The NHS is working on a lot of ideas to try to make it easier for people to get the NHS care that they think will help them. Having a personal health budget is one of these ideas.

**What are personal health budgets?**
People may already be familiar with the idea of direct payments and personal budgets for care and support from social services.

Many people have said that having more say over how money gets spent on their care and support makes them feel more involved in their care and more positive – and it does not cost any more than providing services in a more traditional way.

A personal health budget makes it clear to individuals receiving care and their carers how much money is available for their NHS care so they can discuss and agree the best way to spend it. This will give people more say over the care they get.

If a person decides to have a personal health budget they will be able to use it to buy a range of things that help meet their health and wellbeing needs. Because very few people have started using them, we do not have much information about what people will want to buy.

People will not need to use their personal health budget to pay for emergency care or for care they would normally get from their family doctor. And they can not spend the money on gambling, debt repayment, alcohol, tobacco or anything unlawful.

Personal health budgets are not the answer for everyone but they might be a good way for some people to get the NHS care that is right for them.

**What is happening in Oxfordshire?**
Up until 2012 NHS Oxfordshire are running a pilot to test the idea of giving people a personal health budget. We will be helping a small number of people who are receiving NHS continuing care to see how well this idea of having a personal health budget works for them. Experts from the Department of Health will look at how well personal health budgets have worked and decide whether the idea will work not just for patients receiving NHS continuing care but for people with other health conditions.

**How do Personal health budgets work?**
Everyone receiving long term care has a care plan developed. This outlines the types of care they need and the amount of care they need to achieve their health outcomes.

Personal health budgets can work in one of three ways:
- **Notional Budget** This means no money changes hands. An individual will find out how much money is available to them and talk to their care manager about the different ways to spend the money to meet their agreed health outcomes. They will then arrange the agreed care.
- **Real budget held by a third party** This means a different organisation or trust holds the personal health budget for the individual. They help them decide on the care that will best meet their agreed health outcomes and then buy the services chosen on behalf of the patient.
- **Direct Payment** This means the individual or their carer will receive the cash directly to buy the services the individual and their healthcare manager agree will best meet their health outcomes. The individual or their carer will need to show what the money has been spent on but they buy and manage services themselves.
Engagement
We want to hear from everyone about their views on this new opportunity. If you want to have your say take part in one of our discussion groups (see below for contact details). Look at the information we are providing on Talking health and in particular our questions and answers. We are collecting ideas from patients, their families and carers about how to make the process of working with a personal health budget better. We have formed a patient reference group that meets to discuss new ideas, what is working and what is not working well and needs to be changed.

More Information
A leaflet will be available shortly which will give a simple explanation about personal health budgets. If you want to find out about your position with regard to personal health budgets please contact:
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We are publicising information and the minutes of the reference group meetings on the NHS Oxfordshire website at https://consult.oxfordshirepct.nhs.uk/inovem/consult.ti/system/listConsultations?type=O

Events
Seminar on the Broker in personal health budgets Monday 18 October.
Next meeting of the reference group currently being arranged.
For more information about these events please contact:

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