

Evaluation of Rochdale Families Project

Analysis of Personalised Budget Spend

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Key Points:

- 11 of the 14 case study families received itemised personalised budget expenditure between 2009 and 2011.
- The combined total expenditure on these families for 2009/10 and 2010/11 was £7,373.92 with an average spend per family of £670.36.
- There was a reduction in personalised budget expenditure from £4,251.49 (58 per cent of total spend) in 2009/10 to £3,122.43 (42 per cent of total spend) in 2010/11.
- The highest amount of spend on an individual family was £1235.29 and the lowest amount was £206.
- There were nine item categories of spend: activities and outings; bills; clothing; direct work/referrals; domestic environment; education; family interaction/activities; key documents and transport.
- Families received between three and eight item categories of expenditure, with an average of five item categories per family.
- The domestic environment category accounted for 48 per cent of the total expenditure and was the highest spend item for seven of the families. The other categories accounted for between one and 14 per cent of total expenditure.
- The patterns of personalised budget expenditure reflect the range of problems and vulnerabilities experienced by the families and the holistic whole-family approach adopted by the Rochdale Families Project.
- The expenditure reflects key elements of good practice, including: recognising diversity; holistic whole-family approaches; spend on essential items; and fostering responsibility.
- The personalised budget spend was appropriately linked to potential forms of positive outcomes; particularly related to stabilising domestic environments, addressing financial and transport barriers, facilitating access to education and supporting family interaction and positive social activities.

1. Introduction

This report presents analysis of the personalised budget expenditure on the case study families being supported by the Rochdale Families Project. A key feature of the project is devolving autonomy to project workers to assess the needs of the families and to allocate a limited amount of financial expenditure to directly address some of these needs. Data was provided by the project for 11 of the 14 case study families who were the recipients of this personalised budget spend. There are other families receiving support from the project who are not participating in the evaluation. The project provided the research team with data for 2009/10 and 2010/11, broken down by the individual recipients (this meant that multiple members of the same family or household could have received financial support) and categorised using the project's own definitions of item expenditure. The research team has re-classified these individual items of expenditure into nine item categories.

This report describes the classification of the item categories of expenditure, analyses the patterns of expenditure and discusses the appropriateness of this expenditure in terms of its potential linkages to positive outcomes for the families. Further information about the personalised budget expenditure for each case study family is provided in Annex 1.

2. Classifying Items of Expenditure

Following analysis of the data provided to the research team and assessment of the definitions used by the project, we developed a typology of nine item categories, presented in Table 1:

Table 1: Item Categories and Descriptions

	Item Category	Individual Items Included in Category
1	Providing activities and outings	Outings, day trips, trips to bowling, cinema, meals, play centres
2	Support with paying bills	Bills for gas, electricity, Council Tax, housing (rent) arrears and emergency payments (for example hospital), food
3	Support with providing clothing	Shoes, cadet uniform and essential items of daily wear clothing
4	Providing direct work or referrals	Direct work and courses
5	Improving the domestic environment	Beds, bedding, furniture (beds, chairs, cupboards, tables), doors, carpets, decorating equipment and materials, paints, domestic goods (fridge, freezer, laundry basket, alarm clock, towels), hire of skip and/or van, handy man costs
6	Facilitating access to education	School uniform and equipment (including sports), bus passes (for school or college), internet (for homework)
7	Supporting family interaction or activities	Family holiday, family meal, family outings, tent
8	Providing key documents	Birth certificates
9	Providing or supporting access to transport	Bus tickets/passes, car parking, taxi fares

The purpose of this classification was to group together individual items of expenditure in relation to the family issue that they were seeking to address and the forms of support provided. There were a number of items that could be grouped in multiple categories (for example a school uniform could be classified as both clothing and education or activities and outings could also, in some cases, be classified as supporting family interaction). The placing of an item in a specific category is described in Table 1. Every individual item of expenditure provided by the project is included in this analysis and has been allocated once to a specific category.

