shop 4 support

A guide for providers to help you…
Optimise Your Store

shop4support was created when In Control, the national charity and pioneer of self–directed support, came up with the idea of using the internet to help people find and buy care products and services more easily.

Suppliers and service providers can get involved by creating their own online Store on shop4support. A separate flier summarises how to do this, together with the benefits and costs of using shop4support. Once you sign up, you will be sent a spreadsheet to complete. This flier gives you tips on how to complete the spreadsheet and get the most out of your Store.

Getting Started
We would suggest the following approach:-

1 Ask some questions:-
Don't be constrained by what you currently offer – consider what you could offer. You might want to include your staff and clients in this. Think about:

What do we offer?
How to describe it?
Who is our target?
Why choose us?
What do we charge?

2 Look at other Stores
There are plenty of examples on shop4support. Some good ones to look at are:

Provider	Quick Link	Store Type	Comments
Support Works (Yorkshire Housing)	www.shop4support.com/ supportworks	Standard	This provider of non-traditional day services for people with learning disabilities has developed 5 products which provide a good example of use of images and easy-to-read descriptions, along with a link back to their website.
Middlesex Association of the Blind (MAB)	www.shop4support.com/ mab	Standard	MAB also promote their free services in Harrow's 'Local Groups and Activities' directory, covering the free servies they offer. This store showcases their chargeable services (such as payroll, shopping, PAs), with well-structured and detailed descriptions.
Enjoy Able Living	www.shop4support.com/ enjoyableliving	Standard	This supplier of assistive equipment's store contains a good variety of products and images, although there is scope to put more detail into the product descriptions.
Link Up	www.shop4support.com/ linkup	Premium	A small charity that has developed a range of services as they move away from grant funding, Link Up's store has four extra pages of bespoke information. Click 'visit our store' for their range of services, featuring a good use of images and consumer friendly language.
Thera	www.thera.co.uk/ buyyoursupport.asp then follow the link to their shop4support store	Premium	The link from Thera's website illustrates how a shop4support store can act as an 'extension' of a corporate website. With good explanations of their offerings and simple 'Widgets' visually describing services, this store is designed to be understood whatever your reading age/ability.
Care Bank	www.shop4support.com/ carebank	Standard	This domicillary care provider has used their store to start to personalise their services and translate them into consumer friendly language.
Cyrenians	www.shop4support.com/ cyrenians	Premium	The 'I Buy Services' catalogue showcases residential options for new customers. Cyrenians also use shop4support to give choice and control to their existing clients - their 'I Buy Support' and 'I Buy Community Services' catalogues showcase staff and external services individuals can choose.
Harrow Helpline	www.shop4support.com/ harrowhelpline	Standard	Their catalogue shows how the same core service can be offered as different bundles - e.g. 'Option 1' is a pay-as-you-go model (with no upfront costs) whereas Option 2 requires the user to buy two services (with set up and ongoing monitoring fees).

3 Make a start
The tips overleaf will help.

4 Review and refine
Get feedback, and keep evolving

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This is taken from the 'Strapline' and 'Brief Description of Your Organisation' on the setup spreadsheet. We will also include any accreditations you have here.

The 'Name of the Service' should be concise –a maximum of 30 characters

Use consumer-friendly language – e.g. 'Cleaning Service' rather than 'Domestic Support.'

Think of the consumer – rather than having one item of 'Domiciliary care', you are better to have three items – such as 'Cleaning', 'Personal Care' and 'Support to Get Out.'

Don't be constrained by your current contracts with councils –put as many different products/services in as you want.

If you offer the same core service, but aimed at different client groups or with different prices, you can create a copy in the spreadsheet template and just change one or two words or the price.

Your store will look better if you give us an image for each product / service. If you don't we will just use your logo.

Building a full catalogue of all your products and services takes lots of time, so why not aim to just start with three and add more later?

Users don't like it when they can't see a price, so you must include one, even if it is an 'indicative' or 'typical' price. If this is the case, you should state this in the detailed description.

When you receive enquiries from users, you will have the ability to amend/refine the specific price that you are giving to them.

If you have different prices for different geographical areas, please contact us for the best way to reflect this.

This is the real opportunity to 'sell' your product/service and your organisation.

The 'attributes' that we ask you to provide (such as 'This Service Is Suitable For') on the spreadsheet will enable users to filter their search results.

We are working on ways of linking complimentary products – this will be available later in 2012.

You can use up to 4,500 characters in the product/service description. Sometimes 'less is more', but our experience suggests users want as much information as possible.

You should include details of any restrictions or price information (e.g. 'Price shown is a typical charge for this service, a final price will be provided when we respond to your Request for Service').

You may wish to include case studies, testimonials, associated services or other information to help differentiate your organisation from your competitors. Make sure that you include 'key words' that people may search for.

You can create your own sub-headings (as Link Up have done here).

Take a look at the 'Examples' tab in the spreadsheet to get some ideas for what to include in the description.

Need more help?

Our team can answer your questions and help you get the most out of your store - you can email **info@shop4support.com** or call **01942 614 088** and ask to speak to someone about provider setup.