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SELF-DIRECTED SUPPORT SERVICES



Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living
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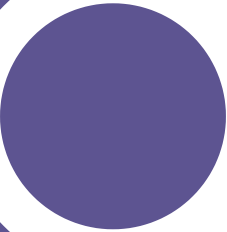
CO-PRODUCTION

We are the User Engagement Team at Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living. This report has been produced in collaboration with Wiltshire Council under our contract to provide a Wiltshire User Engagement Service.

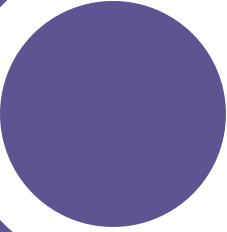
We work alongside people with lived experience of health and social care services to support, encourage and facilitate them to have their say. We aim to ensure their voices are heard and that they are able to contribute to and influence how services are shaped and developed.

We use creative and interactive ways of engaging with people, co-producing each piece of work uniquely, to value the authentic voice of all service users.

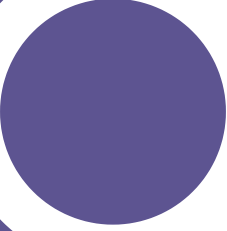
KEY MESSAGES



People require access to initial and on-going support to receive and manage their direct payment. The support must be provided in a variety of formats that responds to the sporadic and fluctuating needs of every individual.



Circumstances can change throughout a person's direct payment journey, on-going access to advice, support and guidance on the full range of topics that enable them to successfully manage their direct payment must be available to them.



A support service should promote independence, it should be local, knowledgeable, relational and responsive with effective communication at its heart. Providing regular updates and simplified information to aid the use of and development of direct payments in Wiltshire.

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INTRODUCTION

Direct payments have been in use in adult care and support since the mid-1990s and they remain the Government's preferred mechanism for personalised care and support. They provide independence, choice and control by enabling people to commission their own care and support in order to meet their eligible needs.

Direct payments, along with personal budgets and personalised care planning, mandated for the first time in the Care Act 2014, provide the platform with which to deliver a modern care and support system.¹

Wiltshire Council offer direct payments to people who have been assessed as having eligible care and support needs, including disabled adults, older people, people with long-term health conditions, mental health needs, learning disabilities, autism, and families with disabled children.

Alongside offering a direct payment the Care Act 2014 stipulates that **the local authority also has a key role in ensuring that people are given relevant and timely information about direct payments, so that they can make a decision whether to request a payment, and, if doing so, are supported to use and manage the payment appropriately.¹**

Wiltshire Council currently commissions the self directed support service to ensure people in receipt of direct payments have access to advice and information. The service also supports work to increase knowledge of direct payments within Adult Social Care teams.

In this report we look at the support and advice that direct payment recipients need in order to successfully receive and manage their direct payment. The analysis discusses people's experiences of using a Direct Payment Support Service and what they think an effective Direct Payment Support Service should look like.

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.

WHAT WE DID

A paper survey was posted to every adult and carer in receipt of a direct payment in Wiltshire (See Appendix 1). All recipients of the survey were given the option of completing and returning the paper survey or completing the survey online.

Wiltshire CIL offered assistance over the telephone to anyone who needed it to complete the survey.

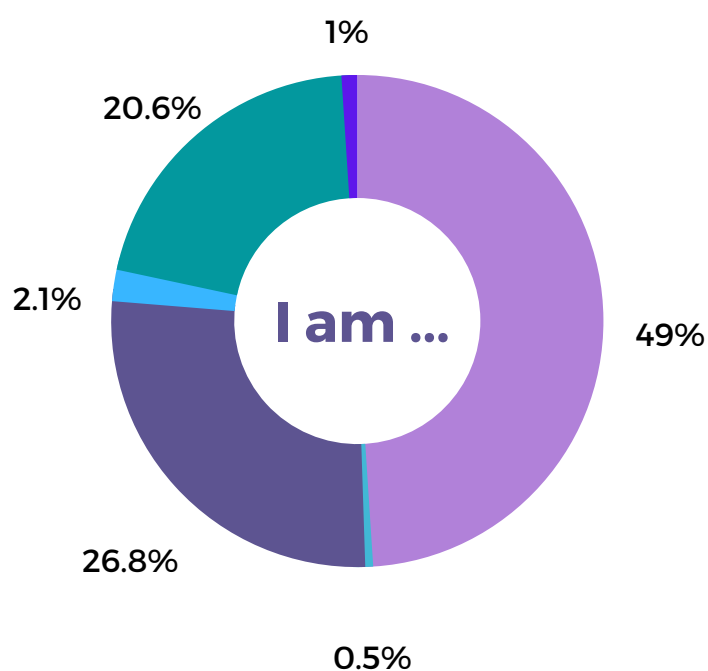
The survey questions consisted of a mixture of multiple selection, rating and free text questions so that recipients were able to share and express their views and experiences.



WHO PARTICIPATED

194

people responded to the survey



A person with care and support needs who receives a Direct Payment

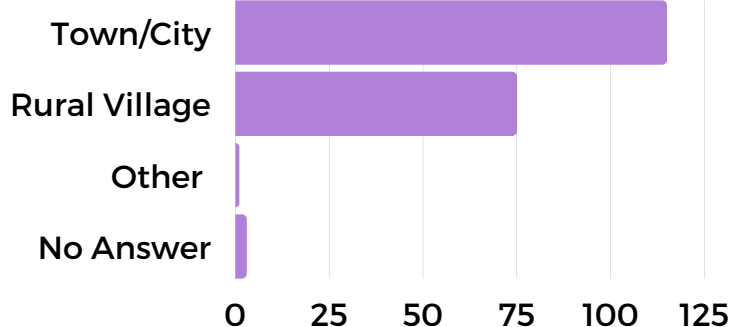
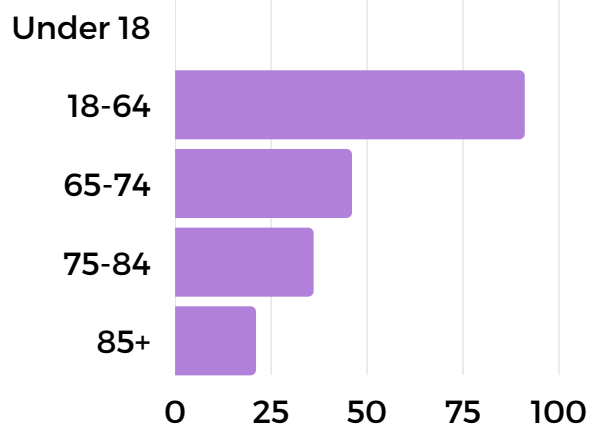
A person receiving a Personal Health Budget