3. Patterns of Personalised Budget Spend

General patterns of expenditure

The combined total expenditure on the 11 case study families for 2009/10 and 2010/11 was £7,373.92 with an average spend per family of £670.36. There was a reduction in personalised budget expenditure from £4,251.49 (58 per cent of total spend) in 2009/10 to £3,122.43 (42 per cent of total spend) in 2010/11.

Expenditure on individual families

The highest amount of expenditure on an individual family was £1235.29 and the lowest amount was £206. Three families received expenditure of over £1,000; six families received expenditure between £466.44 and 733.66; and two families received expenditure between £206 and £238.58. Reflecting the general pattern between the two financial years being analysed, seven of the families received less expenditure in 2010/11 compared to 2009/10.

Indicating the multiple vulnerabilities and problems facing the families and the holistic and whole-family approach of the Rochdale Families Project, all of the families received between three and eight item categories of expenditure.

Items of expenditure related to *improving the domestic environment* accounted for 48 per cent of the total spend and was the highest spend item for seven of the families. *Providing activities and outings, support with paying bills, providing or supporting access to transport and supporting family interaction* were the highest spend items for the other four families respectively. *Activities and outings* accounted for 14 per cent of the total expenditure. The other item categories accounted for between one and ten per cent of total spend. Individual personalised budget spend data by individual family and item category is presented in Table 2 below and a descriptive account of the expenditure on items for each individual family is provided in Annex 1.

Table 2: Personalised Budget Spend by Family and Item Category

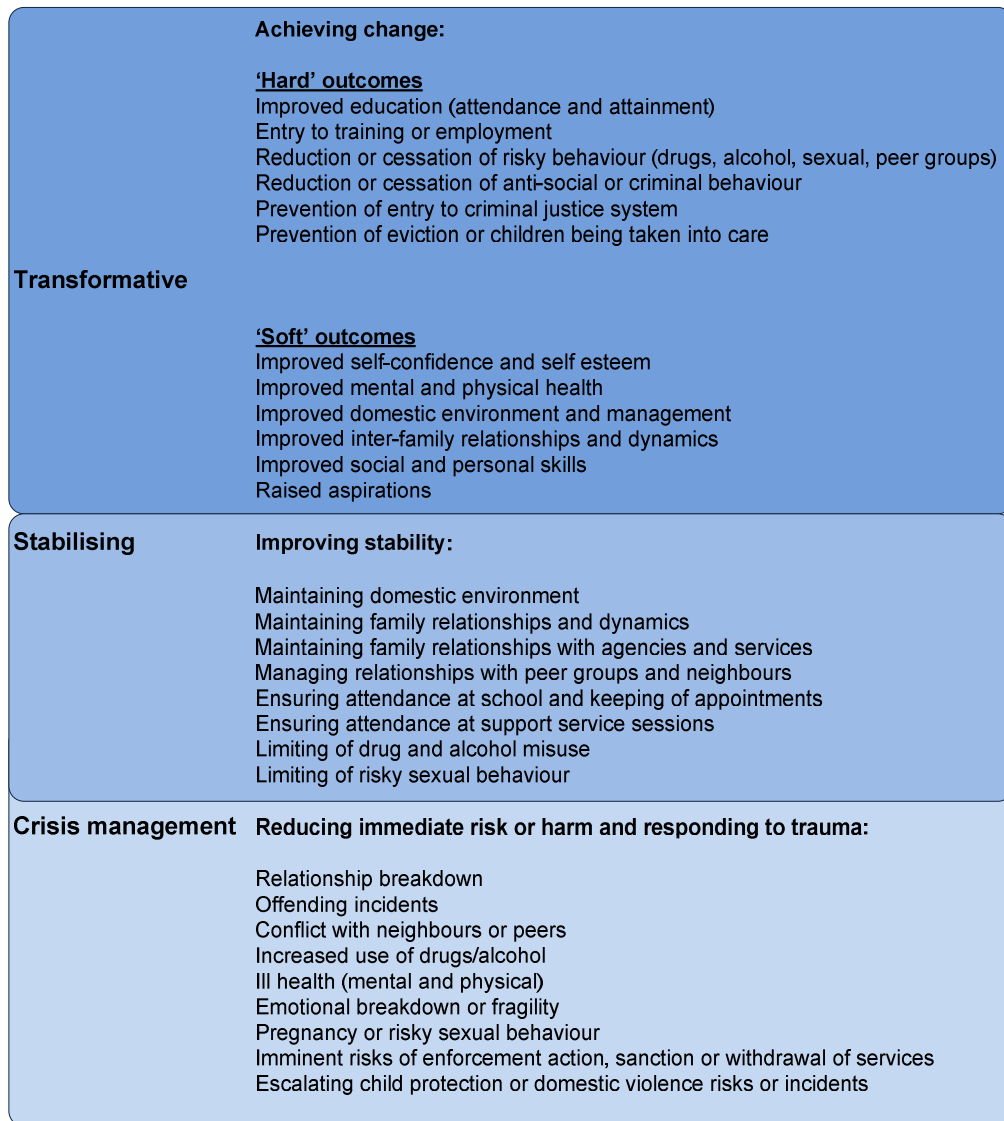
Fam-ily	Total spend	1 Activities Outings	2 Bills	3 Clothing	4 Direct work	5 Domestic Environ- ment	6 Educa- tion	7 Family Inter- action	8 Key docu- ments	9 Trans- port
A	561.78		118.51	70.00		263.27	110.00			
B	1199.80	24.56	45.58		443.19	593.47	50.00			43.00
C	562.32	45.00	195.37	100.00	27.75	140.00			30.10	24.10
D	1235.29	218.77			61.57	574.96	105.00	264.99		10.00
E	466.44	10.00			26.28	335.16	94.40			0.70
G	238.58			42.00	28.58			60.00		108.00
H	540.52	42.63	19.85		26.43	447.91				3.70
I	604.50	50.00				534.50			20.00	
L	1024.93	520.91	25.12	32.31		397.91	32.38			16.40
M	206.00	50.00				140.00	16.00			
N	733.66	54.20	16.16	41.96	10.86	100.77	54.71	440.00		15.00
Total	7373.92	1016.07	420.59	286.17	624.66	3527.95	462.49	764.99	50.10	220.90
(%)	(100%)	(14%)	(6%)	(4%)	(8%)	(48%)	(6%)	(10%)	(1%)	(3%)

