

Wales Council of the Blind Roundup

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No. 28



Tactile markings on new £10 note.

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Inside: Direct Payments

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EDITORIAL

There's a busy autumn ahead. The season started during National Eye Health Week during which Welsh Government held the Annual Wales Eyecare Conference – it was successful and we shall report on that next time. We also have Sensory Awareness Month in November. There is information about these inside.

In recent discussions with groups we found that there is limited awareness of Direct Payments, particularly amongst younger people with sight loss. Groups of young people and groups of older adults revealed almost no awareness of the means by which individuals gain more control and choice over their package of care and support. We've been busy gathering as much information about Direct Payments as possible. We have a general description, some case studies, information from Direct Payment agencies and contact details. We also have an item on Disability Wales' Citizen-Directed Co-operatives and how Direct Payments can be pooled for maximum cost-effectiveness.

Our next edition will be looking at condition-specific support and organisations. This shall be published before Christmas in order to get our publishing schedule back on track. As ever, we would like people to submit examples of organisations to add to the resource.

- *Richard Bowers (richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk)*

WCB Roundup is published quarterly by **Wales Council of the Blind**, 2nd Floor, Hallinans House, 22 Newport Road, Cardiff CF24 0DB. Tel: 029 20 473954.
Email: richard@wcb-ccd.org.uk.

Further copies, in audio CD or large print formats, are available. All editions are online at
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with audio at
<https://soundcloud.com/wales-council-blind>

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Advertisers will reach a readership of individuals with sight loss, optometrists, ophthalmologists, rehabilitation officers, social workers, and organisations working for blind, partially sighted and disabled people.

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To advertise in many editions, please contact us for discounts. Contact Ann via ann@wcb-ccd.org.uk or telephone 02920 473954.

WCB NEWS.

Your Voice: a Shared Vision.

South East Wales Regional Forum

Next meeting: Newport Salvation Army, 1 Hill Street,
Newport, NP20 1LZ.
11am - 2pm, 28th September.

West Wales Regional Forum

Next meeting: Carmarthen Bowling Club, St Peters
Street, Carmarthen, SA31 1LN.
11am – 2pm, 29th September.

Please contact Rebecca at WCB on 029 20 473 954 to let her know you wish to attend.

Storm WCB – Cardiff event

The next StormWCB South East group meeting will be held on Wednesday the 15th of November. The theme of this event will be Inspiration with a selection of speakers connected to this theme. If you want any further information or to be kept in touch with updates for this event please get in touch with megan@wcb-ccd.org.uk or mared@wcb-ccd.org.uk.

More about Storm WCB is in the supplement.

DIRECT PAYMENTS.

What are Direct Payments?

A Direct Payment is money provided to an individual from a local authority as an alternative to directly arranged community care services. Rather than the local authority social services department providing or arranging the care and support it has assessed you as needing, you receive money and appropriate support to enable you to arrange your own services, allowing you more choice and control over the way your care and support needs are met. They are also available to carers.

Case Study.

“I live in Swansea and have been assessed by Social Services as being entitled to four hours per week. I applied for a Direct Payment as I needed help to use equipment at the gym and to go swimming. The Direct Payments service in Swansea helped me advertise my vacancy and sent me applications from which I selected applicants I wished to interview. I offered the job to a lady who lives near me and is willing to transport me and my Guide Dog in her car. This is important as I may wish to access facilities to which there are no public transport links. Direct Payments do not cover the cost of a Personal Assistant’s fuel so you should take that into account. They pay for their own mileage to and from your home, but you must cover the cost of any journeys they perform in the course of their work for you.

“My PA will sign a contract which explains her duties and we will set up payment through the payroll service. This requires her to send in a time sheet verifying hours worked, and she will be paid directly, tax and NI will be subtracted which

makes it easy for me and ensures we meet all legal requirements.”

Direct payments are designed to empower disabled people to live independent lives, offering them more choice and control over how their care needs are met, and are an alternative to having support arranged directly by social services. They were implemented in 1997 and are covered in the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014. In this issue, we outline the system and give feedback from users.

The information in the first section is taken in large part from Age Cymru’s Factsheet 24W, ‘Direct payments for community care services in Wales’. Thanks to Age Cymru for permission to quote from it and thanks also to Welsh Government for suggesting changes to bring it in line with current legislation. We also received input from a service user.

Your rights and entitlements to receive a direct payment and the duties of local authorities are set out in the statutory Code of Practice (Meeting Needs) issued under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 which can be accessed here: <http://gov.wales/docs/phhs/publications/160106pt4en.pdf>

Pros and Cons of Direct Payments.

Pros

- Choice and control of the support you want when and where you need it;
- Flexibility in when you get the support, and how it is provide;
- You choose who gives the support, and you train that person in how best to support you;

- Once the payroll system is set up, you just need to sign the time sheets and your PA gets paid, there is very little paperwork to worry about;
- Overall, the potential to solve many difficulties and to get involved in activities which would otherwise be so challenging that you might not choose to do them.

Cons

- You may go through an additional formal assessment of your needs with Social Services.
- You must agree to set up a separate bank account so the money they pay you for your PA is never mixed up with your own funds.
- You must keep bank statements for that account for auditing purposes, and it must never be used for anything except paying your PA.
- Recruiting the right person can be tricky.
- You are legally that individual's employer, so you must treat them appropriately. This means that you both have responsibilities to respect each other and to work within the terms of the contract of employment. For example, once you have agreed their hours and their duties, you should not expect them to change them without agreement, and they should be punctual and reliable.

Must local authorities offer direct payments?