An informal carer who receives a Direct Payment for my needs as a carer

Employing a Personal Assistant but do not receive any money towards my care from Wiltshire Council

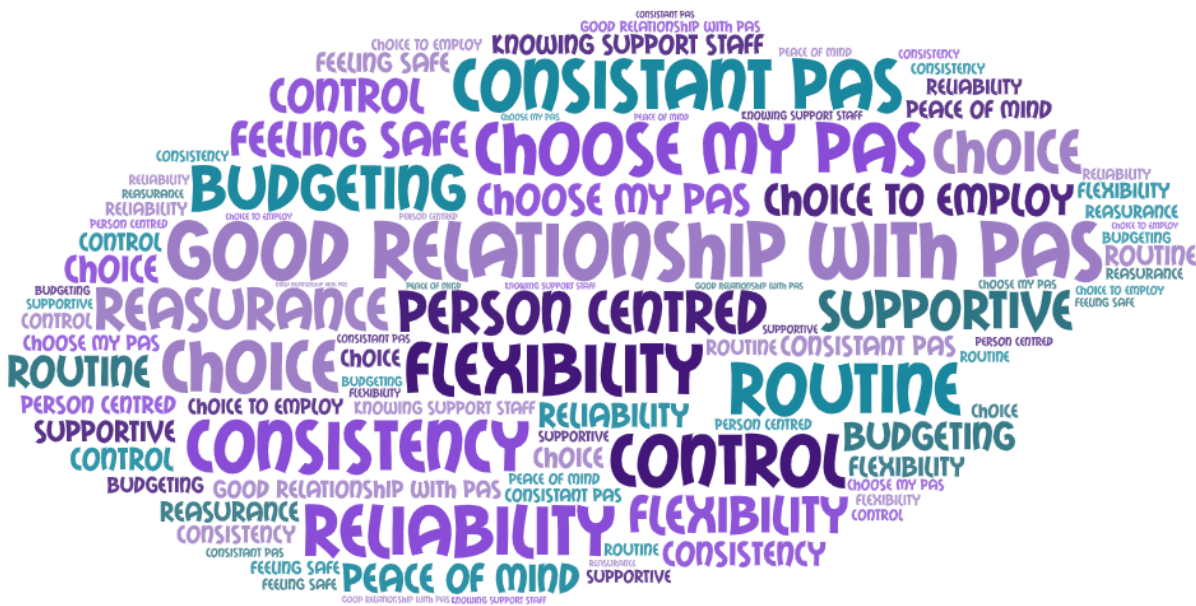
A family member or friend

Other



WHY A DIRECT PAYMENT

A direct payment gives people choice and control over their care and support, enabling them to choose who supports them, how and when. In particular, importance is placed on employing Personal Assistants that people have a good relationship with, giving them consistency of care, flexibility and person centred support that they are able to direct and manage.



My carer is always the same person. For an autistic adult like myself changes of care are upsetting and not helpful to me at all. It should always be the same carer for me all the time

People mentioned the importance of direct payments in enabling them to retain a degree of autonomy and independence by being able to remain in their own home.

The support I receive from my PAs allows me to live independently in my home and the community

Direct payments have contributed to significant life changes, promoting independence and having positive effects on health.

It has enabled me to really pace myself. Assistance with maintaining my home has not only reduced the number and severity of flareups and lowered the number of hospital admissions, it has also enabled me to begin some part time work

What a direct payment is used for also covers a wide range of tasks that support and promote independent living including, amongst others, personal care, maintaining the home, maintaining relationships, supporting and managing nutrition, developing skills and just being able to 'live'.

Direct payments and having a PA has been invaluable to me to allow me to live life and be a mother, wife, daughter

Carers direct payments are of huge importance to carers, enabling them to have a break from their caring responsibilities whilst knowing that their cared for person is safe and well supported by people whom they trust. The direct payment gives them the confidence and reassurance to have the break they need so that they are able to continue caring.

The help I get gives me a break - I can't survive without it!

It is important to recognise why having the statutory right to request a direct payment is so important for so many people. For those who currently receive a direct payment the benefits are immeasurable. Because people do not live linear lives, direct payments enable people to respond to meeting their needs in a way that best suits them.

The promotion of direct payments needs to increase so that more people are able to benefit from the choice, control and flexibility that they offer.

The decision to have a direct payment should be motivated by the desire for choice and control over care and support needs. On some occasions however, the positive choice for a direct payment is over ruled by the necessity to have one as there isn't the availability or suitability of statutory services to meet needs.