N= 11 families

4. Linking Spend to Achieving Positive Outcomes

It is evident from the qualitative elements of our evaluation that project workers regard the use of personalised budgets as a very important factor in achieving positive outcomes for the families and the families themselves also report the significance of this spend. This section links the items of expenditure to possible positive outcomes for the families (as presented in Figure 1 below). Whilst it is not possible to demonstrate a direct causal or linear relationship between personalised budget spend and the achievement of positive outcomes, our analysis suggests that the use by the project of this financial expenditure on families is appropriate and will be significant in cases where positive outcomes have been achieved. The reasons for this are described below. It should also be noted, of course, that not all families will necessarily require financial expenditure through personalised budgets to address their problems and needs.

Figure 1: Typology of Outcomes



Good Practice

Our analysis of the data suggests evidence of at least four positive and effective practices in the use of personalised budget expenditure by the Rochdale Families Project:

Diversity

It is apparent that project workers have sought to understand the specific problems and needs of the families and to use personalised budget expenditure accordingly. Therefore, although improving the domestic environment was the highest item cost category for seven families (as would be expected given the relative cost of the items purchased within this category), other items of expenditure were more significant for four of the families and there was a great deal of diversity in the pattern of expenditure across item categories for each of the families. This suggests a sensitive and nuanced approach has been utilised, rather than uniform or standardised expenditure across the families.

Holistic and whole-family approaches

The fact that all of the families had at least three item categories of expenditure and seven of the families had five or more item categories of expenditure indicates that project workers understand the range of, and inter-connections between, the problems and vulnerabilities of the families and are taking a holistic approach to addressing families' needs. This is also evident in the expenditure applying to various members of the households, including parents and children.

