impact of particular programmes or interventions.
- *Is there anything more related to management/financial systems use of evidence we can insert here?*

Data produced by these tools is analysed, evaluated and discussed to influence how the My Life community might develop and evolve in terms of the way support is offered and the way the business grows.

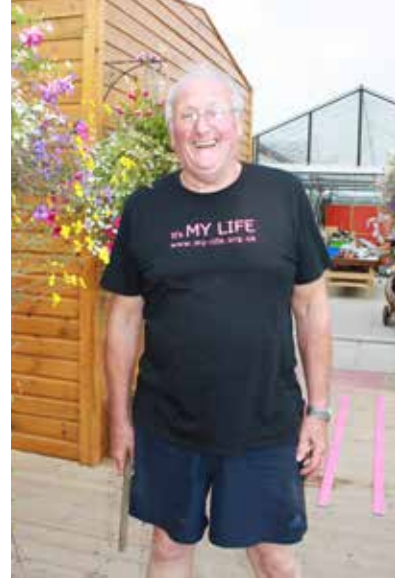
This is illustrated in the diagram below.



My Healthy Life

We all know that getting and staying healthy are critical to a good life. We hear endlessly about the importance of good diet, regular exercise, sufficient sleep and finding ways to deal with stress.

None of these things are separate or different from the other aspects of a good life which we talk about in this document. Having friends and being part of a community also keeps us healthy, as does having a job we value and which gives us enough to live on, and so does learning new skills, and so does having fun. But for historical reasons, in the public sphere, the health aspects of life have been separated from the social aspects: we have a National Health Service which promotes good health and tries to fix things when we are ill – and we have various social services to look after community life and provide social care, which is the responsibility of local councils.



Many people are now saying that this divide is pretty meaningless and that it needs to change. There is much talk of integration, single points of access and joint services. And there is little doubt that in many places where such things have been tried, people say they make sense and are helpful.

We agree that integration is important – very few people actually care whether a particular service they rely on is a health service or a social service, they just want it to work for them. But we would also say that if we are to join things up, then this needs to happen in the right way, and this means with individuals always at the centre, with their lives, their wishes and their needs coming first.

With this in mind, at My Life we will now be starting to think much more seriously about how we can start supporting people who have specific, identified health needs, and particularly those who are eligible for personal health budgets from the NHS. A personal health budget is very similar to a social care personal budget. It is a sum of NHS money allocated to someone with an identified health need that enables them to have greater control when planning and meeting their chosen health outcomes. Its purpose is to ensure that people with long-term health conditions and disabilities have the chance to shape their lives by making the decisions about their health and wellbeing in ways that make sense to them.

There are five aspects of a personal health budget which are crucial:

- The person must know how much money they have, so they can use that information to plan and to budget.
- The person must be allowed to choose the personal health outcomes to be achieved, in agreement with their health professionals.
- The person must be enabled to create their own support or care plan, with whatever assistance they may want and need.
- The person must have freely chosen the way in which their budget is held and managed.
- Whichever option is chosen to hold and manage the budget, the person must be able to spend it at times and in ways that make sense to them, within the national rules.



Sometimes people who are offered a personal health budget struggle with one or more of these aspects. As part of our plan, and in response to the comments of families and other local people, My Life now wishes to begin to help local people with these issues. We know that people sometimes need support to understand what is being offered, they need help to negotiate with health professionals, and to create a support plan, and to decide how to hold and manage their budget, and also to find the resources (including the right, well-trained personal assistants) they need to achieve their personal outcomes.

As we say, we firmly see both health and social care as reflecting elements of “my life” as a person with family and friends and who is a member of a community. If we start from this clear basis we are confident that we will be able to provide a much-needed service for personal health budget holders.

A Plan for My Life Support

In the box below is a summary of the things families have told us they are concerned about. These comments are the starting point for our plan.

