

Making it clear



A community network model of brokerage: Evaluation of the independent brokerage pilot in East Ayrshire

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East Ayrshire
COUNCIL

East Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership
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**The Scottish
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Riaghaltas na h-Alba

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SUMMARY

Outcomes achieved

Community Brokerage Network has achieved all of its outcomes, exceeded some, and achieved additional impact, notably the speeding up of the support process for people, and the accelerated implementation of Self-Directed Support locally. Outcomes are:

1. Improved access to support and information about SDS for more people
2. Increased opportunities for genuine choice and control for people
3. Improved joint, transparent and collaborative working for SDS
4. Improved coproduction
5. Increase the knowledge and understanding in relation to support brokerage

Processes and learning

Brokers' ability to find out about and explain appropriate services and supports reduces the burden on stakeholders, particularly carers. Qualities that carers and people receiving support particularly value include tenacity, listening skills, passion and reliability.

CBN's model worked well by being 'hosted' by a Local Authority, adding value as part of the change process for Self-Directed Support and Personalisation. The partnership between CBN and East Ayrshire Council has been fundamental to the pilot's operation and success. It is the spirit in which the two organisations are prepared to learn together that most characterises the relationship.

CBN is still developing its ability to describe how it is distinct from – and adds value to - roles like social work and independent advocacy. However CBN generally anticipates and manages any concerns about boundaries well.

Independence is one of the most deeply held values for the Network, with many layers to it. CBN appears to equate independence with impartiality. This assumption needs to be tested as the longer-term sustainability of the organisation is explored.

Sustainability

There are healthy signs of sustainability in the local network, including good relationships with local and national partners. Financially, grant-making trusts and Local Authority funding are the likeliest routes for appropriate, sustainable funding. CBN's structure could also contain an answer to the question of independence from funding, effectively acting as a buffer between funding and a network of independent self-employed brokers.

Recommendations

1. Explaining brokerage

To individuals and families

1.1 When concluding a period of support, Brokers should give clear information about if and how people can get back in touch if they need to.

1.2 Likewise, if it is the intention to continue involving people in the co-production of the brokerage model, this should be made more explicit as part of everyday work.

To the wider world

1.3 The website's case study section should be expanded to give more examples of the processes and outcomes of brokerage. Examples beyond people immediately involved in CBN (i.e. brokers and staff) would be particularly valuable.

To professionals and support organisations

1.4 Develop clearer guidelines on the boundaries of brokerage, i.e. what brokers can, and cannot, provide. Demarcating the lines between brokerage and advocacy, and brokerage and social work is particularly important for getting stakeholder understanding and support.

1.5 Consider encouraging care providers' engagement with brokerage on the basis that Brokers have a unique perspective on the level of demand – and unmet need – locally. Of course, CBN cannot compromise its independence by making any guarantees of referrals, but it can play a role in encouraging increased flexibility by helping providers understand the collective purchasing power of the people it supports.

To national debates about brokerage

1.6 CBN should continue to engage with and influence national debates around brokerage, particularly regarding the accreditation of brokers, as this helps ensure the standards and values that matter to CBN are accepted and embedded.

To potential partners and funders

1.7 CBN needs to be able to describe not just the features and processes involved in support brokerage, but the benefits too – including, for the host organisation, transformative system change.

1.8 When applying to funders, there can be merit in describing not just the impact of brokerage on people who receive support, but also on brokers. Some funders (for example, Big Lottery, the Health and Social Care Alliance, Voluntary Action Fund) actively support capacity building or peer support models of this kind.

2. Supporting the network

2.1 Shadowing should continue to be a central element of support to, and quality assurance of, brokers even when they are well-established.

2.2. Brokers providing mentoring should have enough information about new recruits to help them plan their support accordingly.

2.3 Peer support should continue to be encouraged, to strengthen the network and reduce reliance on CBN Directors.

2.3 Reviewing whether skills should be included in the Broker Competency Framework, alongside knowledge and values.

2.4 Look into the desire among carers for the Network to facilitate more group opportunities for peer sharing and support. This could be an appropriate way to develop co-production and collaboration in mutually beneficial ways.

3. Developing the organisation

3.1 Directors should remain as open as possible to the continued testing of some of the organisation's core values and assumptions.

3.2 This includes acknowledging that Scottish Government funding is not sustainable in the longer term and that other funding sources should be considered

3.3 A structure that allows CBN to act as a buffer between funding and independent self-employed Brokers could support a more sustainable blend of charitable grants and public sector funding.

INTRODUCTION

The Scottish Government's Self-directed Support Strategy¹ and recent Self-directed Support legislation² paves the way for people having more choice and control over how their care needs are met. The Community Brokerage Network is an independent support organisation that provides information, advice and support for people to help them make informed choices about their support. They do this by using trained brokers, people recruited from local communities who work on an independent self-employed basis.

Local Authorities are responsible for assessing people's care needs and allocating a budget to meet those needs. After assessment has been done, and the budget allocated, a broker from the Community Brokerage Network can help a people choose, plan, organise and buy their support as they decide.

This model of brokerage is rooted in the community, with local people being trained and supported to help other local people achieve the best deal for their money, as well as connecting them to local networks for support and less formal paid care arrangements. There are now 12 local brokers trained or being trained as part of the network. Their focus is on helping people make a life and not just a plan of care.

The Scottish Government has funded the Community Brokerage Network to pilot this model of brokerage. This report is the result of an evaluation of that pilot.

The evaluation took place between June and August 2014 and bases its findings on evidence including:

- Interviews with 10 carers, 3 individual budget-holders, plus social workers and officials from local and national government
- Focus group and interviews with experienced and trainee brokers
- Attendance at and transcripts from a large Stakeholder Day in June 2014
- Focus group with 15 stakeholders in including CBN, East Ayrshire Council staff, budget holders, carers and CBN's Scottish Government commissioner
- A review of CBN documents, reports, and independent research literature on the subject of brokerage

The report is structured to explore evidence of outcomes that have been achieved (Part 1), learning about processes (Part 2), challenges and learning (Part 3), Sustainability of the Network locally and nationally (Parts 4 and 5) and recommendations (Part 6)

¹ Scottish Government (2010): *Self-Directed Support, a National Strategy for Scotland*

² Social Care (Self-Directed Support) (Scotland) Act 2013

Community Brokerage Network outcome framework: summary of evaluation findings

Key: **Outcome exceeded**; **Outcome achieved**; **Outcome evidenced but gaps remain**; **Outcome not achieved**

Outcome	Example indicators	Summary of findings
1. Improved access to support and information about SDS for more people	People report being able to make informed choices	Good evidence and examples of people making informed choices about using their individual budgets. Some carers expressed interest in having opportunities to meet and exchange information with peers in future. There is a need for better signposting when brokers close cases to make sure people know where to go for any future support.
	People are supported to understand information where needed	
2. Increased opportunities for genuine choice and control for people	People report the difference made by having an independent broker	This outcome was exceeded, with a number of additional outcomes being reported by people who have used the service.
	People are able to plan their own outcomes and support	
3. Improved joint, transparent and collaborative working for SDS	Stakeholders are involved in all aspects of the development of CBN demonstration site	Fully achieved. Collaboration was fundamental to the pilot's success. More progress can still be made to communicate clearly about the role of brokerage.
	Appropriate cross referring/signposting for support for people who request it	
4. Improved coproduction	People and 'professionals' influence the development of CBN with their ideas and experiences	Largely evidenced, but gaps remain. In particular, CBN could communicate more clearly about its intent for stakeholders to be involved, and the formal and informal routes for them to do so.
	Peer support arrangements are set up	
5. Increase the knowledge and understanding in relation to support brokerage	Regular quarterly Monitoring Reports to the Scottish Government	Evidenced, particularly for those closely involved. The next challenge is to widen that understanding to others. Some questions still remain about how to describe and deliver brokerage in ways that people can understand.
	People can tell their story and these are available on the website	

Table 1: Summary of evaluation findings

A number of **additional outcomes** have been achieved by CBN, notably the speeding up of the support process for people, and the accelerated implementation of Self-Directed Support locally. More detail is given [below](#).

PART 1: Evidence of outcomes

Each of the Network's five outcomes is explored below. Evidence and discussion are structured under relevant indicators from the Community Brokerage Network's Outcome Framework.³

Outcome 1. Improved access to support and information about SDS for more people

Having the brokers is a really excellent idea, because someone in my position - the actual carer for the person - we haven't got a clue where to go. Carer interview

This outcome has been fully achieved, with CBN playing an important role in making information accessible and understandable through brokerage support, group events and a comprehensive website.

Indicators:

- 1. People access independent brokerage**
- 2. People know where to go for help in East Ayrshire to make sense of Self-Directed Support**

At the time of writing, 64 people have used brokerage support to get information about SDS since 2013, exceeding a three-year target of 45 people.

