

## **Right to Control event, Newquay, Cornwall**

21 September 2009

Please note: this is a draft text of the speech. It may differ from the delivered version

### **Jonathan Shaw:**

Good morning and thank you to Disability Cornwall for organising today's event. I've just been down on the beach with Steve seeing the new sand chairs you have here in Newquay. While many of us take access to the beach for granted, it's not so easy for wheelchair users. But something as simple as a sand chair can help deliver independence for disabled people - showing how, when we look at ways to adapt our environment, we can break down those barriers to inclusion.

Of course, that's what we're here to discuss today – independence, inclusion, and choice and control. Transforming our approach. Giving people more power so that they have real choice about the services they receive, in turn having power to take control of their own lives.

That's the goal that Government is increasingly moving towards - the goal of putting people rather than systems at the heart of what we do. For disabled people that principle is fundamental. The disabled people I have met over the years – not just in my role as Minister for Disabled People, but previously when I was a social worker and a care worker, working with adults with learning disabilities – those people have told me how crucial choice and control is, how important it is to have a say in the services they receive.

In response to that, we piloted individual budgets – which tested giving people control of the funding that would have been spent on their social care, enabling them to spend the money on what they think they need, rather than what someone else decides they need.

But we need to go further so that disabled people are able to live independently. The Right to Control is that important next step

towards independent living and our goal of equality for disabled people by 2025. The Right to Control will take the principle of individual budgets and extend it further, taking in different funding streams, and giving the control of those funding streams back to the person they are there to support.

We want the Right to Control to be as widely accessible as possible. Having piloted individual budgets, we know that for some people to be able to use the Right to Control, they will need to be supported. So it is vital that there is good advocacy and brokerage in every community to ensure that people are empowered to use the resources in the way that they wish to live independently.

That will be, in my view, through user-led organisations. User-led organisations such as centres for independent living. Organisations like Disability Cornwall – who know how to best support disabled people in their local community. Who understand the real barriers that disabled people face.

Because one thing that I'm quite clear about is that disabled people are the experts in their own lives. And with that in mind, it's clear that they are best placed to decide for themselves how best to use the resources that would be spent on them from the public purse.

While it's clear that disabled people must be in the driving seat - with the government and public services providing a supportive role - it's also clear that the Right to Control shouldn't create new difficulties for the services delivering it. We need to make it work in practice, for disabled people and for service providers. So that those essential services do continue while giving individuals choice and empowerment.

These issues aren't straightforward. We therefore intend to test how the Right to Control operates in a small number of selected trailblazing local authorities in England for around 2 years in the first instance, to make sure plans for introduction across the country are based on real evidence of successful approaches.

We're currently inviting expressions of interest from local authorities who are interested in becoming trailblazing sites, and will work closely with interested authorities over the coming

months. Following a formal invitation for areas to apply to become trailblazers later in the year, we aim to select the sites in January.

But first we need to understand how these trailblazers are going to best work. We want to hear from the customers, the experts, the authorities and the providers - to help us construct the right system of implementation based on the broad legislative framework which is currently going through Parliament.

We've been asking people to tell us what they think over the last few months. Our consultation ends at the end of this month, and we've had a huge amount of interest – which shows just how important this work is and how important it is that we get it right.

So I'm interested to hear from you all today. To hear your views about what you think will work. What mechanisms are needed to make this work at a local level? What skills and training will people need to deliver it? What support people might need in order to make the most of the Right to Control? What funding streams should be included?

We're considering including the Disabled Facilities Grant. We could include the Independent Living Fund. We could also include Access to Work – which we are doubling over the next few years. I'm spending this week travelling the country talking to disabled people, and later in the week I'll be talking to a couple of customers taking part in a trial to see how we might be able to include Access to Work.

Your expertise and advice will be critical. I look forward to working with you all to get this right, to enable disabled people to build the future they choose, to have better opportunities, better chances, and better control of their lives.

Thank you again to Disability Cornwall for inviting me here today – and thank you for listening.