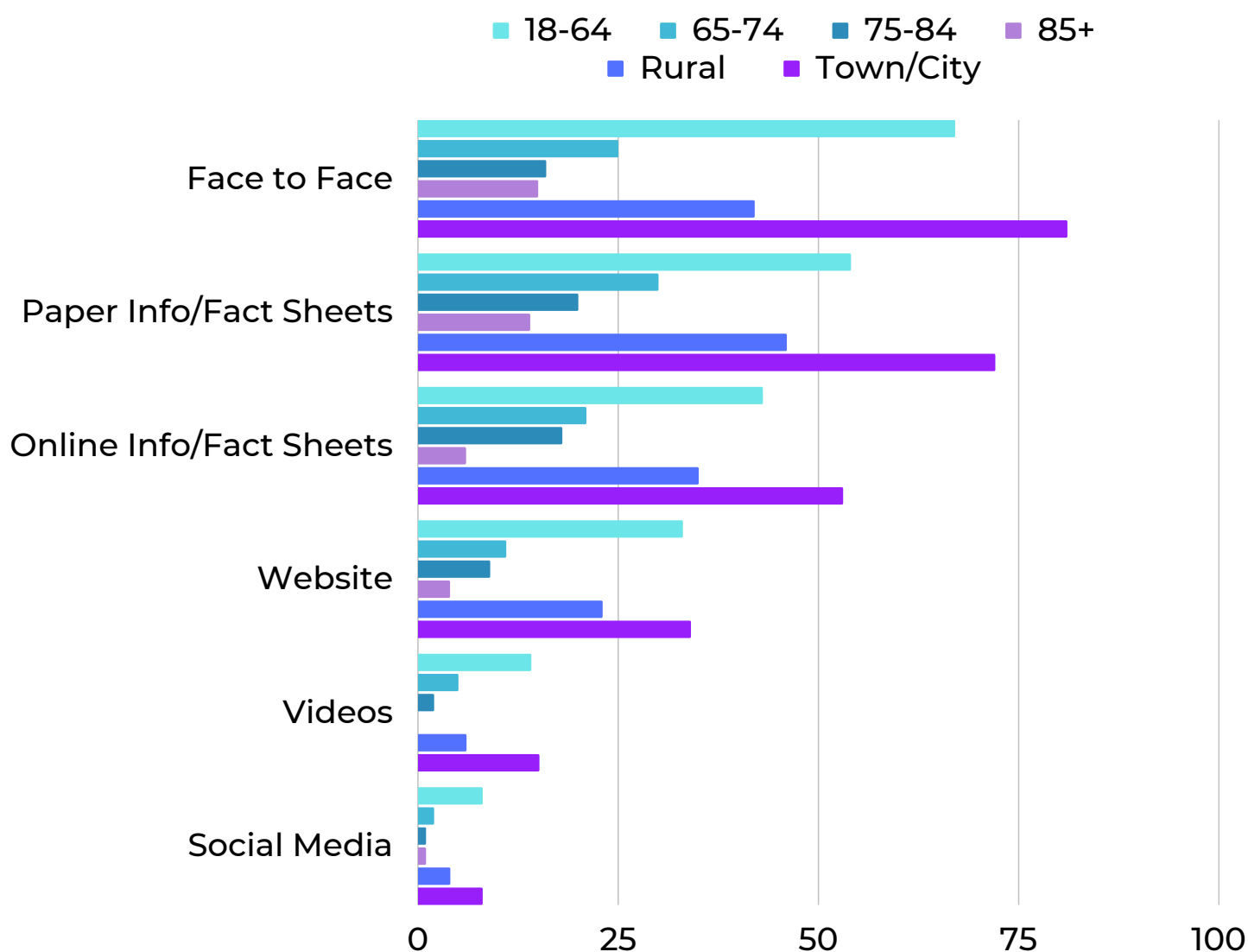
A direct payment can then become a negative experience for people, especially carers who would **rather not have to employ people, pay people, manage payroll, write contracts, recruit etc.**



SUPPORT METHODS

Respondents were asked in what format they wanted to receive support, advice and guidance around receiving and managing their direct payment. Overall there is a clear preference for people to receive the support to manage their direct payment either face to face or through paper information/fact sheets.

In addition there is a need for a digital offering of support whether this be through online information/fact sheets, through a website, or although less popular, through videos and social media.



The reasons for peoples preferences to access support in any given way can be influenced by where they live and their age; in turn influencing access to and use of technology and the ability/ease of meeting people face to face.

Further analysis shows that those who live in rural Wiltshire tended to have a slightly greater preference for support provided in a more traditional digital format (online information/fact sheets and/or website) than those who live in towns or cities. Those who live in towns and cities however have a greater preference for a more modern digital offer through videos and social media support than their counterparts who live more rurally.

I/we tend to use the website. We live in Salisbury so it is difficult to get to Devizes etc

Paper information/fact sheets are the preferred method through which those living rurally wish to receive the support, advice and guidance to receive and manage their direct payment, very closely followed by face to face visits. In contrast, face to face visits are the most preferred method for those living in towns and cities, closely followed by paper information/fact sheets.

Additionally people found information/fact sheets that contained colour, pictures and diagrams easier to follow and understand.²

The youngest age group (18-64) and the oldest age group (85+) had more preference for support, advice and guidance to be received face to face. Where as those aged 65-74 and 75-84 had a greater preference for paper information/fact sheets.

My sight and hearing is slipping away (but I can read the large print - well done) so telephone conversations are very difficult especially if the person at the the other end is using a mobile phone

Online information/fact sheets are preferred most by those aged 75-84 then 65-74 and 18-64 age groups respectively, with the oldest population


least favouring this method.

As we go up through the age groups the use of videos and social media as a resource for finding advice, information and support dwindled, other than a slight spike with the over 85's use of social media.

Utilising a website as a resource for support, advice and guidance was fairly consistent throughout all age groups with it being most popular with 18-64 age group, followed by 75-84, 65-74 and least popular with those aged 85+.

Alongside where people live and their age, peoples disability can also play a role in determining how they like to and want to access support, advice and guidance.

Although not given as an option in the survey, it was suggested that specifically email support was of value as was support, advice and guidance provided on the telephone.



I dislike face to face appointments because of my autism. They cause me stress and anxiety

Having stories featuring real experiences of people receiving and managing direct payments as well as places to share experiences and get advice and support from other direct payment recipients/Personal Assistants such as the Employer and Personal Assistant Facebook Forums set up by Wiltshire CIL are also beneficial.²

It is evident that a wide variety of methods for providing support, advice and guidance for people on receiving and managing their direct payment must be available in order to meet the vast range of communication needs and preferences that are present in Wiltshire.

The variety of methods on offer must cater for a population that varies in age, location and disability. Appreciating the complex need for information to be generic but also able to be tailored to meet specific needs. Therefore a degree of flexibility and a person centred approach must be taken when communicating with direct payment recipients.

SUPPORT WITH...

Survey respondents were asked to rate on a scale of 1-5 (1 = not important; 5 = very important) the importance of the advice, support, guidance and information available to them in the following areas to enable them to successfully receive and manage a direct payment:

- Understanding direct payments
- Budgeting
- Employment rights and responsibilities
- Template forms (employment contracts, timesheets etc.)
- Payroll (calculating wages)
- Personal Assistant (PA) recruitment / PA Register
- Employers Liability Insurance
- Care Act assessment
- Ending a direct payment
- Banking service
- Personal Assistant training

Understanding Direct Payments

Three quarters of people (78%) felt that support to understand direct payments was very important. This may include initial information prior to receiving a direct payment so that an informed decision can be made whether to opt for a direct payment, as well as initial and on-going advice and information to set up and receive the direct payment once agreed.

There is an acknowledgement that there is a **huge amount to do to set up the direct payment** and **that setting up a direct payment is quite overwhelming**. The support to understand direct payments set the scene for people, as a result they felt **less overwhelmed** and they benefited in the long term from the **one to one support when setting up the direct payment**.

The benefit of receiving initial information and advice about direct payments was also seen as a way of promoting and increasing the uptake of direct payments.

