



working together for independent living

Direct Payment Review

HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

2017-18

We would like to thank all of the residents who receive Direct Payments who took part in this Review, for engaging with us and trusting us with their stories.

We would also like to thank Katy Murray, Shaun Bezant and the Adult Social Care staff, Kevin Caulfield, Amanda Roles, Hana Smeet, the team at Action on Disability and Kamran Mallick for their support and enthusiastic involvement over the duration of this project.

Published by:

Ruils

The Disability Action & Advice Centre

4 Waldegrave Road

Teddington TW11 8HT

Tel: 020 8831 6083

www.ruils.co.uk

May 2018

CONTENTS

04	FOREWORD – CLLR COLEMAN
05	INTRODUCTION
06	SUMMARY
06	KEY RECOMMENDATIONS
08	WHAT WE DID
09	WHAT WE FOUND
24	NEXT STEPS
28	GLOSSARY

Foreword

Hammersmith & Fulham aspires to be the most accessible and inclusive borough, one in which disabled residents lead the development and delivery of the services they need and want.

After 2014, based on what disabled people told us, we became one of the few councils in the country not to charge for home care, and we guaranteed funding for the Independent Living Fund when it seemed the government might remove it.

We set up an independent Disabled People's Commission to chart how we should achieve our wider goals. The Commission was made up of a wide age range of local residents who self-identified as disabled people.

We also asked a disabled people's organisation, Ruils, to undertake an independent review of the council's long-standing Direct Payments system, which disabled people told us wasn't working well enough.

I'm grateful to Ruils for their powerful recommendations, which complement the Commission's. The council is committed to implementing both reports, using our new flexibility as we move on from sharing services in a tri-borough arrangement.

We will improve Direct Payments by working with the residents who receive these and the organisations that represent them.

Going further, we will replace the tri-borough's Personalisation Strategy with a co-produced independent living strategy in Hammersmith & Fulham for disabled residents of all ages so that they can live their lives in the way they choose.

Co-production will lie at the heart of how we operate in future – nothing about Disabled People without Disabled People.

Our aim is for disabled residents and disabled people's organisations to work together with councillors and council officers across every department to identify, design and evaluate the policy decisions and service delivery that affect their lives, and remove the barriers they face.

Making this happen will be exciting, challenging and hugely rewarding for everyone involved.

Cllr Ben Coleman

Cabinet Member for Health and Adult Social Care
Hammersmith & Fulham Council

Introduction

Prior to 2012, The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham outsourced its Independent Living Support service, which included Direct Payment support, to Hammersmith and Fulham Action on Disability (HAFAD). In 2012, the contract was retendered which resulted in the service being taken in-house where it became part of a tri-borough service across the London Boroughs of Hammersmith & Fulham, the Royal Borough of Kensington & Chelsea and the City of Westminster. Over the last 5 years, the number of residents receiving a Direct Payment in Hammersmith and Fulham has plateaued. This led to discussions between council representatives and local Disabled Persons Organisations on the need to review people's experience of Direct Payment support in the borough.

These discussions resulted in Hammersmith and Fulham Council commissioning a peer led review of the Direct Payment Support Service. In April 2017, Ruils, a user-led organisation run by disabled people with extensive experience of delivering Direct Payment support services in Richmond, and more recently, Wandsworth was instructed to do this.

Although this Review focused on Direct Payments and Direct Payment support, it is important to recognise the context in which Direct Payments are delivered. Under the Care Act 2014 the local authority has a duty to ensure that information and advice on care and support is available to all client groups when they need it. There is also a duty to embed Personalisation in social care as well as increasing the focus on wellbeing and prevention. The Act is one of the first pieces of legislation to specifically include the concept of co-production in its statutory guidance.

Over a 6 month period, we surveyed and interviewed residents who receive Direct Payments, Adult Social Care and Finance team staff and staff from local voluntary sector organisations. This review is by no means definitive, however it does capture these respondents' views and experiences at this time.

Summary

Hammersmith and Fulham have a long and successful tradition of delivering Direct Payments across their borough. Individuals have benefited greatly, through having more independence, greater control over their care and support and more life opportunities. However, over the last few years Direct Payment uptake has plateaued. Inconsistent, and at times out of date information, lack of internal resources and support, staff changes and lack of experience and knowledge of Direct Payments has made it increasingly difficult for the in-house team to provide appropriate and consistent support. Processes are complex and time consuming and there is little synergy between the social work and Finance Teams.

Existing and new Direct Payment recipients find it difficult to get clear information and on-going support. Although peer support is still provided by the voluntary sector, new Direct Payment users are not informed of this and so many fail to benefit from it. Increasingly residents who receive Direct Payments are relying on payroll providers, friends and family for support. The Council has already acknowledged that it needs to make significant changes in order to reverse this trend and some of this work is already underway.

Changing internal processes, reviewing, updating and improving information is essential, however a culture shift within the social work team is required in order for Direct Payment uptake to improve. Social workers need training and support to increase their knowledge of Direct Payments and their confidence to recommend it. Evidence supports the need to commission an external fit for purpose Independent Living Support Service that can offer information, advice and support to social workers and residents who receive Direct Payments. It needs to be flexible and responsive, supporting the local authority to discharge its responsibilities, whilst empowering local people to take control of their support.

Key recommendations

It is evident from this Review that Direct Payments are changing people's lives, empowering them to take control and to remain independent within their community. From our findings, we make the following recommendations:

- 1 : The council makes a commitment to implementing this report's recommendations and creates an action plan with timescales including dates for the commissioning and mobilisation of the new Direct Payment support contract.
- 2 : As the council reviews and adopts new procedures, it does this with residents who receive a Direct Payment and the organisations that represent them.
- 3 : Information on Direct Payments is co-produced with residents who receive a Direct Payment and is easy to access, simple and jargon free. It should ideally be available online and in hard copy and in a range of formats e.g. large print, easy read.
- 4 : The council ensures that it is Care Act compliant. Co-producing key processes and policies and ensuring that all information is accessible and easy to obtain and understand will support this.
- 5 : The council, working with local user-led organisations and residents who receive a Direct Payment, commissions an Independent Living Service provided by an independent User-Led Organisation (ULO). The specification should include provision for a dedicated front line help desk with staff skilled in all aspects of Direct Payment implementation and support.
- 6 : The service specification for the Independent Living Support Service covers providing information and advice as well as training for Social Workers and other frontline staff as a key outcome.
- 7 : A clear Direct Payment pathway outlining the resident's journey, including key information requirements, staff responsibilities and time scales to be co-produced by the council and residents who receive Direct Payments. This will ensure that the Direct Payments are set up more quickly and efficiently.
- 8 : A programme of change to be implemented within the Adult Social Care Team that empowers social workers to have a positive conversation with potential Direct Payment recipients, putting the resident and their needs in the centre.
- 9 : A commitment to outcomes focused support planning is adopted by the Adult Social Care Team. Training on the relationship between Needs, Outcomes and service provision is crucial to enable this to happen.
- 10 : The council commissions an Independent Evaluation to ensure that these recommendations have been implemented.
- 11 : The council reviews its provision of Direct Payment support for children and young people with a particular focus on children in transition.

