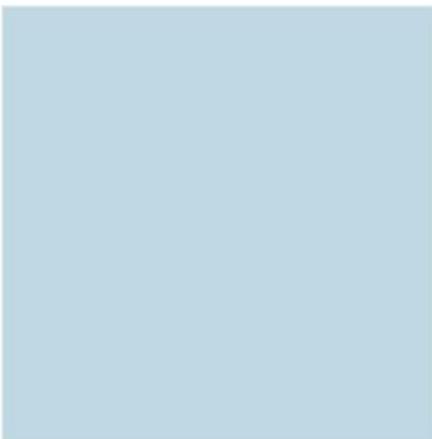
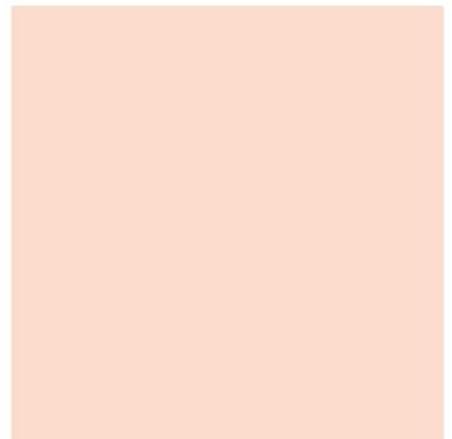
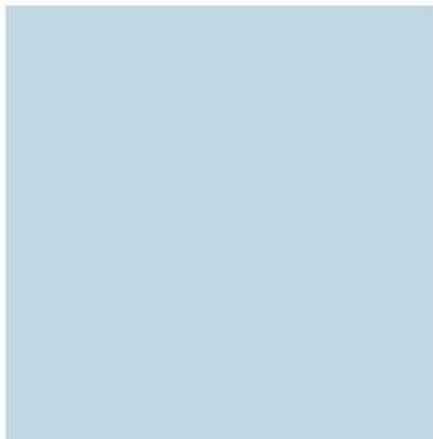


Real Wealth

A source of support and opportunity



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March 2012



Introduction

Real Wealth as a concept first came to us at In Control in 2008. We were starting to pull together early learning from our work with children's services and began to write about what we had learnt and how personal budgets and self-directed support worked for children and their families.

We had a good understanding of a process to explain self-directed support (the Seven Steps) and a clear goal of 'citizenship' for all, however we didn't as yet have a good way of describing what support people already had access to. We felt it was important to start with the resources people already had rather than immediately identifying needs and buying support solutions. Much of this thinking was based on our shared and long standing experience of developing person-centred plans with people of all ages and in many different situations.

'Real Wealth' felt like the most appropriate name for this approach as it reflected the fact that this is about thinking about all the resources – and not just the finances - that people have access to and can utilise. We first published the concept of Real Wealth in autumn of 2008 in our publication 'A Whole Life Approach to Self-Directed Support for Children and Families'. Since this our understanding of Real Wealth has developed, we have consulted with family members and many others, and as such our model and the graphics we use have changed. We fully expect to continue to see our understanding grow as we begin to explore this approach in more depth, especially as it starts to be used in practice.

Real Wealth

Real Wealth represents all the resources which people use to self-direct and live their lives. People may not always be aware of it in such a structured sense, but it impacts on the decisions they take, the way they spend their time, the employment they seek or have, their relationships and their health.



Real Wealth, In Control, 2012

For example: A parent with a part time job may be wondering who they can approach to offer their child somewhere to go after school for the 30 minutes it takes them to get home at the end of the day. They could ask a family member nearby, seek a recommendation about after school care or choose the school's after school club. In this case it's the **people** they know who will help them to make a decision.

It is important to stress that Real Wealth and the process of exploring it will not replace formal assessments linked to eligibility criteria. Exploring Real Wealth is an essential part of understanding all the resources available (or not available) to meet identified need. Exploring Real Wealth is part of developing a plan, it is not part of assessing need.

An approach based on Real Wealth is not reliant on a personal budget being allocated. Real Wealth provides a structure for exploring sources of support and solutions drawing on the resources available locally and on an individual person's, or child and family's Real Wealth.

The Five Elements of Real Wealth

People – The people they know, close friends, extended family, work colleagues, social friends and neighbours.

Skills and Knowledge – Their strengths, abilities, knowledge and decision making skills.

Access – The place they live, local resources, shops, health services, schools, leisure facilities and community activities they part of.

Assets – The money they have control over, their income, benefits, savings, and if they have one, a personal budget.

Resilience – Their well-being, the inner strength that keeps them going when times get tough, their physical, emotional and mental health, and for some, their faith, belief system or religion.

Using Real Wealth

Thinking about all the resources that people have and being more aware of an individual's Real Wealth can help support to be planned more effectively. Most people will need support at some time in their lives such as for times of crisis or ill health, older age or because they have long standing health conditions. Real Wealth can be good source of support and opportunity for people and helping them to identify and make use of their Real Wealth enables them to look for solutions within their existing resources.

Of course thinking about people's Real Wealth may well identify resources where they are not 'wealthy' at all. They may be isolated through geography, through a health or mobility difficulty or may find communicating with people around them challenging and difficult. It is important to note then that Real Wealth is not simply an approach to identify positives in people's lives; it can also help individuals to think about some of the gaps and about how to get support to fill these.

For example: If there is a gap in skills and knowledge needed to help them apply for work then it may be possible for the individual to look for local learning opportunities which can help them to develop their skills and knowledge.

Having a good understanding of their own personal Real Wealth will help people to realize and acknowledge how 'wealthy' they are or are not. This knowledge will provide them with a good foundation for working in a person-centred way to get the support and access to opportunity which will address their support needs.

Thinking about people's Real Wealth can also bring many benefits for those working in social services, health, education or leisure.

For example: If someone is able to continue to develop their skills and knowledge and as a result they are able to find work and employment then this also has an impact on other areas their life, such as developing their social connections and networks through people they meet at work which in turn will also have a positive effect on their mental health.

Summary

Identifying and enabling people to appreciate their own Real Wealth is an essential component of any approach to meeting their individual support needs. It provides a foundation upon which the use of a personal budget can be used and it will help people to build on the existing 'wealth' in their lives eg making people more 'wealthy' in the longer term. It also ensures that gaps in the resources they base their everyday lives on can be addressed, either through the use of a personal budget, or on a wider scale in influencing those who commission services to ensure there are appropriate local opportunities, services and resources for the local population to use and access.