Appropriate expenditure

It is evident that personalised budget expenditure has been used sparingly and appropriately. There is no evidence at all of what may be deemed superfluous expenditure, for example on 'luxury items' or repeat expenditure on the same items. Support with paying bills is noticeably limited and modest (see below), expenditure on clothing is confined to essential items (often linked to education needs), expenditure on transport is predominately directly related to accessing education and expenditure on improving the domestic environment is entirely linked to essential items of furniture (primarily children's bedrooms and necessary kitchen equipment) and key home improvement (decorating or clearing excessive items). The one item of audio-visual or media expenditure (internet) was linked to completing school homework. All of the expenditure can therefore be directly linked to the aims of the project and the potential achievement of positive outcomes (see Figure 1 above).

Fostering responsibility

A key feature of the personalised budget expenditure data is the attempt to foster self-responsibility amongst the families and to prevent an over-dependency by the families on the financial or practical support of project workers. This is demonstrated in the provision of decorating materials and paints and skips, which require the families to undertake home improvement work themselves, the limited support provided to pay bills and the provision of bus passes, tickets and taxis in order that support family members' attendance at school and college rather than simply providing direct transport (i.e. lifts by project workers). Although direct support has been provided, ensuring that self-responsibility and proactive behaviour is fostered as a complement to this direct support is crucially important if positive outcomes are to be sustainable in the post-project intervention period.

Potential Relationship between Expenditure and Positive Outcomes

Each of the item categories of personalised budget expenditure may be linked (although not conclusively proved) to the positive outcomes presented in Figure 1 above and these are now discussed in turn.

Providing activities and outings

The provision of activities and outings is crucially significant for the relationship between the project workers and individual family members which is *the* most important mechanism and factor in achieving positive outcomes. The provision of these activities signifies the benefits for individuals of the project intervention and often provides a context and environment where the interaction and

trust between project workers and family members can be built. Access to activities and outcomes is also linked to crisis management (providing respite or diversion in periods of trauma) and soft transformative outcomes such as improved self-confidence and esteem, improved social and personal skills and raised aspirations. It may also lead to improved relations with social peers and other family members and encouragement to become involved in more formal and structured leisure activities (such as cadets) which in turn can reduce involvement in risky behaviours. It is also important to note that there is an opportunities and social justice dimension to the provision of these activities, given that many of the children have not been able to access these activities and outcomes previously. Access to activities and outcomes can also be utilised as an informal reward, praise or sanction mechanism to strengthen the relationship and engagement of families with the project intervention.

Support with paying bills

This is primarily linked to crisis management and in particular reducing the imminent risk of enforcement action, sanction or the withdrawal of services, such as utilities or housing (rent) arrears. The purchasing of essential food items addresses a pressing and urgent need and can also be linked to education about diet, health and effective budgeting. The key issue here is the limited use of this form of expenditure and the data suggest that this support has been provided sparingly and appropriately by the project.

Support with providing clothing

This can be essential in enabling access to leisure activities and to 'soft' transformative outcomes such as improving self-confidence and self-esteem and improving social relationships with peers. When shopping trips are undertaken jointly by project workers and family members, this also provides an opportunity to encourage self-responsibility and effective budgeting and the experience of shopping itself (for example in a new environment) can be very positive for children who may not have had this opportunity previously. It is evident that this form of support has been used appropriately by the project, restricted to essential items and linked directly to other positive activities.

Providing direct work or referrals

This enables project workers to undertake direct work with family members which is a core component of the intervention and has also been used to purchase courses (RCT) which may be linked, in the longer-term, to transformative outcomes.

Improving the domestic environment

This is primarily linked to improving or achieving stability for a family, but, given the domestic conditions for some of the families, this also represents a form of crisis management. The provision of basic and essential goods such as furniture for children's bedrooms or kitchen equipment and addressing the chaotic context of a home (by removing rubbish or cluttered goods or decorating) will be a pre-requisite for enabling families to move on and developing the positive contexts required for interventions aimed at transformative outcomes to be delivered. This will also potentially have a series of positive consequences for family relations and dynamics, improved mental and physical

health and improved self-confidence and self-esteem. As discussed above, it is important that direct support is balanced by the promotion of self-responsibility and independent household management skills and the financial data provides suggests that this balance has been recognised by the Rochdale Families Project.