Issues raised by families

Staffing:

- Recruitment (Recruiting reliable quality people)
- Staff Cover (Holidays/ Sickness/ Maternity)
- Staff Training
- Rotas/ Hours and Staff Management (Time consuming)
- Staff Retention
- Matching Part time staff to part time hours

Managing budgets:

- Understanding of pay scales - managing pay dependent on level of support required
- Clarity on use of money
- Contacting Direct Payments Team
- Paying wages at a competitive rate
- Money (management and funding)
- Books/payroll
- Working with budgets and getting most out of the budget given (Direct Payments at times seem low)
- General financial management

Feeling supported:

- Support from local authorities (can feel like left to own devices)
- Meaningful activities
- Finding appropriate activities/group activities
- Independent person for advice when required for issues with staff
- Policies of statutory authorities
- What to do in an emergency
- Understanding employment laws
- Looking at a long term support plan
- Training/courses for families to keep up to date with policies/laws and for general support

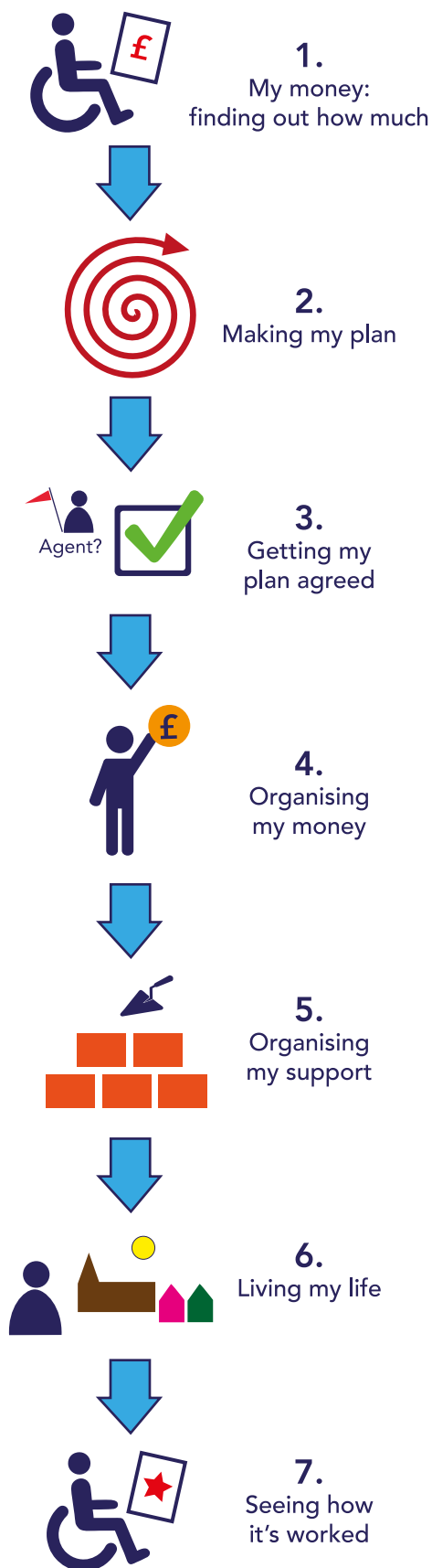
We are convinced that there is now considerable evidence of our success in creating a safe, welcoming, inclusive and vibrant community on our two sites in the heart of the wider communities in Wigan and Leigh. We receive many visitors, both expected and unsolicited, and many of our volunteers and paid staff spend a large part of their working week off site supporting people in their homes and elsewhere in the wider community.

We are now hearing that there is a need and an opportunity to take this activity to the next level and to become more wholeheartedly part of the fabric of these local communities. We will do this through finding ways to walk alongside people who need additional support in their lives, particularly those who use Personal Budgets, Direct Payments, Personal Health Budgets, or those who fund their own care.

With this in mind, we have begun a discussion with commissioners from Wigan Council about their perception of what it is that the citizens they support with personal budgets now require in order to get a good life:

- What is it that prevents people from using their budgets effectively today?
- Where are the gaps in support that people complain about?
- What is it that stops people from achieving their personal outcomes? and
- How might My Life Support use the experience gained since 2012 to assist?

We believe that there are two elements to how My Life Support may be able to contribute. The first of these involves us helping people to manage the continuing conversation when someone comes to the council for help. We use the term 'continuing conversation' to refer to the exchange between the person when they first come for help ("assessment") through the support planning process, service provision and "review". One familiar way of portraying this continuing conversation was set out by Simon Duffy of In Control more than ten years ago.



