Key messages from the Flexible Disability Support (FDS) study

This paper provides a plain language summary of the key messages from a small study done on Flexible Disability Support (FDS).

# What is FDS?

FDS is a type of contract available to some people for disability support. It is currently available to people accessing Enabling Good Lives (EGL) in Christchurch and Mid-Central. FDS contracts enable disabled people, tāngata whaikaha Māori (disabled Māori) and whānau to use their personal budget in a contracted partnership with a chosen provider.

# About the study:

The study looked at the situation of 12 disabled people and their whānau who use an FDS contract. The people lived in Christchurch and Mid-Central regions. They also gathered information from Kaitūhono/Connectors, a financial advisor and an independent Kaitūhono/Connector. The study was done in late 2021 by Standards and Monitoring Service (SAMS). This study will be used to help develop the FDS contract further.

# The positives:

There were many positive findings that are in line with the EGL Principles[[1]](#footnote-1). Nearly all study participants were positive about having more say and control in their lives.

The findings included:

* An increase in self-determination and autonomy for disabled people.
* People felt they had more control and ‘say so’ in what they wanted to do in life, due to the way they were supported.
* People described their lives as more fulfilled.
* Ordinary life outcomes were being experienced by people, such as their living arrangements, participation in exercise or education courses.
* The lives of some whānau were positively changing for their family member and themselves, because of the FDS supports.
* Purchasing items had made a big difference in the independence and confidence of some participants. For instance, buying a mobility scooter or getting driving lessons.

# Areas for improvement:

The study also identified opportunities for improvement. Some study participants were unaware of how the new system works or what the expectations are of them when they have an FDS contract, and there was some confusion about who is meant to do what.

## Easy-to-understand information

There was a focus on the need for easy-to-understand information for everyone. This included recommendations to develop and share easy to understand information about:

* The FDS contract, such as how it works and what the process is for getting started.
* What the roles and responsibilities are for the different people involved, including people receiving supports, their whānau, provider staff and Kaitūhono / Connectors.
* What the EGL principles look like in practice
* The new disability support system

## EGL budgets:

There were some identified areas for improvement for EGL budget processes. These include:

* The purchasing guidelines need to be clearer
* Not everyone is being provided with information about how their personal budget is tracking
* Some people need more support and information to understand how their EGL budget works.

## **Other recommendation:**

* Some work should be done to ensure more people are aware that the FDS contract is an option. This can be done by having people who are currently using an FDS contract share their stories.
* There needs to be accessible ways for people receiving supports to give feedback regularly, so they can say what is and isn’t working well for them.
1. Here is a link if you want to know more about the EGL Principles <https://www.enablinggoodlives.co.nz/about-egl/egl-approach/principles/> [↑](#footnote-ref-1)