

## 1. Why the Opportunities Trust?

People with disabilities who currently receive services are in the process of being assessed and offered personalised budgets to give them greater choice and control over their support arrangements<sup>(1)</sup>.

The Opportunities Trust was created to help ensure that people with personal budgets have an appropriate and stimulating range of opportunities to choose from, should they wish. These could include, for example, leisure activities, education, personal support and help into employment.

By working together, the organisations which are members of the Opportunities Trust will be able to better promote the services and activities that are already available, and work with carers and people with disabilities to look at creating new opportunities if the current 'market' isn't providing them.

## 2. What is the Opportunities Trust?

The Opportunities Trust is a group of organisations working together to provide a rich menu of activities and support for people with disabilities and impairments across Cambridgeshire. The organisations include Cambridgeshire County Council, voluntary groups, social enterprises, independent companies and community groups. They are all working together, with carers and clients, to improve the variety and quality of services available.

## 3. What is the Opportunities Trust mission statement, and its key objectives?

The Opportunity Trust is a cross sector network of organisations providing activities and support for people with disabilities in Cambridgeshire. Members of the Trust will work to develop and promote an integrated and innovative menu of activities from which clients can independently choose. The network will also work together to a suitable quality standard so clients and their carers receive value for their money.

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<sup>(1)</sup> (Personalised budgets are also known as individual or in control budgets, direct payments, self-directed support. See question 10 below for more information)

The key objectives of the Opportunities Trust are:

- to create a Cambridgeshire Providers Network, ensuring equity of service delivery and a comprehensive range of opportunities for people with disabilities
- to facilitate, support and develop a partnership network, working collaboratively across all sectors, where organisations with the same goals can come together, providing inspired and innovative solutions to meet customers' demands
- to develop, set and maintain shared high standards in keeping with good practice and national policy guidelines and establish a suitable level of quality standard for its members
- to facilitate information and knowledge sharing with the membership
- to work with its members in undertaking market analysis and facilitate development of opportunities across Cambridgeshire

#### **4. What is the Opportunities Trust legal status?**

The Opportunities Trust is constituted as an Industrial and Provident Society. This form allows for:

- one member organisation, one vote, ie - no individual organisation can have more than one member on the Management Board
- fully mutual status
- the organisation will not exist as an autonomous organisation, but will be fully owned by its members

#### **5. How is the Opportunities Trust funded?**

The Opportunities Trust has received funding from Cambridgeshire County Council to run for two and half years from Summer 2008. During that time, the Trust is investigating ways of making itself sustainable, including charging organisations to become members, and offering training and consultancy, amongst other options.

## **6. How will the membership and management board be established?**

The steering group for the Opportunities Trust was established in November 2007. An interim board is now in place with 15 founder members who are taking forward the work of the Trust until January 2008 when the first AGM will elect permanent members to the Board.

The management of the organisation will be carried out by the board, elected by and accountable to the member organisations. There will be opportunities at which members can raise issues of concern, and an Annual General Meeting at which members of the board will be subject to re-election.

Although the Opportunities Trust is fully independent of Cambridgeshire County Council, it is fortunate to have the Council on board as a member and it has agreed to fund the development phase of the Opportunities Trust.

The board of management will comprise of:

- 8 representatives from the general members
- 1 senior management officer from Cambridgeshire County Council
- 2 representatives from members of independent advocacy organisations
- 2 user/carer representatives
- 1 Centre for Independent Living representative
- 1 local authority County Council Member

The duties of the board are to:

- set and monitor the strategic direction of the Opportunities Trust
- ensure that there is a very close working with customers, potential customers and their supporters, all sectors of the provider market, including employment, leisure, social activities, vocational and wider education establishments
- establish suitable quality frameworks through which organisations can demonstrate their level of provision
- suspend or remove organisations who are unable to meet the quality standards

They shall also have the duty to resolve any disputes between members.

## **7. What is the Opportunities Trust membership arrangement?**

The Opportunities Trust is an independent, 'stand alone' body operating as a social enterprise, incorporated as fully mutual Industrial and Provident Society, which is open for membership to all providers operating within Cambridgeshire including the local authority, health authority, voluntary and independent sectors.

Membership eligibility criteria:

- a) Member organisations may come from the voluntary/community sector, social enterprise, charitable or business sectors and from the in-house day services of Cambridgeshire and other councils.
- b) Member organisations should be delivering (or aspiring to deliver) services and opportunities within Cambridgeshire, which individuals can purchase through self-directed support in the future.
- c) Member organisations must work towards, meet and maintain the quality expectations as set out by the management board.

The principles of agreement for members are available to download from the Opportunities Trust website, [www.opportunitiestrust.org.uk](http://www.opportunitiestrust.org.uk).

There are numerous benefits to organisations being a member of the Opportunities Trust including:

- a) being able to market your activity or service on the Opportunities Trust website.
- b) inclusion in the online directory of members' services.
- c) a bi-monthly newsletter of all the latest developments in the personalisation agenda.
- d) the chance to take part in regular training events organised by the Opportunities Trust.
- e) the opportunity to partner with other Trust members and bid collaboratively to promote new services where provision is sparse or not covered.
- f) being part of a network which supports knowledge sharing, where lessons in providing personalised services can be shared and common practices established.
- g) support to reach the required quality standard.

## **8. What are the membership fees?**

Initial membership fees are £100 per annum. Fees will be reviewed annually, and effective from 1<sup>st</sup> April.

## **9. How will clients and carers be involved?**

Clients are being asked for their views on what activities and support they would like to see for the future. If a service is not currently available to match their requirements, the Opportunities Trust will work together with its members to bridge the gap.

Clients will be able to access the Opportunities Trust web-site ([www.opportunitiestrust.org.uk](http://www.opportunitiestrust.org.uk)) for information about service providers to help them to choose how they would like to use their budget in a way that will help them towards their personal goals.

## **10. What is a personal budget?**

The idea behind personal budgets is to help people needing social care and associated opportunities to design that support and give them the power to decide the nature of the services they need. A key feature is a clear allocation of resources, giving individuals a clear cash or notional sum for them to use on their care or support package

This flexibility will help people with disabilities use their budgets to serve their needs more effectively, based on Person-Centred Planning, which looks at each individual's needs, dreams and aspirations more specifically and more flexibly than has been achievable in the past.

For more information on personal budgets visit [www.in-control.org.uk](http://www.in-control.org.uk).

## **11. Who is the first point of contact at the Opportunities Trust?**

Christine Fraser is the Development Officer. Her contact details are:

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