Based upon the feedback from families and our discussions with the council the following is proposed. This is how we at My Life Support propose to guide the citizens of Wigan and Leigh through the process outlined in the diagram overleaf. We refer to this here as a **continuing conversation** with Mrs A. My Life Support would wish – subject to agreement about funding, capacity and successful completion of procurement protocols – to proceed to implementation of this process as soon as is practical.

- 1** Mrs A comes to the council for help – she may be in hospital, she may be referred by another professional, she may come on the advice of a friend or family member, or she may simply come because she feels she can't cope or she needs help with a particular issue. The council offers Mrs A information and advice ("signposting") but it is clear that this is not sufficient at this time and she needs more support. She may be eligible for a personal budget.
- 2** The council asks My Life Support to help. We have a conversation with Mrs A, and use a simple tool to draw up a support plan which sets out who Mrs A is, who is in her network, what it is she feels she wants from life and what are her priorities for improvement. Throughout the process, we focus on what matters most to Mrs A and what are the simplest and most effective ways of achieving these things. The planning tool will enable us to describe these things in ways that can measure improvement over time.
- 3** We will then agree an action plan with Mrs A. This will describe what she needs to do, what family, friends or neighbours in her network will be asked to do, what those in the wider community might do - and what (if necessary) paid support will provide, how long for and what that paid support will achieve. The paid support may be paid for by Mrs A's personal budget if she is eligible. It might be provided by My Life Support, but it may be provided by others if this is more appropriate and that suits Mrs A. All of these things will have timeframes against them.
- 4** We will then use one or more of our evidence tools (POET, Outcome Star, SWEMWBS) to "set a baseline" so we can measure change over time. And we will use our simple Social Profit Calculator tool to show how much different services (specialist care and health, and mainstream community services) will be spending on support for Mrs A .
- 5** We will work with Mrs A to help put the agreed arrangements in place. She may need a lot of help with this or only a little. She may at this stage need help finding an agency or finding Personal Assistance staff. How we might help with this is set out on the opposite page.
- 6** We will, if necessary help Mrs A to get the support she needs; we might sit alongside her in her conversations with family, friends or neighbours; we will also go with her to appointments and introduce her to others in the wider community if this is what she needs; and we might have a role in liaising with and actively managing her support for her, particularly in that support comes from an agency.
- 7** At the agreed time, we will hold a review conversation with Mrs A. This will give her the opportunity to say what is working and what is not working about her support and to tell us about any changes she feels are needed. Our approach will always aim to help someone in her position to work towards the maximum of independence and connection of which they are capable - and to continue to focus on what matters most to them.
- 8** As part of this process we will use the evidence tool again to work out what has changed in Mrs A's life, and to inform the conversation about where now to focus attention. And we will reapply the Social Profit Calculator to work out how the different elements of support for Mrs A are contributing to help her achieve her outcomes.
- 9** Based on the review conversation, Mrs A's support plan and action plan will then be revised, changes made and the process repeated as necessary.

Whilst we are clear that individuals using Personal Budgets, Direct Payments or Personal Health Budgets and those funding their own services are asking for this approach to the Continuing Conversation, they also tell us that there are other gaps. We propose two options to filling these gaps. My Life Support would be pleased to explore both of these in more detail with commissioners:

- The first option concerns the issue of helping people to make a plan, manage their money (budget) and manage the support arrangements they purchase with that budget.
- The second involves My Life Support in taking on responsibility for employing staff and for managing the support service for the individual.

The first option does not require registration with the Care Quality Commission, the second does; that registration has now been applied for (May, 2017).

Option 1

Personal Budget, Direct Payment, Personal Health Budgets and self-funder support services.

What are they and who are they for?

These are a variety of options that enable individuals to employ their own support or help them to find the right agency or provider, or even do both. Individuals can choose one element or take a pick and mix approach. Our mission is for individuals to have real choice and control, without all of the hassle. We are also very interested in how individuals sustain high quality support, so we have introduced services that help to keep an eye on things and resolve problems as they arise.