What we did

In order to ensure we had a comprehensive view of Direct Payments in Hammersmith and Fulham, it was very important to include as many people in the Review as possible. To achieve this, we employed the following methods:

DIRECT PAYMENT SURVEY

We created a survey which asked key questions about the individual's experience of setting up and using a Direct Payment. The survey was distributed as follows:



Posted (with a free post envelope) to 180 residents who receive Direct Payments by Action on Disability (AOD)



Posted (with a free post envelope) to 450 residents who receive Direct Payments by Hammersmith and Fulham Council



A link to the survey was emailed to AOD and council residents who receive Direct Payments with email addresses



Copies of the survey were distributed through AOD and Hammersmith and Fulham Mencap

Residents who receive Direct Payments were offered documents supplied in a format suitable to their needs including Large Print and Easy Read versions. They were also offered the option of completing the survey over the telephone.

PEER MEETINGS

We attended 2 Peer Support meetings hosted by Action on Disability and led discussions on Direct Payments.

INTERVIEWS

We conducted:

- 14 interviews with council staff including Social Workers, members of the Finance Team and team managers
- 6 interviews with Direct Payment users
- 5 interviews with voluntary sector staff

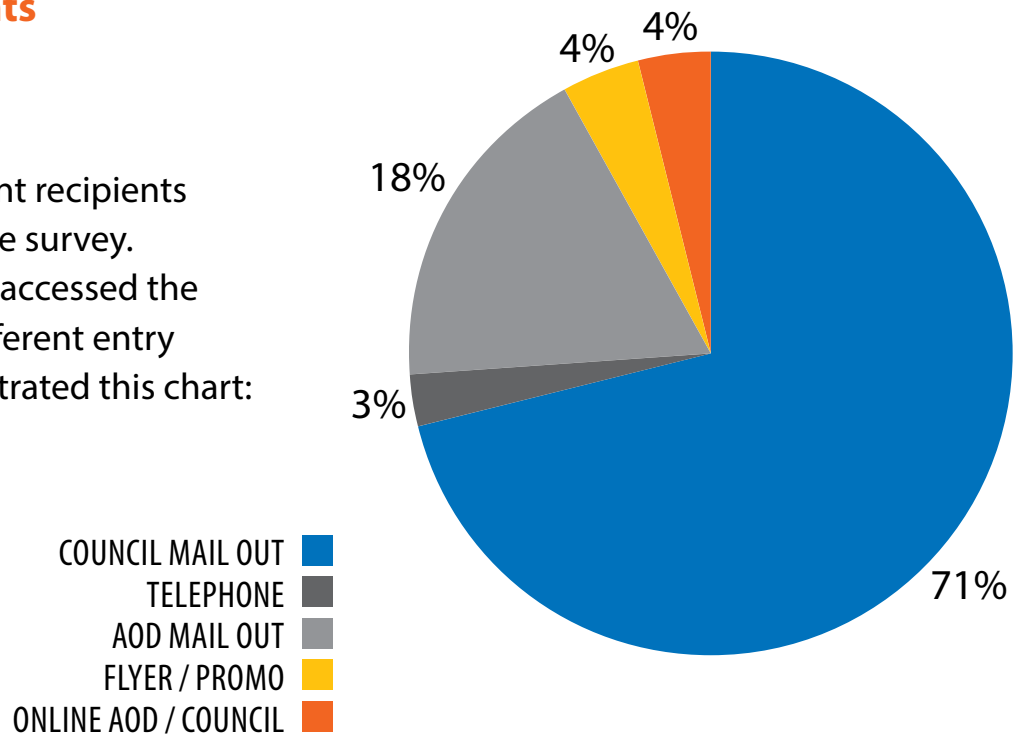
What we found

SURVEY RESULTS

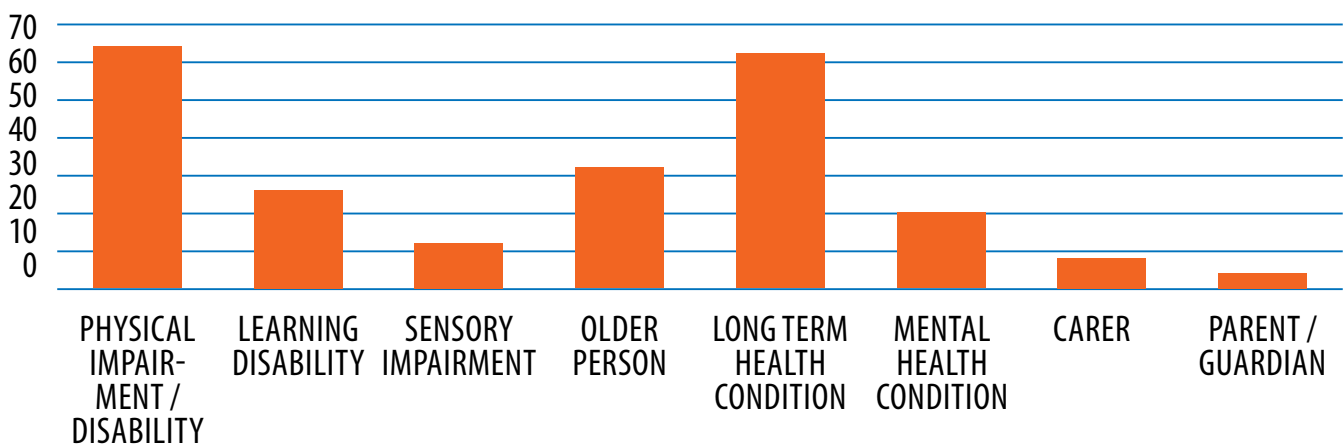
Respondents

98

Direct Payment recipients completed the survey. Respondents accessed the survey via different entry points as illustrated in this chart:



RESPONDENTS - HEALTH & SOCIAL CARE NEEDS



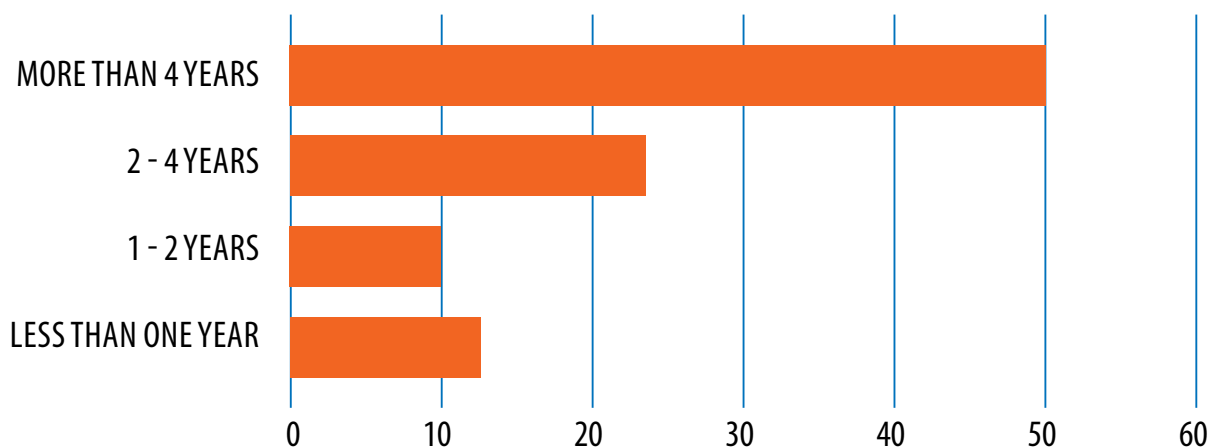
Individuals with a wide range of health and social care needs completed the survey.

Please note: Some people indicated they were living with a number of different impairments or conditions.

The majority of respondents **72%** had found out about Direct Payments from their social worker while a small proportion **8%** had heard from Action on Disability (AOD).

Just over half of the respondents had been using a Direct Payment for more than 4 years, with **24%** between 2 and 4 years and **13%** less than one year.

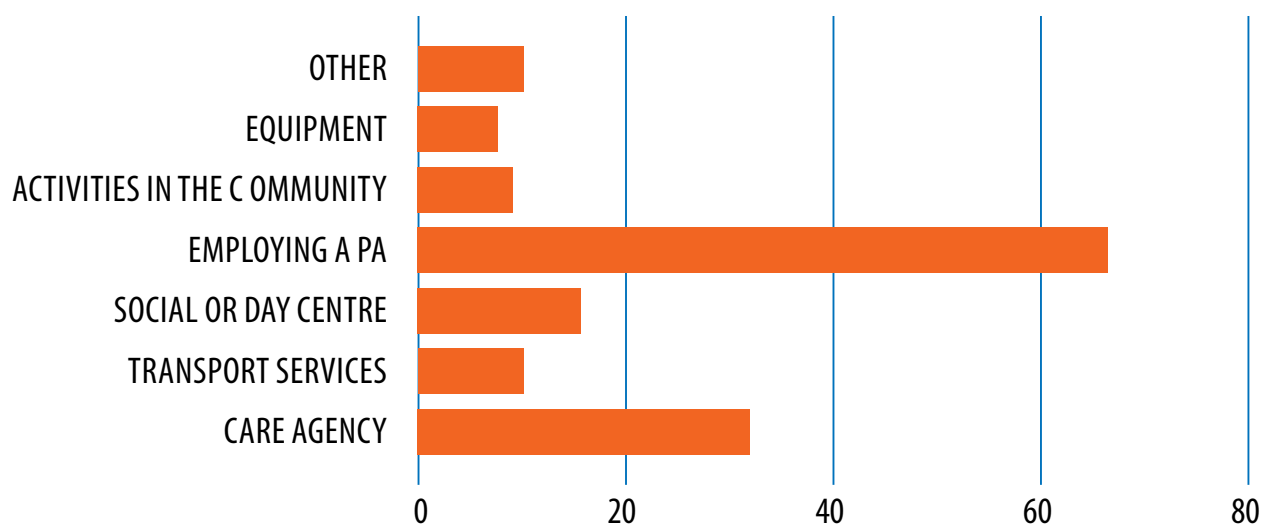
LENGTH OF TIME USING A DIRECT PAYMENT



Use of Direct Payment

The majority of respondents use their Direct Payments to employ a Personal Assistant. Other uses specified included: respite, someone to help with exercises, attending Impact Theatre, shopping, cleaning and washing. One respondent commented that there was very poor information on what a Direct Payment can be used for.

USE OF A DIRECT PAYMENT



Setting up a Direct Payment

56% of respondents indicated that they felt involved in the process of writing their support plan and budget. Just over 5% felt slightly involved with 4% not feeling involved at all. 9% of respondents did not know what a support plan was.

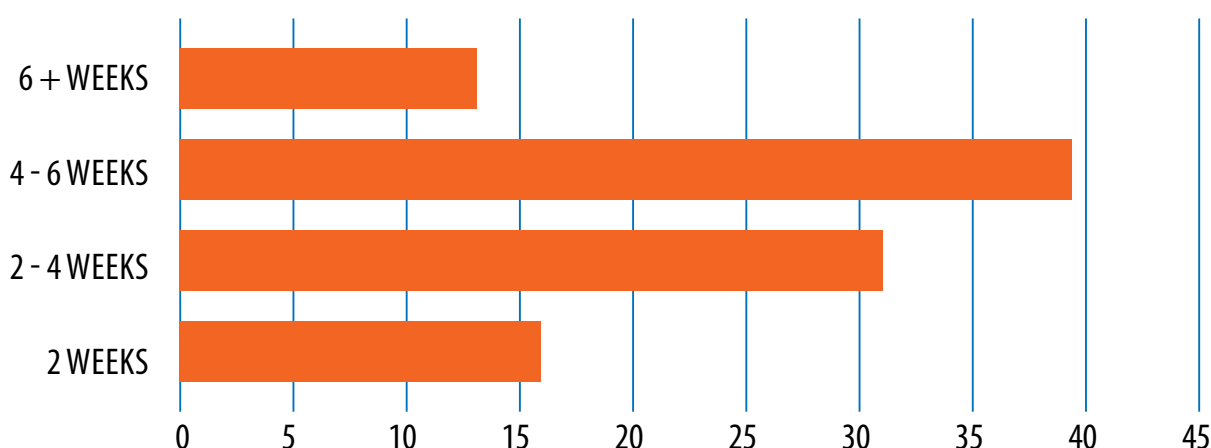
56% felt their support plan fully reflected their needs and requirements, while 41% felt that it only partially reflected this. 3% felt that their support plan did not reflect their needs and requirements at all.