I don't think a lot of people know about direct payments and the support available to manage them. It is a big commitment employing someone and I think the lack of knowledge about direct payments puts people off

Budgeting

Support, advice and information around budgeting was of importance to 62% of people. Of value is support to work out what a person can afford to pay a Personal Assistant or care provider from the budget. Whilst budgets from the local authority are calculated by the average market rates in local areas, peoples experience shows that they can **fall short of the costs of the care required and charged.**

Budgeting support enabled people to have a better understanding of how they would be using their direct payment and to understand how they would meet the costs of their responsibilities and liabilities as an employer.



Employment Rights and Responsibilities

61% of people found advice, information and support around employment rights very important, with support ranging from doing **DBS checks** to **calculating holiday entitlement** for Personal Assistants.

People found 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.**³

I had an issue with a Personal Assistant and I was provided with advice on how to go about having those conversations with the Personal Assistant - so that I understood my responsibilities as an employer³

A quarter of people did not find advice, information and support around employment rights and responsibility important at all - it is however important to note that not all direct payment recipients directly employ Personal Assistants, many utilise the services of agencies and other providers and therefore do not have any employment responsibilities - **most of the topics I have marked as not important relate to employment, this would be important to others but doesn't apply in my situation.**

Template Forms

An essential part of being an employer is ensuring that you are able to operate in line with employment law by carrying out and providing all of the documentation required. The template forms and documents provided range from **employment contracts** that are legally required, to **timesheets, annual leave forms, supervision templates** etc. as well as template forms relating to **recruitment** and **payroll**.

Over two thirds of people found access to templates forms and documents of importance. Having support to **understand** and use/fill in the template forms was also beneficial.

Payroll

Payroll support consists of a payroll company calculating wages, tax and National Insurance contributions due to HMRC and pensions. For direct payment recipients who employ Personal Assistants payroll support is invaluable, for those who do not directly employ support, payroll is of no significance to them. In a survey carried out by Wiltshire CIL in 2021, 80.8% of respondents utilised the payroll service.³

Payroll support was frequently mentioned amongst survey respondents as being **vital**, making **payroll easy**, it is **professional**, **invaluable**, **valued**, **great** and **prompt**.

People generally found the payroll service reliable and liked the **speed of providing payslips**, although some would prefer them more in advance of pay day so that they had a bit more time to **process the payments and issue the payslips** to their Personal Assistants and **query any discrepancies**.

It was also recognised that the support that the support provider provides as an intermediary between the direct payment recipient and the payroll provider to set up payroll, complete all of the necessary forms and provide advice and information around payroll was also of huge importance.



Personal Assistant Recruitment / PA Register

Many people who receive a direct payment choose to employ Personal Assistants; as we have already seen having choice and consistency over who supports you and a good relationship with the person supporting you are some of the many benefits of direct payments.

The importance of recruitment support varies significantly depending on a person's circumstances. 46% of people surveyed viewed support to recruit as very important. Many will know who they want to employ, whilst others will need support to recruit their Personal Assistant(s). The requirement for recruitment support can also fluctuate depending on Personal Assistants leaving or the need for more people to provide support if a care package has increased for example.

Focus on Recruitment

Andrew was looking to find a PA to support him to continue with his range of hobbies, gardening, walking, and keeping fit and active. He also needed help to keep on top of things at home as he often experiences periods of confusion and forgetfulness.

He felt daunted at the prospect of recruiting someone and didn't know where to start. The Direct Payments Adviser explored the practical needs of the job vacancy with him, as well as the important personal qualities and interests the new Personal Assistant needed to have.

The more they talked the more confident Andrew got and the easier it became for him to write a job description and a job advert.

The advert was shared online and on social media and Andrew was given some postcard size adverts to place in his local community.

The Adviser discussed how best to meet and interview the shortlisted candidates with Andrew, he successfully recruited a new PA.

Recruitment of Personal Assistants can be difficult, with success of a recruitment being influenced by pay rates, location and hours. People found the **PA Register was a very good starting point to build a team of Personal Assistants**. Although others were still struggling to recruit for a year with poor responses to adverts.

Difficulties can also be experienced covering **regular Personal Assistants and getting emergency cover**. More promotion of the **PA Register** was needed so that it becomes the **place to look for social care jobs**.

Thanks to the sensitive and discrete support and understanding of Wiltshire CIL enabling me to recruit a PA, my quality of life has improved dramatically

Employers Liability Insurance

Having Employers Liability Insurance in place is a legal requirement of being an employer, therefore all direct payment recipients who are employing people to support them have Employers Liability Insurance.

The Employers Liability Insurance protects employers in case the person that they have employed is injured or ill while they are working for them and they seek compensation against them. It also provides access to dedicated employment law advice if issues were to arise with an employee that required disciplinary/dismissal advice or the ending of a direct payment so that everything is done legally.

Often people do not understand the significance of needing to have the insurance in place until they are in a situation where they need it. Dealing with then very complex employment situations will require input from the Direct Payment Support Service and the insurance provider.

Focus on Employers Liability Insurance

A Personal Assistant with over 2 years service suffered a stroke which left them unable to provide care to their employer.

The employer was supported by the Direct Payment Support Service to seek legal advice from the insurance provider, draw up a plan of action and understand the Personal Assistants entitlement to Statutory Sick Pay.

The legal advice ensured that the employer met all of their obligations towards the Personal Assistant.

The employer maintained good communication with the Personal Assistant whilst they were on sick leave. The Personal Assistant was unable to return to work, following obtaining a GP medical report the insurance provider supported the employer around the dismissal of the Personal Assistant on the grounds of ill health.

The Personal Assistant was also directed to the Money Advice Service for financial guidance.

62% of people considered advice, information and support around Employers Liability Insurance as very important. People who have needed to utilise the insurance and legal advice have described it as being of **value**.



Care Act Assessment

In order to receive a direct payment a Care Act assessment is carried out to determine care and support needs and eligibility. A review of needs should then also take place every year as Wiltshire Council has a responsibility to ensure that needs are being met and public money is spent appropriately.

Support to **navigate the care system**, prepare for a Care Act assessment or review was viewed as being of significant importance to 83% of the survey respondents.

The assessment and review process was described as **ambiguous** and **onerous - all the forms we have to fill in to receive the support payment, it's the same questions and answers that are given every year.**

Therefore support to think about and look at what a good life looks like and what people need in order to live their good life helps them to prepare for the assessment of their care and support needs.

Ending A Direct Payment

Unsurprisingly there was almost a 50/50 split in whether people deemed support, advice and information to end a direct payment as important or not.

Until ending a direct payment people often do not appreciate the steps that need to be taken to ensure that everything is ended legally and correctly.