Facilitating access to education

This may address all levels of positive outcomes, from the prevention of enforcement action (linked to non-attendance) through stabilising a family situation by increasing attendance at school and college and ultimately achieving transformative 'soft' and 'hard' outcomes (see Figure 1 above). The financial data provided indicates that expenditure was used directly to facilitate access to education and to encourage individuals to take some responsibility for ensuring their own attendance and engagement.

Providing key documents

Two families were provided with copies of birth certificates. Although these are key and essential documents that would be required to access some services, it is not appropriate to link the provision of these documents to achieved positive outcomes.

Supporting family interaction or activities

This form of support may provide crisis management (in response to a moment of family trauma such as bereavement or relationship breakdown) but it is also very important in stabilising a family (through maintaining family relations and dynamics) and also contributing towards 'soft' transformative outcomes such as improved inter-family relationships and dynamics and improved mental health. It is important to recognise that many of these families will not engage in many whole-family activities or interaction and may not have had a family holiday, for example. Some of the activities and outcomes listed in the first item category above may also have included other family members.

Providing or supporting access to transport

This support is essential to the daily lives of families, in terms of accessing a range of services and consumer goods. It is therefore linked to stabilising a family's circumstances. It may also be linked to 'hard' transformative outcomes such as entry to training or employment. However, as the data does not provide specific detail on the nature of the journeys undertaken, it is not possible to provide a link to specific forms of positive outcomes. The role of transport in accessing education has been described above.

Comparing Personalised Budgets and Police Incident Data

The potential impact of personalised budgets and quantifiable positive outcomes, but also the complexity of this relationship, may be illustrated by comparing budget data to police incident data. Of course, it is not possible to prove a direct causal relationship between these inputs and these specific outcomes, and involvement in recorded police incidents is only one element of family

circumstances and behaviour. However, the analysis does reveal some interesting, but inconclusive, findings. The four families who received the highest levels of personalised budget expenditure all had significant reductions in their recorded police incident data. The two families who received the lowest amounts of public expenditure and one family who did not receive expenditure were the three families where recorded police incidents increased marginally during the period of the project intervention. However, two of the three families who achieved the greatest reduction in recorded police incidents received relatively small (and below average) amounts of personalised budget expenditure and the family which had a large increase in recorded police data received about the average budget spend. In summary, there does appear to be some link between personalised budget expenditure and reduced numbers of recorded police incidents, but this is not uniform and it is likely to be the form of financial support, rather than the amount, which is the key relevant factor.

5. Conclusions

The analysis of personalised budget expenditure for 11 families for the period 2009-2011 indicates that there has been nine item categories of spend on the families. The analysis suggests that the Rochdale Family Project has demonstrated four key elements of good practice, including: addressing the diverse and specific needs of each individual family; recognising the need for a holistic and whole-family approach to addressing problems; utilising expenditure appropriately (in terms of limits and direct links to the aims of the project); and combining direct financial support with attempts to foster responsibility and self-reliance amongst the families.

Although it is not possible to demonstrate a direct causal relationship between the use of personalised budget expenditure and the achievement of positive outcomes for the families, the qualitative elements of the evaluation indicate the perceived importance, by project workers and family members, of these personalised budgets.

This importance is two-fold. Firstly, the use of personalised expenditure is a key element in the process of delivering the intervention. It encourages individual project workers to link expenditure to the specific, diverse and holistic problems and needs of a family. It strengthens the relationship between project workers and family members, for example by demonstrating the concrete and visible benefits of engaging with the project and the ability of project workers to achieve positive results for the families and, through for example outings and activities, provides different contexts and environments in which project workers may engage with family members and build trust and rapport.

Secondly, the use of personalised expenditure is likely to be linked to the achievement of all levels of positive outcomes: crisis management, achieving stability and achieving transformative change (including soft and hard indicators). Our analysis indicates that the personalised budget expenditure by the Rochdale Family Project is appropriately linked to the aims of the project and each item category of expenditure plays a potential role in achieving positive outcomes.

