

Putting **People First** Transforming Adult Social Care

Supporting Micromarket Development: **Key messages for Local Authorities**

Local authorities that wish to promote diversity and choice for people seeking a personalised service should consider establishing a local support agency to stimulate and support local micro social care enterprise.

1) A central plank of the government's personalisation strategy as set out in Putting People First is to give every person eligible for publicly-funded adult social care a personal budget but for this to work properly people need a range of services to choose from that reflect the full diversity of their lives, needs and aspirations.

Local authorities have been tasked with 'shaping and building the market' to ensure that this choice is available. This new role is not yet well understood and local markets in many areas still provide only limited choice to people.

2) There are many people who want to be in control of their services but do not want the burden of becoming an employer and do not want to rely totally on family and friends. Micro social care and support enterprises established and managed by local people are in a good position to deliver individualised services and are vital elements of a diverse market.

3) Micro entrepreneurs provide a wide range of highly diverse services. Some are easily identifiable as 'social care' services (eg day support services; domiciliary care agencies) but others sit less obviously within social care (eg leisure classes, housing providers, therapies, employment).

4) Micro social care and support providers are independent of any larger or parent organisation and often deliver the service themselves without employing staff or have a small number of paid or unpaid workers. Most providers of micro services see their operation as being an ideal size and are not aiming to develop their enterprise in order to support more people or to expand into a different area.

5) Every local authority has existing micro providers in their area but they can be hard to identify and engage; they face growing regulatory, legislative and other barriers and in general their numbers are falling. In every area there are entrepreneurs who would be willing and able to set up new, innovative and highly personalised service options if only they knew what people needed and had the information and support that they need to do so with confidence. There has been a view that new services will simply emerge and existing services adapt and thrive in response to the growing number of people with their own budgets. Evidence from the micro markets project suggests that this does not happen so easily and in most areas the local market is becoming less rather than more diverse.

6) The NAAPS Micro Markets Project has successfully tested a business model designed to stimulate and support micro social care and support enterprise.

This local agency support model gives current and potential providers the information, advice and help that they need in order to set up a small enterprise or adapt a current service to meet new local requirements.

There are many local and national barriers that people setting up or sustaining micro social care and support enterprises encounter. The agency has an important role in minimising or removing local barriers and contributing to the removal of national barriers.

7) Learning from the Micro Markets Project has been brought together in a Practical Guide for local authorities. The development and sustainment of a thriving local micro market is not however an easy task and NAAPS recognises that even with this Practical Guide local authorities may need extra help. The charity has a wealth of knowledge, experience and practical resources that can be made available to local authorities keen to provide real choice for people seeking support and services. NAAPS, in addition, is working to overcome local and national barriers to micro social care enterprise and is happy to extend that work to include barriers identified by local authorities endeavouring to support local micro provision.

More information of the help that NAAPS can offer to local authorities and to micro providers can be found on the NAAPS website: www.naaps.org.uk