SUPPORT SERVICES	WHAT DO THEY DO?
Creative support planning	<p>This looks at the money individuals have available for their care and support and explores a wide range of options to achieve the best outcomes, get good value for money and achieve a good life.</p> <p>We explore how an individual wants to be in control, what they want to achieve, maximising their income, housing options, what good support looks like for them and how they want to access the community. Although they may have a support plan, does it really look creatively at the way the money is being spent? We can help individuals to make sure the money works as hard as possible to get them a great life. We also will consider the things that money can't buy, such as friendships, community and being in the company of others. Our experience in connecting people to a great life is vast.</p>

Implementing the support plan

SUPPORT SERVICES	WHAT DO THEY DO?
Action planning	Once the support plan has been completed, the most difficult part is making it happen. We will develop a clear action plan to ensure everything is thought through in detail and put into place. We will work through the key areas such as housing, recruiting staff and will support individuals to make this happen. We will explore the options and consider the times it will take to make everything fall into place.
Recruitment support	We have a unique recruitment support service, which is called 'Pathways to Employment'. We believe this is such a critical and important role, so people should be screened and have some basic training before they are matched to an individual. We run the recruitment and training sessions up to eight times per year, depending on demand. We find, train, screen and match around 250 personal assistants per year and can assist to create new teams, or to replenish existing teams as people move on.
Finding the right support service or agency	Some individuals may have a preference to use an agency or provider. We are developing an easy to access e-marketplace of organisations that provide a wide range of care and support and help individuals to find what they are looking for within their budget. We will help individuals to shortlist, scrutinise, interview and select the right organisation for them.
Developing a micro market	With our vast connections and relationships in the local community, we have found many people with skills to offer. We also have many young people that we are nurturing, who also have a lot to give. Harnessing and hosting such skills will develop innovative micro provision that should respond to low level need across the community. This will be hosted via our technology platform, making it easy to access for all.

SUPPORT SERVICES	WHAT DO THEY DO?
Safeguarding support services	For individuals who want to employ their own team, we encourage them to take out the relevant checks and ensure that they can safeguard themselves as much as possible. My Life Support can do DBS checks and support individuals to understand the process and any information returned. We can send for professional and character references and help individuals to consider what they say, to enable them to make an informed choice about who supports them.
Early intervention and wellbeing support	We offer, by referral, a bespoke service for individuals who could be seen as 'vulnerable' in the community, to support them to access their GP, hospital appointments and administrative tasks, such as being an appointee. Other services we can offer include: handyperson, gardening and emergency dog-sitting during a hospital admission. However, these will be need to be arranged in advance wherever possible, so that they can be triggered and commissioned as required.
Payroll	We will administer all aspects of your payroll, ensuring that the staff team are paid on time and all payments to HMRC are accurately paid.
HR Support	Employing staff is definitely not an easy job. Our experienced Human Resources team will help and advise individuals on all aspects of employment, from managing, supervising and appraisals, to sick leave, maternity cover and disciplinary and more. We will work closely with insurers to ensure the advice given is interpreted and delivered correctly.
Financial support	We will manage the personal budget in an open and transparent way using our 'virtual wallet' IT system. This enables individuals to have sight in real time of their personal budget and any transactions coming in and out. It lends itself well for easy auditing and has all of the information in one place. This list is not exhaustive as we have access and can source training of all requirements.

SUPPORT SERVICES	WHAT DO THEY DO?
<p>Training and development</p>	<p>We can facilitate a wide range of training courses, as we have access to a variety of trainers. We host several days throughout the year including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Values training • Mandatory training, such as first aid, moving and handling, etc. • Health and social care qualifications, from Level 1 and 2 and upwards • Leadership and management skills • Specialist subjects, such as autism, challenging behaviour, mental health, epilepsy, etc. • Individualised training packages for those with complex health conditions • Asset Based Community Development (ABCD) • Advocacy training • Disability awareness training
<p>Personal finance support</p>	<p>For some individuals, managing their own income is a challenge as there is no-one close by to facilitate this process for them. My Life is happy to act as an 'appointee' for those who lack capacity and need help to ensure their bills are paid on time. We will use the virtual wallet to enable other members of the family to oversee the activity in real time.</p>
<p>Monitoring a service or agency</p>	<p>We recognise that having a loved one who needs care places a big responsibility on the relatives. This could be an elderly relative living at home needing care, going in or living in residential care. We understand that the biggest issue for many families is that of time, in particular if you don't live close by and have all of the pressures of your own family responsibilities.</p> <p>My Life can offer an experienced matched member of our team, assigned specifically to the family's relative. He/she will go and visit their relative unannounced, as often as they like. We will ensure that the provider of the care is fully meeting the individual's needs and we will intervene as required, as well as reporting back direct to the family.</p> <p>This can be a regular commitment or something families may just need because they are going away on holiday.</p>

