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TIN Arts



Using personalised budgets to provide choice and opportunity

Personalisation is on the rise in social care, set to become more prevalent with the introduction of the Care Act in April 2015, which requires local authorities to make personalised budgets available more widely. It could offer opportunities for some arts and cultural organisations—individuals can use their personal budgets to engage in arts activities that also deliver social outcomes. Whilst this model will not suit all organisations, some could find it an effective way to engage with commissioners.

TIN Arts, a social enterprise in County Durham, has been doing this for many years. It runs participatory dance projects for people of all ages and abilities. **GeTIN2Dance**, its contemporary dance course for adults with learning disabilities, is funded through direct payments. Weekly sessions involve warming up, exploring different dance styles, creating new moves and rehearsing for performances. Designed to be inclusive, fun and stimulating, it also offers an alternative to more traditional day care. *'One of the first workshops we delivered was for a group of adults with a learning disability,'* says Chief Executive Martin Wilson. *'We were surprised when they told us that they didn't get many dance workshops; not many practitioners catered for them. We wanted to start something, so we thought we'd look at this.'*

Initially the project was funded by the Northern Rock Foundation. In 2005, TIN Arts began looking into direct payments, approaching Durham County Council to discuss moving from a subsidised model to one where people could choose to attend GeTIN2Dance as part of their local authority care.

The rise of personalisation

The 2008 white paper *Valuing People Now* stated that *'all people with a learning disability are people first with the right to lead their lives like any others'*. It proposed personalisation as a way to help people with learning disabilities take more control of their lives, an approach that has already been taken up by some local authorities and underpins the Care Act. David Shipman, Strategic Commissioning Manager at Durham County Council, explains the Act's central elements: increasing service-users' choice and control, providing more flexibility, and driving an increase in preventative services. *'Partly it is about asking people, what do you want to do, what do you aspire to? But it also aims to move people away from dependence on statutory services and meet social care and health needs in a more inclusive way.'*



Personal budgets in practice

'For us 'personal budgets' mean direct payments, virtual budgets or individual budgets,' explains David Shipman, Strategic Commissioning Manager at Durham County Council. *'We identify where someone would get a lot more out of something like TIN Arts than the traditional day service. In a direct payment, we give them the money to spend on what they want—as long as it's safe, legal, meets their care needs, and gives us the outcomes we're after. Virtual budgets take away some of the risk or pressure of a direct payment; we identify the amount together but we continue to arrange and administer it.'*

Martin explains the practicalities for TIN Arts: *'Every month we send each attendee an invoice. They share it with their local authority, which releases the funding into their account, and they pay us. We issue about 700 invoices a year. Managing cashflow is key—but every month we have an income of about £9,000, which is quite a rare fixed income to have—and it's completely unrestricted.'*

In practice, personalisation revolves around personal care plans. Each person with a learning disability develops a plan with their social worker or care coordinator that looks at their health, family and friends, how they want to live their life and where they need support, and sets out outcomes to be achieved. Under the Care Act, local authorities are required to develop online marketplaces listing providers in their area, allowing people to choose from various options—many already do so. Durham County Council's information guide allows service users and their care coordinators to find out about organisations like TIN Arts. Organisations can register to be listed in the guide via the website.

Meeting commissioners' needs

Organisations looking to deliver direct payment services need to understand the context in which they want to work. *'TIN Arts works really hard to understand the people it works with and get carers and families on board, building trust,'* says David Shipman. *'It's not as simple as thinking "we can include people with learning disabilities in our activities, therefore we can access a pot of money". It's about having the right ethos and knowledge.'*



Making the wider benefits of arts and cultural activities clear to commissioners is also essential. *'Providers should think how what they're offering can help a person move on, become more confident and independent,'* says David. *'TIN Arts draws out those wider added value outcomes.'*

TIN Arts makes sure that its work helps to deliver outcomes that are important to Durham County Council. *'They want people with learning disabilities to have better physical and mental health, and be involved in leisure and recreational activities in their local communities,'* explains Martin. *'We hit those two areas.'* A report on opinions of carers, care coordinators and service users identified several wider benefits, including improved self-confidence, group and interpersonal skills, establishing strong friendships, improved organisational and planning skills and increased levels of physical activity.