Since April 2003, local authorities have had a legal duty to offer direct payments as part of their support planning process, if the person is willing and able to manage them – with or without assistance – to meet their eligible needs. An individual does not have to accept direct payments. If they prefer, they can choose to receive care and support services provided and arranged by the local authority, or a 'mixed care' package, where some of the services are provided by

the local authority and other needs are met through direct payments. This can, for example, give somebody the opportunity to familiarise themselves with having direct payments before taking on responsibility for arranging support to meet all their needs. Services can also include aids and equipment to help you get around, or to assist you with daily activities in the home.

Direct payments can only be paid towards the cost of care and support services that the local authority social services department have assessed you as needing. These are called 'eligible' needs because they are based on the local authority's application of the National Eligibility Criteria. Direct payments cannot be offered for needs that do not meet the criteria (<https://socialcare.wales/hub/sswbact-assessment-tool>).

Who can have a direct payment?

Anyone who has been assessed as eligible for care and support by their local authority is eligible to receive direct payments to organise some or all of their care. Carers may also be eligible (see below).

How to get a direct payment

You can ask the local authority to carry out an assessment of your needs to see if you are eligible for support and to discuss whether or not direct payments are the means by which you would prefer to manage them. If you meet the eligibility criteria for care and support, direct payments must be discussed and offered by the local authority following an assessment of your care needs and as part of your support plan.

It is up to you whether you accept the offer of direct payments or not. You have a choice, and if you decide not to

opt for direct payments, the local authority is under a duty to arrange or provide services for you in order to meet your eligible needs.

You can also request to switch to direct payments rather than continue to have services arranged or provided by the local authority. This can be done at any time. If you want to switch to direct payments, you should tell the local authority who will discuss this with you.

The level of your direct payment

A local authority must ensure that the value of a Direct Payment is made equivalent to its estimate of the reasonable costs of securing the care and support required, to a standard that the local authority considers reasonable.

The local authority must include in its calculation inherent costs associated with complying with the legalities of being an employer. It must also allow for changes to the amount paid brought about by external factors such as inflation or changes in regulations.

Direct payments for carers

In addition to the right of people who may require care services to have an assessment of their needs by social services, a family member or friend who cares for them will also have a right to an assessment of their own needs as a carer.

As a result, a carer may be assessed as eligible for services to support them with their caring role, as well as to maintain their own health and well-being whilst doing so.

Using your direct payments

You can use your direct payments however you wish, as long as it is to meet your assessed eligible needs (as identified in your care assessment). Although social services departments need to set conditions to ensure that the payments are used on assessed needs, a balance should be reached in respect of the overall aim of direct payments – i.e. they are designed to give people more choice and control over the care and support services they are assessed as needing.

For example, below is a list of some of the things you may be able to use a direct payment for, which includes traditional types of homecare alongside other methods that may suit particular people:

- personal care – e.g. getting dressed, washing and bathing;
- housework, cooking, shopping, or gardening;
- support with communication needs;
- meeting social needs – leisure activities, visiting friends, attending social groups or a course;
- specialist homeware or equipment and adaptations;
- transport, such as taxis.

Direct payments: things to consider when arranging your own care and support

Employing your own care workers or personal assistants gives you the greatest choice and control over your care services. Some people worry about the responsibilities of being an employer, but many others have found it to be a successful way of arranging their care and support and that, once systems have been set up, they run smoothly. You may find that a local support scheme offers training and/or a

payroll service that helps with the tax, National Insurance and pension aspects of being an employer. Ask your local authority for details or look at the Dewis website (<https://www.dewis.wales>).

If you are daunted by the prospect of taking on the responsibility of being an employer, this doesn't mean that you will be unable to make use of the direct payments system. Instead, you can choose to use your direct payment to contract with an independent care agency, or a person who is self-employed.

Complaining about a decision or service provision

You, or your representative, have the right to use the local authority complaints procedure if you disagree with a decision about direct payments. A complaint can be about any aspect of a local authority's actions and also the actions of organisations that are carrying out services on behalf of the local authority. Each local authority must publish details of its complaints procedure and you should be informed about it.

What do people think of Direct Payments?

We asked people to tell us their experiences of obtaining and using Direct Payments. Some of the responses also talk about the assessment for care and support generally, but we felt that this might be seen as part of the same process from the outside, so we left those comments in. The reports have been anonymised.

Peter.

Peter's experience shows that it is important to know your rights and to understand the system before approaching the local authority for support.

He first tried to apply for DPs about two months ago via the local authority's independent living call centre, and was told that he needed a rehabilitation assessment, which has a waiting list of 6 to 12 months.

Peter knew that he needed a social worker assessment, not rehab, but the call centre insisted that this was not the case.

He complained to the Social Services Manager who admitted that the call centre was wrong, and arranged for a social worker to assess him very quickly.

He has now been told that he can have Direct Payments to cover support for social activities (such as taking him to the gym), and for maintaining a guide dog spend area, but not for activities such as cleaning, shopping and gardening. The local authority claims that Direct Payments are for 'extreme care' and social activities. He is not satisfied with this, and is likely to appeal against their decision.

The idea that Direct Payments are reserved for 'extreme care' is misguided. Direct Payments are merely an alternative way of funding your assessed needs. Peter is right to challenge this.

Peter has views on the awareness of both Direct Payments and services in general within the local authority. He says there seems to be a poor level of awareness of the roles and responsibilities of other departments (such as the call centre's poor understanding of the role of rehabilitation).

He believes that there is a lack of clarity about what activities Direct Payments may be used for.

Helen.

Helen is self-employed, and on a low income. She started claiming Direct Payments around 15 years ago in England.

She now lives in Wales, where her Local Authority was helpful in getting her an increase in the hours of support. She is currently entitled to 16 hours of support per week. Because her income is low, she does not have to make any personal financial contributions.

Helen believes that one good aspect of the system is that if you move, your 'old' LA continues making payments for 12 weeks, giving time to make new arrangements. This helped in her transition to her current local authority.

