**Direct Payment Support Services Framework**

* Direct Payment Support Services provide a range of support to citizens using Direct Payments, such as:
  + Initial advice and support planning
  + Ongoing advice and support
  + Personal Assistant recruitment
  + Managed accounts
  + Payroll and HMRC services
* Currently Birmingham has an open market for Direct Payment Support Services, meaning any company can register to provide support to citizens in Birmingham with Direct Payments. Prior to this, there was a block contract arrangement with one sole provider.
* An outline Framework for DP Support Services would mean that in order to provide services in Birmingham, providers would have to meet a set of quality and service standards, and agree to a standardised tariff of charges, including an upper limit to costs of each type of service.
* Providers would then be the subject of quality monitoring, via quarterly self-assessment returns and an annual monitoring visit.
* Direct Payment support services are not regulated by the Care Quality Commission (CQC), or by the Financial Standards Authority (FSA). This is a risk for the Council and for citizens using these services, and so a quality-based framework and monitoring run by the council would go some way to reducing this risk.
* The number of providers on the Framework should be limited to a manageable number, to ensure choice and quality for the citizen.
* Some other Councils, such as Nottingham and Sheffield, have implemented similar systems, and these could be used as models of best practice to ensure implementation is done in the right way.