The group information sessions organised by East Ayrshire Council were reported as a useful way to learn about brokerage. Several respondents emphasised the friendliness and approachability of the brokers at these events, and that this overcame any anxieties or uncertainties they had about using brokerage. However one carer felt the language and paperwork could have been clearer at the session they attended. They would have missed out on valued support if they had not taken a chance on ticking a box they did not understand:

³ This is based on the Support in the Right Direction outcome framework for Independent Support, [available here](#)

'I didn't know what a Broker was. I didn't have a clue what they did. See the form that I filled out? 'Blah, blah, blah, would you like help from a Broker'? I'm so glad I ticked yes! ...A lot of people would ignore that because they didn't have a clue what it was and it sounds so boring.' Carer interview

Three respondents who reported finding brokerage to be very helpful were not sure if they were entitled to get back in touch with the Network for more support in future, for example when their personal budget or circumstances change.

'A problem for me is I'm not quite sure if they're still involved with the changes because it's possible we might need to contact in the future as (my child's) needs change... I suddenly thought 'I wonder if the brokerage would know anything about groups or opportunities for children on the spectrum to have some kind of play dates or something?' Carer interview

It may be that brokers want to discourage dependency, or that people forgot being told about how to get support in future. All three still had the broker's contact details, so it may just be that they lacked confidence to ask for help again. Either way, brokers could give greater clarity about if and how people can get back in, touch once a period of brokerage support ends. As well as improving access to support, this will also give a measure of quality assurance. As one article on the subject of brokerage explains, brokers need to be available longer term to check on the success of the support they have given:

*'When there is a real problem we don't want to find that the broker who 'wrote our plan' isn't allowed to get their hands dirty and sort out the really difficult stuff.'*⁴

Indicator: 3. People have the information they need to make an informed choice

All of the interview respondents were able to give examples of making more informed choices about using their personal budgets with brokerage support. In some cases this was simply a case of being better able to understand the practicalities of using a personal budget:

'I felt they explained much better than we had been explained to previously about how the money can be used...even though we'd had a couple of meetings about it, we still weren't clear on what to do. (The Brokers) really explained in detail about what it was for. They just made it a lot clearer to us. They broke it down and we just had an ordinary conversation about it.' Carer interview

⁴ Duffy, S. and Fulton, K. (2009) *Should We Ban Brokerage*, Centre for Welfare Reform

In other examples, people reported the role brokers played in informing them about and pursuing new approaches, technologies or possibilities they had not previously thought of or been able to access.

'Even (with) the original direct payment...we've had nothing but problems trying to get staff... So they've been good in helping in that extent, trying to get people.' Carer interview

The Network's website also has an important role in making information accessible, and encouraging people to identify the support they need. It provides comprehensive background information; signposts to other relevant organisations (e.g. local advocacy and independent living services); and allows people to learn more about how the network (and individual brokers) work. However, as Self-Directed Support develops, people increasingly want up to date local examples of what can be achieved, and the website's case study section could be expanded. As the Network's commissioner in Scottish Government noted, if the website does not give people what they need when they need it, they may miss out on, or dismiss, brokerage support:

'It's important for an organisation like this to ensure the website is kept up to date, to ensure that when people...come across the website because they are looking for some help in this area, that it is kept up to date and it is vibrant and alive.' Commissioner interview

Indicator: 4. People are supported to understand the information where needed

Brokers are skilled at helping people to understand complex information. Respondents particularly valued that brokers did not speak down to them, or speak to a carer 'over' a disabled person's head. They also cited examples of brokers' willingness to adapt communication methods, including helping dyslexic people with paperwork, using text messages for a busy carer, and listening carefully so that somebody with speech difficulties did not have to repeat themselves.

'You get the information... (and) because of that, if you get a misunderstanding or you don't fully comprehend what they're saying, they will then put it in very simple way for you.' Carer interview

Outcome 2. Increased opportunities for genuine choice and control

I think her independence, that's what I see starting to really come through - confidence and independence she's got. Carer interview

Indicator 1: People report the difference made by having an independent broker

This outcome has not only been met but exceeded, due to the number and value of additional outcomes that have been achieved. Examples reported during the evaluation included:

- Increased pride, motivation and aspirations
- Improved life chances
- Personal development and growth
- Greater independence
- More connections to local communities, networks and services

The sum of all of these, and of the improved choice and control brokerage affords, is *improved quality of life*, as these testimonials from CBN clients and their carers demonstrate:

'If it wasn't for CBN I would have been stuck in the flat seriously depressed. Now I am feeling my confidence is coming back slowly. I feel more relaxed than the way I used to feel.' Client feedback

'Since you and (his Social Worker) have become involved in his life it has already improved dramatically. You have each taken great care and shown sensitivity in all your dealings with (him). He is not comfortable in social situations or meeting strangers and yet he has found a friend and confidante in (the Broker) already...(He) has told me that he feels very comfortable now being able to accept or reject suggestions

made to him; at the beginning of the process he would readily agree to or even repeat an idea as if it had been his own.' Client feedback

Discussing an example of helping a mother and daughter conceive of creative alternatives to traditional residential respite services, one broker reported that there are a series of knock-on effects for individuals, carers and services:

'You're basically improving the quality of life for two people there, as well as reducing the need for services and that whole thing of taking dignity away, when she could still go away for a couple of days with her daughter.' Broker Focus Group

Indeed, additional outcomes for carers featured prominently in the evaluation. These are summarised in the list below, then illustrated with quotes from carers and a social worker:

- Greater clarity about Self-Directed Support
- More options and flexibility about spending personal budgets
- Increased creativity
- Reduced stress, pressure and anxiety

'It's a burden off of me. I've got enough to do to look after (my partner).' Carer interview

'Before (the Broker) came, it was a wee bit disorganised and she looked at everything for us and sorted it all out... I think I was just being given the wrong advice from someone that was trying to be helpful but didn't really have the right information.' Carer interview

'The quality of what my son's getting just now, I don't think it would have been as suited to him if the Brokers hadn't have been here, any way at all.' Carer interview

'As a worker, when you see people's lives totally changed...it's great just to see (him) so independent and totally in control and wanting to get a broker to look at (his) next stages. It's great. And on reflection, it's less work for me dealing with some of the services and knowing that (he's) the right person to be doing that.' Social worker in Stakeholder Focus Group

Indicator 2: People are able to plan their own outcomes and support using any combination of the four options

People we spoke to in the evaluation generally knew the outcomes they wanted to achieve, but described using brokerage support for guidance about how best to do this. Sometimes this involves giving straightforward practical support. At other times, brokers added particular value by bringing new ideas:

‘They were really helpful, filling out the forms and helping us use the money wisely to get the most out of it...giving us more ideas and thinking of another type of thing that you could do. Ideas of what would benefit the child the most for the little or large amount of money you were getting.’ Carer interview

Several respondents said that it meant a lot to them that brokers *listened* to what *they* wanted, and that the suggestions put forward by brokers were more suitable, or more tailored, as a result. Although there were occasions where a broker contributed quite specialist expertise (for example about installing a wet room), from a broker’s perspective it is just as helpful that they do not have a specialist health or social care background. This allows them to be guided by the outcome rather than being hindered by knowledge of what is not possible:

‘I think the fact that quite a lot of us don’t come from a health or social work background, we don’t know the limitations. We just go “Oh, you want to go to the shops every weekend? That’s fine, we’ll try and arrange that.”’ Broker Focus Group

Where this indicator was not evidenced, this was commonly due to the limited availability of services to provide options, see below.

Indicators: 3. People can spend their Individual Budget as they see fit with few restrictions

4. People change their support arrangements as they see fit, including changing provider where they choose

Brokers are definitely helping people to have more choice and control over how their budgets are spent and how support is arranged. Where limitations exist, these come from outside of the brokerage relationship. A commonly cited problem was that service providers are not interested in providing part of someone’s care package, desiring the whole budget. Examples like this are probably inevitable in the early days of Self-Directed Support, but some illustrative quotes are included here as a record of the kind of challenges being faced – and the potential for change.

'Even the care package people are not prepared. It's all red tape with them. And a lot of them, we're finding, are more interested in having the whole package rather than part of the package.' Carer interview

'If she's in respite and you feel things aren't working out and she's maybe not happy - which is far from the case because she loves her respite - but we've got the choice of saying "Well look, we're not happy". You can control things quicker, get things moving quicker.' Carer interview

'There definitely is a lack of choice in terms of services that are out there and it seems to be the same services that are working with people.' Broker Focus Group

Outcome 3. Improved joint, transparent and collaborative working for SDS

'(My wish would be that) we all, that's Brokers, clients, care providers, social workers etcetera, feel clear about our roles and responsibilities, the self-directed support process, and have positive and collaborative relationships.'

Broker Focus Group

There is good evidence that this outcome has been achieved. A major strength of the brokerage model developed in East Ayrshire is its genuinely collaborative approach to working with communities, local authority staff, brokers, partner organisations and other stakeholders. However, as the quote above demonstrates, progress can still be made to develop understanding of the Community Brokerage model, including its collaborative intent.

