Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living

Information Sheet

ADVICE & SUPPORT FOR DP USERS ENGAGING AN AGENCY

DIRECT PAYMENT

Direct Payments are cash payments given to people who are assessed as needing help from social services and who choose to arrange and pay for their own care and support services instead of receiving them directly from the Council.

The Direct Payment will be paid monthly in advance. Payments are based on the number of days in the month that support is required so the payment amount may fluctuate slightly from one month to the next.

CHOICE OF AGENCY

You have decided to use an agency to provide the care you need. If you have not yet decided which agency to use, please ask us (or the Council) for a copy of the Council's Care Directory which contains agency listings, information on what to consider when engaging an agency and a useful checklist.. If you use the internet, there is a link below to the online version:

http://www.carechoices.co.uk/region/south-west/wiltshire/

You may also like to look at the Care Quality Commission website (**www.cqc.org.uk**)

ENGAGING AN AGENCY

You should obtain from the agency details of their terms and conditions and a contract. You may also wish to obtain written confirmation that they agree to supply the support you require.

It is reasonable to expect an agency worker to record the amount of time their visit to you has taken. This may be recorded on a timesheet and the worker should ask you to authorise this. Alternatively the worker may use an electronic device to log the time and duration of their visit. The agency will use this record to produce your invoice.

BANK ACCOUNT

You will need to open a separate bank account for the receipt of the Direct Payment money. This account should provide monthly bank statements and, unless you are going to make payments electronically, a cheque book.

If you are unable to open a bank account, please let us know and we will be able to help.

KEEPING FINANCIAL INFORMATION

Wiltshire Council will also require you to keep copies of your bank statements and invoices and you may need to produce these at any review or reassessment by the Council.

INVOICES & BUDGETING

Some agencies agree to charge the rate funded by the Council rate so it is worth telling them that you will be on a direct payment from the outset. Others may charge a higher or lower rate. They may also add a charge for care workers' mileage to/from visits and charge an additional amount if care is provided on bank holidays.

Some agencies may charge you a penalty fee if the worker goes over the agreed allocated time. We recommend you check the agency's terms and conditions and your invoices for any penalty charges.

If the agency charges more than the agreed Direct Payment amount, you will need to pay the shortfall yourself.

We can assist you by providing a sample budget once you know what your agency's rates are so that you can see how much you can afford.

Some agencies invoice every four weeks, some monthly and you can arrange to pay them by direct debit or by cheque but in all cases you should check the invoices to ensure the charges are correct and keep copies of the invoices for your records.

If agency rates change, you should check that you can still afford the hours you are receiving. Please get in touch with the Direct Payment Adviser team if you are not sure what you can afford.

If you have any queries about the information provided or you would like further information, please contact the DP Adviser Team at Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living on **0300 1233 442** or **admindp@wiltshirecil.org.uk**.

Our own website contains a wealth of information for Direct Payment recipients
www.wiltshirecil.org.uk

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