

# Personal health budgets

Update December 2009



Earlier this year, over half the primary care trusts in England applied to become personal health budgets pilot sites. 75 PCTs, in 68 sites, have been awarded provisional pilot status. Twenty have been selected for an in-depth study, as part of a wider evaluation exploring the potential of personal health budgets to benefit different groups of people. The pilot programme will run for three years until 2012.

## Evaluation team and in-depth pilot sites named

Since September, the Department of Health has been working alongside an independent expert research team to set up the evaluation that will underpin the pilot programme over the next three years. The evaluation team combines the expertise of three universities, led by the personal social services research unit (PSSRU) at the University of Kent.

All the pilot sites will be evaluated, and the team has selected 20 sites that will participate in an in-depth study. The sites have been selected to ensure a range of demographics and different backgrounds, services and geographical areas.

A full list of the provisional pilot sites can be found on the [Department of Health website](#).

## Legislation update

### Direct payments for health care

Primary care trusts are already able to offer personal health budgets that do not involve giving money directly to individuals. The Health Act – which received Royal Assent on 12 November 2009 – will extend these options by allowing selected primary care trust sites to pilot direct payments.

The Department of Health has recently published a [consultation document](#) (including an easy read version), describing proposals for regulations and guidance to govern how direct payments would work in practice. The consultation is open until 8 January 2010. The Department would like to have the regulations and associated guidance in place for approved sites to start using direct payments by the summer of 2010.

### **NHS Constitution: a consultation on new patient rights**

The Government is currently consulting on new entitlements for patients, and the inclusion of these in the NHS Constitution. One of the longer-term proposals it includes is that all patients who could benefit from a personal health budget should have the right to be offered one.

The details would be developed in light of findings from the current personal health budgets pilot programme, and there would be

further consultation before any new right is introduced. But this demonstrates the Government's commitment to the programme and signals a clear intention to make personal health budgets available more widely in the future.

The consultation runs until 5 February 2010 and the consultation document can be found on the DH website:

[NHS Constitution: a consultation on new patient rights](#)

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### **Personal health budgets: milestones so far**

A reminder of how far we've come:

**July 2008** – Lord Darzi makes a commitment to a pilot programme for personal health budgets in *High Quality Care for All*

**January 2009** – *Personal health budgets: first steps* published, setting out basic principles and calling for expressions of interest

**May 2009** – 70 provisional pilot sites named

**July 2009** – Launch event for all organisations involved in the pilot programme

**August 2009** – *Understanding personal health budgets* information leaflets published

**September 2009** – evaluation team appointed and in-depth pilot sites named

**October 2009** – 20 pilot sites nominated for in-depth study

**November 2009** – Health Act 2009 allows direct payments piloting

## Focus on engagement and communication

Effective engagement will be the key to the success of personal health budgets.

Our approach is to enable primary care trusts and their partners to experiment and be innovative, supported by a pilot programme with a detailed evaluation and a learning network to share best practice. It will be important for the pilot sites to involve people (and their families) who have experience of using services, in developing their projects.

To help inform people, including the public and relevant support organisations and commissioners, the Department of Health has published an information leaflet, *Understanding personal health budgets*. It is also available as an easy read document, and you can download or order hard copies of both via the DH website.



### Engaging with GPs

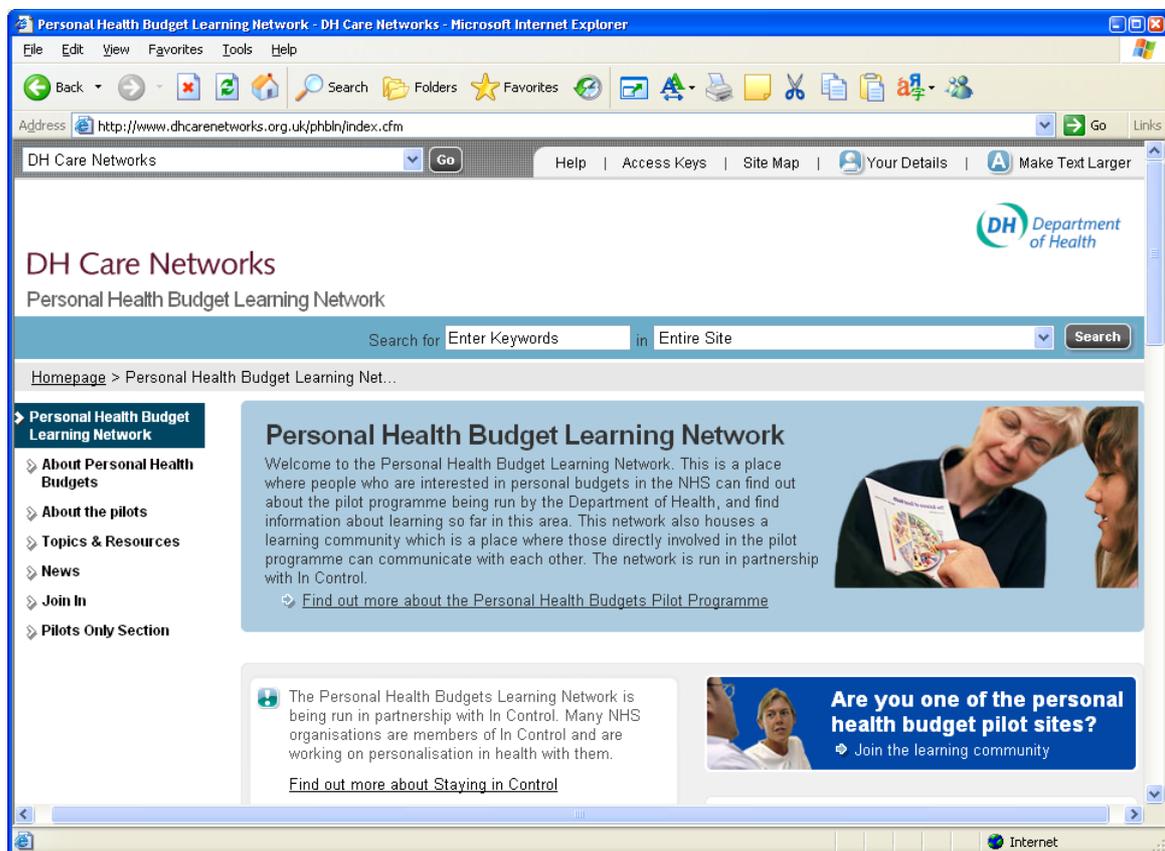
The BMA suggests that any pilot site or interested organisation looking for more information about how to engage with GPs, both as clinicians and as practice-based commissioners, should contact their local medical committee. Go to the [BMA website](#) for more information.

## Personal health budgets learning network

Anyone with an interest in personalisation in health may find the learning network for the programme, [www.personalhealthbudgets.org.uk](http://www.personalhealthbudgets.org.uk), a useful resource.

This website is a source of news, information and resources about personal health budgets and related areas, and a platform to engage in discussion and debate with others who are interested. Your contributions are very welcome.

You can also reach the personal health budgets team by emailing [personalhealthbudgets@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:personalhealthbudgets@dh.gsi.gov.uk)



Earlier information sheets can be found on the personal health budgets section of the [Department of Health website](http://www.dh.gov.uk).

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