She did not find the process for claiming was too intrusive. However, she had to provide full details of her income and believes that this is necessary to ensure that funds are going to the right people.

Her Direct Payments are currently administered by an agency. She is entitled to 16 hours support per week, to be used for basic household tasks such as cooking and shopping. However, due to problems described below, she is only getting between 6 and 8 hours/week.

Helen is very critical of the support her particular agency provides. She feels they have no understanding of the particular needs of vi people. This may be because many of their clients are elderly with mobility problems, and have very different needs from younger disabled people.

Helen suggests that agency staff and support workers should have vi awareness training. At the moment, Helen has to educate them about her needs herself.

She sees shortcomings in the processes for recruiting someone to provide care and support. Helen is sent CVs which only give information such as gender and whether the applicant is a driver, and is thereby left to interview candidates on the basis of minimal information.

She has asked the agency to be more proactive in looking for people who might be better suited to supporting vi clients, but they are not willing to do this.

Because of these problems, it has not been possible for her to recruit a second support worker. She feels she does not have the time and energy required to argue with the agency. Helen could, of course, complain via the local authority complaints procedure.

Although the payroll support provided by the agency is very good (workers are paid on time), there is a very slow response to any other type of pay-related enquiry (for example, when workers join or leave).

Some of the communications from the agency are inaccessible (e.g. information highlighted in red).

Overall, Helen feels that Direct Payments is a 'brilliant system' but she has lost faith in her agency because of the quality of their people, poor response to issues raised, and lack of understanding of the needs of people with vision impairment (particularly younger vi people).

Katie.

Katie has been in receipt of Direct Payments for 7 years. She describes here some aspects of the process.

She underwent an assessment by a social worker/rehab worker to draw up a care plan. This included the well-being outcomes she wanted to achieve such as personal care and shopping, and decided how these could most appropriately be achieved - how many hours of support are required, for example.

Then she had a financial assessment by the local authority that she found quite intrusive. If you have a partner/spouse, any joint income may form part of the assessment. Whilst this assessment will include a set allowance for disability-related expenditure Katie's experience didn't allow for some of the extra costs of disability such as additional heating.

She discovered that if your income exceeds the 'threshold', you have to pay for some of the hours yourself. This means that it may, in some circumstances, not be worthwhile proceeding with the application.

In Katie's case, she had to appeal to get the costs of owning a guide dog included, such as specialist cleaning of bedding, additional taxis arising from the dog's tiredness and other things that are not covered by Guide Dogs. The appeal involved producing a written argument, and a face-to-face interview. Although she found the process to be stressful, her appeal was a success.

Individuals can choose to manage their support themselves, but her LA has a contract with a specific agency and Katie makes use of them. She set up separate bank account to handle payments. The agency advertises for the Personal Assistant.

Katie felt that when the relationship with the PA works well, the system is excellent, but there needs to be give and take on both sides. For example, one PA wanted Katie to fit her requirements around the PA's personal circumstances. In

this regard it is important to remember that you are the employer, so you should engage a worker that fits your timetable.

Katie was surprised that the agency does not arrange for PAs to have the appropriate disability awareness training - the client is left to explain what is required.

Despite these issues, Katie describes Direct Payments as 'the best part of social care', and is currently very satisfied with the service provided by her personal assistants.

Karen.

Having been in receipt of direct payments for over five years, the impact this has had on Karen's life has been quite significant.

Having a personal assistant for an agreed number of hours a week has offered her opportunities she would otherwise have found very difficult to undertake.

Being able to interview and select the person that best suits her and her situation really makes a difference. She is the one making the decisions.

Her PA drives her to the various locations she needs to go to, unlocking a whole new realm of travel, freedom to access facilities and with the right PA this can completely transform your life. Karen says it certainly has transformed hers.

Karen's one real concern is that not enough people are available to fill the PA jobs. The job with the right person is extremely rewarding - the knowledge that you can significantly change a person's life has got to be worth considering. She really feels this role needs to be given more credit in an effort to encourage more people to apply.

Geoff.

With regard to direct payments, Geoff's history is as follows. He had been in hospital for a few months, and when the time came to send him home it was decided by the Social Services via the hospital that he needed someone to come in at least once a day. Workers from Social Services came in twice a day for six weeks, which was longer than usual, but this was because he was identified as a disabled person. After this six-week period, he decided that he should recruit his support through direct payments managed by an agency. They have always been helpful: initially, they advertised in the newspaper on his behalf, and within a few days, the advert was answered. An agency officer came out with the candidate, they had an interview of sorts, and she and Geoff seemed to click right away.

The support worker has worked for him for five years. Whenever she needs to take long spells of leave, Geoff has been fortunate in finding a very helpful substitute, who also was obtained through the agency. He pays the agency £280 per month, and they pay his PA for a certain number of hours per month.

Geoff admits that he was concerned about people coming in, especially after hearing 'horror stories' from one person he met in hospital, but he believes direct payments have worked extremely well for him.

Pooling Funding

Pooling your available funding means taking some of your money (including Direct Payments) and adding it to the funding of one or more other people to meet your collective support needs and personal goals. Not only can this give you

better value for money, but it can enable you to share solutions with your peers, and help you do the things that are important to you more effectively.

Flintshire Council has produced 'A Guide to Pooling your Funding with other People' which gives more information on this. You can download it from their website:
<http://www.flintshire.gov.uk/en/Resident/Social-Services/Direct-Payments.aspx>.

Citizen-Directed Co-operatives and Direct Payments.

Jeff Brattan-Wilson of Disability Wales's Citizen Directed Co-operatives Cymru Project tells us about an initiative in Monmouthshire.

What do we mean by a 'Citizen Directed Co-operative' and why has one been created in Monmouthshire?

When it comes to direct payments, those receiving them are often the experts in their own needs.