Indicator 1: Stakeholders are involved in all aspects of the development of CBN demonstration site

There was a mixed response to this indicator in the evaluation. Some respondents, who had prolonged or intensive contact with the Network, felt very involved in influencing the brokerage model locally. For example, one carer gave an example of being invited to contribute at planning events, but informal examples were more common, for example of CBN being open to ideas:

'They were very open to suggestions because of the newness of it all...And they were reviewing, depending on how that panned out, whether or not to make that (my suggestion) a permanent feature of their service.' Carer interview

This is not to say formal opportunities to influence the development of the model did not exist. From the beginning of the project a multi-stakeholder Steering Group guided the project's development. This included representatives from Community Brokerage Network; East Ayrshire Council; Ayrshire Independent Living Network; East Ayrshire Advocacy Service; NHS; and care services.

A number of sub-groups were set up to develop policy and practice, including:

- Staff recruitment and competencies
- Risk
- Training and accreditation.

These groups all contained people with a variety of skills and experience. For example, people who used Direct Payments and their carers were involved in the recruitment process (including creating the Broker job specification), website design and social media activities. Indeed, one young man was subsequently employed to manage the Network's social media presence.

Nevertheless, most respondents we interviewed did not recognise being involved in the project's development. To fulfil CBN's community development aspirations it needs to be more explicit about both the intent and the opportunities for people to be involved.

Indicator 2: Stakeholders understand their contribution to the Community Brokerage Model

This indicator has not yet been achieved for stakeholders beyond a core group of Community Brokerage Network Directors, Brokers and East Ayrshire Council Self-Directed Support officials. These stakeholders understand and value the model's responsiveness to local needs and circumstances.

However, the model itself is still in development, and many of its values and ways of working run counter to prevailing modes of care and support. The model, and its emergent nature, can therefore be hard for other stakeholders to understand. It is universally accepted that more work and time are needed to fully understand and describe the parameters of the model, including where these boundaries meet or cross over other roles (see [Part 3 below](#) for an exploration of professional boundaries).

CBN's future identify and function beyond the life of the pilot are still to be determined. In terms of stakeholder *contribution* to the model, if it is to remain as a *network*, rather than an *organisation*, this will need more stakeholders to fully understand their contribution to the model and its effective operation.

Indicator 3: Appropriate cross referring/signposting for the 'right' type of support for people who request it

Two aspects to this indicator are evident in East Ayrshire. Firstly, there is the role of brokers in referring people to other services that help people use self-directed support. For example, two carers described how their brokerage support added value to the help they get from local advocacy or independent living services. Brokers gave more generic examples of the circumstances in which they would make referrals, for example if somebody needed advocacy support relating to budget allocation or unsatisfactory service provision. The brokers we spoke to in the evaluation were all well informed about, and able to pool expertise about, local services, so there is no reason to doubt that appropriate referrals will be made when necessary.

The other aspect of the indicator relates as much to Outcome 2 as it does to Outcome 3 - the brokers' role in seeking out and supporting access to appropriate care and support for people. People with individual budgets, their carers and social workers all reported the value of brokers' role in researching services, both in terms of what is available, but also adding insight into what is possible. For example, a social worker described brokers as adding value to her work as they help people find new sources of support they would not have known about otherwise. As one exchange between a budget-holder and her carer shows, this takes significant pressure off people and increases choice:

Budget holder: *'They've got the extra people that they can go and make enquiries and do this and do that. Whereas you have got all the things, you've got the cooking and the shopping and the washing.'*

Carer: *'I think what mum's trying to say is, if it was left to me, there's not a lot of time for me to be running around doing things, whereas the brokers are full time and doing that. Where I'm full time taking care of what's going on in the house.'* Client/carers interview

It is not expected that brokers will have extensive knowledge of the supports and opportunities that might benefit people. Brokers take each case individually, identifying tailored solutions rather than fitting people to a menu of options. This could be a challenging and potentially inefficient way of working, particularly for less experienced brokers. However, brokers are beginning to build a library of resources and, more importantly, to liaise with each other as a pool of ideas and experience to be shared.

'(Brokers have) brought in stuff about different support providers and different things, so we're starting to build up a library. We're information sharing so we don't have to start from scratch every time we're working with someone.' Broker Focus Group

Indicator 4: Joint training is available for people to facilitate the community brokerage model

Joint training has taken different forms. Brokers particularly valued opportunities to take part in East Ayrshire Council training. Opening training courses up to partner organisations goes both ways, and Council staff have also been welcomed onto training organised by Community Brokerage Network. Spending time learning alongside each other is valuable for helping both organisations' staff learn more about their respective roles:

'It helps council staff...it's also showing the workers a different way. So the next time they do an assessment and they give somebody their budget and the person says 'I want a peer manager to help me', they then can see it in a different way. And I think it's really difficult to train somebody on that in a room. But seeing the stories or seeing it in a different way is the best way to show them.' East Ayrshire Council manager contribution to Focus Group

Similarly, brokers learn by observing more experienced colleagues, allowing them to observe the Network's principles in action, and feel more confident about their role, as this exchange from a focus group with brokers shows:

Broker 1: *'That's the very good thing about when you have your first shadowing and then when you go out yourself to do it. They'll be able to check it first before they go out, to make sure that the finished article is perfect.'*

Broker 2: *'You're working in tandem with someone, so it's not like you're having to do anything on your own and without any sort of help. There's always back-up there, there's always the support.'*

Shadowing is one of the most effective ways of sharing deeply held experience and knowledge⁵. It should continue to be a central element of support to brokers. For more information on support for brokers, see [Part 2](#) below.

⁵ For example, 'Deep Smarts', Leonard, D. and Swapp, W. (2005), in *Managing Knowledge*, Sage Publications, and Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995) *The Knowledge-Creating Company*, Oxford University Press.

Outcome 4. Improved coproduction

'At the beginning, we all were there together and you quickly got that sense of - it was strange - the Community Brokerage Network, you felt as though they were part of East Ayrshire Council to an extent. But you've got to realise 'No they're not, we're working together'. Council staff contribution to Stakeholder Focus Group

This outcome was largely evidenced by the evaluation, but gaps remain, particularly about the clarity of ways in which people are involved in developing the Network.

- Indicators:**
- 1. Users are involved in the development of the CBN demonstration and in areas of their choice**
 - 2. The experience of SDS users influences and shapes practice**
 - 3. Users and 'professionals' both influence the development of CBN with their ideas and experiences**
 - 4. Users are involved in training and in recruiting brokers**

As with the similar indicator in Outcome 3, it was not always clear if or how individual budget holders had been involved in developing the service locally. There were a handful of examples of involvement leading to changes in Community Brokerage Network systems. The quotes below demonstrate the same mix of formal and informal routes for users to influence practice as those described above:

'It developed from there to become the case, because I made one or two suggestions in the course of emails.' Carer interview

'We were all involved in designing the advert. Local people came and decided what the competencies would be for brokers. People who'd used services designed the job description of what a broker would be. That's stuff that we've just assumed and taken for granted, but maybe it's about noting some of that, because that was us working together.' Council manager contribution to Stakeholder Focus Group

Stakeholders who are central to the Network might feel that coproduction is at the heart of everything CBN is and does. It appears more likely that when the Network 'does' coproduction it does it well. But it does not always do it explicitly. Several interviewees

were unaware whether or how their views and experiences were shaping the service. As with Outcome 3 above, CBN could be more explicit about its commitment to coproduction and community development.

Indicator 5: Peer support arrangements are set up

So far, most of the examples of peer support relate to brokers, not individual budget holders or carers. This is legitimate when the development and networking of brokers is central to the Community Brokerage model, as these quotes show:

'The brokers have peer support meetings where we can confab and see what we're doing, what everybody is achieving, what's not working and call help from each other.' Broker Focus Group

'There's a pool of creativity, it's not just down to one Broker...We can tap into each other's stuff and increase the viability of one client's outcomes by putting two or three together and seeing if we can get a better deal.' Broker Focus Group

However there are also indications of a desire among carers for the Network to facilitate more group opportunities for peer sharing and support. This should be welcomed as a sign of increased engagement in, and to some extent ownership of, the Network by local people. Unprompted, several carers expressed the same wish for the future of the Network, for example:

'You were getting a wee chance to chat to other people, what they were trying to get for their children and why. You could bounce ideas off other people, so it was a good idea to have the meeting...It was quite nice coming together like that. It makes you feel that you're not quite as isolated as you sometimes feel, with different fights and different needs.' Carer interview

'(It) probably would be good to catch up every few months, especially with self-directed support implemented now. (It) would be good to speak to them now and then and keep an open dialogue. Maybe have meetings with other families, opportunities to meet up and talk about ways that they're using their money and how they're finding it. That would be a good opportunity for everybody.' Carer interview

Indicator 6: Stories and experience of users are used on the website to share experiences with potential SDS users

The website contains a small number of case studies, but as noted [above](#), there could be more of these. Local examples are important to help people understand Self-Directed Support and Brokerage, both of which can be quite obscure without practical illustration.

People are also rightly cautious about raising expectations by over-emphasising attractive, striking or atypical examples. But for now, the Network continues to seek out and share stories to help people and professionals understand the creative possibilities in brokerage and self-directed support.

