

Comparison with PHB Choices

PCG is aware that CCGs are considering a move away from PHB Choices onto alternative platforms, following the withdrawal of their technology platform. Virtual Wallet is functionally similar to PHB Choices, however, there are fundamental differences, which are explored below.

Features and Functionality comparison

	Virtual Wallet	PHB Choices
Prevention	Can seamlessly include IAG, directory and self-assessment	No
Localisation	Local configuration of a national solution	National solution (off the shelf)
Branding	Localised	Universal
Marketplace	✓	✓
Micro commissioning / Get Quotes	✓	✓
Timesheets	✓	✓
Online statements	✓	✓
Payroll	✓	✓
Payee Direct	✓	✓
Online Ordering	✓	✓
Online Payments	✓	✓
Online Calendar	✓	✓
Budget Calculator	✓	✓
Customer satisfaction	✓	✓
Pre-paid cards	✓	✗
CCG view access to PHB account	✓	✗
In-house technology platform	✓	✗
Integration potential	Imosphere, IEG4	n/a
Funding streams	All – PHB, local authority, client contribution and top-up	PHB and/or own bank account only
Physical Funds	Held in separate CCG bank account	Held in existing CCG bank account

Virtual Wallet – comparison to PHB Choices

End-user support	✓	✓
Onboarding services	✓	✗
Delivery models	Direct Payment, Direct Payment Managed, 3 rd Party and Notional	Direct Payment
NHS Endorsed	✓	✓
Fees	0.5%-1.5% (Plus implementation fee)	2%-4% (Plus implementation fee)

Six Key Differences

Six of the main points of differentiation between the Virtual Wallet and PHB Choices are:

1. Holistic Solution

The Virtual Wallet is part of the 'Assist' platform, which enables the provision of information, advice and guidance, helpful toolkits and local directories alongside the ability to spend and manage a personal health budget. PHB Choices is ostensibly a marketplace of goods and services that a patient can spend their PHB on. This prompts individuals to leverage their assets and the community to find solutions that might cost nothing.

So what? *Managing a PHB is just one part of a patient's overall journey and experience, so there is an opportunity to make the stages before and after as seamless as possible. Providing information, advice and guidance and local directories prompts individuals to leverage their assets and the community to find solutions that might cost nothing, aligning with the initiatives on prevention, strength-based approaches and asset-based community development.*

2. Localisation

The Virtual Wallet is a multi-tenanted solution based upon a national platform, but it can be truly localised, from configuration options to meet the rules and processes of each CCG through to customisation of branding and look & feel. PHB choices is an off-the-shelf, nationwide solution.

So what? *Although they have commonality, each CCG is different, both in terms of how they do things and the people they serve. Using a common platform is efficient, but it is important that the local solution is built around the needs of the CCG and its population. A useful analogy is that Tesco is Tesco, but a Tesco store on a high street in a small town both looks and operates very differently to an out-of-town Tesco superstore.*

3. Support

Virtual Wallet provides a telephone helpdesk for individuals and providers, manned by our team of staff at our head office in the UK, as well as online resources and email support. In addition, PCG provide a fully managed service, helping our customers onboard individuals and providers into the system PHB Choices provides online resources and email and phone support only – there is no provision for onboarding and other managed services

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So what? Our 10 years of experience in delivering personal budgets in social care has taught us that the biggest barrier to roll-out is making the whole thing less daunting for individuals and as easy to roll-out as possible for a CCG. A slick technology solution is only one part of the answer, hence why we offer person-to-person support, along with 'managed' direct payment options, as well as an onboarding service for individuals and providers. Our approach takes the hard work out of implementation, gets more people to take a personal budget **and** keeps them with a personal budget.

4. Delivery Models

Virtual Wallet can be configured to deliver the three recognised models of personal health budget delivery - direct payments (including 'managed' options), third-party and notional. PHB Choices delivers direct payments (funds in the individual's own bank account) only.

So what? CCGs have to offer all types of PHB. The benefits to CCGs in having a common approach include: consistency for staff, providers and patients, the ability to easily switch patients from one model to another and significant efficiencies in auditing and reporting. For example, Mental Health (Section 117) PHBs may need to swap between being a DP and a notional several times during the year as a result of changes to an individual's mental health. Only a unified delivery platform can effectively support this.

5. Cost

PHB Choices charge between 2% and 4%, depending on the package chosen. PCG's standard package is 1%, which is at least half of the PHB Choices service. Based on an example PHB programme with £10m of spend, the cost of the Virtual Wallet would be £50,000 – £150,000 per annum (depending on the type of PHB), whereas the cost of PHB Choices would be £200,000 - £400,000 per annum.

So what? Whilst a 'one-size fits all' pricing model is simple, it does not always deliver the best value for money. PCG can tailor pricing to the scenario and will guarantee the overall cost is lower than PHB Choices (whilst still delivering a better-quality solution). Our Notional Budget Solution is as low as 0.5% and our DP solution is 1% of budget. This matters as the difference in cost will allow CCGs to invest those savings back into the CCG's services.