Often, recipients of direct payments prefer to include aspects surrounding their gender, cultural needs, sexuality and religious identities into their care package - not just their physical or mental support requirements.

The 'Social Services and Wellbeing Act' stresses the importance of looking at all aspects of an individual's life, rather than only meeting their support needs.

Now, imagine people who have direct payments getting together, having choice and control over what kind of services they want, and ultimately creating an agency of their own, but with a difference.

This is what a **citizen-directed co-operative** would look like.

There are many different co-operative models that exist and the citizen-directed co-operative is not intended to replace any of those other models. It is created with the hope that this will be another option for people to choose from, such as worker co-operatives, multi stakeholder co-operatives etc.

During our bid to the National Lottery for funding, we were able to identify that there were no Citizen Directed Co-operatives in the UK. Due to our long history of being a disabled people-led organisation, we realised that this work is central to our organisation's core values and the work surrounding a user-led co-operative would fit within our own principles.

Our idea is not new within the European context. Norway and Sweden already have 100% member-led co-operatives; we wanted to replicate this idea in the UK and provide people with the same opportunity.

The timing for this co-operative is perfect. In Wales, as mentioned earlier, the 'Social Services and Well-being Act' recently came into being, which stresses the importance of asking service users what they want, looking at their life holistically and asking what is important to them.

The act is encouraging social care to move away from a 'prescription'-based culture, where services are being offered and individuals have to fit into that service, rather than the reverse.

Furthermore, the act encourages service users to co-design their care and participate in a 'what matters' conversation.

A citizen-directed co-operative in this instance is a really good way of collectively responding to the needs of individuals.

For example, under the old model of service provision, if one local authority notices that they have a number of people over fifty years of age that have all have classed themselves as members of the Catholic faith, then social services can meet their support needs but are very unlikely to meet their religious needs.

The answer though could be for the local authority to bring all of these individuals together and explore the option of setting up a citizen-directed co-operative, where they can integrate their Catholic faith into their everyday support requirements. They could also recruit Catholic PAs or those who have experience in Catholicism.

By setting up this particular co-operative, social services can also reduce the risk of isolation and loneliness that the individuals may face if left by themselves. Simply put, one direct payment may be able to achieve many assessment objectives. There is also the prospect of a greater return on investment from one direct payment.

As part of our project, we have established a co-operative in Monmouthshire which was originally called 'My Life, My Choices'. However, due to a number of reasons, the board voted to change the name to 'Moncare Co-operative'.

We currently have five board members who all are involved in direct payments either as parent carers or as direct payment recipients.

We are currently in the process of registering Moncare Co-operative with Co-operatives UK. The board is also now in the process of developing the business plan for the co-operative, to ensure that it is sustainable. This will be done in conjunction with the Wales Co-operative Centre, our project partners.

The board will be meeting in the next few months to decide its priorities and strategies to ensure that the co-operative can go from strength to strength.

We are currently looking for more Direct Payment recipients in Monmouthshire to join the Co-operative board.

For more information, please contact Citizen-Directed Co-operatives Cymru Project officer Jeff Brattan-Wilson: jeffbrattan-wilson@disabilitywales.org or 02920 887325

Disability Wales and the Wales Co-operative Centre has commissioned a report from Northumbria University on Co-operatives and direct payments:

<http://www.disabilitywales.org/wordpress/wp-content/uploads/direct-payments-report-eng.pdf>

They have more information on Citizen-Directed Co-operatives Cymru at

<http://www.disabilitywales.org/projects/current-projects/citizen-directed-co-operative-cymru-project/>

They are also conducting a survey of people who receive DP at https://www.surveymonkey.co.uk/r/DP_Recipients

Agency Support.

Local Authorities review their contracts with agencies periodically, but it seems that they do not always seek the views of disabled people when doing this. In one case we know of, the individual was moved from an agency that supplied a good service to a new agency that gave an inferior service. We believe that, in order to ensure the process is disability-led, disabled people must be consulted on the appropriateness or quality of a service provider such as a Direct Payments agency.

Three agencies explain their service for people using Direct Payments and give some case studies.

Penderels Trust

Penderels Trust is a not-for-profit organisation that has been supporting people with disabilities or long-term health conditions to live independently since 1988. Most of the people they support have a direct payment, either as part of their personal budget for social care or personal health budget for healthcare and support. They support adults and children with a range of disabilities including those with a visual impairment.

They currently hold the local authority contract to supply support services to people with a direct payment in Flintshire and Wrexham. These services are provided by a team of experienced and friendly independent living advisers who are based in their office in Mold. Their services include:

- Personal assistant (PA) recruitment and ongoing staff management including PA Finder service;
- Meeting responsibilities as an employer;
- Payroll service including auto enrolment support;

- Using a care agency;
- Managing care money on an individual's behalf;
- Keeping accurate records.

In each area they work in, they work in partnership with other agencies who provide specialist support for disability groups, such as sensory impairment charities and the resource centre for vision impairment for that local area.

They can provide information in a number of different formats including Braille. Their website has the 'browse aloud' functionality and they can provide written documentation in large font, on different coloured paper or in a different format that can be used by electronic readers.

Case Example 1

They work with a woman, aged 51, who lives with her family. As an employer of personal assistants (PAs), they provide her with recruitment and employment support. Initially they were providing a lot of support including going to her home to process PA wages. Since this time, they have gradually reduced support as she is a very independent woman. Her adult son can now process the wages for her so the agency no longer has to make these frequent visits. She is a regular participant of their peer groups and is a willing mentor to others considering a direct payment.