A number of respondents commented that although their plan met their needs, they were living a restricted lifestyle and some were supplementing it with support from friends and/or family. Others commented that their care needs had changed and their plan no longer met their needs. Some were waiting on a review, whilst others expressed confusion over what they can spend their Direct Payment monies on.

There was quite a variation in the time taken to set up a Direct Payments. 40% of respondents reported that it had taken 4 - 6 weeks to set up their Direct Payment (see table below). Others had experienced significant delays with respondents reporting that it had taken 6 months, 11 months and 18 months respectively.

Respondents, who had experienced delays, commented that the process was slow and appeared disorganised. In one case the individual had experienced significant issues with paperwork that had had to be completed several times.

TIME TAKEN TO SET UP A DIRECT PAYMENT



In terms of managing their Direct Payment 42% of respondents had been offered a Managed Account, 23% had not and 35% did not know what a Managed Account was.

Employing a Personal Assistant

73% of respondents use their Direct Payment to employ a Personal Assistant or support staff. This is consistent with national data on Direct Payment use.

37% of respondents found it very easy to find a Personal Assistant (PA) to employ, with **38%** finding it quite easy, **18%** finding it quite hard and **6%** very hard. Respondents commented that they needed more information and were in many ways dependent on the employment market.

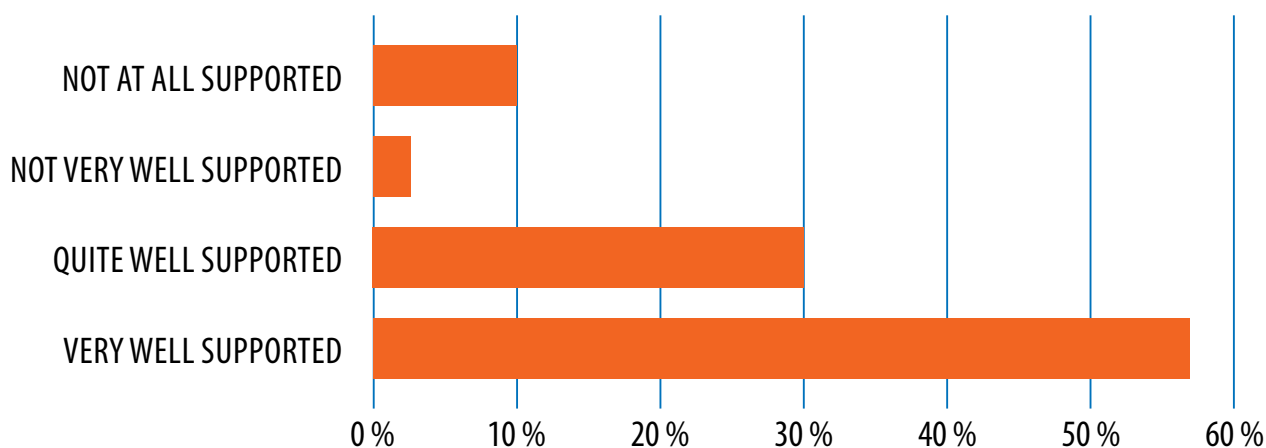
In terms of support to find a Personal Assistant (PA) **42%** of respondents felt well supported, **37%** felt quite well supported with **11%** feeling not very well supported and **10%** feeling not supported at all.

Respondents cited very different experiences of support: some received support from AOD, whilst others had had no support but were confident in finding their own PA via Gumtree for example. A few respondents had employed PAs who had previously worked for the agency that supported them and others had employed family members who they trusted.

The majority of respondents **77%** had received support to set up arrangements such as contracts, references, insurance and payroll. This support came from a number of sources including: Barry Bookkeeping Payroll Solution, Action on Disability (AOD), Nationwide (a payroll company), Pay Packet, social workers, family members and friends. Only **15%** had not had any support and a small proportion were unsure.

91% of respondents reported that they fully understood their responsibilities as a Direct Payment employer, with **6%** reporting they partially understood. Only **3%** of those who responded did not feel they understood their responsibilities.

SUPPORT TO MANAGE THE PA/EMPLOYER RELATIONSHIP



The majority of respondents felt well supported to manage their Personal Assistants. Again they cited different sources for support including Peninsular, their accountant, friends and family. Some felt they had not needed any support whilst others felt that since the service from HAFAD (now Action on Disability) has ceased they had not had any support.

13% of respondents had attended the recent Employer Training offered by Action on Disability, whilst **28%** were not aware of it. Just over half of the respondents were aware of the Peer Support Group run by Action on Disability, and of these **55%** had attended up to 3 sessions in the last 12 months with a very small proportion attending between 6 - 9 sessions over the same period.

