

## Flexible Fund Review

### Introduction

As part of the Business Plan Review for ICM we are reviewing our use of the Flexible Fund to ensure that we can strengthen its use in developing our person-centred approaches and build on early successes in the first two years. The Flexible Fund is a specific type of fund that ICM Service Users, Key Workers and Peer Mentors can access to allow for flexible fund options to be taken to developing support. Within ICM, both service users and staff can access a flexible fund to enable the service user to overcome barriers to engaging with a service and work towards their personal goals.

On Wednesday 30<sup>th</sup> October we ran a workshop with our delivery team to consider what has been going well, what could be better and to look at options for the way forward in using the flexible fund. In addition, we have also consulted with staff from across the partnership to look at specific actions we could develop to strengthen its use.

Consequently, we have consulted with the following:

- 4 GROW Trainees
- 3 members of the ICM Core Group
- 7 Engagement Workers (representing all pathways)
- 5 members of the Programme Team
- 3 Team leaders

### Findings

#### Learning from our Case Studies

1. Building engagement is key before making decisions – It enables us to understand what the client wants to work towards
  - So initial focus for a flexible fund is overcoming the barriers to engagement
2. Best used to empower the individual - not save them.
3. Can be used to stabilize someone in crisis where this is acting as a barrier to engagement – but always need to plan for long-term
4. Can be fully utilised when staff and service users know what alternatives there are to mainstream services
5. Can be used for ‘taster’ options if Service User is not sure what they might be interested in or what they might like to do
6. Don't worry about labels on an individual – Always use the flexible fund to focus on the individual

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▶ **What is going well?**

- It is being utilised in this area and there are open discussions about it across the team
- Team have bought into the role of the Flexible Fund and can see its purpose and role within the programme
- It has already proven to enable people to overcome some significant barriers to engagement
- By overcoming barriers it has already shown to enable individuals to see other aspects of their lives ie. By helping people gain accommodation it enables them to see where other parts of their life might prevent them from sustaining it and gives them something to work towards.
- Flexible Fund is easily tracked on M-Think to show impact on outcomes

▶ **What could be better?**

- Consistency of approvals within the team – It does send out mixed messages as to what can be paid for and what not
- More engagement work at the start needed to understand individual's needs and what they want to work towards
- The 'flexibility' of the fund – Paperwork, time to make request, approval process and existing procurement policies can restrict the immediacy and flexibility of the use of the fund
- More peer and GROW Trainee input into use of the flexible fund – Peers and GROWs not always aware of what Flexible Fund is for or how it can be used
- Strength of Service User voice within flexible fund requests
- More direct communication between Panel and Engagement Team in decision-making for flexible fund
- Clearer guidance on use of flexible fund for GROWs and Peer Mentors, especially where they are not previous ICM clients
- Better understanding of what Flexible Fund is used for by external partners to ensure consistency of approach and person-centred nature of it

Our Actions - Strengthening the Flexible fund

- ▶ Programme Team to review the panel process and propose options for change – **31<sup>st</sup> October (Sarah W)**
- ▶ Programme Team & Core Group to develop proposal for new administrative procedures for flexible fund to ensure it is more streamlined and person-focused – **November (Paul P & Core Group)**
- ▶ Programme Team to review Flexible Fund form to ensure it captures all information needed – **31<sup>st</sup> October (James F)**
- ▶ Programme Team to ensure Flexible Fund is included in workshops at Fulfilling Lives North West Conference – **26<sup>th</sup> November (Paul P)**

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- ▶ Programme Team to ensure training on Flexible Fund forms part of commissioned services induction for all staff and volunteers for years 3 & 4 - **December (Paul P)**
- ▶ Programme team to develop best practice guidance & FAQ's – **31<sup>st</sup> October (James F)**
- ▶ Programme Team to organise Flexible Fund workshop with Core Group – **End of October (Mark J)**
- ▶ Programme Team to develop communication about flexible fund in next ICM at-a-glance – **End of October (Paul P and James F)**
- ▶ Programme Team to develop proposal for ETE 'Flexible Fund' budget for GROW Trainees – **November (Paul P)**

### Timescales

**October** – All consultation and review completed

**November** – All proposals in place and signed-off

**December** – All proposals incorporated into commissioning

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