This may include ensuring all:

- Outstanding wages are paid
- Calculating any outstanding holiday entitlement, redundancy or lieu in notice
- Paying any final invoices
- Paying any final tax, NI or pension liabilities due
- Returning any unspent direct payment monies to Wiltshire Council.

Focus on Ending A Direct Payment

A residential placement had been secured for the person being cared for which meant that the direct payment had to stop.

The nominated person was employing 6 Personal Assistants, one of whom was pregnant and due to go on maternity leave.

The Direct Payment Support Service supported the employer to seek legal advice from the insurance provider in order to ensure that their indemnity protection would be valid. Support was provided to calculate redundancy entitlements and to ensure that the pregnant employee was able to receive their statutory maternity entitlements.

The direct payment was able to end in a timely manner providing the nominated person with all of the advice and support needed.

Banking Service

The Direct Payment Support Service provides a banking service to some direct payment recipients. The banking service is only available to people for whom the inability to open a bank account would become a barrier to them accessing a direct payment. Currently 13%⁴ of direct payment recipients in Wiltshire utilise the services of the banking service.

For those who use the banking service it is very important to them as it enables them to still have the choice and control over who supports them, how and when.

Personal Assistant Training

Additional funding provided by Skills for Care is applied for and utilised by the Direct Payment Support Service to fund, organise and host a range of training courses that are provided free of charge to direct payment employers and their Personal Assistants.

Those who employ Personal Assistants recognise the importance of being able to train them and invest in their development. Two thirds of respondents placed importance on access to training for their Personal Assistants.

I will feel more confident and comfortable in my role as a PA. I will apply my new found knowledge into my work to be a better PA to my employer⁵

Feedback from Personal Assistants who have attended training courses highlights how much they enjoyed and benefited from attending the courses, on average their confidence and understanding rose from 5.4 to 8.8⁵ by the end of the course.

There is value and merit in direct payment recipients having access to support, advice, information and guidance on all of the topics detailed above that relate to successfully receiving and managing a direct payment.

The level of importance that an individual will place on a particular topic will fluctuate depending on where they are in their direct payment journey with some elements being more pertinent than others depending on current circumstances.

If, for example a person has a steady team of Personal Assistants, the need for recruitment support will not arise until one of them leaves.

Therefore having a responsive support service that is able to provide on-going support and access to the whole range of advice, information, support and guidance as and when it is needed is crucial to people being able to successfully receive and manage their direct payment.

Access to the Direct Payment Support Service is through a one time referral, meaning that the direct payment recipient can access advice, information and support at anytime throughout the duration of receiving a direct payment. Their case does not become 'closed' and they can contact the Direct Payment Support Service at anytime.

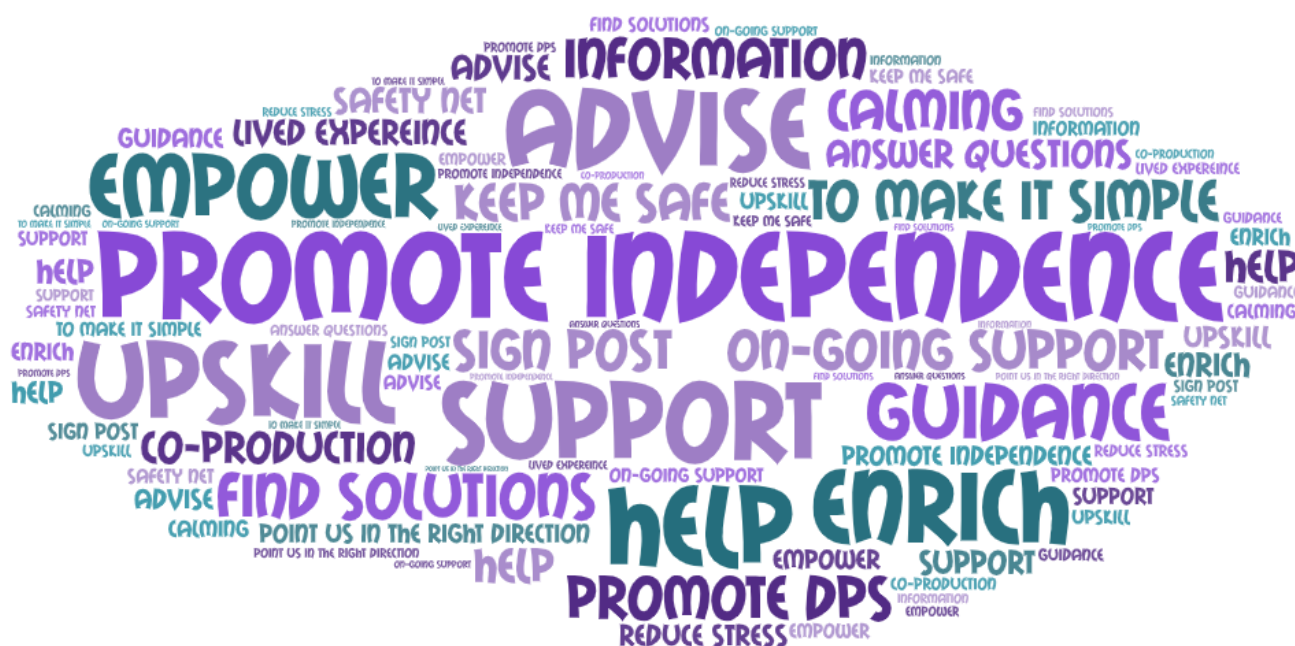
DESIGNING A SUPPORT SERVICE

In order to look at what a Direct Payment Support Service will look like for the future, we will use the evidence of people's experiences in this survey to look at and understand:

- The aim of a support service
- Who should provide the support service
- Key components of a support service
- The scope of a direct payments support service

The Aim of a Support Service

Many suggestions and ideas were given to describe and explain the aim of a direct payment support service:



A clear emphasis was placed on promoting independence, upskilling, empowering and promoting the confidence of the direct payment

recipient so that they are able to take responsibility for the management of their care and support needs. In summary a Direct Payment Support Service:

Promotes direct payments as a way of facilitating independent living. Providing advice, information and guidance to new and existing direct payment recipients to empower them to have choice and control over their support in a way that works for them, enabling them to live their life their way

A considerable amount of importance is placed on having a support service by direct payment recipients. The support service is described as **invaluable, all support is helpful** and helps people **to understand the process, to fill in the gaps when they are employing their own assistant, and to provide critical background services like payroll and insurance.**

Focus on A Support Service

My mum's care needs escalated rapidly at the same time that I was (and continue to be) ill, meaning that I was very close to becoming overwhelmed by everything that I had to organise for mum.

