

DIRECT PAYMENT SUPPORT SERVICE



Direct Payment
recipients
co-designing a
direct payment
support service
for the future

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This report was facilitated and produced by the Wiltshire CIL User Engagement Team, under a contract with Wiltshire Council, to provide a Wiltshire Engagement Service.

The User Engagement Team works alongside people with lived experience of health and social care services to support, encourage and facilitate them to have their say, ensuring that their voices are heard and that they are able to contribute and influence how services are shaped and developed in Wiltshire.


The User Engagement Team uses creative and interactive ways of engaging with people, co-producing each piece of work uniquely, to value the authentic voice of all service users.

Key Messages


Direct Payment recipients value and utilise a Direct Payment Support Service to its full benefit to enable them to successfully receive and use their direct payment giving them choice, control and independence over their lives.



A Direct Payment Support Service is best delivered by a Local User Led Organisation that is part of the local community and independent of the local authority.



An effective Direct Payment Support Service is one that has excellent communication with direct payment recipients, it is responsive, relational and knowledgeable. A support service that encompasses these characteristics gives direct payment recipients the confidence to manage their direct payment.



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Appendix 1

1 Introduction

Direct payments are a way of giving people more choice and control over the care and support that they receive.

Instead of social services arrange the support that someone has been assessed as needing they can choose to receive a personal budget in the form of a direct payment from Wiltshire Council and arrange it themselves.

Direct payments are offered to anyone who has been assessed as having eligible care and support needs, including disabled adults, older people, people with long-term health conditions, and families with disabled children.

A Direct Payment Support Service provides recipients of direct payments with advice and information on setting up and managing a direct payment, on being a good employer, payroll, banking, and recruitment support.

In this report we analysis the discussions held with direct payment recipients about their experiences of using a Direct Payment Support Service and what they think a good Direct Payment Support Service should look like and who it should be delivered by.

This piece of work has been carried out at the request of Wiltshire Council to assist them with the development of Direct Payment Support Services for the future.

Aim – the purpose of this piece of work is to understand the views and experiences of direct payment recipients of using a Direct Payment Support Service to help inform future service specifications.

2 What we did

Two workshops were facilitated by The User Engagement Team at Wiltshire CIL to gather people's views and experiences of using a Direct Payment Support Service:

- ▶ One for adults/carers in receipt of a direct payment
- ▶ One for parent carers in receipt of a direct payment from Children & Families

The direct payment recipients who took part in the workshops were invited via the current Direct Payment Support Service.

Each workshop was also attended by a representative from Wiltshire Councils Commissioning Team.

Due to the very tight time constraints from Wiltshire Council for running the workshops and producing the subsequent report it was difficult to source many people with availability to participate. People had work commitments, childcare commitments or health issues that prohibited them from being able to participate within the tight timeframe allowed. The option to participate via email was offered but not taken up by anyone.

A short presentation to set the context and purpose of the workshops was delivered at the start of the workshops. The participants were then asked 4 questions in order to gather their views and experiences of using a Direct Payment Support Service. A copy of the presentation slides including the questions can be seen in **Appendix 1**.

Each question generated open group discussion, all contributions were recorded and have been analysed in this report.

3 What Direct Payment Support Services are used for?

The participants used all of the current functions of the Direct Payments Support Service.



People particularly talked about the advantages of using the **payroll service** to calculate their **Personal Assistants wages**. The systems in place for sending in **timesheets** or ringing in their Personal Assistants hours worked well and was beneficial to many. Having options on how to do this gave people the choice to use the method that worked best for them, for some this was by **post** or **email** for others by **telephone**.

Receiving **payslips** for their Personal Assistants enabled people to pay their own Personal Assistants and HMRC. People also benefited from being able to **choose how they receive their payslips**. **Posted** hard copies were best for most people as they don't own printers to be able to print them themselves.