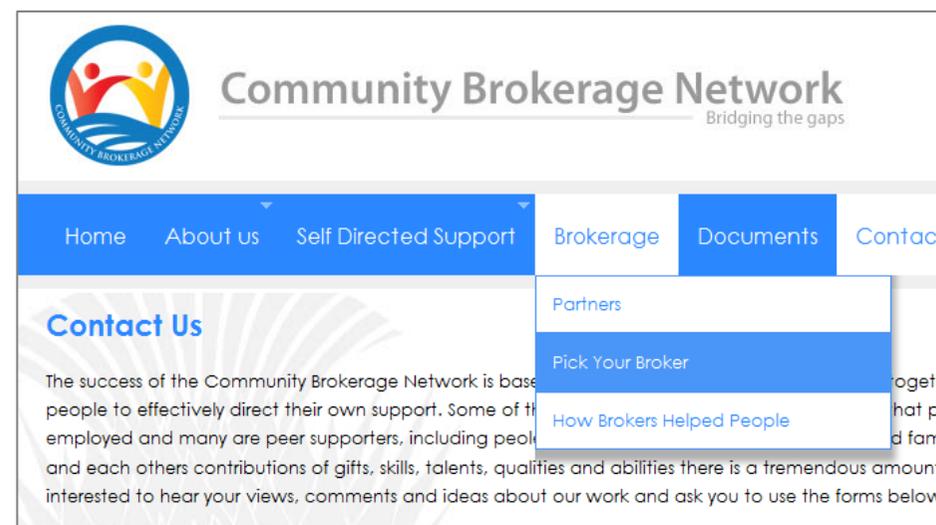
'There was some good examples about how people had used their money in order to create an environment, for the best, within their home. In other words they were using it in some cases for adaptations - which is something that we've been crying out for, for a while. And we thought 'Well maybe that would be a good use of self-directed support'. Carer interview

'I think that they don't know how creative it can be...Solutions are often so simple and they can make such a massive difference.' Broker Focus Group

Indicator 7: Users of SDS choose the independent broker they wish to work with them

Until recently there have not been enough trained and experienced brokers to make a reality of this indicator, though choice of worker is increasingly important in self-directed support services.

However, the CBN website now contains a separate page ('Pick your broker') that lets people view brokers' profiles and make more informed choices about who to work with, see Figure 1.



Outcome 5. Increase the knowledge and understanding in relation to support brokerage

It's interesting to see that balance, the weight of evidence they have to support what they are doing... It's not just happened overnight, it's evolved over three years, and it's clear they really get that. It's quite a difficult area to understand, but what's in their progress report really does help me to understand (support brokerage).

Interview with civil servant

As with some of the indicators above, this outcome is most evident for those who have been involved in the Network. The next challenge is to widen that understanding, though important questions still remain about how best to describe brokerage.

Indicators:

- 1. Regular quarterly Monitoring Reports to the Scottish Government**
- 2. Development of an Outcomes Framework**
- 3. Records of meetings, training data etc.**
- 4. Progress reports available**

Professionals who have had contact with the Network report having increased understanding of brokerage. For example, the civil servant responsible for the Network's funding remarked that the monitoring reports she received are of a very high quality. These contain a good balance of qualitative and quantitative evidence that improves understanding of brokerage, as evidenced in the quote above. The civil servant also felt it had benefited Community Brokerage Network to have been involved in the Support in the Right Direction project which created the Independent Support outcome framework. Involvement in national groups like this will be useful for the Network's continued development, as it allows ideas to be shared – and tested.

In another example, a local social worker, who initially had some concerns about the boundaries between brokerage and other roles, nevertheless felt that working with CBN has helped her learn more about how brokerage can work successfully.

Throughout the pilot it has been important to create links with East Ayrshire Council staff, and in the future it will be important to maintain these, for example by revisiting groups or teams to keep them informed of developments around brokerage.

Indicators:

5. A range of information is gathered

6. Academic Research is carried out

7. A variety of topical papers produced

One of the Directors of the Community Brokerage Network is undertaking a PhD to contribute understanding of the role of brokerage in self-directed support. Other research papers and articles are shared within the network and its partners as a way of linking the local model to the wider context of developments in understanding brokerage.

Indicator 8. People can tell their story and these are available on the website

See indicators 1.6 and 4.3 above.

ADDITIONAL OUTCOMES

1. Speeding up the process of arranging support

As an outside agency looking in to the Community Brokerage model, we were interested in finding out whether introducing another person (the broker) to the support process would cause unnecessary delays or confusion.

As the evaluation began, Community Brokerage Network invited us to interview a Social Worker who had found that working with an inexperienced broker had made things take longer than they needed to. The feeling was that the broker caused duplication by looking at parts of the funding package that were already in place. The Social Worker acknowledged that there had not been any problems when working with more experienced brokers and that everyone is still working out their own role in Self-Directed Support. It was also felt that handover of cases should also become quicker when Social Workers can confidently assign people their budget, signpost them to a broker and know that acceptable plans will be drawn up. It will take time for Social Workers to get used to 'letting go of control' and for everyone involved to learn more about the types of support packages that can be signed off by social work managers.

One carer, who rated support brokerage very highly on the basis that Brokers can chase up other professionals more persistently than they could, nevertheless felt that there can be delays in communication.

'The downside I think is time, which is always going to be a problem in dealing with situations. You've got to get people, they've got to come back to you, there's back and forth and things like that. So, otherwise, they've been brilliant. Any problem they've worked hard at trying to solve it.' Carer interview

Quite surprisingly, these were the only examples we found of delay or duplication related to broker involvement. Indeed, there were many more examples of brokers speeding up processes and outcomes for people. Brokers put this down to having the dedicated role and time to research options for people, and the carers we spoke to agreed. For example,

'They made you feel really important and that they really were trying their utmost to try and help you and speed things along as quickly as they could.' (Carer interview)

'As far as their role is concerned, I find that it has made a massive difference. No offence to the social worker, she's great, but (the Brokers) just seem to get their teeth in. Once they found out what we were looking for they just got on with it and it's just done, it seems like right away. I'm sure they're going through the same processes as the social workers but it just seems so much quicker.' Carer interview

It is important to say that this isn't about highlighting deficits in Social Work or comparing the effectiveness of roles. Social Workers themselves agreed that sometimes a Brokers' fresh perspective, and ability to challenge processes, can cut through delays to get things done, adding value to the Social Work role, as noted in two comments in the stakeholder focus group:

'Something happened that could have happened months before, but didn't happen because there was an issue about 'Is it ok? Who's taking it forward? What's happening?'. A broker who didn't have all that just came in, and it happened within a couple of weeks. It's not that people haven't thought about that, sometimes it's just somebody else thinking differently and challenging it.' Social Worker in the Stakeholder Focus Group

'Once they engage or work along with a broker they will very quickly see the benefits of that and how you will see somebody who's able to give more time, who's able to sit back, who's able to say 'Well let's look at this from a different angle.' And confidently I'm saying this is great, because I would love to have the time to do that but I don't have the time to do that.' Social Worker in the Stakeholder Focus Group

2. Added value for East Ayrshire Council, accelerating the change process for Self-Directed Support

In some models of organisational consultancy, external consultants are placed within the organisation or system they are trying to change. In some ways there are parallels between embedded consultancy and the Community Brokerage Network model, which developed processes and assisted culture change, not from 'within', but very much alongside East Ayrshire Council. This approach is as central to the way this community brokerage developed in East Ayrshire as any other feature of the model.

The explicit focus of the partnership was on developing and testing a model for community brokerage. However the gains have been much greater. It is fair to say that one of the most important outcomes of the partnership was the accelerated implementation of Self-Directed Support locally.

Indeed, at a fundamental level, community brokerage is not actually about brokerage, at least for its own sake. In this case it is about effecting systems change in existing services:

'All the current services should already be 'helping' and if they are not then the challenge is to help them change into the sort of services that do provide the right help rather than creating a new profession'.⁶

As Community Brokerage Network considers its future, it will be worth developing the ability to describe not just the features and processes involved in support brokerage, but the benefits too – including, for the host organisation, transformative system change.

⁶ Duffy, S. and Fulton, K. (2009) *Should We Ban Brokerage*, Centre for Welfare Reform

PART 2: Learning about processes

This section of the report explores the processes used by Community Brokerage Network, and identifies recommendations for the future. The first three areas (broker recruitment, support and development) look at organisational processes; the next four consider the things that brokers do that are most appreciated by budget holders and carers.

1. Broker recruitment

There is a deliberate but informal approach to identifying and recruiting potential Brokers. The rationale is to make the role accessible to people who might have the right skills and qualities, but do not have qualifications or experience to match. Broker recruitment and development is where the Network's community development aims become most manifest.

The benefits are that Brokers are indeed drawn from all walks of life in the community and bring a range of skills with them:

'Brokers have got skills in a whole range of areas. They're not coming in here with a BA in Social Sciences, although we do have folk who've trained as a lawyer and decided to do something different. We've got other folk who've trained in other things, the holiday industry and all sorts of things. They've got fantastic transferable skills and life experience that will be used in this context. It's been absolutely amazing.' CBN Director, Stakeholder Day 2014

Brokers who had recently come through the recruitment process clearly understood its value, not just in putting applicants at their ease, but in bringing out aspects of their lives and personalities that might be overlooked in traditional interview formats.