When I started to look at the option of a direct payment I have been so thankful for the support Wiltshire CIL have given me so that I can employ a Personal Assistant, everything from the assessment, banking, recruiting a PA and templates have been a huge help. I have been listened to and supported at a very stressful time and during events where I had no idea of how to progress or where to turn to for help.

The direct payment is set up and we are now in relatively calm waters, enabling mum to remain in her own home, where she is most settled and less anxious, by receiving the round-the-clock care that she requires to do so.

Who Should Provide the Support Service?

Previous engagement with direct payment recipients in Wiltshire in 2021³ discussed who is best placed to deliver a direct payment support service; looking at the benefits and disadvantages of -

- A local organisation
- A national organisation
- The local authority

A Local User Led Organisation

An advantage of a local organisation providing a direct payment support service is that it is **independent of the local authority and not government led**.

People felt that a local 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 local 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 organisation and you will not experience delays in receiving support as the **staff are all knowledgeable** on direct payments and able to assist. Having a **good knowledgeable support service took the pressure off** of direct payment recipients.

The **added value** of a local 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 a 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 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**.

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 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**.

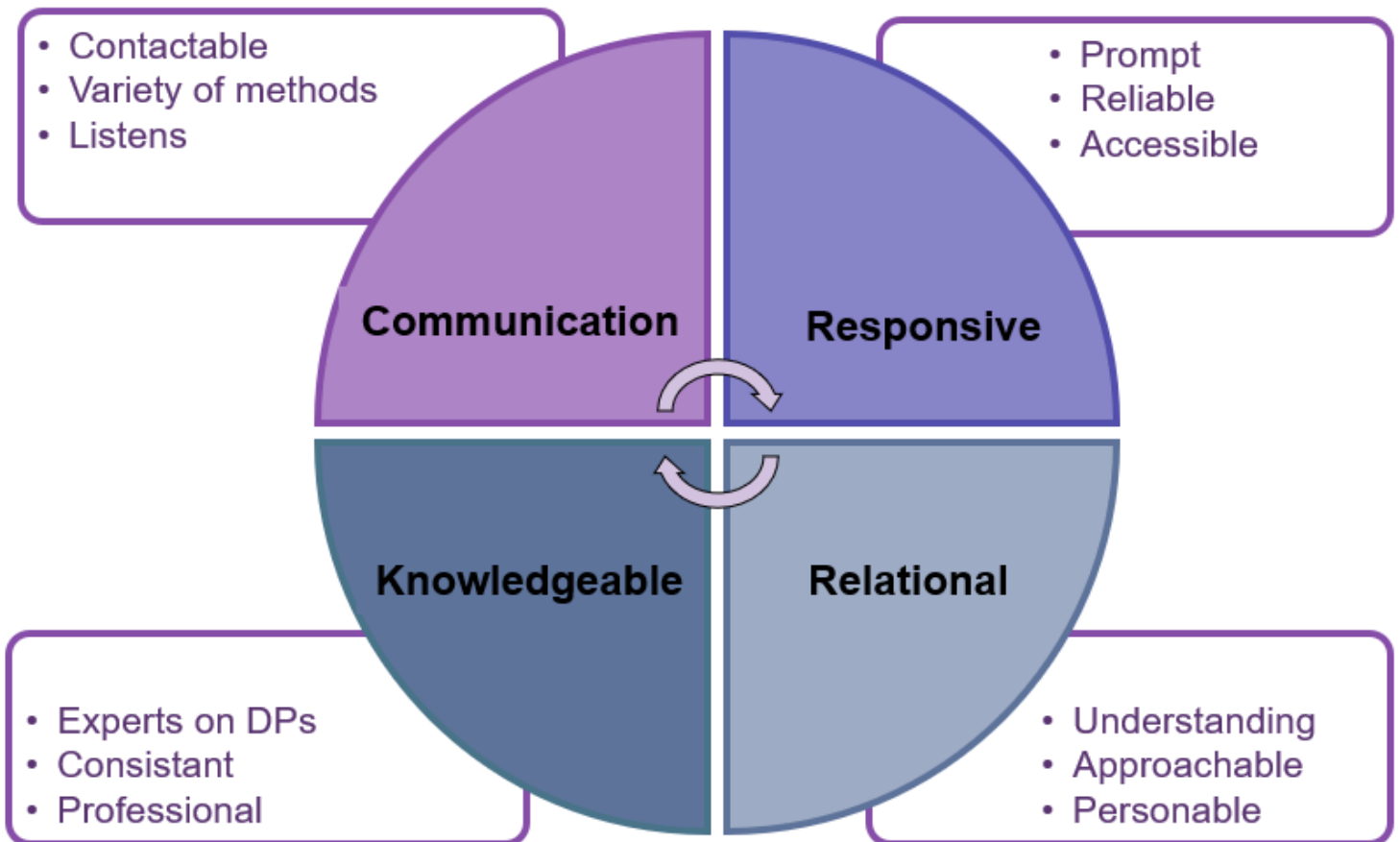
People strongly felt that the support would **not be joined up** or comprehensive, **different teams/departments would do different things, nothing would get done**.

It was felt that there would not be any effective support provided 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**'.

Key Components of a Support Service

There are four key components that contribute towards a direct payment support service being effective and of value for direct payment recipients:

- Communication
- Responsive
- Relational
- Knowledgeable



Communication

One of the the things valued most in a Direct Payment Support Service is effective communication. We have already seen that people need to be communicated with in a variety of ways using mediums that best work for them. A support service must be able to adapt how it communicates, be flexible and personalise its communication methods so that everyone feels equally valued and informed.

Being listened to is also valued so that people feel understood and **do not have to continually repeat** their situation and issues to the Direct Payment Advisers, this promotes confidence in the service.

All information is valuable and access to your support service via telephone email or website are invaluable

Having a variety of means by which a support service can be contacted is also valuable so that people are able to dip in and out and choose which communication method works best for them or for the type of query that they have.

A Direct Payment Support Service responding to individuals different communication needs, being contactable and listening to people means that direct payment recipients are confident and equipped to manage their direct payments and fulfil their responsibilities as employers as they have been given the right support in the way that works for them.