The **banking service** was frequently used to **pay Personal Assistants**, pay **tax** and to pay **invoices for self-employed Personal Assistants** or **agency support**. People described the banking service as **very valuable** and felt that it made receiving a direct payment a lot easier as

some found having a **separate bank account for the direct payment all too much.**

Advice and information on managing a direct payment and employers' responsibilities was utilised frequently. Support to **understand forms** and issue **employment contracts** for their Personal Assistants was used. Support to understand **probation periods** and the length of them was useful as was support with **calculating annual leave and sick leave/pay** and **understand break entitlements.**

Support around managing personal assistants was also valuable including advice on carrying out **supervisions** and especially if **disciplinary** matters arose. Someone described how they **had an issue with a Personal Assistant and were provided with advice on what they can/can't do and how to go about having those conversations with the Personal Assistant so that they understood their responsibility as an employer.**

People felt that being given advice and information on their responsibilities as an employer gave them **the confidence to have conversations with their Personal Assistant regarding disciplinary issues/supervision.**

Most people tended to recruit their own personal assistants through people that they knew but acknowledged the benefits of having a PA Register and the need for support with recruiting Personal Assistants.

A survey carried out by the current Direct Payment Support Service in Spring 2021 found that of the 146 responses, that 69.9% received a direct payment and of these:

- ▶ 80.8% utilised the payroll service
- ▶ 31.5% sought employment support inc. holiday entitlement
- ▶ 27.4% utilised the banking service
- ▶ 21.2% utilised pension support
- ▶ 21.2% used the PA register/recruitment support

There was no distinction between the support that adults/carers receiving a direct payment utilised from a Direct Payment Support Service to what parent carers who received and managed a direct payment from Children & Families used.

4

Who Should provide a Direct Payment Support Service?

We looked at who the participants felt a Direct Payment Support Service should be provided by and what the benefits and disadvantages were of the support service being provided by:

- ▶ A Local User Led organisation
- ▶ A National Organisation
- ▶ The Local Authority

▶ A Local User Led Organisation

It was unanimously agreed that a local user led organisation is best placed to provide a Direct Payment Support Service.

It was discussed that the most important reason why a local user led organisation would be the best provider of a Direct Payment Support Service is because it **is independent of the local authority and not government led.**

People felt that a local user led organisation would provide **better support** as they will **know the local council and the local systems** better. The fact that the organisation was **local** was of huge importance and made the organisation relatable and part of the community. Knowing **where they are** and being able to **pop in if needed** was important.

It was agreed that you would get a more **personal** and personable service from a user led organisation. You would **get to know the staff**; they would be **familiar** when you contacted them for advice and support. The fact that you would be familiar and get to know the people would mean that you are **not talking to a switchboard** where they don't know you, you would be less likely to feel that you are **being talked down to** and you would feel **respected** and **not just a number.**

As a result, you would experience **better communication** from a local user led organisation and you will not experience delays in receiving support as the **staff are all knowledgeable** on direct payments and able to assist.

It was also acknowledged that having all of the functions of a Direct Payment Support Service under one roof was beneficial, it was commented that **doing everything in one place - advice, payroll, banking, recruitment etc.** worked and was **professional**. Having a **good knowledgeable support service took the pressure off** of direct payment recipients.

The **added value** of a user led organisation and all of its **other functions** were recognised and people felt that they **benefited from being able to access the many other services and opportunities** provided by such an organisation.

► **A National Organisation**

It was felt that a national organisation would be **too big** and would not be **personal**. **Not being local** would have detrimental effect as they would **not understand the local area, the local authority and local systems and procedures** or **who the Social Workers are**.

Lack of local knowledge was a frequent concern about a national organisation delivering a direct payment support service. There is a fear that there would be a **loss of local of in-depth knowledge** and **communication would be more difficult**.