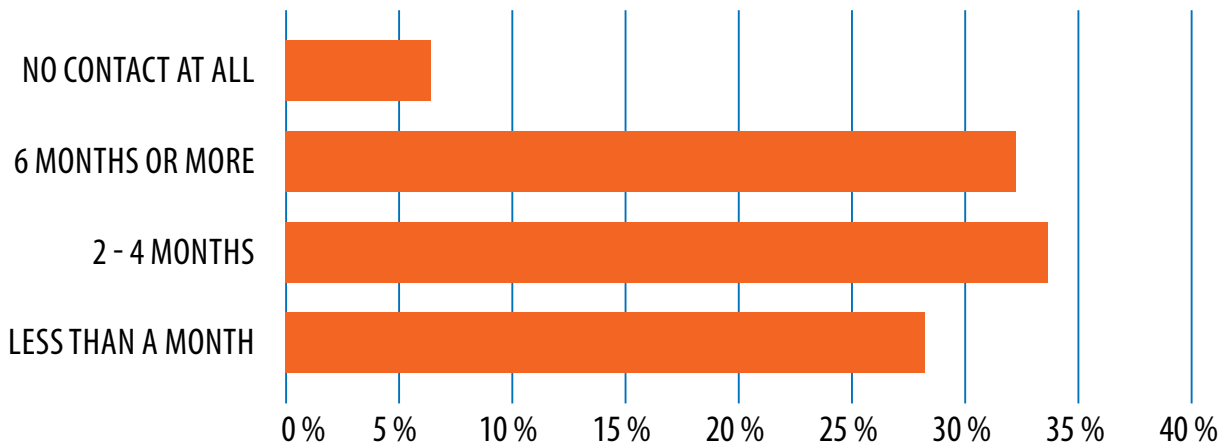
Managing their support

When asked about their level of satisfaction with the support they received to manage their care and support arrangements generally, **47%** of respondents were very satisfied with the support they received. This increased to **90%** when including those who were quite satisfied. A very small number of respondent were not satisfied.

In terms of managing the financial aspects of their Direct Payment, **45%** of respondents felt very well supported and again this number increased to **81%** when you include those respondents who reported feeling quite well supported. Some respondents reported that they were able to manage on their own and were well supported when they had issues. Respondents reported getting support from a variety of agencies e.g. Pay Packet, Barrie Bookkeeping, accountants and family members.

Some respondents felt that they had been left to get on and manage their Direct Payment on their own. One respondent felt let down by the Direct Payment service because they had contacted them for support, had spoken to a number of different people and did not feel that the information given was clear enough.

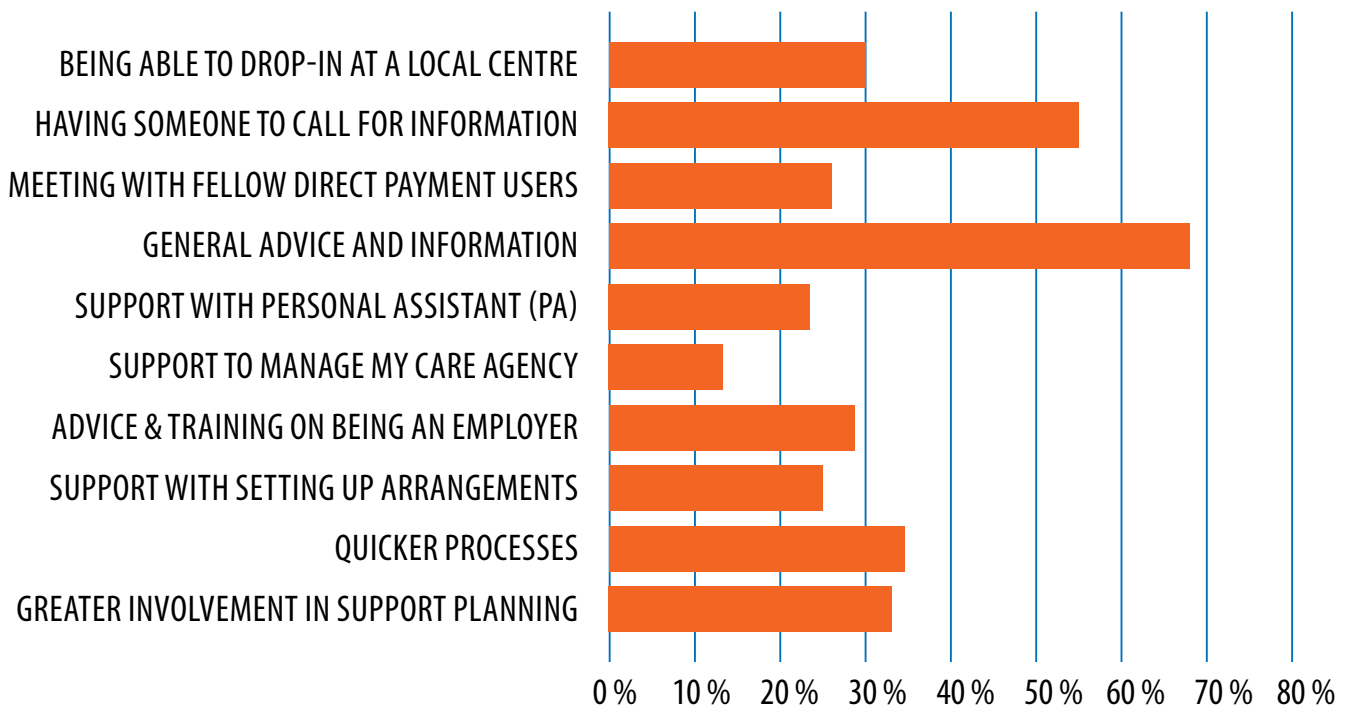
FREQUENCY OF COMMUNICATION FROM THE LOCAL AUTHORITY ABOUT DIRECT PAYMENT



There was quite a lot of variation in terms of frequency of contact from the Local Authority regarding Direct Payments. Some respondents commented that the Local Authority only communicated with them about the financial monitoring of their Direct Payment or when their Direct Payment rate changed. They did not receive general information and felt it was difficult to speak to someone at the council when they had a query.

Improving the Direct Payment experience

WHAT WOULD IMPROVE YOUR EXPERIENCE OF DIRECT PAYMENT



The table above indicates that the majority of respondents would like greater access to information and advice on Direct Payments.

Some respondents noted the advice and support they received from Action on Disability and payroll providers, while others expressed frustration at not being able to get a response from the Direct Payments team when they contacted them.

When asked how they felt their Direct Payments was working, **88%** of respondents reported feeling happy and in control while **9%** felt that they needed more support. **2%** were not happy and wished to have a review. Respondents who stated they needed more support reported feeling “thrown in the deep end” with no contact details of how to get support when required.

There is uncertainty about what a Direct Payment can be used for. Some people felt inhibited from spending their Direct Payment as they were worried about using it incorrectly. One respondent described Adult Social Care as a “maze of processes rather than a coherent, understandable and empathetic structure putting the service users and their carers first”.

53% of respondents reported that they did not find managing a Direct Payment difficult. For the other respondents, areas of difficulty included: the paperwork, pension auto enrolment for PAs, clarity on what they can spend their Direct Payment monies on, employing PAs e.g. finding back up cover, budget cuts and lack of flexibility in what the Direct Payment can be used for. For some the whole system was difficult to manage.