However, although the Network has exceeded its target for the number of people it has supported, it has not yet fully met its own expectations of establishing a network of local brokers:

'The bit that I think is taking longer has been building that capacity locally. The amount of time that's spent with brokers in recruiting them and supporting them, that's taking longer than I would have anticipated.' CBN Director, Stakeholder day 2014

Preparing to become a Broker at the same time as becoming self-employed is a demanding challenge. CBN originally planned to 'identify and recruit self-employed individuals with the skills to be further trained to deliver independent

brokerage'.⁷ This was intended to include, for example, 'people who are life coaches, counsellors and community workers'. In reality, extra capacity building has been needed because most of the brokers were experienced freelancers, but some were not.

This has also placed a burden on experienced brokers, initially to deliver the service, and latterly to mentor new recruits. Mentors also feel the need for information about new brokers' background, skills and motivation:

'This would help when or before mentoring brokers. New people just seem to pop up each week without formal introduction. I accept that it might be thought that it is more informal - but it takes more time to gather information, which I am short of.' Broker interview

2. Broker support

The most evident support for brokers comes in the form of having easy access to the Network's directors and experienced staff. Brokers universally valued this support and the peer support they give each other. Both forms of support should continue to be encouraged, with a likely increase in the amount of peer support over time, as the local network becomes more self-sustained.

'Support from the Directors for the Brokers is incredible, in terms of if you've got a problem or if there's something you're not sure about – you phone them, you email them, they always get back to you...I think that that and the support from the other Brokers is what makes this work so well.' Broker Focus Group

In terms of formal support, a draft Competency Framework has been created, to help understand and plan the development of Brokers' abilities. The Framework arranges knowledge, 'ways of acting' and behaviours against a series of values. Interestingly, skills are not present. This appears to be a deliberate decision which reflects the desire, mentioned above, not to exclude potential Brokers. Nevertheless, the community brokerage model reflects the belief that the skills needed to help people are often already in their communities. Even inexperienced brokers have – and need to keep developing - a great many skills, and it is worth reviewing whether skills should be included in the Framework.

⁷ Community Brokerage Network *Brokerage Demonstration Site Funding Paper*, 2012

3. Broker development

Brokers are trained in a core set of topics and can also access training opportunities through East Ayrshire Council. However, the ability to shadow experienced brokers is particularly valued by newer brokers. Organisations sometimes feel that shadowing is costly or unnecessary, but it is an effective way to transfer complex knowledge⁸, build the confidence of new brokers, and embed the community development approach that is being taken. Several of the respondents we spoke to had met with brokers while they were being shadowed and none reported it as intrusive or unhelpful. Indeed, in one case the suggestions made by the new broker were welcomed by the carer. Brokers themselves value shadowing highly and they should continue to be encouraged to work in this way, even when well-established (for example, experienced colleagues can still learn a lot from observing each other's practice).

'For me the shadowing is absolutely brilliant, because you get a good idea of somebody who knows exactly what they're doing, how to present it and how to draw the best out of people, what they really want.' Broker Focus Group

4. Broker role

Research

The most common aspect of the broker's role to be appreciated by stakeholders is their ability to find out about appropriate services and supports that can help achieve people's outcomes. Carers, in particular, appreciated having someone to take the burden of this from them, people with the energy and ideas to look into opportunities they might not have considered. A Social Worker also reported that this added value to her role.

Tenacity

Carers also appreciated having someone 'in their corner' and several mentioned the importance of Brokers' willingness to persist until the outcome was achieved.

'I felt a trust with the Broker that you would get what you needed. I could depend on them to look into things...She was like a dog with a bone, she wouldn't rest until my son got what he wanted...She made suggestions as well, which was great, things that I or the social workers wouldn't have thought of. I know the social worker is really busy and they've been really great, but ...I just think the social workers are so

⁸ Nonaka, I. and Takeuchi, H. (1995) *The Knowledge-Creating Company*, Oxford University Press.

stretched that they need the Brokers to come and fill the gaps, to tailor a package to suit the individual person.’ Carer interview

‘She almost seemed to be going above and beyond the call of duty...She came through and spent a good three or four hours with us, discussing the family circumstances and the family needs, and pointed us in the direction...very thorough.’ Carer interview

Bargaining

Although most people understood the Broker’s role in helping get the best for their budget, fewer respondents mentioned the role for Brokers in getting extra value for money, for example by helping people pool their budgets or bargaining with service providers to provide the best deal. Brokers were comfortable that bargaining on people’s behalf was a legitimate part of the role. It is likely that this role will grow in future - examples of Self-Directed Support encouraging people to pool budgets are increasingly common.

As people who have a unique oversight of the level of demand for – and provision of – services, Brokers’ roles may also increasingly involve using the combined purchasing power of the people they support to demand more from services.⁹ Carers have already noticed this potential, for example:

‘When I’m dealing with it I’ve only got mum’s budget - but they might have four or five other people. So therefore they can go with the four budgets to get a firm to deal with something...Which gives the brokers more power, which makes negotiations quicker...But there are some firms who are just stubborn. They’re not prepared. They are ‘No, we want the whole lot’. Carer interview

Even if it is not a case of combined bargaining power, Brokers have an important role to play in negotiating on behalf of people, particularly when services remain inflexible:

‘Rather than them being railroaded into “This is the package you’ll take”...(We are) saying “Well no, actually they only want this part of your package and they want that part of somebody else’s package”. That could be quite intimidating for some people being able to stand up and say “I don’t want it all” when it’s almost forced upon them.’ Broker Focus Group

⁹ The role of increased demand in leading to changes in services is expressed in the Support in The Right Direction outcome framework

Indeed, Community Brokerage Network contribute actively to the East Ayrshire Council initiative called '*Changing the Conversation*', which aims to shape the marketplace for Self-Directed Support through commissioning and procurement processes.

As with creating a library of resources, and getting creative insight from each other, Brokers benefit from being able to discuss examples of their work with colleagues. This equips them to generate intelligence about which providers are, or are not, flexible and responsive to people's needs – this could be an important marketing or bargaining tool for the Network in future.

'We can tap into each other's stuff and increase the viability of one client's outcomes by putting two or three together and seeing if we can get a better deal. There have been organisations that we've just had to set aside because they're not ready and not willing at the moment.' Broker Focus Group

5. Qualities of brokers

This section summarises the qualities that people valued in Brokers. It therefore uses people's own words whenever possible, to illustrate the themes that emerged.

Tailoring

'She really did bend over backwards, nothing was too much bother. She did her utmost to make sure (my son) got what he wanted and needed.' (Carer interview)

'They were really helpful. Totally, really, really helpful. Couldn't have been nicer people at all. They didn't judge me because I was dyslexic or anything else, really, really nice... Not just me, there was another woman whose daughter is at (the same) school, and she just found them great to work with.' Carer interview

Good listeners

'I haven't yet heard them say "Sorry, I'm not quite catching that, I don't know what you're saying", which quite often people do...I just find them very polite and very courteous.' Interview with a carer of a partner with impaired speech

'She really took on board his answers, she seemed to know him – what he liked, what he didn't like, what wasn't really good for him, what he wouldn't be interested in, what his real passion was. She seemed to pick that up in no time at all. I fully trusted her to get the best for (him) and she did. She was fabulous and

I don't think anybody could have done a better job. I was so lucky to get her, and so was (my son).' Carer interview

'Sometimes with a child with disabilities who doesn't say much, to get that small idea and open that bubble up...you don't see because you're so close to them, but somebody who's just given a little bit can help more from the outside.' Carer interview

'My son is almost faceless, they (other services) don't really know anything about him and his likes and his needs and what he's been through, and just the kind of wee boy he is... It was lovely they were so interested. I think they were really inspired by his story. It was important to me.' Carer interview

'From (my husband's) point of view "You really listened and understood and he felt you have vindicated your role as "broker", by helping him as much as humanly possible. Prior to that he was looking at a life without any enjoyment and only existing/coping from day to day. Now he can look forward and plan his life with confidence in the knowledge that he has a voice.' Testimony from budget holder and carer

Passion

'If everyone worked the same as (the Broker) did, it would be a whole better place, it really would be. You can tell it's genuine, it's not just a job, it's a passion, she definitely wants the best. We're so lucky to have her.' Carer interview

'They seemed that bit more passionate about it, they were really fighting your corner... It's quite refreshing. I'm not saying that the social worker and the rest of the team don't do that, because they do, but sometimes it maybe feels that the process is a bit slower. I just think the Brokers are fantastic.' Carer interview

Reliability

'There was never a case of thinking that she wouldn't do what she said she was going to do. She always followed through.' Carer interview

'Actually just doing it. There were no ifs and buts, it was just done.' Carer interview

PART 3: CHALLENGES AND LEARNING

Community Brokerage Network is testing one particular approach to support brokerage. Internal and external stakeholders acknowledge that there is still learning to be done to fully understand the model in reality. This section of the report attempts to capture and explore some of the challenges that have arisen as the model began to be implemented, and where possible, some of the solutions that have been identified.

