



Co-produced Toolkits for Supporting Individual Service Funds (ISFs)

Two practical, co-produced toolkits are now available to support the understanding, implementation and delivery of Individual Service Funds (ISFs) for adults with learning disabilities - developed in partnership with people with lived and professional experience across social care.



These toolkits were developed by the EQUALD team.

The EQUALD Project has released two toolkits designed to support the delivery and uptake of Individual Service Funds (ISFs) for adults with learning disabilities. These research-informed toolkits have been co-produced with people with learning disabilities, carers, social workers, commissioners, support providers, and researchers, to ensure that they are both practical and accessible. EQUALD is led by Dr Liz Croot at the University of Sheffield and funded by the National Institute for Health Research.

About the EQUALD project

The EQUALD project had two objectives

1. To understand what is needed to make Individual Service Funds (ISFs) successful at improving the quality of social care for adults with learning disabilities.
2. To co-produce toolkits to support the implementation and delivery of successful ISFs.

First, the research developed theories (explanations) about what makes an ISF work well for somebody. Building on the real-world experiences of people who develop, deliver, or use ISFs, these theories explain what needs to be in place within social care systems for ISFs to work well. This early work shaped the development of the toolkits, highlighting what is needed to make an ISF successful and identifying barriers to effective implementation.

Co-Production

Co-production was central to the development of these toolkits. The toolkits were co-produced with:



- People with learning disabilities from three self-advocacy groups
- Staff from three local authorities actively developing their ISF offer
- Carers, social workers, commissioners, support providers and advocates who took part in three national co-production workshops

Co-production took place over four months (April – July 2024) and directed the content, format, and structure of the toolkits. Three local authorities user-tested the toolkits and gave feedback which the EQUALD team used to further improve the tools, and make sure they are practical and relevant for everyone interested in developing or using ISFs.

The toolkits

Toolkit One: for local authorities and support provider organisations

This toolkit helps local authorities and support providers with the development, delivery and governance of ISFs:

- Evaluation Framework: A tool for assessing the success of ISF programmes, including suggested mechanisms for measuring outcomes and success.
- Progress Pathway: A quality monitoring tool that tracks the ISF journey for individuals, helping local authorities and providers document progress and ensure the proper allocation of funds.

Toolkit Two: for adults with a learning disability, carers and advocates



This toolkit supports adults with learning disabilities and their allies to understand and make decisions about ISFs. It includes 3 Easy Read documents and a video:

- **ISF Video:** The video explains what an ISF is, how it is different from other personal budget options, the benefits of ISFs, and how to get one. It also includes what to do if an ISF isn't working.

- **ISF factsheets:** Easy-to-understand handouts covering the same information as the video, providing individuals with printed information for reference.

- **ISF I Statements:** Clear and accessible statements outlining what individuals should expect if they have an ISF.

- **'Questions to Ask':** A guide for individuals or their support networks to ask social workers or service providers about ISFs to help them make informed decisions.

How you can access these resources

The two toolkits are freely available via the [**EQUALD webpage.**](#)

Download the Toolkits

We encourage you to visit the site and explore these resources, whether you're from a local authority, a support provider, or if you are an adult with a learning disability, or you support someone. These tools have been designed to make ISFs more accessible and to empower individuals to take control of their care and support if they want to.



These resources were produced by the EQUALD team, led by Dr Liz Croot (l.croot@sheffield.ac.uk), with Dr Alice Dunning, Clare Tarling, and Jodie Bradley (Speakup Self Advocacy). The EQUALD project was hosted by the University of Sheffield, with co-applicants from the University of Birmingham, Manchester Metropolitan University, Speakup Self Advocacy, the Association for Real Change, Self Directed Futures, and the National Care Forum.

The EQUALD team would like to thank everyone who contributed to the co-production of these resources and (ORGANISATION) for supporting this important research and helping us to share our work and resources.

The EQUALD project was funded by the National Institute for Health and Care Research (NIHR151776). The views expressed are those of the authors and not necessarily those of the NIHR or the Department of Health and Social Care.