Case Example 2

They work with a woman, aged 75, who is deafblind as a result of Usher's Syndrome. She lives with her adult son, her husband having passed away a few years ago. They support her with PA employment. Her PAs support her to access leisure activities, with visits to the local garden centre being something she particularly enjoys. The trust recently supported her to find agency support to cover her PA's

annual leave. As part of her condition, she also suffers episodes of paranoia. They have worked with a specialist worker for this condition which has helped Trust staff better understand the symptoms and behaviours associated with it.

People Plus Independent Living Services (ILS) Division.

People Plus deliver a range of tailored Independent Living Services for vulnerable people and have done so for over 13 years. Their experience and expert knowledge includes helping people to manage their Direct Payment to pursue life choices and achieve better outcomes by supporting greater:

- Choice
- Independence
- Empowerment
- Control

They work with Councils, normally under a contract, to deliver free-at-the-point-of-contact information, advice and support to help eligible people to receive and manage their Direct Payments.

These services also extend to Councils who deliver their Direct Payment services under something called a Framework Agreement, whereby people have a choice of support providers.

They also deliver services to people who self-fund their own care but wish to take advantage of People Plus's specialist advice and services to allow them to do this. Many of these people often benefit from purchasing their Payroll Service and/or asking them to manage their care monies on their behalf, where they pay clients' carers or care agencies directly through something called a Managed Account.

PeoplePlus currently provide Direct Payment services for Bridgend County Borough Council (Contract), Neath Port Talbot (Framework) and Powys County Council (Contract). Their service delivery and long credible track record of working with people with differing needs extends beyond Wales where they currently support over 10,000 individual Direct Payment service users across the UK, working alongside 17 Local Authority Regions.

What they provide:

Their service is committed to providing high quality, impartial, advice and information. This will allow people to take control of their own care needs and meet their obligations in managing their Direct Payment funds and where applicable, fulfilling their employer responsibilities. Their support service provides:

- A diverse range of tailored Direct Payment information for service users who want to consider/receive a care budget from their Local Authority or self-fund their own care
- Care Options, Employment Responsibilities, Recruitment Support and Advice
- Payroll and Managed Account service to help with financial management, PA/Agency payments, reporting and regulatory compliance (HMRC) of a Direct Payment and associated care funds.

Case Study:

Julie has been in receipt of Direct Payments for the past 6 years. She had a quick and unexpected loss of sight which changed her life. Being a very independent and active person Julie took up visually impaired bowls and took to it like a duck to water. She is currently both the UK Ladies

Indoor and Outdoor Champion for Visually Impaired Bowls and has been selected for the commonwealth games squad in Australia 2018.

She uses her Direct Payments to employ a Personal Assistant to enable her to get to training sessions with her coach John Wilson and matches at club & county level. In some cases her PA also supports her when she travels away to major tournaments around the UK.

“PA jobs have so much value and are so worthwhile. Having a PA enables me not only to access bowling, which I of course love and has transformed my life but it also allows me to access other activities which are so important for general day to day life.

“Being a high performance sportswoman keeping up with a demanding training schedule as well as family responsibilities is essential. I employ PAs through Direct Payments with the support of PeoplePlus, which enables me to get to and from training sessions and matches, as bowling greens are often in the middle of nowhere! It is an important support outlet for me. It would be quite difficult to get to some of the venues without the support with transport I have, so my PA plays a key part in my on-the-green success.

“When you find the right PA it can be life changing and so empowering.”

The Rowan Organisation

The Rowan Organisation is a leading provider of Direct Payments (DP) and Personal Budgets Support, with over 30 years of experience in providing services across Wales and England.

They are a not-for-profit charity and are proud to be directed by a Board of Management, most of whom also receive their services, ensuring that they offer user-led services and personalised solutions at all times. It enables those who receive their services to play an active role in the development of the organisation.

The Rowan Organisation currently hold contracts for DP support in Conwy, Denbighshire and Gwynedd, where they also have a bilingual office base. However, they also provide remote support in other areas across Wales.

They have extensive experience of providing support to disabled and older people, including many of whom who have sensory impairments.

They can provide information in a variety of formats including Braille, large print and audio versions, and in a range of different languages.

Case Study.

They recently supported Catherine, a young woman who is blind and was feeling isolated within her home, which was severely affecting her sense of wellbeing. They engaged with her through the provision of email and audio information to ensure that she was confident about using DP, and to understand how it could improve her lifestyle. Catherine is now enjoying a renewed sense of independence with a supportive PA who assists her to live a full - and far more independent - lifestyle. Catherine is now rarely at home! The organisation provides payroll support via regular email communication to ensure that the PA is paid correctly and this works well. Catherine is now a fully competent and confident employer but knows that should she have any queries, the agency will be there to help.

Direct Payment contacts.

Local Authorities.

Where we have identified that an authority uses an agency to provide DP support, this is indicated. Note that LAs review their contracts with suppliers regularly, so this information could change in future.

Anglesey

Adults Services: 01248 752 752 or
email ASDUTY@ynysmon.gov.uk
Children's Services: 01248 752984 or
email gxbss@ynysmon.gov.uk

Blaenau Gwent

Direct Payments Team: telephone: 01495 355265 or
email: directpayments@blaenau-gwent.gov.uk

Bridgend

Agency used: People Plus (listed below).

Caerphilly

Information, Advice and Assistance Service (IAA): telephone
0808 100 2500.

Cardiff

General contact no. for adult care assessments:
029 2023 4234
Children's care services: 029 2053 6490
Agency used: Dewis CIL.

Carmarthenshire

Contact your Social Worker or Occupational Therapist if you have one, or if you would like to receive a care needs assessment contact Careline+ on 01267 224466.

Agency used: Diverse Cymru.

Ceredigion

Single Point of Access on 01545 574000

Agency used: Diverse Cymru.

Conwy

Direct Payments Section: telephone 01492 577744 or email direct.payments@conwy.gov.uk

Agency used: The Rowan Organisation.

Denbighshire

Called 'Support Budgets'.