The difference a Direct Payment makes to day to day life

The majority of respondents reported that having a Direct Payment had made a significant difference to their lives. For some it was fundamental:

- “ **Everything, without Direct Payments I would be confined to my bed and live in a pigsty.**
- “ **A big difference! The Direct Payment finances my daily personal care needs and it helps me to live a more independent life.**
- “ **It has totally changed my life. My wife is again my wife and not my carer. I am free to do what I like when I like with my Personal Assistant. I have control over my life and feel more independent.**

Respondents described how having a Direct Payment had given them more choice and control over their care and support and it had enable them to be more independent. Additionally, respondents felt more self-confident and dignified.

- “ I am able to have control over who cares for me which gives me greater dignity and comfort.
- “ It means I live with dignity and self-confidence; independently in the community.

A number of respondents reflected on how much better it was to employ a PA than having agency support. Reference was made to agencies being unreliable and the care staff not understanding their needs. Conversely, being able to choose PAs who understood their needs led to a better quality of life which included individuals being able to engage in activities and feel part of their community.

- “ I feel in control of people caring for me. I get continuity of people I know and trust well. Felt badly let down by care agencies – poor communication and continuity.
- “ I feel much better mentally when I have my own carer as I can arrange all my needs any time during the day and there is always one person who supports me and knows everything about me and my needs but with agencies the carers get changed weekly due to their routine and I had to explain everything to them from the beginning and the was so tiring.

Respondents also cited feeling less stressed using a Direct Payment to meet their needs and acknowledged that having a PA to support them gave their family members and carers a break.

- “ Less stressful, help with personal care, food, hope, interaction, laughing not isolated, couldn't cope without it.
- “ A Huge difference. My (adult) son is able to have hobbies and life outside the family and his young siblings get a break from him. As he grows into adulthood he no longer wants to spend all of his weekends or holidays with the family, which he finds stressful.
- “ Helpful to have a carer to alleviate my husband because of my disability, better quality of life for my family and myself.
- “ It makes my life comfortable without stress.

A couple of respondents commented that having a Direct Payment had not made any difference to their lives. One cited the lack of support they had as a reason for this, whilst a second felt that financially they were worse off with a Direct Payment. A further respondent felt that while giving people control over their money was good, “forcing vulnerable people to become employers” was wrong.

Length of time using a Direct Payment

Just over half of the respondents had been using a Direct Payment for more than 4 years. We compared their experience of Direct Payment to those who had just started on their Direct Payment journey. In many areas there was not a significant difference in their responses. We have highlighted a few areas where differences did occur in the table below:

	UNDER 1 YEAR	OVER 4 YEARS
Use of a Direct Payment	50% of respondents using a DP to pay for a care agency 33% employing own PA	26% of respondents using a DP to pay for a care agency 74% employing own PA
Felt involved in the process of writing the support plan	9% felt very involved 64% felt involved 18% didn't know what a support plan was	28% felt very involved 60% felt involved 4% didn't know what a support plan was
The extent to which the plan reflects your needs	27% fully 63% partially 9% not at all	54% fully 46% partially
Time taken to set up Direct Payment	50% 2 - 4 weeks	52% 4 - 6 weeks
Awareness of Action on Disability peer support group	None	85% are aware of it

Although there are some differences between these two groups' experience of Direct Payments, both groups agreed that having access to general advice and information on options and choices and having someone to call for information and advice would improve their experience of Direct Payments.

Encouragingly **87%** of people who have been using a Direct Payment for 4 years or longer and **89%** of people using a Direct Payment for less than a year feel their Direct Payment is working well and report feeling happy and in control.

KEY THEMES FROM INTERVIEWS

Based on the on one-to-one interviews with Adult Social Care and voluntary sector staff, stakeholders and residents who receive Direct Payments the following themes emerged:

- **Direct Payment Support**
- **Perceived complexity of a Direct Payment**
- **The Direct Payment Process**
- **Training**
- **Flexibility of Direct Payments**

DIRECT PAYMENT SUPPORT

Direct Payment support, as expressed by Direct Payment (Direct Payment) recipients, staff, stakeholders and the voluntary sector, was viewed as minimal when setting up, with on-going support being sporadic.

Residents who receive Direct Payments reported feeling frustrated by the lack of support and guidance they received from the Local Authority. They specifically referred to the inability to contact the Local Authority for advice as an issue. They found it challenging that contact details were not available on relevant webpages. They stated that only generic Adult Social Care (ASC) phone numbers were available and were not easy to find. They increasingly turned to local voluntary organisations, close friends and family for support. However professional support was limited due to Action on Disability (AoD) no longer having the support contract.

- “ **No ongoing support for me once Direct Payment is set up. *DP Recipient***
- “ **I do not get any support other than that which I have arranged myself. *DP Recipient***
- “ **I have stopped trying to get support from Direct Payment service. I now only use AOD because I can rely on them. *DP Recipient***
- “ **Since AOD stopped doing Direct Payments I have had so little support from that service. *DP Recipient***
- “ **No support other than to take money back. *DP Recipient***

A significant number of the Adult Social Care staff we interviewed, felt that they would be more able to promote and setup Direct Payments if there was an external support service in place.

- “ Losing AOD had a massive effect on support for Direct Payments. *ASC staff member*
- “ I would promote Direct Payments more if able to refer residents who receive Direct Payments to a front line help desk support. *ASC staff member*
- “ No response from Direct Payments team for support makes our job impossible. *ASC staff member*
- “ Joint visits with the Direct Payments team no longer happen – I have no idea why, but now everything is left to us which is just too much. *ASC staff member*

Additionally, members of the voluntary sector interviewed expressed concerns over the lack of guidance and support since the Local Authority took over the Direct Payment Support Service.

- “ Responses from the Direct Payments team can take weeks to respond, if at all. *Voluntary Sector*
- “ No continuity with social workers causing many problems. *Voluntary Sector*
- “ Support by the Direct Payments team is not sufficient when there is clearly not enough resource. *Voluntary Sector*
- “ No support links in place anymore since Local Authority took over Direct Payments. *Voluntary Sector*
- “ No ongoing support once Direct Payment in place. *Voluntary Sector*
- “ Direct Payment Peer Group is not promoted or communicated to residents who receive Direct Payments and therefore numbers have dropped. *Voluntary Sector*
- “ AOD were switched on and informative – this no longer exists. *Stakeholder*

They also highlighted that since the Local Authority had taken over Direct Payments, requests to provide support/advice had almost ceased.