There was a concern that a national organisation may hold **contracts in multiple areas throughout the country** and this would be detrimental to Wiltshire as you may **lose the local knowledge and expertise**. For example, local geography would not be known, and this could make receiving support to recruit a personal assistant very difficult if they do not understand the area and the rural nature of it. They may also offer different services in different areas which in their view is **not equitable**.

► **The Local Authority**

One of the biggest contributing factors as to why the participants felt that the Local authority would not be best placed to deliver a Direct Payment Support Service was **communication**.

People experienced **poor communication** from the local authority and described getting lost in the **Wiltshire Council maze: you leave a message for someone to call you, but no one does so you have to call back - nothing gets resolved - it's like a call centre, it takes**

ages. You would lose any sense of the service being personal and people **don't know who to speak to** in the council.

It was acknowledged that the local authority is local but despite being local it lacks any sense of being personal or personable.

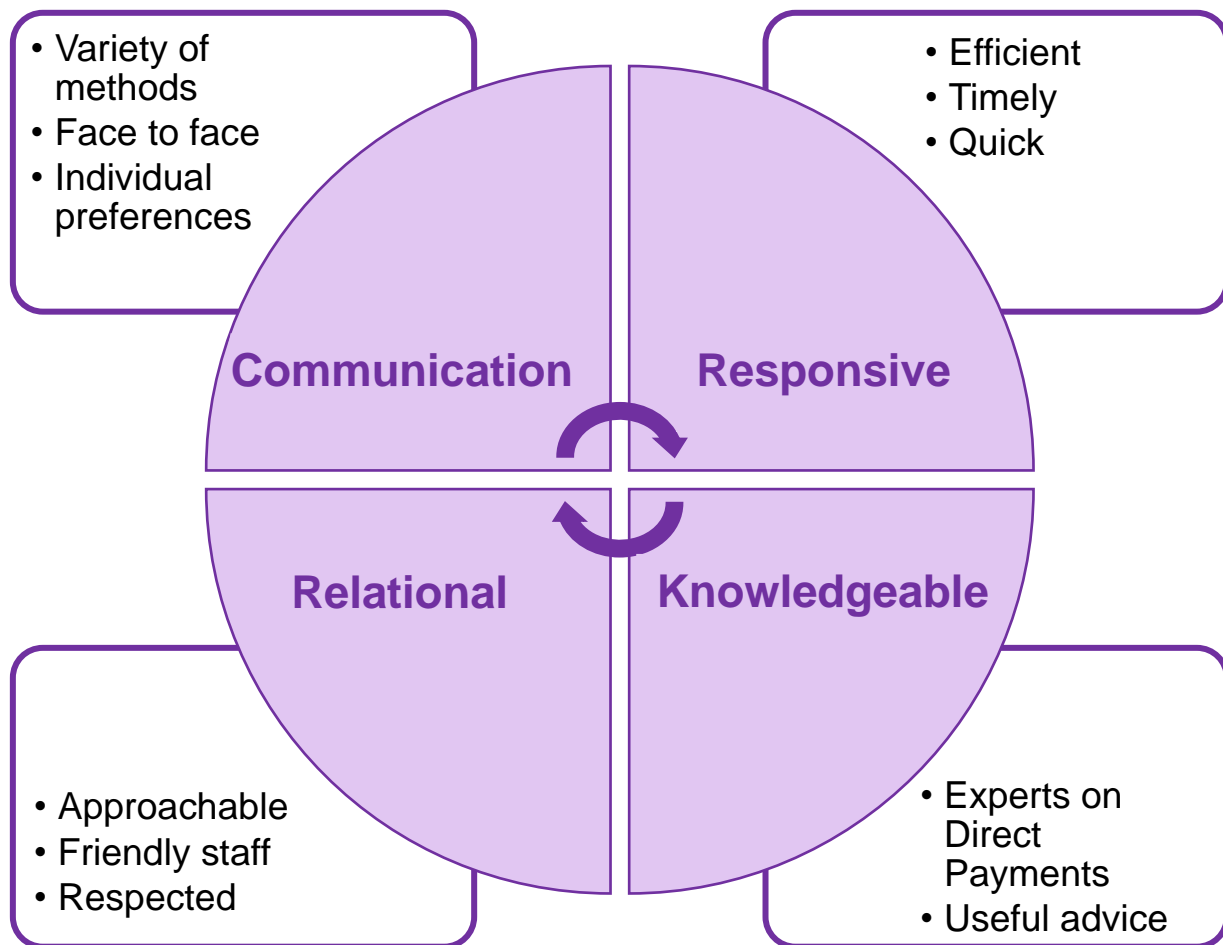
People strongly felt that the support would **not be joined up** or comprehensive, **different teams/departments would do different things, nothing would get done.**

