



## **INDEPENDENT SUPPORT: QUESTION AND ANSWER**

### **Q. What are Independent Supporters?**

These will be individuals who will be recruited and managed by the private, voluntary and community sector to provide advice and support for parents of children with SEN, and young people with SEN, through the statutory assessment and Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP) processes.

Independent Supporters will help to build resilience in families by offering a range of time-limited support such as liaison across different agencies and advice on personal budgets. The level and nature of that support will be tailored to the particular needs of individual families.

They will be independent from the local authority and be recruited by the private, voluntary and community sectors. The current draft of the Code of Practice includes Independent Supporters as part of the offer of advice and support that LAs should make available.

### **Q. What will the £30m be spent on?**

The majority of funding will be used to cover the costs of paying for Independent Supporters' time spent working directly with parents, children and young people. This would include the costs to recruit, manage and train Independent Supporters via the private, voluntary and community sector. CDC will manage the process and also oversee an independent evaluation of the funding and report on best practice and outcomes.



**Q. How will the process work?**

The Department for Education has appointed CDC to develop the details which are still being finalised, including how to ensure families can access this important support.

CDC will first run an initial 'trial' phase over the next few months looking at different delivery methods and develop appropriate training. This will be achieved through a robust and transparent procurement exercise inviting bids from private, voluntary and community sector organisations to develop the services. CDC will assess the bids, ensure best value and commission the work.

**Q. How many will there be, how will you be sure there are enough and that they are located where families will access them?**

CDC has suggested it expects to see up to 1,800 Independent Supporters, which equates to around 12, on average, in each LA area. These posts will be recruited and managed through the private, voluntary and community sector and work in partnership with LAs and their Parent Partnership Services.

**Q What role will LAs play?**

Local authorities will be responsible for conducting SEN assessments and putting in place EHC plans. Government and CDC will be asking LAs to work in partnership with its Parent Partnership Services and those organisations providing Independent Supporters to help identify families in most need of support.



**Q. But don't Independent Supporters already exist through Parent Partnership Services and key workers?**

Some support for parents and young people does exist. Parent Partnership Services already provide impartial information, advice and support to families. And some families are also able to access a key worker to support them. However, the new SEN arrangements that will apply from September 2014 will require local authorities to provide broader information, advice and support across education, health and social care services. The truth is that the level of support available for families isn't enough to meet the need, and Independent Supporters will help to address this shortfall.

**Q. Who will be eligible to apply for funding?**

CDC want to encourage any private, voluntary or community sector organisation to apply for funding, provided they are confident they can recruit individuals who would be effective Independent Supporters. CDC is developing detailed criteria and will invite bids in due course.

**Q. Will there really be up to 1,800 people by September 2014?**

The trial phase over the next few months will, among other things, allow CDC to test the market, see different delivery methods and learn about what works well. It will also allow us to promote Independent Support among SEN sector organisations to encourage them to participate.



**Q. How will you know if you've succeeded / how will you evaluate this?**

CDC will be building evaluation in from the start. We are developing a set of success criteria which will need to address a range of issues – not only, for example, in relation to the number of Independent Supporters recruited, geographical spread, and parents or young people supported; but also in terms of family experience and quality of EHC Plans. These criteria are likely to evolve in light of experience from the trial phase over the next few months.

**Q. How many families will this money support? Will it meet all the demand?**

It is impossible to set a meaningful target for the number of families that will receive help from Independent Supporters. The amount, and the nature, of the support each family receives will be different. The important thing is that the support is properly targeted so that the families that most need this kind of support receive it.

**Q. Aren't you encouraging parents and young people to become dependent on support?**

Not at all. Parents and young people do often need help. Independent Supporters will offer a range of help, targeted around the assessment and EHC Plan processes. Although the level and nature of support will be tailored to meet the particular needs of a family, it will be time limited. At its heart, Independent Support is intended to build family resilience and not encourage dependency.



**Q. But there's less funding for LAs. Aren't you unrealistically raising expectations of parents and young people?**

In a time of austerity, it is all the more important that funding is used as effectively as possible. The reforms overall will help ensure that families are fully engaged in decisions that affect them from the outset, in some cases with the help of Independent Supporters. This should help ensure that the right support is provided to families and young people as quickly as possible.

**Q. How long will the funding be made available and sustained?**

Funding will be available until March 2016. By the end of that period, we expect there to be experienced Independent Supporters in place. Sustainability in the longer term is one of the key success criteria for Independent Support, and we will work with local authorities to achieve this. For this to work in the longer term, and to ensure local authorities continue to make this form of support available, they will need to understand what benefits Independent Supporters offer.

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