The voluntary sector expressed concern that staff were no longer referring residents who receive Direct Payments to the Direct Payments Peer Support Group as numbers had dropped significantly. This is consistent with the survey results in that that none of the residents who receive Direct Payments who were in their first year of receiving a Direct Payment were aware of the Peer Support Group.

PERCEIVED COMPLEXITY OF A DIRECT PAYMENT

Social workers we interviewed reported that Direct Payments are complicated and difficult to set up and to manage. This had a negative effect on their ability to promote them as a viable option.

- “ Direct Payments is just too complicated for residents who receive Direct Payments to understand. *Social Worker*
- “ There needs to be a change of attitude from making a decision on what is best for the client empowering and enabling them. *Social Worker*
- “ Assessment appears to be based around time and task rather than client focus. *Social Worker*
- “ Direct Payments no longer exists as it was but no one has advised of this change to residents who receive Direct Payments or staff. *Social Worker*

A significant number of Social Workers do not engage with Direct Payments as they lack confidence and support. Their perception that Direct Payments are complicated has resulted in them making assumptions that Direct Payments are too complicated for residents to take on.

- “ Many residents who receive Direct Payments do not want the hassle of setting up a Direct Payment and see it as a major block. *Social Worker*
- “ Seventy percent of the elderly won't take on Direct Payments because they are frightened by it. *Social Worker*
- “ Younger people are more adaptable and more likely to take on Direct Payment. *Social Worker*

Stakeholders expressed that social workers' attitude towards Direct Payments needed to change if the council wanted the uptake of Direct Payments to increase. The change needed to come from the top down for any real impact.

- “ Direct Payment viewed as a finance priority rather than person centred. *Stakeholder*
- “ Direct Payments need to be viewed as an asset rather than a problem. *Stakeholder*
- “ Direct Payments isn't about you but rather about the money. *DP Recipient*

THE DIRECT PAYMENT PROCESS

Direct Payment Set up

Consistent with the survey results, those interviewed reported varying lengths of time taken to set up their Direct Payment. Many Social Workers found the Direct Payment process difficult and time consuming with insufficient advice and guidance on the process for both residents and staff.

- “ It’s just too much admin to set up Direct Payments. *Social Worker*
- “ The process is not defined causing confusion. *Social Worker*
- “ No timeline so we understand the process from start to finish. *Social Worker*
- “ Set up can take 2/3 months. *Social Worker*
- “ I may have to make up to 3 visits to a client to set up Direct Payment. *Social Worker*
- “ There is just too much paperwork to set up a Direct Payment – much easier to offer a Local Authority care package. *Social Worker*

Once a Direct Payment has been set up some residents who receive Direct Payments have had to wait up to 4 weeks to receive their first payment due to internal payment cycles. No consideration had been given to what the Direct Payment Recipient will do in the interim.

- “ I had to borrow money to pay for my Personal Assistant as it took 4 weeks for me to get any money. *DP Recipient*
- “ I don’t understand why Direct Payments cannot pay a sum in advance – how will I pay my PA? *DP Recipient*

Some residents who receive Direct Payments had lost their Personal Assistant/carer due to not having sufficient funds to pay them until they received their Direct Payments causing them significant distress.

Monitoring and Auditing

There is a perception that Direct Payment process is currently finance driven rather than person centred. There appears to be a lack of consistency in regards to Direct Payment monitoring and auditing. Money has been clawed back with very little apparent involvement with the Direct Payment recipient and/or Social Worker. There appears to be no symbiotic relationship between Finance teams and Social Workers; both working in isolation and making decisions that will impact Direct Payment recipient.

- “ We are not involved when money is taken back. *Social Worker*
- “ There is no interaction between finance and ourselves. *Social Worker*
- “ Finance are clawing back money without first discussing this with us. *Social Worker*

Due to lack of staffing resources within the Finance team they have not always been able to carry out accurate monitoring of Direct Payment usage. In some cases, the finance team have suspected that funds may have been misused. They have to deal with historic data which means they might not be able to accurately determine what is underspent and needs to be returned to the council.

- “ **No resource to review accounts that may have misused funds. Stakeholder**
- “ **Finance are clawing back money without first discussing this with Social Workers. Stakeholder**
- “ **Some staff interviewed felt that many issues are not highlighted and/or are left, until they become critical. Stakeholder**
- “ **No safeguarding issues raised if funds are being misused. Stakeholder**
- “ **Processes are outdated and therefore not fit for purpose. Stakeholder**
- “ **Without robust systems to support residents who receive Direct Payments will prevent residents who receive Direct Payments from being empowered to make the right choice. Stakeholder**

Consistent with our survey, interviewees reported that communication from the Local Authority about Direct Payments is sporadic and tends to focus on monitoring and finance. Recently, the finance team sent out new monitoring forms to a limited number of Direct Payment users. This caused a lot of stress and worry to the recipients as there was no communication prior to this informing them of the change and what it would mean. The voluntary sector representatives reported that Social Workers were not always completing yearly reviews and as a result any changes in the Direct Payment Recipient's circumstances were not always picked up.

TRAINING

There are very few staff who feel competent and confident to promote Direct Payments to residents, finding it easier and more expedient to recommend a Local Authority care package instead.

- “ **Constant struggle to educate due to staff changes. ASC**
- “ **I don't have enough knowledge to promote Direct Payments and would therefore suggest a Local Authority package. ASC**
- “ **Training has not been successful in the past. ASC**
- “ **I don't understand pensions or leave – so how can I explain it to a client. ASC**
- “ **There is a serious lack of knowledge with Direct Payments within Adult Social Care. ASC**

Some stated that training had been irregular and unsuccessful because they felt unable to discuss Direct Payments with residents who receive Direct Payments with any real clarity or understanding. This situation appears exacerbated by high staff turnover.

FLEXIBILITY

The lack of clarity as to what Direct Payments recipients can use their Direct Payments for causes confusion and frustration. This relates to both residents who receive Direct Payments and the Social Care teams. As discussed earlier in this report, Social Workers in particular find it difficult to provide clarity around this. There seems to be a general misunderstanding of the fact that Direct Payments are intended to be flexible but only within the parameters of the individual's agreed needs and outcomes.