3.1 Honesty/reflectiveness

The first thing to say about the way CBN address challenges is that Directors set the tone for encouraging very honest appraisal of the Network's work. CBN is a highly reflective organisation that is deliberately engaged in the process of learning and improvement. There is accurate awareness and honest assessment of past, current and future challenges.

One example gives an important indication of the Network's willingness to learn, even when it means challenging its own principles. Originally, CBN decided that to maintain independence, brokers would not use other professionals' assessments of people, and would approach each situation knowing very little about the client. However, this led to difficulties, including the risk of duplicating the efforts of social work, and the policy was changed:

'We have been put in situations where we weren't given the right information and if we had gone in there full steam ahead we could have made complete fools of ourselves...I understand we did have, at the beginning, (the principle of) going in with no preconception...We've now got systems in place...where it's now vetted and we ask more questions.' Broker interview

The ability of the organisation to examine the effects of its principles will continue to be extremely important. The future development of the brokerage model will require the continued testing of some of the organisation's core values and assumptions, what we can think of as its 'sacred cows' ([see below](#)).

Another aspect of CBN's honesty is particularly appreciated by stakeholders – the honesty to say when they do not know something. This creates trust, but also takes pressure off Brokers, who won't always have the answers:

'What they don't know, they seem to find out, they're quite honest about it. But it's not as though they go off and think about it for a month and then get back to you. They go away and they find out what they don't know, and they get straight back to you.' Carer Interview.

3.2 Relationship with East Ayrshire Council

It would be impossible to understand the support brokerage model in East Ayrshire without understanding the relationship between Community Brokerage Network and East Ayrshire Council.

Staff in each organisation view their counterparts as genuine partners. It is acknowledged that things will sometimes go wrong. But it is the spirit in which the two organisations are prepared to learn together that most characterises the relationship. This exchange from the recent Stakeholder Day, between the local authority SDS lead and one of the Community Brokerage Networks Directors demonstrates this spirit of enquiry:

SDS lead: 'Because we were looking at how we were going to implement SDS, we were wanting to basically change the culture really of how we did quite a lot of things here. We were interested in what the Brokerage Network were proposing.'

CBN Director: '...I think it was brave of the Council because we didn't have all the answers at that point. And I think that was the difference from some of the other councils we'd been to. They either wanted us to do it all or didn't want us to give free reign to some of the things we wanted to try. So I think from that point it's really felt, to me, as if it's been partnership.'

Shared ethos between East Ayrshire Council and Community Brokerage Network

One of the potentially challenging aspects of the community brokerage model is that it is steeped in a community development ethos that challenges traditional views of the boundary between services and communities. However there are many policy pressures on Local Authorities to find new ways to engage with and serve communities, and the development of the brokerage model locally has coincided with a renewed focus on community capacity locally. In other words, there was a coalescence of values that was fundamentally important to the partnership's success.

'I think East Ayrshire is invested in its Vibrant Communities service which is an amalgamation of what was Community Learning and Development and Leisure Services. And that was very much about building up

communities themselves to be self-sustaining, to come up with their own locality action plan so there is a big focus in East Ayrshire on building up communities, which brokerage, local area coordination all fits into. So it's not something that's happening away over in social work in isolation, it's part of a far bigger movement.' East Ayrshire Council official in the Stakeholder Day focus group

East Ayrshire Council also had pragmatic reasons for working with an independent organisation that was trying to achieve similar things: it makes it easier to demonstrate that there is more to the renewed community focus than cost-savings:

'We all share the view that natural supports are the ones that are sustainable and the ones that achieve real outcomes. But from a council perspective, when we're mentioning the natural supports, that equates at times to us having to make savings...If that's coming from somebody that's independent that's saying 'There's a group here that you could be part of'. I think that's been really quite helpful from our perspective.' East Ayrshire Council official in the Stakeholder Day focus group

3.3 Independence

Independence is one of the most deeply held values for the Network, with many layers to it. The layers that were identified in the evaluation are discussed below to make it easier to understand different parts of what is probably the organisation's most valued sacred cow.

- **Independence from social work**

Respondents were clear that there was value in the Network's independence from social work, for a number of reasons.

Helping people to get the best service:

'I really think it's a good idea to have an objective view, because sometimes they're all singing from the same hymn sheet, representing the council, which maybe isn't necessarily best for you. A lot of the time the council want to do it the cheapest way that they possibly can. So it's quite good to have somebody who's objective and independent, at least from the council, to try and fight your corner and see what you're entitled to and how you can use it best for (my child). That's my goal; the only thing I want is absolutely the best for (my child) that I can get.' Carer interview

Helping people present their case to social work:

'She really helped us in identifying our needs and the best way to present them to social work...It's almost like a third party. Somebody independent who can help work between both...I think it's crucially important.'
Carer interview

Helping people separate the message from the messenger:

'I think there has been some clients that say 'Other folk have suggested that, you're suggesting it as well so it must be true'. It's that reiterating it. Somebody might have suggested it before but they do think 'it's just a social worker or the council trying to save money' ...Sometimes that's enough to get them to think.'
Stakeholder focus group

'I don't think that lady would have let anyone from local authority through her door. There would have been no engagement at all.' Stakeholder focus group

Making support more acceptable to people

'Sometimes it is so hard to engage with social care services because you're saying that you need help. So somebody that's totally independent from that is taking some of that away, and being that go-between makes that a bit easier for folk.' Stakeholder focus group

- **Financial independence**

To help manage potential or perceived conflicts of interest, the organisation has a strict policy on independence from other organisations:

'We don't engage with any Broker who is working for a provider organisation... Brokers have to be absolutely independent with no business interest anywhere else, even if it's just about who pays their wages...Retaining that independence is absolutely critical because we can give people honest, impartial advice that is based on what we're finding out with them and for them, and not about us having any relationship that benefits us financially.' CBN Director at Stakeholder Day 2014

The brokerage model in East Ayrshire is different from models in other areas, for example where independent brokers charge for their services or service providers describe their Self-Directed Support information services as brokerage. Stakeholders value the Network's financial independence:

'If people that are doing brokerage from providers, it's another name for business, for marketing The (CBN) brokers talk about brokerage in such a natural way that people think 'Yeah, that's going to make sense'. It is no threat, it's nothing to do with providers.' East Ayrshire Council official

Brokers are self-employed, paid for the duration of this pilot from a Scottish Government grant. This allowed them to earn a living while retaining independence:

'We haven't got any vested interests. We've all got our own businesses so we don't have any allegiance to any particular service provider... If we were directly working for the local authority then they've still got that hold over us... I don't think that would work because then we're criticising their service and they're employing us and the money's coming from there - so then you're in the same situation as everybody else. You've got a vested interest in keeping your own mouth shut' Broker Focus Group

In this view, independence equates to impartiality. Yet there are many organisations (for example Citizen's Advice Bureaux and Law Centres) that are financially dependent on local authorities but who are as strongly committed to impartiality as the Network is.

A final reflection is that 'independence' can also mean standing on one's own feet. To date, CBN has necessarily taken a very supportive approach to broker recruitment and development. Longer term, it will benefit the Network's sustainability, and funding opportunities, if this aspect of Broker independence is kept in mind. The more independent that self-employed Brokers can be of CBN support, the more CBN can clarify the logic of whether it is the *organisation* that needs to be wholly independent from funding, or the *people* who provide brokerage. This topic is examined in more depth in [Part 4 below](#).

3.4 Boundaries

- **Personal boundaries**

The community development and peer support models being developed in East Ayrshire embrace life experience as a useful asset in helping others. This is viewed as helping to make support more accessible – and indeed, making the Network more sustainable. It also means brokers' personal boundaries are in a slightly different place than they are with other professions:

'You're not diminishing your capabilities as a Broker by admitting experience in life because that ultimately is why we're here, because we do have that experience.' Broker Focus Group

This is relatively common practice in peer support, but it is significantly different from established practice in the health and social sector. Some other professionals (or indeed, brokers from some professional backgrounds) will need time to understand, and feel comfortable with, the community brokerage model.

- **Role boundaries**

The emergence of brokerage as a new role has required the Network to be able to explain how it is distinct from – and adds value to – roles like social work and independent advocacy. This has taken time, and there is still work to be done. It has occasionally caused discomfort as services adjust to each other and relationships with different agencies and social work teams are still being developed. However there is good evidence that Community Brokerage Network is proactive at anticipating and managing potential role confusion, and at engaging partner agencies in debate about the role of the independent broker.

As these debates continue, it is important to find the right balance between the legitimate brokerage role of questioning the status quo while also maintain high standards of professionalism:

'I'm worried that we end up being portrayed as a vigilante group... When I'm mentoring my brokers coming up, I'm going to be sitting saying 'Yes, we need to push for people but in the right way. Not like a vigilante little group that are on a mission to create bother.' I think we have to do it the right way, the professional way.' Broker interview

PART 4: Sustainability – the local network

[This section considers the sustainability of the local brokerage *network*. [Part 5](#) assesses the sustainability of Community Brokerage Network as an *organisation*.]