It was felt that there would not be any effective support provide via the social work teams to assist people with managing their direct payment. The social workers **do not have the expert knowledge** on managing direct payments, **they can't answer your questions** and there is **no social worker consistency.**

Over all people described how their experience of interacting with the local authority was a '**constant headache**'.

5 What does a good Direct Payment Support Service look like?

There are many things that make a good Direct Payment Support Service, and these can be grouped into 4 main themes.



Communication

For a Direct payment Support Service to be good it needs to have excellent **communication** with those that it is supporting.

People want the Direct Payment Support Service to communicate with them and vice versa in a way that is effective and works for them. There needs to be a variety of ways to communicate including **in person, email, letter, telephone, social media, video calling and online.**

There is real value in people being able to meet with the Direct Payment Support Service face to face, they felt that **you can have a better conversation, be shown things and ask more questions**. Some also felt that face to face meetings enabled you to **discuss things better, and that conversations would be more flowing and useful**.

As previously discussed, a local user led organisation would be most likely to be able to fulfil the communication requirements and offer a variety of methods of communication to direct payment recipients. They would in particular be more likely to be able to meet with people face to face than a national organisation or a local authority as they are based in the local community.

A Direct Payment Support Service responding to individuals' different communication needs meant that they could manage their direct payment and fulfil their responsibilities as employers. Some described how they **needed payslips for their Personal Assistants posting to them as they didn't have a printer**. If payslips were emailed, they wouldn't be able to give their PA their payslip. The same was true with employment contracts, timesheets etc.

Responsive

A Direct Payment Support Service needs to be **responsive, efficient and quick**.

Key characteristics of a good service is one where people receive a timely service, they can **pick up the phone to call them and get a quick answer to a question**. It is a service that is easy to get hold off and that answers, people will **respond and get back to you**.

Having a Direct Payment Support Service that is efficient and does what it is meant too **takes the pressure off** for people, as, **they don't worry about the tax, the wages etc, it works like clockwork and therefore never have any issues**.

Managing a direct payment can involve a lot of work for people; some described how they may forget to send in timesheets or hours their personal Assistant has work but having a support service that is able to respond to this so that **even at very short notice payroll is done and I can pay my Personal Assistants** is invaluable as it means that personal assistants continue to be paid.

Knowledgeable

It is important for direct payment recipients that the support service that they access is **knowledgeable about everything to do with direct payments.**

Direct payment recipients will look to the support service to **explain their responsibilities** to them so that they understand what they are doing. They need to trust that the Direct Payment Support Service is the expert and **knows what they are doing.**

People will seek **answers to questions and queries** and need to feel like they can have **a constructive conversation with a Direct Payment Advisors and will be given useful advice, tips and information on being a good employer.** This was especially important for people who felt that they didn't particularly **want to be an employer** but needed to.

Relational

Direct payment recipients want to be supported by **professional staff** who they feel that they can **relate to and talk to** and can be **patient** with them whilst they navigate through something quite complicated such as becoming an employer.

Having Direct Payment Advisors who are **open and friendly** is very valuable and makes the whole process of understanding how the direct payment works a lot easier. Advisors who are able to explain things **easily and simply** so that things **do not feel complicated** really helps.