- “ **Less flexibility with what you can use your Direct Payment for as you have to detail everything.** *Social Worker*
- “ **Choice and flexibility has been removed causing disempowerment.** *Social Worker*

Residents who receive Direct Payments are given different answers depending on who they manage to talk to, and find their needs are quite often not being met.

- “ **I don't understand how some people I know can use their Direct Payment for things I am told I can't have.** *DP Recipient*
- “ **I am told Direct Payments doesn't cover a cleaner even though I can't do it myself.** *DP Recipient*
- “ **To me there is no point in having a Direct Payment if it doesn't cover my needs – there is no choice.** *DP Recipient*

Many social workers felt that Direct Payments were flexible and should be flexible, but need to be managed, but not by social workers. It is clear from our discussions with ASC staff that different staff perceive the flexibility of Direct Payments differently and thus there could be inconsistencies across the organisation.

Next Steps

STEP 1

ACTION REQUIRED **Agree a timescale & Action plan to implement the Recommendations**

RATIONALE An Action Plan with set timescales will help to keep everyone on track and will ensure that the learning from this Review is implemented.

STEP 2

ACTION REQUIRED **Set up local user group**

RATIONALE Through the review process, we have heard the views of many local residents who are eager to get their voices heard. As the council reviews and adopts new procedures it is crucial that it co-produces any processes and policies with local disabled residents. This will not only ensure that the Council meets its Care Act obligations, but will also help the council to deliver services that meet local need.

STEP 3

ACTION REQUIRED **In conjunction with the user group, develop tender specification for Direct Payment support contract and select provider**

RATIONALE The Specification should include

- provision for a dedicated front line help desk with staff skilled in all aspects of Direct Payment, implementation
- Support provision of information, advice and training for Social Workers as below.
- Designed to be delivered by a User-led organisation (ULO). Research indicates that Direct Payments are more successful in areas where ULOs are involved in Direct Payment delivery. A ULO utilizes the lived experience of disabled people to develop and deliver services. They are able to build community capacity by providing opportunities for people who use services to get involved in running the organisation and to share their knowledge and experience with their peers.

STEP 4

ACTION REQUIRED **Develop and implement a culture change programme within the Adult Social Care teams, to include Direct Payment training, information and support**

RATIONALE To generate interest in Direct Payments, Social Workers need to be empowered to be confident in promoting the benefits and explaining Direct Payments to residents. Putting the resident and their needs in the centre and working with them as equal partners will enable social workers to deliver better outcomes for their residents. The culture change programme should include on-line training, Direct Payment information tools to take out on home visits, development of Direct Payment champions within Social Work teams and an advice line provided by the Direct Payment support organisation. Having an external Direct Payment support service will significantly reduce the social worker's workload and provide an information resource for the more complex aspects of Direct Payment, especially direct employment.

STEP 5

ACTION REQUIRED **In conjunction with the user group, improve clarity, speed and effectiveness of internal assessment and Direct Payment processes and procedures**

RATIONALE Having a clear Direct Payment pathway outlining the Direct Payment Recipient's journey, staff procedures and responsibilities will ensure that Direct Payments are set up more quickly and efficiently. This should include a clear process for assessing residents' ability to manage their own care and support needs, taking into account the support available from friends, family and the Direct Payment Support Services.

A timeline of the process will help the Direct Payment Recipient to understand what is required, by whom and when. This will also help when there are delays as the Direct Payment Recipient will know who to contact.

The relationship between need, service and outcomes must be established and well communicated so that Social Workers and Direct Payment recipients are clear about what their Direct Payment can be used for. The council should not be prescriptive; rather it should empower residents by discussing with them the different ways in which they can move towards their desired outcome.

Once the relationship between need, service and outcome is established, and the degree of flexibility understood, it is much easier for both Social Workers and Direct Payment recipients to manage a Direct Payment. The Direct Payment recipient can change the service they are purchasing as long as the new service helps them to meet their agreed outcomes as detailed in their support plan.

STEP 6

ACTION REQUIRED

Develop and produce easy to understand information explaining the Direct Payment process

RATIONALE

Information needs to be easy to access, simple and jargon free. It should ideally be available online and in hard copy and in a range of formats e.g. large print, easy read. Online information needs to be accessible, with links to further information where required. Contact details of any relevant departments need to be easy to locate. All information needs to be up to date and relevant.

STEP 7

ACTION REQUIRED

Develop effective monitoring and review processes / resources

RATIONALE

There needs to be a clear, consistent and proportionate Direct Payment expenditure monitoring system that is fit for purpose which both the Finance and Social Work Teams work to.

The delays caused by payment cycle frequencies should be reviewed to ensure residents who receive Direct Payments are not left without any funds to pay for services that are required immediately. Alternatively there should be the facility to cover Direct Payment Recipient costs in the interim period.

The Finance team would benefit with an increase in resource to enable them to support the expected growth in Direct Payments e.g. the employment of a dedicated DP officer.

STEP 8

ACTION REQUIRED **Ensure Care Act Compliance**

RATIONALE Hammersmith and Fulham need to ensure that they are Care Act compliant. To do this they must ensure that all information on social care provision and in particular Direct Payments is clear, up to date and readily available. Personalisation needs to be embedded in social work teams, putting the Direct Payment Recipient and their needs in the centre. All care and support options need to be explored, with social workers empowering individuals to have choice and control over their care.

The Council needs to create a culture where co-production is embedded in their working practice. Including disabled people's views in the specification of the new Independent Living Service would be a good start.

STEP 9

ACTION REQUIRED **Independent Evaluation**

RATIONALE As part of the model of co-production, it is vital that any changes to service provision is independently evaluated. It is the recommendation of this Review that a further independent evaluation of the Independent Living Service be conducted to ensure that the key recommendations of this Review have been met.

Glossary

Direct Payment

A Direct Payment is a payment made to an individual following a community care assessment in lieu of council provided care. A Direct Payment enables the individual to set up, manage and pay for their own support.

Support Plan

A support plan is a document that explains how an individual will spend their Direct Payment to best meet their support needs and to achieve their identified outcomes.

Personal Assistant (PA)

A Personal Assistant is a person employed to provide someone with social care and support in a way that is right for them.

User-led Organisation (ULO)

A ULO is an organisation that is run and controlled by people who use support services including disabled people, people who use mental health services, people with learning disabilities, older people, and their families and carers.