'Our job in brokerage was to find those local people and connect them up so that they can help each other. These brokers are all local and they're all helping each other. We never set it up as an organisation... We don't have offices or anything, we've got a network of people in East Ayrshire who're really well connected and well supported.' CBN Director at Stakeholder Day 2014

To what extent has the three year funded pilot contributed to a sustainable model of brokerage in East Ayrshire? To understand this, we need to look more broadly than finance alone – there is more to sustainability than just income. In particular, funding bodies and service commissioners are increasingly looking for evidence of sustainable *impact*. Nevertheless, funding is still important, as are a host of indicators we can summarise and explore below under the headings of 'networks' and 'knowledge'.

Networks

Most of the elements we would expect to see in a sustainable network are in place in the Community Brokerage Network in East Ayrshire. There are good relationships with the local authority and CBN has good understanding of other local services, albeit that relationships are still being established. National relationships are also strong, for example with the Scottish Government SDS team and other relevant partners. Referral routes are being established as more people are assessed for self-directed support. The Network has a strong reputation with its local and national partners.

What still needs to be developed however is the number of trained and experienced brokers, and the number of organisations fully embracing self-directed support by providing more options and choice for people.

At present, there are more brokers in training than there are working as brokers. This should change in the next few months as a recent group of recruits move through training, shadowing and mentoring to start managing their own work with people. Nevertheless, getting a team of brokers in place has taken longer than expected. There is now limited time for the network to begin functioning fully during the pilot period which ends in March 2015.

Knowledge

As Brokers' knowledge and experience grow, there will be less reliance on the Directors' to provide and manage brokerage. This allows more time to be put into maintaining the local Network. For now, there are two interesting indications that the Network's knowledge increases its potential to be self-sustaining.

Firstly, Brokers are pooling knowledge, ideas and practice. This can be relatively self-sustaining because:

'It's limitless. Lighting another candle with a candle doesn't diminish the light. Sharing the information only makes our network and our relationships stronger and better. The more access we have to information, the more we're putting in the pot, the more knowledge – the bigger our web gets, the stronger we get.' Broker Focus Group

Secondly, when presented with a hypothetical situation about what they would do if the Directors were no longer available, the answer Brokers gave was telling. As the following exchange from the Broker Focus Group shows, Directors are viewed as supporting the Network by fielding referrals and supporting with more complex enquiries. In theory, once Brokers are more equipped to deal with complex enquiries, the Network could be self-sustaining as long as an appropriate way to take – and allocate – referrals was found.

- *'We (would) still email each other to say, "I can get a client this", we still share information and send out group emails.'*
- *'We can phone each other and other people and go round the community.'*
- *'We'd just carry on. I suppose in terms of referrals, they would have to be redirected to us because the referrals come through the directors. They field them out to us, so they would have to come directly to us and then we'd have to work it out between us who was doing what.'*
- *'I think where we would fall down would be if we came across something that we weren't sure of, which happens quite a bit! I'm straight on the phone to a Director if I don't know how to do something, and that is still happening because we're learning as we go. If we came up against something that we weren't sure about that's where the gap would be because we do rely quite heavily on them for support and guidance.'*
- *'The other thing there is that we have also the support of East Ayrshire Council.'*

Funding and finance

There are mixed views among stakeholders about how to fund the local Network in future. Amongst Brokers there is a strong preference for **Scottish Government** to continue to fund support brokerage across the country, as this was seen as the only way to maintain independence from local services.

Most stakeholders, particularly Brokers, are strongly of the view that brokerage should not be funded from **personal budgets**. Interestingly, in interviews with two carers, both of whom valued the support highly, one felt that they would not have used the service if it cost them, but that *'There's maybe a contribution type argument there to be had...a small charge for those that can afford it, free to those who can't.'* Another said that *'Even if you still had to pay a little bit (like I did with respite), I don't think people are going to quibble too much.'*

Although this finance model exists elsewhere in Scotland, it is contrary to the Community Brokerage Network's values about not making money from providing support. However it was suggested at the Stakeholder Day that a **separate budget within the assessment process** could be set aside for brokerage where it is needed.

This might be a more acceptable middle ground than seeking **core Local Authority funding**, as it allows the Network to continue 'working for' the client and maintain independence from the council. Nevertheless, the example of Citizen's Advice Bureaux above could provide a useful parallel for future considerations: impartiality doesn't necessarily require financial independence.

Table 2 below identifies the main options for funding the Network, along with a simple assessment of their independence, sustainability and feasibility.

Table 2: assessment of the main options for funding the Network

Options (in order of acceptability to Directors and Brokers)	Independent	Sustainable	Feasibility
Scottish Government	✓	✗	✗ Some short term possibilities, but it is almost certain that the Government would not support brokerage universally – or indeed, independently of local government. For example, Scottish Government made provision for advocacy as a statutory duty for local authorities under the Mental Health Act but resisted pressure to do so under SDS legislation.
Grant making trusts	✓	✓ In 1-5 year cycles	✓ Broader outcomes (and possibly policy contexts) beyond SDS are likely to have to be set out in funding applications
Local Authority	?	?	✓ East Ayrshire Council values the service – but also its independence. Options could include simple core funding, or purchasing a set amount of brokerage support or time, then assigning it on a case by case basis.
Allocation from LA within personal budget	✓	✓ (people will have budgets)	✓ Only if CBN and Brokers were comfortable with the idea, for example by being confident of the value brokerage adds to people’s ability to use and benefit from their budgets
Personal charge	✓	✓	✓ This model is being piloted elsewhere in Scotland, but would require the unacceptable sacrifice of a sacred cow for CBN

Community Brokerage Network are at the forefront of developing policy and practice in support brokerage, and there are no established financial models that can be simply adopted.

Even some of the literature on the subject is vague on the topic, suggesting that ‘Peer support would be freely given or facilitated and funded through some locally coordinated system’.¹⁰ Although this is not particularly helpful, it hints at the possibilities for alternative models like [Local Exchange Trading Schemes](#) that could support brokers, though not the organisation.

In the meantime, grant-making trusts and Local Authority funding of one kind or another are the likeliest routes for appropriate, sustainable funding for Community Brokerage Network.

¹⁰ Duffy, S. and Fulton, K. (2009) *Should We Ban Brokerage*, Centre for Welfare Reform

PART 5: Sustainability – the organisation

The Board of Community Brokerage Network has a number of strategic questions to discuss for the 2015/16 financial year:

- Is there a future for the Community Brokerage Network as an *organisation* after March 2015?
- What is the *organisation's* role in supporting the local network that has been established in East Ayrshire, if any?
- Can and should CBN look to develop its model in another Local Authority area?

This section is not an attempt to provide a feasibility appraisal of these questions, but to help inform their discussion by sharing findings and perspectives from the evaluation.

Organisations needs structure – networks need support

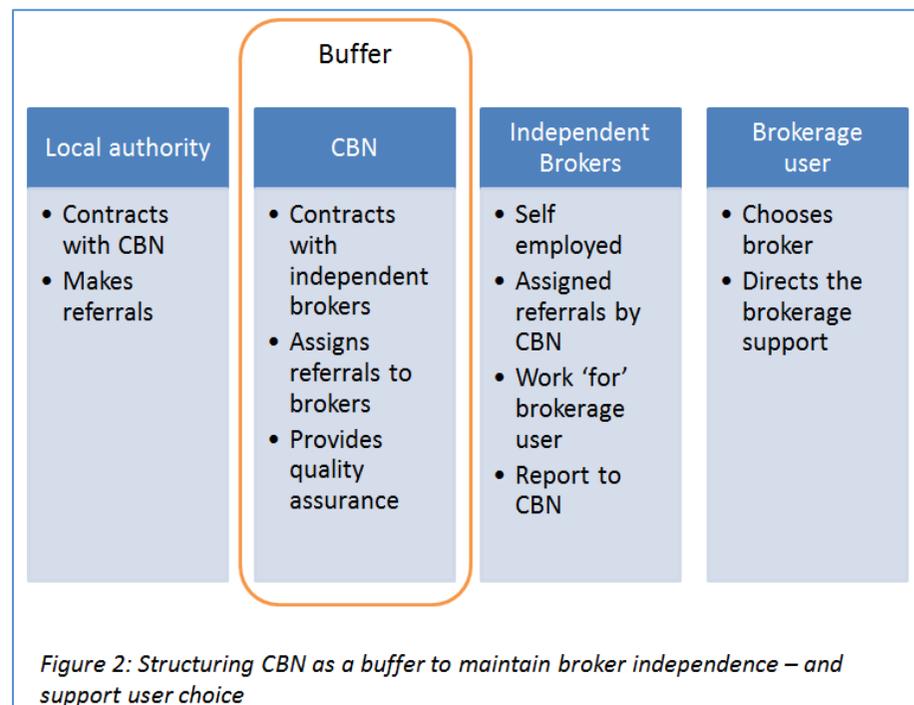
As described above, the brokerage network in East Ayrshire is nearly, but not quite ready to be self-sustaining. For the foreseeable future there is still a need for it to be coordinated.

