The research leading to the guides

The Personal Budget guides are based on the findings of a research study called the PEOPLE study. In this document you can read more about the research, how it was carried out and who was involved.

Background
The PEOPLE study was a three year research project which started in 2010 and ended in October 2013. It was funded by the Big Lottery Fund and led by Rethink Mental Illness and the McPin Foundation, in partnership with Kings College London and the University of Birmingham.

The study had 3 aims:

1. To understand what it was really like for people with a severe mental illness to get a Personal Budget
2. To understand how family members and carers were helping people with severe mental illness to use Personal Budgets
3. To understand how mental health workers were supporting people with severe mental illness to use Personal Budgets

What we did
The study was undertaken across 4 local authorities in England, selected to provide maximum variation.

In phase 1 of the study, between September 2010 and January 2011, we interviewed 58 key stakeholders in the sites, including representatives from the local authorities, NHS primary-care and secondary mental health trusts and third-sector organisations. We asked them about their experiences of implementing personalisation in mental health services in order to understand the organisational context in which this new approach was being introduced.¹

In phase 2, between January 2012 and April 2013, we interviewed people with a severe mental illness, their families and mental health workers. We spoke to:

- 54 people with a severe mental illness
- 18 family members or carers
- 30 mental health workers

54 people with a severe mental illness
We interviewed people 1, 2 or 3 times. All of them had, or were trying to get a Personal Budget:

- 37 people were still using a Personal Budget
- 9 people had finished using a Personal Budget
- 8 people were applying for a Personal Budget

The people we spoke to were:
- Aged 21 and 71
- 33 women and 21 men
- Mostly White British, with 6 people from other ethnicities and 8 who preferred not to say

We spoke to people with different mental health diagnoses, including:
- Schizophrenia
- Bipolar Disorder
- Personality Disorder
- Severe depression

18 family members
We spoke to 18 family members of someone with a Personal Budget for mental health. Some of them came from areas outside the 4 local authorities. The people we spoke to were:

- 9 men and 9 women
- 11 people cared for their son or daughter
- 7 people cared for their partner or spouse

30 mental health workers
We spoke to 30 mental health workers in the local authorities. All of them had some experience of Personal Budgets. They were:

- 14 men and 16 women
- 12 Social Workers
- 10 Community Psychiatric Nurses
- 8 Occupational Therapists
Our lived-experience advisors
We worked closely with 10 people who have personal experience of using mental health services and who used their knowledge and experience to guide our study. They were all linked to service-user groups in the local authority sites.

These people told us what was going on locally around Personal Budgets and helped us to understand what was happening 'on the ground' in the areas where we were interviewing people. They worked with us through all stages of the study: deciding what to ask people, finding the right people to ask, and helping us to make sense of what people told us.