Single point of access: telephone 0300 456 1000

Agency used: The Rowan Organisation.

Flintshire

Mark Cooper (Direct Payments Coordinator):

telephone: 01352 701101,

email: Mark.Cooper@flintshire.gov.uk

Agency used: Penderels Trust.

Gwynedd

Direct Payments Coordinator.

Telephone: 01286 682888,

email: CynghoriAsesuOedolion@gwynedd.llyw.cymru

Agency used: The Rowan Organisation.

Merthyr Tydfil

Telephone: 01685 725000

Email: customer.care@merthyr.gov.uk

Agency used: Dewis CIL.

Monmouthshire

Direct Payments Officer, G.A.V.O.

Telephone: 01291 672352

Email: direct.payments@gavowales.org.uk

Neath Port Talbot

Direct Payment Support Service

Telephone: 01639 686812

Email: directpayments@npt.gov.uk

NPT uses the following 'approved suppliers' to provide DP support: Diverse Cymru; The Rowan Organisation; Compass Independent Living; ILBP; My Care, My Home; People Plus.

Newport

Direct Payments Support Team: telephone 01633 656 656 or email direct.payments@newport.gov.uk

Pembrokeshire

Direct Payment Team: telephone 01437 764551

Email: enquiries@pembrokeshire.gov.uk

Agency used: Diverse Cymru.

Powys

Telephone: 01597 827666

Email: adultsocialservices@powys.gov.uk

RCT

Direct Payments for Adults: telephone 01443 425003

Direct Payments for Children: telephone: 01443 425006

Agency used: Dewis CIL.

Swansea

Independent Living Team: telephone 01792 636445

Email: independentliving@swansea.gov.uk

Agency used: Compass Independent Living.

Torfaen

Direct Payments Support Team: telephone: 01633 877908

Email torfaen@S4il.co.uk

Vale of Glamorgan

Direct Payments Development Officer:

Telephone: 01446 704685

Email: c1v@valeofglamorgan.gov.uk

Agency used: Dewis CIL.

Wrexham

Direct Payments: telephone: 01978 298676

Email: directpayments@wrexham.gov.uk

Agency used: Penderels Trust.

Agencies.

Compass Independent Living

11-12 Belvedere Trading Estate,
Taunton, TA1 1BH

Tel: 0330 3330089/01823 282823

Email: payroll@compassdisability.org.uk

Dewis Centre for Independent Living (CIL)

Amber House

Upper Boat Business Park

Upper Boat, Pontypridd

CF37 5BP

Tel: 01443 827930

Fax: 01443 841922

email: info@dewiscil.org.uk

Diverse Cymru

307-315 Cowbridge Road East

Cardiff CF5 1JD

Tel: 029 2036 8888 Email: info@diverse.cymru

ILBP (Independent Living Brokerage Partnership)

Suite 8, Station House

New Hall Hey Road

Rawtenstall

Rosendale

BB4 6AJ

Telephone: 01706 249 595

Email: info@ilbp.co.uk

My Care, My Home

Information & Advice

Telephone: 0800 731 8470

Email: info@mycaremycarehome.co.uk

Website www.mycaremyhome.co.uk

People Plus

PeoplePlus Group Ltd,
Independent Living Services (ILS),
Blades Enterprise Centre,
John Street,
Sheffield, S2 4SW
Telephone: 0330 123 2815 (local call rate) or
07540 669645
email: ilsneathporttalbot@peopleplus.co.uk
ilsbridgend@peopleplus.co.uk

The Rowan Organisation

Ty Menai
Parc Menai Business Park
Ffordd Penlan
Bangor, Gwynedd LL57 4HJ
Telephone 01248 668750 for Welsh speakers or
0800 783 1755 for English speakers
To learn more about the support that they can offer in Wales,
please contact Karen.smith@therowan.org or on 02476
322860.

The Penderels Trust

St Andrews Park
Queens Lane, Mold
Flintshire
CH7 1XB
Telephone 01352 706235
Email: wrexham@penderelstrust.org.uk
flintshire@penderelstrust.org.uk

ACROSS THE SECTOR.

‘It Makes Sense’

In December 2015, the NHS Wales ‘It Makes Sense - Sensory Loss Awareness Month’ Campaign was launched to raise the awareness of the NHS Wales workforce of the All Wales Standards for Accessible Communication and Information for People with Sensory Loss.

Last year’s campaign developed key messages for healthcare staff to encourage them to ask patients about their communication and information needs and for the public to ‘Tell, Ask and Share’ their particular communication needs with healthcare professionals. A campaign film was produced which you can view at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.wales.nhs.uk/it-makes-sense-2016>

This year’s campaign will run throughout November 2017 with activities taking place in Health Boards and NHS Trusts across Wales. There will be a national campaign launch on the afternoon of Thursday 23rd November 2017 and a programme and booking details will shortly be available on the website for the Centre for Equality and Human Rights at <http://www.equalityhumanrights.wales.nhs.uk>

The Campaign launch for 2017 will focus on the new Sensory Loss Information Standard which will require GP surgeries to capture, record and share the different communication and information needs of patients with

sensory loss. A programme of engagement with members of the Sensory Loss Community to inform them about the new Information Standard is being planned and will be undertaken throughout the autumn of this year through to March 2018.

For further details please contact Tara Lewis at Tara.Lewis@wales.nhs.uk or telephone 02920 104234.

‘Pathway to Participation’ Project

Guide Dogs Cymru has secured a £92k grant from Children In Need to run a Wales-wide project entitled Pathway to Participation. Led by Guide Dogs’ qualified habilitation specialists, the three-year project will encourage children and young people with a vision impairment to broaden their horizons by getting out, participating in activities and developing new social networks. These could be creative, sporting, social or activity-based. The aim is to address feelings of isolation and exclusion, and increase confidence and self-esteem. Regular involvement in local youth activities, clubs and groups will improve physical and mental health and well-being, as young people are encouraged and inspired to try something different, meet new friends, take more control of their own lives and simply have fun.

