

Subject: Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People - financing options?

I have read your report with interest, and in particular the use of direct payments to provide choice.

We are a supplier of environmental control systems (remote controllers for people with mobility problems) to the NHS, which we believe funds only 2% of the estimated need. We have invested significantly to improve our products over the last 3 years, but are always coming up against the obstacle of funding when we look to widen their usage.

I note the comment on page 73/74 that, based at a pilot in Essex, given the choice, some individuals would prefer to have more use equipment and less use of carers. This would also have the advantage of providing a saving on carer costs.

We estimate that a weekly lease on our equipment would be c.£25 to £30, which would need just over one carer hour saved per week to pay for itself. The user would then benefit also from 24 hour support provided by our equipment and could significantly improve their quality of life.

To ensure that where possible equipment is used, it would need to be made available as an option, which would include funding.

However, while direct payments can be easily used to fund carers, there are problems in funding equipment. Users will not always have budgets for outright capital purchase, and as we are a small company we cannot offer rentals, nor would a leasing company take a credit risk on individuals. There is a financing scheme in place for motor vehicles (Motability), but this scheme is very restricted in its scope and cannot be used for other types of equipment.

Is there some sort of central funding scheme that would assist in financing our equipment and other forms of assistive technology?

Regards

Mark Kendall
Finance Director