

Community Budgets and the Legacy of Total Place

Introduction

Total Place was designed to improve public services and save money by bringing organisations and their budgets together. Begun by the previous Government, the central theme of the scheme was a 'whole area' approach that would reduce overlap and duplication by sharing objectives across multiple agencies. Local public services were given new freedoms over their finances and performance management.

The Total Place pilot programme ended in February 2010. An evaluation report was published in March 2010. Following the General Election the new Coalition Government stated that it wished to build on Total Place with 'Community Budgets.'

Since April 2011, 16 areas covering 28 councils and their partners were given control of Community Budgets, pooling various pots of Whitehall funding to tackle social problems around families with complex needs.

In context: Total Place

The Total Place concept pulled together three complementary strands:

- **Counting** – mapping the flow of money through an area to identify where it can be spent more efficiently.
- **Culture** – changing organisational cultures to deliver joined-up solutions to problems.
- **Customer needs** – using customer insight to help areas work out how best to redesign services and allocate resources.

13 pilot areas were identified and asked to focus on a particular theme. The pilots were expected to:

- Test the Total Place concept
- See how services could be improved whilst delivering greater value
- Create a body of evidence on cross-agency working

A list of Total Place areas and the themes focussed on can be found here:

www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/themes/theme-groups

In the South West, **Bournemouth, Poole and Dorset** were included in the pilot programme. They focussed on delivery of older people's services.

The pilot area's final reports are available at:

www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/totalplaces

The Treasury report on the Total Place pilots can be read at:

www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_total_place.htm

All of the pilots also incorporated elements of customer insight. Local Government Improvement and Development have recently published details of this. It highlights how insight into shared customers is an important starting point for Total Place initiatives. However, research suggests that insight is still largely used in silos. The challenge, the report states, is to develop customer insight as a corporate information tool to help areas make the right strategic decisions. You can view the report here:

www.idea.gov.uk/idk/core/page.do?pageId=18029936

Inspired by the national pilots, six Total Place projects were funded in the south west by the Regional Improvement and Efficiency Partnership. £1.75million was allocated. Details of these schemes are available here: www.swcouncils.gov.uk/nqcontent.cfm?a_id=6025

The Total Place programme has now ended. However, individual authorities may have chosen to continue some or all aspects of the programme, whilst others may have chosen to 'shadow' the programme with their own initiatives.

Community Budgets

Background to the policy

The Coalition Government saw potential in Total Place. The Community Budgets policy develops aspects of Total Place giving a specific focus to helping families with multiple and complex needs.

Up to 50,000 families experience multiple social, economic and health problems. A larger group, perhaps as many as 70,000 are at a much greater risk of developing these problems. The needs of these families and the problems they experience and create can require support from up to 20 different professionals. These families comprise a small proportion of the population but are calculated to require in the region of £250-£350,000 per year in support and assistance.⁽¹⁾

Objectives and expectations

Funding to support families is currently distributed across a range of schemes and agencies. The government believes that this lack of coordination leads to poor quality intervention and support, undermining the ability of families to resolve their problems. It also wastes money.

Community Budgets are expected to deliver improved outcomes for families by:

- Pooling funding pots
- Allowing local discretion on spending
- Allowing local accountability

Work and achievements achieved

Because Community Budgets are new, it will take time for useful evidence on the programme to emerge. However, much work has already been done to put Community Budgets in place and identify target groups. The programme has also been extended.

Community Budgets were designed to bring funding and providers into a single place, driving costs down and improving outcomes for families.

- 16 areas have piloted Community Budgets since April 2011, and are expected to help at least 10,000 families by 2015.⁽²⁾
- Funds that tackle problems of families with complex needs have been pooled into single budgets.
- The programme will be rolled out nationally by 2013-14. An invitation was made on 29 June 2011 for all councils to sign up to Community Budgets: approximately 50 local authorities will be brought into the programme during 2011-12, and a further 60 during 2012-13. The deadline for expressions of interest was 9 September.