For more details or to make a referral please contact Guide Dogs Cymru via email on Cymru-MT@guidedogs.org.uk or telephone 0345 1430195.

Blindness from diabetes halves in Wales

Research by Swansea University published in the British Medical Journal has found that, despite an increase in the number of people in Wales with diabetes, the proportion of diabetics who go blind or suffer sight loss has almost halved since Wales' diabetic retinopathy screening programme started in 2007. The research shows:

- There were 339 fewer new certifications for all levels of sight loss from any cause combined in 2014-15, compared with 2007-08;
- There were 22 fewer people with known diabetes with sight loss due specifically to their diabetes. There was a 49% fall in new certifications for severe sight impairment, from 31.3 to 15.8 per 100,000 people;
- During this observation period, 52,229 (40%) more people were diagnosed with diabetes in Wales.

Diabetic Eye Screening Wales invites patients registered with diabetes who are aged 12 and older for annual eye screening.

For more information about the screening and why it is so important, visit **www.medic.video/w-type2** and click on the video called "The Importance of Retinal Screening".

If you have any questions about retinopathy screening, or are concerned you may need an appointment, contact the Diabetic Retinopathy Screening Service for Wales on 01443 844344 between 9am and 3pm, Monday to Friday.

For information, advice and support on diabetes, contact Diabetes UK Cymru on 02920 668276 or wales@diabetes.org.uk.

CONSULTATIONS.

Welsh Government

Details of all consultations are at <http://wales.gov.uk/consultations>. Here's a selection relevant to the disability sector:

- Services fit for the future (closes 29th September)
- Electoral reform in local government in Wales (closes 10 October)

For preferred formats contact

CustomerHelp@wales.gsi.gov.uk or call 029 2082 3683.

Draft Transport Accessibility Action Plan

The UK Government is seeking views on a draft accessibility action plan which sets out proposals to improve the travel experience for people with disabilities.

In Wales, responsibility for transport is devolved to the Welsh Government, and the scope of this document is restricted to those areas for which the Department for Transport has direct responsibility in England and for those transport matters on which powers have been reserved at UK level. Notable reserved areas which will be of interest to people in Wales are cross border rail services, rail infrastructure investment in Wales, and aviation.

To find out more, read the proposals and respond, visit the website <https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/draft-transport-accessibility-action-plan>. The consultation closes on 15 November 2017.

OPPORTUNITIES.

Stelios Award for disabled entrepreneurs

Leonard Cheshire Disability has announced that applications are now being accepted for the 'Stelios Award for Disabled Entrepreneurs in the UK 2017'. This is the eleventh year of the award, which is run with the Stelios Philanthropic Foundation. It rewards those with disabilities who have demonstrated exceptional entrepreneurial spirit and business ability in the face of significant barriers. The overall winner wins £30,000 & an additional 4 shortlisted applicants win £10,000 each.

To find out more about the award and how to apply, visit the Leonard Cheshire Disability website, <https://www.leonardcheshire.org/support-and-information>. You can also ring 07740 515 957 for more information and to request alternative formats. The closing date for applications is 6th October, and the winner will be announced on 14th November.

PUBLICATIONS AND RESOURCES.

Turned Out 2017

Following the 2017 General Election, RNIB conducted a survey asking vision impaired people about their voting experiences, and the results have now been published. 'Turned Out 2017' reveals that only one in four blind and partially sighted voters felt the current system let them vote independently and in secret.

The tactile guide was a particular source of problems. In some cases polling station staff did not offer it, and even when it was offered, they were unaware of how to use it. Fifty-four per cent of respondents felt new accessible ways to vote are needed, such as telephone, electronic and online voting. RNIB is now calling on the UK Government to make three changes:

- Replace the current Tactile Voting Device (TVD) with a new accessible voting system
- Guarantee all blind and partially sighted voters can get their legal right to vote without any assistance and in secret
- Provide an online and/or telephone option for blind and partially sighted people to cast their vote independently and in secret if they aren't able to vote at their polling station by the time of the 2022 General Election.

Power for Life

Western Power Distribution (WPD) operates the electricity distribution network in the Midlands, South Wales and the South West. Put simply, our role is to ensure the power network of poles and pylons, cables, wires and substations – the infrastructure that we all rely upon to live our lives to the full – delivers electricity to our homes and businesses around the clock.

Power cut? Call our emergency number 0800 6783 105

Sometimes power cuts can happen for reasons beyond our control. During a power cut we are able to help.

We know it can be particularly worrying if you rely on electricity for medical equipment or if you are elderly, very ill or disabled. If you depend on electricity for a reason such as using a nebuliser, a kidney dialysis machine, an oxygen machine, a ventilator – or any other reason – you should register with us.

WPD provides a FREE Priority Service Register, which helps us to identify customers who may need a little extra help during a power cut.

If you join our FREE Priority Service Register we can:

- Give you a direct number to call in the event of a power cut so you can get straight through to us.
- Agree a password with you before we visit you, so you feel safe.
- Provide special help, if needed, through the RVS (Royal Voluntary Service) or British Red Cross.
- Ring and tell you about planned interruptions to your electricity supply.
- Keep you as informed as possible in the event of an unplanned power cut.

To join, call **0800 9177 953**, or visit our website **www.westernpower.co.uk**

EVENTS.

The Cerebral Visual Impairment Society - Annual Convention

The annual convention of the Cerebral Visual Impairment Society will be held on 3rd November at the Future Inns Hotel, Cabot Circus, Bristol. The theme will be 'Embracing a different 'Normality''.