Responsive

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

A good support service is one that people know is **available when needed**, even if the need is only **infrequent**, they **don't have to wait** for the phone to be answered and their questions and queries are answered **promptly.**

To have somewhere/someone that you can contact and know you will receive a response instantly or within a short amount of time. Who you are talking to is compassionate and understanding and you feel you are being listened to

Knowing that advice, information, guidance and support is available when needed takes the pressure off, as direct payment recipients know where to get the support they need and have confidence that they will be provided with the support required.

I know that when I have an issue or need advice, I know who to ring and who to talk to. The support available gives me piece of mind, and I know that if I email or phone, I don't have to wait long for a response

Relational

As well as being responsive and using a variety of communication methods and tools a Direct Payment Support Service has to be relational. Direct payment recipients value and expect to be supported by professionals who are **understanding, compassionate, personable and approachable**

The understanding of my (invisible) disability is the most valued aspect of the support I receive

Having Direct Payment Advisers who are **kind, polite and friendly** makes the whole process of understanding how the direct payment works a lot easier. An adviser who has **empathy** makes all the difference to direct payment recipients who are navigating the complex task of setting up and managing their direct payment.

A Direct Payment Support Service should feel personal and where people know you and your situation, as a result the direct payment recipient feels **valued, heard and understood**.

Knowledgeable

When using and contacting a Direct Payment Support Service direct payment recipients expect the advisers to be **professional** and the **experts** on direct payments, so that they can trust that the advice, information and support that they are being given is **helpful, accurate, up to date, consistent and correct**.

The support, advice and information needs to be proportionate to the persons needs, taking into account their preferred **communication**

method, **responsive** to their level of knowledge and understanding and given in a **relational** way that **does not bombard people with facts when not needed**.

I don't know what I don't know and Wiltshire CIL fills in all the gaps in my knowledge that I didn't realise I have

The Scope of a Direct Payment Support Service

In general people found the current **set up** and **structure** of the Direct Payment Support Service **worked well** for them, they felt the support system was **established**, had local knowledge and the support provided is **valued** and **much appreciated**.

As we have already discussed and analysed, the following areas are all deemed equally important and crucial parts of an effective direct payment support service:

- Understanding direct payments
- Budgeting
- Employment rights and responsibilities
- Template forms (employment contracts, timesheets etc.)
- Payroll (calculating wages)
- Personal Assistant (PA) recruitment / PA Register
- Employers Liability Insurance
- Care Act assessment
- Ending a direct payment
- Banking service
- Personal Assistant training

In addition to the above, there are a few areas that direct payment recipients felt would be beneficial to receive more support, advice, guidance and information on from a Direct Payment Support Service.



Regular Updates

People frequently suggested that they would like and would benefit from **regular updates** and **ongoing hints, tips** and **advice** around managing their direct payment from a Direct Payment Support Service.

As previously established any regular updates would need to be provided in a variety of formats and mediums and could include **social media updates** and **videos** etc.

People viewed being kept up to date on any changes that could effect how they managed their direct payment as important, this could be around **pay rates**, **legislation changes** or **minimum wage increases** for example.

We were not kept informed of the increase to carers (PA) wages, so more up to date and timely information or changes, regulations etc.

Whilst the responsibility to notify direct payment recipients on some changes such as direct payment pay rates increasing lies with the Local Authority, it is recognised that the support service also has a role to play in sharing this information.

Simplified Information

Setting up and managing a direct payment requires the direct payment recipient understanding and taking on board some quite complex information around becoming an employer.

There were several suggestions with people asking for **clear, concise, simplified information** on the whole process of receiving and managing a direct payment. Having a **toolkit** and **bite size** information on specific topics were suggested as useful methods of simplifying information.

A step by step guide on the process of how direct payments works, and have the terminology explained. Also, a guide for what to do in a crisis.



Promotion of Direct Payments

Direct payment recipients see direct payments as a positive choice and feel that more should be done to **promote direct payments as an option** for people receiving care and support.

They also felt that the **Direct Payment Support Service should be promoted better**, by the support service but also by the social care practitioners working for the local authority, as its function is crucial to the successful management of a direct payment for direct payment recipients.

Assessment Process

The process of a Care Act assessment is perceived by people as **daunting and complex**. Having support to understand and prepare for the assessment process was suggested as beneficial. Once an assessment had been agreed people also found it difficult to then **understand the support plan** and decipher what support their direct payment covered.

For my mum to have a clearer understanding of what she is meant to pay for from direct payments and to be kept better informed about this

People found navigating the council **complicated, bureaucratic with too many different departments and people to go through**. Whilst it is the local authorities role to be more accessible and transparent, a Direct Payment Support Service will often become a mediator between the local authority and the direct payment recipient helping to broker the relationship and smooth the waters. It is therefore important for the Direct Payment Support Service and the operational teams within the local authority to have a productive relationship.

Recruiting and Training

One of the areas that people struggled with most is **recruiting personal assistants**. This is an on-going national issue which has been helped with the recent uplift in direct payment rates in Wiltshire enabling people to offer a higher, more competitive pay rate to their Personal Assistants.

It was suggested that some Personal Assistants may feel **isolated** which may deter them from the role. So, providing **peer support** options such as the Personal Assistant Facebook forum would be beneficial.

There were several suggestions made to support recruitment of Personal Assistants which included having a **pool of Personal Assistants** and **lists of carers** that people can call on when needed. Providing such resources lies beyond the scope of a Direct Payment Support Service as this would entail operating as an 'agency' which would require regulation by CQC.

There is however scope for a direct payment support service to support with and look at more creative uses of direct payments, Individual Service Funds and how budgets can be pooled, alongside exploring the merits of Personal Assistants setting up as micro enterprises to address the recruitment issues at a local community based level.



BEYOND A SUPPORT SERVICE

Alongside there being a handful of areas that direct payment recipients felt they would like further support on to receive and manage their direct payment there were also a wide variety of issues and areas that were raised by people that either fall beyond the scope of a Direct Payment Support Service or are not related to direct payments.

These areas have a significant impact on peoples lives, so they are also worth addressing within the context of this report.



DP Related

- More Funding
- Assessment processes
- Local Authority DP administration
- Personal Health Budgets
- Being the employer



Beyond DPs

- Care and support services available in Wiltshire
- The future
- Housing
- Transport

Direct Payment Related

A tenth of survey respondents mentioned the need for **more hours** of support or an **increase** in the direct payment funding so that they can employ a Personal Assistant for more hours. As well as wanting and needing some **security of provision**. The need for more support was due to a **change** in circumstances and **getting older**, people described **struggling to manage with less support**.