⁽¹⁾ One family identified by the government required 250 interventions in one year including 58 police call-outs and five arrests; five 999 visits to Accident and Emergency; two injunctions; and a Council Tax arrears summons. Their Community Budget led to the £200,000 cost being cut by two thirds. Source: DCLG Press release 29 June 2011 www.communities.gov.uk/news/newsroom/1933560 (accessed 14/9/11)

⁽²⁾ The 16 pilot Community Budget areas are: Birmingham, Blackburn with Darwen, Blackpool, Bradford, Essex, Greater Manchester (a group of 10 councils), Hull, Kent, Leicestershire, Lincolnshire, London Borough of Barnet, London Borough of Croydon, London Borough of Islington, London Borough of Lewisham, 4 London Boroughs combined (Hammersmith and Fulham, Wandsworth, Westminster, and Royal Borough of Kensington and Chelsea), and Swindon

- The Government has announced an expansion of the scheme (a prospectus is expected soon):
 - o Two areas will be selected to co-design **neighbourhood level Community Budgets** to involve residents in choosing services, how they should work and whether they want to run them.
 - o Two areas will be selected to help co-design a **Community Budget bringing all local public service funding in an area into a single pot** to deliver better services that reflect people's needs. Departmental staff will be made available to help services overcome financial and legal barriers to delivery.
- 'Dissemination Hubs' will be set up in 9 local authorities to support neighbouring areas in developing Community Budgets. In addition to pooled budgets, two other sources of funding will be included in Community budgets:
 - o The annual £2.2bn Early Intervention Grant from the Department for Education.
 - o The annual £200m European Social Funding from the Department for Work and Pensions.

Government departments are supporting Community Budgets with:

- A cross Government Ministerial Group chaired by the Secretary of State for Communities and Local Government.
- Regular Community Budget Political Leadership Group meetings chaired by Communities Minister Baroness Hanham.
- A senior officials group chaired by Lord Michael Bichard.
- 16 senior Whitehall Champions - one for each of the 16 first phase areas.

A letter from the DCLG Permanent Secretary dated 28 July outlines work done to date on Community Budget pilots, and plans for the future:

www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1964161.pdf

Community Budgets in the South West

Swindon is currently the only area in the South West taking part in the Community Budget programme.

Their approach is firmly set in their four year plan for Swindon, using a whole systems approach to integrated services for families with complex needs.⁽³⁾

More information on their strategy can be found at:

www.localleadership.gov.uk/communitybudgets/places/swindon-2

⁽³⁾ Local Leadership website "Community Budgets"

www.localleadership.gov.uk/communitybudgets/places/swindon-2 (accessed 20/9/11)

Reception and criticism

There has been some suggestion that [MPs prefer Total Place to Community Budgets](#), and an admission by Eric Pickles that [Community Budgets may have been too optimistic in believing that they could succeed without greater cross-government coordination](#).

Concerns have also been raised over whether Community Budgets can deliver improved outcomes at the same time as reducing costs: www.guardian.co.uk/public-leaders-network/2011/jun/22/community-budget-pilots-option-councils

However, much of the commentary on Community Budgets has focussed on how far reaching and useful they could be, and how to ensure they deliver on their promise. For example:

- Institute for Government: [Why Community Budgets are worth watching](#)
- Involve 'Making Participation Count': [Turning around public services to turn around lives](#)

Role of the South West Observatory

As the Community Budgets programme expands, SWO will continue to support public services by providing baseline evidence and analysis to inform decisions, and helping stakeholders identify efficiencies, share resources and promote best practice.

As community budgets become more established, target groups, their needs, and best-fit services will be identified. Over time the impact of those services will be monitored. We recommend that Community Budget areas use SWO as a resource throughout this process. This support could include:

- Reference to resources such as the [State of the South West](#) and [local profiles](#) as a baseline for data and information. Our [Local Intelligence Networks](#) and [module websites](#) are also key sources of geographical and thematic intelligence.
- Attending future SWO events where best practice and examples from the policy field are showcased
- Contact the [Core Unit team](#) directly to discuss specific, bespoke support.

Resources

Total Place areas and the themes focussed on
www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/themes/theme-groups

Total Place final reports www.localleadership.gov.uk/totalplace/totalplaces

Treasury report on Total Place pilots
www.hm-treasury.gov.uk/psr_total_place.htm

Question and answer briefing on Community Budgets
www.communities.gov.uk/documents/localgovernment/pdf/1967423.pdf

Local Leadership resource for Community Budgets
www.localleadership.gov.uk/communitybudgets

Department for Communities and Local Government Community Budget webpage
www.communities.gov.uk/localgovernment/decentralisation/communitybudgets

Department for Education Community Budget webpage
www.education.gov.uk/childrenandyoungpeople/families/multipleproblems

Community Budgets Community of Practice (*may require registration*)
www.communities.idea.gov.uk/c/1564537/home.do