SUPPORT SERVICES	WHAT DO THEY DO?
Monitoring outcomes and reviews	My Life has an experienced team who can attend any meeting with reference to an individual or their loved one. This could be a review, re-assessment or anything else that is required.
Futures planning	<p>For many families, the fear of what will happen to their loved one if something happens to them is so scary. Individuals don't seem to make any plans at all. However, in our experience, when something does happen it is very difficult to pick up the pieces for the families left behind.</p> <p>My Life has an experienced team who will work with individuals and families to develop a futures plan, which explores everything from wills and trusts, to who will oversee the care of a loved one, to developing essential lifestyle plans that put into place everything that needs to happen in the event of ageing, illness, losing capacity or sudden death. We will hold on to the plans, which can be a critical part of an individual's letter of wishes, and will trigger requests in the event of anything happening to the primary carer.</p>

Option 2

Third party budget management.

What are they and who are they for?

For many people, the responsibility of employing staff to work in their home can seem very daunting, especially when you are dealing with something as important as personal care.

My Life Support is applying to be registered with the Care Quality Commission and will act as the legal employer of personal assistants, support workers and carers, working with individuals at every step to make sure they and their family are happy. The individual will still make all the decisions about how their personal [health] budget is allocated, who works for them and what they do, but we will also be able to support them with recruitment, training, other aspects of employment and anything else they may need to manage their budget effectively.

This option is known as a 'third party arrangement'. We can be commissioned by the NHS, Social Care or directly by individuals. Whichever way, the individual is in control, so they can live the life they want to and achieve the outcomes that are important to them.

SUPPORT SERVICES	WHAT DO THEY DO?
Individual client bank account	We will hold the budget on the individual's behalf in a separate client deposit account. We will support the individual with financial planning and reporting, helping them to keep track of their money. They will be able to view their bank account should they wish, as well as accessing monthly financial reports online.
Payroll	The individual will report the PA hours worked to us on a monthly basis and we will process staff pay and payslips. Employees have the choice of either paper or online payslips.
Performance management	Full support will be provided should any performance issues or employee concerns arise.
Co-ordination of training	We will organise training for the individual's staff, both mandatory and for personal development.
Personalised risk assessments	We will conduct risk assessments bespoke to the individual, taking a common sense approach to risk enablement.
Employer and Public Liability Insurance	Because the staff are employed by My Life Support, if a problem arises the individual will be fully covered by our insurance.

Discussions with commissioners now need to focus upon key deliverables, price, timescales outputs and outcomes from the two approaches.

Conclusion

We are very confident that the emergence of My Life Support as a vibrant, innovative and deeply values-driven enterprise in Wigan and Leigh over the last five years presents us with a great opportunity:

- It is an opportunity for those citizens who need support, to discover or rediscover a sense of purpose and connection;
- It is an opportunity for the wider community in the towns to move towards including many socially isolated and often marginalised citizens; and
- It is an opportunity for the commissioners of care and health services to invest in services which are both effective and efficient.

My Life Support's approach, with the person always at the centre, accorded status as a citizen and supported by an energized and motivated workforce, who are informed by a process of careful reflection on "what works" is, we believe the formula for a future which is both realistic and sustainable.

Our intention which we set out in this document is to extend our work further into the communities in Wigan and Leigh.

We are sure that this is an aspiration which will find favour with all our stakeholders and will, we believe provide us with a strong basis for the future.



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