Meeting commissioners' needs isn't just about outcomes: providers must have a sustainable business model, so users can feel confident the service will still be around in six months. TIN Arts was conscious of pricing its service correctly, considering the cost of a day of local authority-provided care and pricing its offer slightly lower to ensure it was competitive. *'We run the programme one day a week, 36 weeks a year, at £52 a day. If 15 people come every week bringing £52 each, the programme is sustainable.'*

Measuring success

Durham County Council monitors TIN Arts' work through its regular service monitoring activity. But the real measure of success is service users' annual reviews of their care plans. Social workers and care coordinators work with individuals to look at how well the plan meets their needs, how much they've spent, and whether they want to continue with the same services. Service users effectively vote with their feet. For TIN Arts, the fact that people return to the programme year on year shows that its approach is working.

TIN Arts also asked the social workers who refer people to them for their feedback. They cited increases in confidence, independence, communication skills, interaction and collaboration. One of the clearest positive signs is the high level of retention. According to Martin, *'they felt attendees were becoming motivated to participate—to plan ahead the night before, get up in the morning and travel to see other people.'* Traditional day services can struggle to motivate people to attend, something TIN Arts' fun and progressive approach helps to overcome.

This progression—continuing to learn and taking on new challenges—is key to TIN Arts' success. The variety of dance offers a surefire way to keep participants engaged and excited, and doing new things. *'We're constantly changing the theme for our performances,'* says Martin. *'We never sit still; there is progression and difference every year. That means people want to stay and carry on with us.'*

As David Shipman put it, *'parents don't want their children to go into a day service and sit there for 20 years; they want something proactive, positive and creative, that takes them somewhere.'*

Producing high quality art

TIN Arts receives Arts Council National Portfolio Organisations funding, and is keen to keep creating high-quality work that pushes the limits of contemporary dance. One way it does so is through Flex Dance, an emerging company of artists with a learning disability led by TIN Arts' Artistic Director Tess Chaytor. It is not funded through direct payments, but many artists come from its direct payment services. *'We realised a handful of people were coming to our sessions who wanted to do more, and had the ability to,'* explains Martin. *'We felt it was important that we made work that was not only participatory in nature, but put across what we're about. Flex Dance is our beacon—it captures the ethos of our work.'*

Flex Dance often performs outdoors, at arts festivals across the country. In this way, it reaches a wide audience, reflecting TIN Arts' desire to change how people with learning disabilities are viewed by the public and challenge preconceptions about disability. *'We want people to look at the ability, not the disability,'* says Martin. *'We want them to look at the art, not necessarily who's doing the dancing.'*

Broadening horizons

One piece of feedback TIN Arts received from social care workers was particularly welcome: *'they felt we were helping people to broaden their horizons,'* says Martin. *'We try to show people the broader creative world; we talk about different dance or art forms, we go and see things and talk about them.'*

This broadening of horizons is not just about new cultural experiences; it has a very practical side. Becoming familiar with public transport through trips with TIN Arts can have a very positive impact on a person's ability to face the challenges of everyday life, for example. And wider interests may lead people to pursue arts and cultural activities independently, without local authority involvement. *'People meet and discover that they can get involved in theatre and dance groups by themselves,'* says David. *'They form friendships with a whole range of people, not just other people with a disability.'*

For David, the availability of projects like TIN Arts' has added a lot to the social care offering in the area. But he is keen to stress that personalisation is not a silver bullet for arts and cultural organisations looking for funding. *'We now have a much more varied market—we still have a significant cohort of traditional day services, alongside providers in arts, culture, sport, outdoor or environmental projects. I think it's got a lot of potential, but it's a long process, and the providers have to be prepared to put a lot into it.'*



All photos courtesy of TIN Arts.

Find out more

Read more about direct payments at Durham County Council at <http://www.durham.gov.uk/directpayments>.

Read more about TIN Arts at <http://www.tinarts.co.uk>.

For more information and resources on Cultural Commissioning visit <http://www.ncvo.org/CCProg>.

Case study researched and written by Matilda Macduff

The Cultural Commissioning Programme (www.ncvo.org/CCProg), funded by Arts Council England, works to strengthen relationships between the arts and cultural sector and public service commissioners. It is delivered by a partnership of [National Council for Voluntary Organisations](#) (lead), [New Economics Foundation](#) and [New Philanthropy Capital](#).