Cerebral Visual Impairment (CVI) is a form of visual impairment caused by the brain not being able to process information from the eyes passing along the visual pathways in the brain. It is the commonest cause of visual impairment in children in the developed world.

There is a charge of £75 for professionals, and £15 for parents, carers and people with CVI. To find out more about the conference and book a place, visit the Society's website, <https://www.cvisociety.org.uk/cvi-convention>, or email info@cvisociety.org.uk.

Online Today

Online Today is a project to support people with sensory loss, gain and develop skills that allow them to use technology and the internet with confidence. The forthcoming schedule is:

- 29 September - Cardiff Institute for the Blind Exhibition
- 4th October – 'Supporting your senses' seminar at Swansea Grand Theatre
- 6 October - Welshpool and District Visual Impairment Club
- 25 October, 8 November and 22 November - Visually Impaired Merthyr

For more information about Online Today, call the team on 029 2082 8518 or email onlinetodaycymru@rnib.org.uk.

'Supporting your Senses. Who can help?'

This seminar for people with vision and/or hearing loss is being held on Wednesday 4th October 2017 from 1.15pm – 5pm at Swansea Grand Theatre.

There will be presentations from Mr Gwyn Williams Ophthalmologist, Kim Richards from SENSE, and the City and County Of Swansea Sensory Services team. The event also includes an information fair about aids, equipment and services available in the community, and RNIB Cymru's Online Today team will be there. Places must be booked in advance from Sue Neale, Eye Clinic Liaison Officer, Singleton Hospital on telephone 01792 200390 or email susan.neale@rnib.org.uk.

Audio described tour of National Museum Cardiff

The next audio described tour of the National Museum Cardiff is on Thursday 12th October from 11 am to 1 pm. It will be an opportunity to visit the Museum's Victorian art gallery, including masterpieces by Turner. A sighted companion is welcome to accompany you on the tour, and a limited amount of guided assistance is available from Museum staff. Please let them know when you book if you require this.

The event is free but booking is essential. To reserve a place, ring 029 2057 3240.

Audio described opera

Welsh National Opera (WNO) will be giving an audio described performance of Tchaikovsky's opera 'Eugene Onegin' at Wales Millennium Centre on Friday 6th October. The performance begins at 7pm and is preceded by a Touch Tour at 6pm, where patrons will be greeted by WNO's Stage Manager and Audio Description team. You can find out more about the production on WNO's website, <https://www.wno.org.uk/event/eugene-onegin>.

Tickets can be purchased through the Wales Millennium Centre box office on 029 2063 6464 and members of Hynt, Wales' national access scheme that works with theatres and arts centres, receive a free seat for a companion.

North Wales Mobile Information Unit

Details of the North Wales Mobile Information Unit's autumn schedule are on Vision Support's website, <http://www.visionsupport.org.uk>. It is recommended that you ring 01745 338914 to confirm details before travelling.

Keep the Ball Rolling

'Keep the Ball Rolling' is an information and goalball event for vision impaired children, young people and their families on Saturday 7th October from 10.15am – 1pm at the Pavilion, Swansea University Sports Village. Goalball is a team sport designed specifically for blind athletes.

The event includes a presentation from Mr Laws (ophthalmologist) and the orthoptists; inspirational speeches from vi athletes and information from the Swansea VI Education Service as well as RNIB. There will also be goalball sessions for the young people with Kathryn Fielding, and a specific goalball session for the over-16 years age group from 1.30 – 3pm.

To register for a place at this event, contact Sue Neale, Eye Clinic Liaison Officer, on telephone 01792 200390 or email susan.neale@rnib.org.uk.

‘Have a Go’ at RNC

There’s an event for vision impaired young people aged 13 – 17 years at the Royal National College for the Blind in Hereford on 21st-22nd October. At the ‘Have a Go’ weekend, participants can have fun and make new friends while trying a range of sports, music, performing arts and much more.

The event involves one overnight stay in free accommodation for the young person and one accompanying adult. There is an information and advice session for adults, otherwise they are free to use the College’s leisure facilities or explore the local area. To find out more, visit the RNC website, <http://www.rnc.ac.uk/events/4945>, telephone 01432 376 621 or email info@rnc.ac.uk.

New College Worcester

New College Worcester has a programme of events during the autumn including:

- 3rd October – ‘Supporting students with a vision impairment’ for teaching assistants and parents.
- 14th October – ‘Family and Education Day’ with activities for children and a chance for parents to find out more about the College.
- 8th November – ‘Outreach Open Day’ for education professionals and parents.

For full details of all events, visit the New College website, <http://www.newcollegeworcester.co.uk/events> or telephone 01905 763933.

Glaucoma Group Meeting

There's a meeting of the Mid-Powys Glaucoma Group on Monday 6th November from 2 pm to 4 pm for anyone affected by the condition.

The event will be held at Howey Village Hall, Howey, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 5PT and tea /coffee will be provided. The programme is:

- 'Glaucoma' - Mr Ben While, Consultant Ophthalmologist
- 'Introducing the International Glaucoma Association' - Eryl Williams, International Glaucoma Association (IGA) Regional Development Manager.

For further information or to confirm your attendance please contact Eye Care Liaison Officer Keira Brooks on 07701 295138.

Smell gas?

Staying safe in six easy steps

If you smell gas in your home or business, we're here to help. Here's what to do.

- 1 Call us immediately on Freephone 0800 111 999. We're available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and will send out an engineer to make your property safe.
- 2 Turn off all your gas appliances and, if possible, switch off the gas at the meter (unless the meter is in the cellar or basement, in which case don't go in).
- 3 Open windows and doors.
- 4 Don't use any electrical appliances or switch lights on or off.
- 5 Don't smoke or use naked flames.
- 6 If there's a smell of gas in the cellar or basement, please wait outside or with a neighbour.



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