A **friendly voice at the end of the phone** when you call for advice or help makes a huge difference, it gives people the confidence to engage with the support service.

A support service that feels **personal** and where people know you and your situation is important and reiterates that feeling of **not being just a number, you're not talked down to** and you **are respected** while being encouraged to remain in control of your own choices.

6

What else would you like a Direct Payment Support Service to do?

On the whole people felt like they were sufficiently and effectively supported by the services that are currently encompassed within a Direct Payment Support Service, describing themselves as **being spoilt**.

Parent carers who received a direct payment for their child felt that having more support around the time of transitions from children to adult's service would be beneficial. What they felt they needed was ways to share their **knowledge and experiences** of going through this process with their young person with parents of other young people.

This doesn't necessarily need to be structured and set but needs to be when people choose and how they choose to interact with each other so that they can dip in and out **when they need to**.

There were some suggestions made about how some things could be tweaked to make managing the direct payment easier for them, such as greater information on record keeping and payroll cut off dates; but nothing new or in addition to what a support service already provides.

One thing that some people felt might be useful for them would be support to challenge what they **can and can't use their direct payments for** and **how flexible and creative** they can be with it. People found the whole process of discussing this with the social work team and the lengthy panel process exhausting.

7 Conclusion

This report has laid out what disabled people and carers in receipt of direct payments feel is important to them when designing a Direct Payment Support Service that is able to meet the on-going needs of direct payment recipients.

It is evident that direct payment recipients value and utilise a Direct Payment Support Service to its full and use the vast array of services that it offers throughout the duration of receiving a direct payment.

This gives people the information, support and guidance that they need to be able to manage and run their direct payment effectively ensuring that they meet all of their legal obligations as an employer while remaining in control of their own lives.

There is a very strong argument that a local user led organisation is best placed to provide a Direct Payment Support Service as it is a local, community based and able to fulfil all of the characteristics described by direct payment recipients that are needed to be a good and effective service.

Having a support service that has excellent communication channels, is knowledgeable, relational and responsive is crucial to people being successfully supported to administer their direct payment.

Whilst on the whole people feel that the current provision set out within a Direct Payment Support Service is sufficient and covers what is needed in order to receive a direct payment; there may be scope to specifically facilitate the sharing of knowledge and experience amongst direct payment receipts who are moving from children to adult services as this is a particularly problematic transitions phase.

Some of those who participated in this piece of work have also expressed an interest in being involved in the forthcoming tender process to select the provider of the Direct Payment Support Service.

Direct Payments Workshop



Wiltshire Council

Background

- ▶ The current Direct Payment Support Service is coming to an end next year and Wiltshire Council are looking at how they can provide services most effectively going forward
- ▶ Wiltshire Council want to understand your views and experiences of using a Direct Payment Support Service
- ▶ Your views and experience will help inform future service specifications

Direct Payment Support Service

A Direct Payment Support Service currently provides:

- ▶ Advice & information on setting up and managing a direct payment
- ▶ Advice & information on employers responsibilities
- ▶ Payroll services (inc. pensions) for over 900 PAs
- ▶ Banking Services for 400 employers
- ▶ Recruitment support (PA Register)

What do you access a Direct Payment Support Service for?

Who should provide a Direct Payment Support Service?

What are the positives and negatives for each of these:

- ▶ A local user led organisation
- ▶ A national organisation
- ▶ The Local Authority

What does a good Direct Payment Support Service look like for you?

Think:

- ▶ About how it meets your need
- ▶ About how the support is provided
- ▶ About the qualities and skills the support service should have
- ▶ About what support you value

**Is there anything that
you would like a Direct
Payment Support
Service to offer that it
doesn't already?**

What next?

What you have told us today will be written into a short report that will be used by Wiltshire Council to assist them to develop specifications for future services

**** A copy of the report will be sent to everyone who has participated in these workshops ****

Thank you!