Frustrations are experienced with the assessment processes for a Care Act assessment, reviews and OT's. The wait for a review or assessment was long, a carer describing **needing help since January and still trying to sort it out** now. A lack of reviews were noted with some wondering if **annual reviews have stopped** and others not having had their **needs assessed for 3 years**.

Continuity of support from social services was also important, with a desire to going back to having **allocated workers** and more **face to face contact/assessments** with social workers. People struggled with contacting social services and got frustrated with **length of time spent on the phone** and people **not getting back** to them.

To go back to having an assigned person (social worker) who deals with your files and has a continuity of contact over time

There is an interest in wanting to know more about eligibility and access to **Personal Health Budgets**.

The Financial Assessment caused people stress and anxiety, people found there were **too many forms**, it was **too complicated** and **not person centred**. The level of information requested in the assessment was felt to be disproportionate, with people describing **going through such in depth personal accounts every year very tiring and not necessary as accounts never change in a good way!**

The local authorities administration of direct payments caused some frustrations around late payments of direct payments into accounts, especially when needing to pay Personal Assistants, but having to **wait 2 months for the first payment** of the direct payment to be received into their bank account.

The recent uplift in the direct payment rate has been very welcomed by direct payment recipients, however an **annual automatic uplift** in the rates would enable direct payment recipients to budget more effectively and offer competitive rates of pay, in turn having a greater success rate with recruitment and lower staff turn over.

Being in an inconvenient rural location and having to retain staff regularly, yearly pay increases would be helpful. Companies are paying considerably enhanced rates to attract and keep staff. My staff have recently received their first pay rise in nearly a decade. I doubt anyone else would be happy about this especially given the world economy and inflation

The limitations of direct payments to cover the administrative costs of managing a direct payment was highlighted - **Money received for managing budgets is not included in the funding provision. It costs me to run a PC, print etc. and at least 5 hours per month on administration - on top of caring hands and responsibility and emergency covers.**

Having **clear explanation** from the local authority on **how the direct payment is made up** would also assist with budgeting - **better and clearer laid out (financial) information so I can see what is in place easily.**

For those who struggle with being an employer and the responsibilities that it entails suggested that the local authority or the Direct Payment Support Service became the employer. Whilst this isn't an option, there is scope for the local authority to explore the use of Individual Service Funds in these circumstances.

Beyond Direct Payments

There is a need amongst the respondents to want to know more about what care and support services are available in Wiltshire, including **community services** and **accessing the community**. People want to know what is available, how they find out what is available and how they access services such as **carer cafes, dementia support, befrienders, counselling, advocacy, respite, and form filling**.

We were recently informed that we'd need a deputyship in place for supported living but wasn't told by the social worker that they could help complete the forms until we asked the questions directly sometime later

There is a concern about **planning for the future** as people get older, they want information on wider issues that effect their lives, health and wellbeing such as information on where they can access **welfare checks/ calls**.

What happens next as I become less and less able to cope alone?

Bigger issues such as **housing** and **transport** infrastructures in Wiltshire were also raised as areas of concern and where people would like to see improvements.



CONCLUSIONS & RECOMMENDATIONS

There is a demand and appetite amongst disabled, older people and carers for direct payments. A considerable number of people in Wiltshire are already benefiting from the choice, flexibility and control that a direct payment gives them. But, more can be done to embed direct payments as a positive option in Wiltshire with greater promotion of their use as one mechanism of achieving self directed support.

Further consideration should also be given to how personal health budgets and Individual Service Funds can also be of benefit to people living in Wiltshire.

Integral to the successful management of a direct payment is an effective, local Direct Payment Support Service that provides ongoing support, that is also:

- Accessible,
- Knowledgeable,
- Responsive and
- Relational

Direct payment recipients value and utilise all of the support on offer to them through a Direct Payment Support Service. Whilst they have suggested some areas where they would benefit from some greater support, overall they would struggle to understand and know how to meet all of their statutory responsibilities as an employer without the support service.

REFERENCES

1. <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance>
2. Direct Payment Guidance Summer 2023 - <https://www.wiltshirecil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Direct-Payments-June-2023.pdf>
3. Direct Payment Support Service September 2021 - <https://www.wiltshirecil.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/Direct-Payment-Support-Service-Report-September-2021.pdf>
4. WCIL Quarterly Self Direct Support monitoring returns, submitted to Wiltshire Council
5. Skills for Care funded training course feedback 2022/23

APPENDIX 1

Self Directed Support Services Survey

We would like to understand the views of people who use self-directed support services (direct payments and personal health budgets) in Wiltshire.

A Self-Directed Support Service provides support and advice to help people manage their direct payments or personal health budgets to give people more choice, greater flexibility and more control over the support they get and to help meet a range of needs and promote people's independence and quality of life.

We would like to understand what a Self-Directed Support Service looks like for people in Wiltshire and what you need from the service so that you can live well.

The anonymous information that you provide will be written into a report that Wiltshire Council will use to help shape and develop services.

- I am ...
 - A person with care and support needs who receives a direct payment
 - An informal carer who receives a direct payment for my needs as a carer
 - A person receiving a personal health budget
 - Employing a Personal Assistant but do not receive any money towards my care from Wiltshire Council
 - A family member or friend
 - Employed as a Personal Assistant
 - Self-employed
 - Other
- How old are you?
 - Under 18
 - 18-64
 - 65-74
 - 75-84
 - 85+
- I live in:
 - A town/city
 - A rural village
 - Other

- On a scale of 1-5 how important is advice, support, guidance and information on the following topics (1 = not important, 5 = very important)
 - Understanding direct payments
 - Budgeting
 - Employment rights and responsibilities
 - Template forms (employment contracts, timesheets etc)
 - Payroll (calculating wages etc)
 - Personal Assistant recruitment
 - PA Register
 - Employers Liability Insurance
 - Care Act assessment
 - Ending a direct payment
 - Banking service
 - Personal Assistant training

- How do you like to receive support, advice, information and guidance? (tick all that apply)
 - Website
 - Face to face
 - Social media
 - Online information / fact sheets
 - Paper information / fact sheets
 - Videos

- What is working well with the support available to you at the moment and what do you value most?

- Do you think there are parts of a support service that are not valuable?

- Is there anything more you would like from a support service?

- What do you think the key aim of a support service should be?

- Is there anything else you would like to add?

- If you would like to talk to us further about your views, we would love to hear from you. Please leave your name and either your phone number or email and we will arrange a time to catch up with you.

**Thank you to everyone who
contributed their views
and experiences**



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