The use of personalised budget expenditure has been significantly reduced in the second year of the project. However, in our assessment, this expenditure is a necessary and valid element of the

intervention, which complements other forms of expenditure and approaches, such as the key worker model, enhancing the time spent with families and the provision of a range of support. It is not possible to directly quantify the cost-benefits of the use of personalised budgets, but they represent a very modest amount within the overall project budget and, given their relative importance and that other elements of the evaluation (for example analysis of police incidents data) suggest significant cost savings being related to the project intervention, these budgets do appear to represent good value for money.

Annex 1: Family-Level Data

The item category expenditure for each individual case study family is presented in Table 2 above. This annex provides further information about the forms of expenditure for each case study family.

Family A

The main item category of expenditure on the family was improving the domestic environment. This included the purchase of bedding and decorating materials. The family also received support with paying bills for the Council Tax, electricity and gas and purchasing food and clothing, including school uniforms and sports clothes. The budget spend on the family was £373.27 in 2009/10 and £188.51 in 2010/11.

Family B

The main item categories of expenditure on the family were improving the domestic environment and direct work/ referrals. This included the purchase of a bed and bedding, a carpet, a fridge freezer and the hire of a skip; and purchasing courses with RCT. The family also received support with paying bills for electricity and gas and purchasing food and clothing, including school uniforms. There was also some expenditure on activities and outings and transport. The budget spend on the family was £933.25 in 2009/10 and £265.55 in 2020/11.

Family C

The main item categories of expenditure on the family were support in paying bills, purchasing clothing and improving the domestic environment. This included paying electricity and gas bills and housing (rent) arrears and purchasing clothes and shoes. The family received support in purchasing a carpet and paint. Outings, transport and key documents (birth certificates) were also purchased. The budget spend on the family was £21.30 in 2009/10 and £541.02 in 2010/11.

Family D

The main item category of expenditure on the family was improving the domestic environment and there was also significant expenditure on supporting family interaction and activities and outcomes. These included purchasing bedroom furniture and tables and chairs. Support for family interaction included family outings and purchasing a tent. Taxi transport to school was also provided. The budget spend on the family was £764.96 in 2009/10 and £470.33 in 2010/11.

Family E

The main item category of expenditure on the family was improving the domestic environment. This included the purchase of bedroom furniture, bedding, a carpet, decorating equipment, handy man costs to put up a cupboard and the removal of a fridge. School uniforms and gym shoes were also purchased. The budget spend on the family was £0 in 2009/10 and £466.44 in 2010/11.

Family G

The main item category of expenditure on the family was transport (the hire of a van and taxi fare). There was also expenditure on a family meal and clothing. The budget spend on the family was £28.58 in 2009/10 and £210 in 2010/11.

Family H

The main item category of expenditure on the family was improving the domestic environment. This included the purchase of a fridge/freezer, bunk beds, bedding, a mattress and mattress protector and an alarm clock. There was also expenditure on activities and outcomes and support with a food bill. The budget spend on the family was £467.47 in 2009/10 and £73.05 in 2010/11.

Family I

The main item category of expenditure on the family was improving the domestic environment. This included the purchase of a fridge/freezer, bedding and a laundry basket, the hire of skips and house decoration. There was also expenditure on activities and outings and the purchase of a key document (birth certificate). The budget spend on the family was £124.50 in 2009/10 and £480 in 2010/11.

Family L

The main item categories of expenditure on the family were activities and outings and improving the domestic environment. These included outings, day trips, cinema trips, meals and tickets; and purchasing furniture, bedding and a vacuum cleaner. There was also support to provide internet connection for school homework and assistance with a food bill and transport. The budget spend on the family was £604.15 in 2009/10 and £420.78 in 2010/11.

Family M

The main item category of expenditure on the family was improving the domestic environment. This included the purchase of internal doors. There was also expenditure on a bus pass for college, sports

equipment and attending a leisure activity and meal. The budget spend on the family was £140 in 2009/10 and £66 in 2010/11.

Family N

The main item category of expenditure on the family was improving family interaction through support for a family holiday. There was also expenditure on bedding and towels, clothing (including a school uniform and cadet uniform), activities and outings and a weekly bus ticket. The budget spend on the family was £612.59 in 2009/10 and £121.07 in 2010/11.