'I think it's very important about keeping independent because we've all got different sets of skills. But I think in the future it might be difficult if - We're not an organisation. We haven't got somebody that's sort of chairing it.' Broker interview

Buffering – brokering the brokers

In terms of funding, it could be that CBN's structure contains an answer to the troublesome question of independence. Note the wording in the sentence below (our emphasis):

*'People who work as brokers should be free of loyalties – notably with the local authority or support providers'*¹¹



¹¹ Duffy, S. and Fulton, K. (2009) *Should We Ban Brokerage*, Centre for Welfare Reform

It could be that rather than one layer of contractual relationship, i.e. between Local Authority and Brokerage, there are several, see Figure 2.

This could allow CBN to act as a buffer between brokers and users, who can select their own self-employed broker from CBN's pool. CBN could be a broker of brokerage, ensuring that the people who provide brokerage remain totally independent of local authority influence while also ensuring quality and standards are maintained.

To date the model has necessarily been relatively developmental and supportive for brokers, requiring CBN to think of self-employed brokers as part of the organisation. However as the Network grows, a slightly more detached model can develop, more akin to the widespread consultancy model of using associates. This balance of *network* and *structure* could also help avoid the pitfalls CBN relates to 'becoming an organisation':

'By not creating an organisation, by having that flat network of people - I think is how you keep it real. Otherwise you end up servicing an organisation that then gives things to people, and doesn't have the people growing.' CBN Director at Stakeholder Day 2014, our emphasis

Accreditation

At a national level, there is confusion, and to some extent competition to mark out the territory, as to what independent brokerage is and is not. CBN has unique insights to share and, regardless of what decisions are made about developing locally, it should continue to engage with and influence national conversations. Contributing to accreditation of brokerage is an important means to achieve this, helping ensure the standards and values that matter to CBN are accepted and embedded. Stakeholders from all perspectives (i.e. Scottish Government, Local Authority, Brokers, Directors) commented on the desire to see CBN contribute – and develop – in this direction, for example:

'My wish would be that we can sort something out nationally around accreditation for brokers and that they're operating to standards and competencies. Otherwise you have everybody who can be a broker and I think those brokers should sign up to that kite mark.' Stakeholder Focus Group

'(My wish) is that we do have some sort of national body that oversees something like this model in other areas.' Stakeholder Focus Group

Transferring the model: looking for a ‘host’

The additional learning in [Part 1](#) of the report identified that there is unlikely to be a set model of brokerage that can be parachuted into another area. However, we know that CBN’s model worked well by being ‘hosted’ by a Local Authority, and this is likely to continue to be necessary, *regardless of where funding comes from*. The organisation adds value to Local Authority partners as part of the change process for Self-Directed Support and Personalisation.

When describing CBN’s work, Personalisation is probably the more suitable of the two terms, as it is broader and contains less risk of a narrow focus on *process* and the technical aspects of Self-Directed Support that many Local Authorities and NHS Boards struggle with. Nevertheless, there is a case to be made for Local Authorities funding independent brokerage as part of their responsibility to develop ‘facilitated markets’ for Self-Directed Support ¹². This ‘place-making’ approach may be one that is well-suited to CBN’s community development ethos, and which gives Directors the language and opportunities with which to engage Local Authority officials.

Despite Stakeholders’ desire for a continued national presence, there was also belief that an immediate expansion into the other parts of Ayrshire may be the most pragmatic route to developing Community Brokerage Network in a sustainable way. This exchange, from the stakeholder focus group, illustrates the point:

- *‘I wonder if there’s an opportunity even just pan-Ayrshire. I think the challenge will be looking at different sets of interpretations of the legislation, different sets of values, but actually doing that.’*
- *‘I’d thought of the Ayrshire bit as well. I think that’s a natural expansion with the health boards being the same it seems natural that that’s where we would go to next.’*

¹² Dowson, S. and Greig, R. (2009) ‘The emergence of the Independent Support Broker Role’ in the *Journal of Integrated Care*, Pavilion Journals

Part 6: Recommendations

This section collates the conclusions and recommendations that emerge in the report. Recommendations are given under three main themes: explaining brokerage; supporting the network; and developing the organisation.

1. Explaining brokerage

To individuals and families

1.1 When concluding a period of support, Brokers should give clear information about if and how people can get back in touch if they need to.

1.2 Likewise, if it is the intention to continue involving people in the co-production of the brokerage model, this should be made more explicit as part of everyday work.

To the wider world

1.3 The website's case study section should be expanded to give more examples of the processes and outcomes of brokerage. Examples beyond people immediately involved in CBN (i.e. brokers and staff) would be particularly valuable.

To professionals and support organisations

1.4 Develop clearer guidelines on the boundaries of brokerage, i.e. what brokers can, and cannot, provide. Demarcating the lines between brokerage and advocacy, and brokerage and social work is particularly important for getting stakeholder understanding and support.

1.5 Consider encouraging care providers' engagement with brokerage on the basis that Brokers have a unique perspective on the level of demand – and unmet need – locally. Of course, CBN cannot compromise its independence by making any guarantees of referrals, but it can play a role in encouraging increased flexibility by helping providers understand the collective purchasing power of the people it supports.

To national debates about brokerage

1.6 CBN should continue to engage with and influence national debates around brokerage, particularly regarding the accreditation of brokers, as this helps ensure the standards and values that matter to CBN are accepted and embedded.

To potential partners and funders

1.7 CBN needs to be able to describe not just the features and processes involved in support brokerage, but the benefits too – including, for the host organisation, transformative system change.

1.8 When applying to funders, there can be merit in describing not just the impact of brokerage on people who receive support, but also on brokers. Some funders (for example, Big Lottery, the Health and Social Care Alliance, Voluntary Action Fund) actively support capacity building or peer support models of this kind.

2. Supporting the network

2.1 Shadowing should continue to be a central element of support to, and quality assurance of, brokers even when they are well-established.

2.2. Brokers providing mentoring should have enough information about new recruits to help them plan their support accordingly.

2.3 Peer support should continue to be encouraged, to strengthen the network and reduce reliance on CBN Directors.

2.3 Reviewing whether skills should be included in the Broker Competency Framework, alongside knowledge and values.

2.4 Look into the desire among carers for the Network to facilitate more group opportunities for peer sharing and support. This could be an appropriate way to develop co-production and collaboration in mutually beneficial ways.

3. Developing the organisation

3.1 Directors should remain as open as possible to the continued testing of some of the organisation's core values and assumptions.

3.2 This includes acknowledging that Scottish Government funding is not sustainable in the longer term and that other funding sources should be considered

3.3 A structure that allows CBN to act as a buffer between funding and independent self-employed Brokers could support a more sustainable blend of charitable grants and public sector funding.

Appendix 1 – Competency framework

Competency Framework For Brokers			
	What You Know	What You Do	What You Are At All Times
Respect	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You understand diversity You understand discrimination You understand stigma and marginalisation You are aware of stereotyping You are aware of your own biases You understand disrespect You understand confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Treat everyone with dignity and respect Work effectively with people from all backgrounds and experiences Work effectively with people who have a range of support needs Show respect for differing levels of understanding, opinions and views Demonstrate respect in all aspects of your work Respect confidentiality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Fair Aware Adaptable Compassionate Empathetic Understanding Patient Modest
Integrity	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> You know the principles underpinning community support brokerage You understand decision making You know the standards required for your conduct 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Uphold the principles of community support brokerage at all times You support people to make their own decisions You work to the standards of the SSSC Code of conduct?? Work with a 'can do' attitude 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Honest Trustworthy Transparent Consistent Dependable Reliable Competent Kind

Equality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You understand inclusion • You understand inequality and the various forms • You are aware of the barriers that cause inequality • You understand equality does not mean everyone gets the same but that people need different opportunities and help to be equal 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You work to ensure people are included • You work to reduce inequality and create opportunities for people • You break down barriers for people not put them up • Challenge inequality 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Observant • Inclusive • Confident • Assertive • Disciplined • Responsible
Citizenship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You know and understand everyone's right to be a citizen • You understand the principles of involving people at every level of what the community brokerage does (coproduction) • You understand the need for and value of community connections and relationships • You understand the role of others • You understand power and abuse of power • You understand influence • You understand safeguarding and what to do to protect people 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You work to ensure people can take up their right to be active citizens • You help people to make their contribution if they need help • You work alongside others as a team and respect their role • You network effectively and build up a variety of useful contacts • You never abuse power • You work to make a community stronger • You positively influence the lives of people you have contact with • You help people take balanced risk • You act to protect people where there are safeguarding issues 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Good at Listening • Conscientious • Calm • Friendly • Approachable • Welcoming • Tolerant • Optimistic

Quality	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You understand the importance of having a good life • You know how to support people to explain what that means to them • You know how to put this into a plan • You understand achievement / outcomes • You understand choice and control • You understand the needs of carers and those they look after are separate 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • You work to help people direct their own support • You work to help people achieve their goals • You help them to be creative with their individual budget • You help them get the most from their individual budget • You help them build up informal support arrangements • You respect carers and work alongside them positively 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Visionary • Effective • Encouraging • Imaginative • Insightful • Resilient • Motivating • Committed • Creative • Inspiring
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July 2013