

Welcome to issue 2 of the Direct Payments newsletter

We hope this finds you safe and well during this difficult time

Be sure to follow public health guidance

This Newsletter was due to reach you in March however this coincided with the rapidly changing Coronavirus situation which has affected all of our lives. Although it's not been easy, it has been inspiring to see and hear of so many people going above and beyond to support loved ones.

When we've been speaking to you we have noticed how well

people are managing in difficult circumstances; showing a calm courage. We have really appreciated your kindness in asking after the team too. We hope you are looking forward to giving hugs to loved ones soon

There have been many ups and downs during this crisis. We have been pushed to live and work in different ways.

One of the unplanned benefits has been that we have been compelled to think creatively and flexibly. Creativity and flexibility are words we have wanted to be associated with direct payments for a long time so we are keen to build on this as we slowly move out of lockdown.

Below are some examples:

Online 'arty party sessions' has given opportunity to have social contact with a group they would usually see in person, but still be able to try new arts and crafts at home.

Tablets/ipads have been purchased to make it easier for individuals to stay connected with others and make use of the wide range of online activities and apps available.

Here is Kieran with his bike that was purchased using the Direct Payment as he was unable to get to the gym. His parents advised 'It's been great, he has cerebral palsy so not the most mobile of guys and the plan had been to get his PA to take him to the gym but as he is one of those shielded folk we can't.'

He is determined to improve his time each day on the bike.



A family wanting to isolate still have their PA coming to visit, she sits outside the window (in a deck chair with her own flask of tea) for a chat to give the family carer a break. The same PA is trialling helping to prompt the person to have a shower and sequence tasks using the telephone.

Being able to be flexible has given many people relying on Personal Assistance's (PAs) for essential support, peace of mind. They are able to change hours, change ways of being supported and add temporary PA's to payroll who wouldn't usually be able to be in a paid role.

If you have any stories of your experience through Covid-19 that you'd like to share in this newsletter contact us on personal.assistants@shropshire.gov.uk

Direct Payments update

There have been two important changes in using Direct Payments to employ Personal Assistants that you need to know

If you have a question please call [0345 6789 044](tel:03456789044)

April 2020 Uplift

If you employ a PA the amount they should be paid each hour has increased following the National Living Wage increase in April.

The hourly rate has increased from £8.62 to £9.30. This increase only applies to employed PA's.

For self employed PA's the rate remains £10.98; they are still required to meet their own Tax requirements and have their own appropriate insurance.

The Council will continue to pay £10.98 per hour into your Direct Payment account (this amount has not increased). After your PA has been paid there should be enough left to cover holidays, bank holidays and pension. The £10.98 per hour no longer includes a contribution for national insurance.



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What do I do now?

You need to inform your Payroll Provider as they will not apply the increase automatically. If you manage your own payroll please ensure you are paying the right rate of £9.30 an hour.

If you think your PA may be eligible for national insurance contributions speak to your Payroll Provider or a member of the Direct Payments Team.

April 2020 Employment Law Change

All workers now have a right to a "written statement of employment particulars" or contract. Again this only applies to employed PA's, not self employed PA's. A self employed PA should provide you with a contract of what they are going to provide.

Employers must provide their workers with a written statement/contract on or before their first day of employment. It doesn't matter how long they're employed for.

What do I do now?

Attached to this newsletter is a contract that has been provided by an insurance company as an example. Make use of it, either in its entirety, or as a template for writing a contract more specific to your situation. Please provide each of your employed PAs with a contract no matter how long they have worked for you.



Direct Payment Groups Update

Peer Support group

Encouraging each other through sharing knowledge, experience, questions and challenges. Two earlier group sessions were described as “useful and enjoyable”. Now we are planning online sessions. If you would like to join in then email us at:

personal.assistants@shropshire.gov.uk

Finance and Communication group

Rewriting the language and messages in direct payment letters to be clear and helpful. More to follow next newsletter.

Mend the Gap support planning group

Lots of positive work coming from this group, influencing policy, training and finalising a Direct Payment vision. We will give a full

round up in the next newsletter.

Recruitment and Retention group

Aiming to improve Shropshire’s PA market through better recruitment processes, training, and support to keep PA’s.

A PA pool is developing to assist employers looking for PAs. Maria and Nigel are already in the pool. Anyone interested in becoming a PA contact

personal.assistants@shropshire.gov.uk



Nigel



Maria

You asked: What support is there for employers?

Being an employer is a big responsibility

It can be overwhelming and so the right information and support is important. This has become even more relevant over the last few months.

Below are some places you can look for help

◆ Employment Liability Insurers

Some provide telephone employment advice if you have an employment query. Check your policy.

◆ The Direct Payments Support team

You can request support from the Direct Payment Team by contacting your local Social Work Team or calling First Point of Contact **0345 6789 044**

◆ Good Boss Network

A zoom conversation with other individual employers every Thursday at 3pm run by Surrey Independent Living Council. If you would like to attend please contact Hilary Hall—
hdelaneyhall@btinternet.com

◆ Skills for Care website

There is a lot of helpful information; including a ‘Employing a personal assistant toolkit’ This provides templates for a range of employment situations such as holiday requests, contracts, maternity and sick leave.

www.employingpersonalassistants.co.uk/

◆ ACAS

ACAS provide a free helpline to any employment queries **0300 123 1100** and have templates online. If there is a situation which requires a legal process to support employment issues ACAS provide a free early conciliation service
www.acas.org.uk/early-conciliation.

Caroline's lockdown reflection

“Bizarrely I have been busier than normal ”



Caroline & Sera

It's now 13th May and 51 days since UK locked down. My first thoughts are that actually my life hasn't changed much. Is this a little sad? Possibly.

It highlights that social isolation actually is the norm for me. I suspect it may be similar for a lot of people with disabilities.

I sing in a choir. I'm missing that, but I've joined Gareth Malone's Great British Home Chorus and am somewhat half heartedly joining his sessions

and learning the pieces. I've submitted the first and will record the second this afternoon .

The things I am grateful for during this time are:

I have two PAs who have been with me for over two years and two more who seem to 'fit' nicely. Jeez, for the first time in 18 months I'm fully staffed! As long as we all stay well...

I have a beautiful if unruly garden.

I'm able to take my Assistance Dog and best bud out for walks some days. Other days we play scent games or brain games at home or brush up on training.

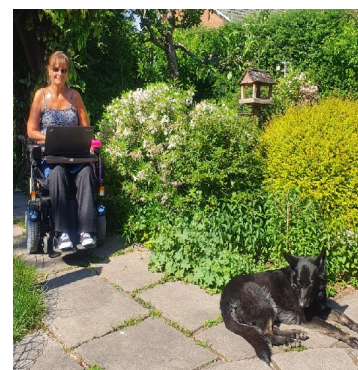
Never have I been more grateful that I live relatively rurally, and I'm loving the quiet roads which enable me to avoid the shockingly unkept

pavements which cost me a fortune in remedial massage.

Bizarrely I've been busier than normal. As a charity Trustee, zoom meetings have been regular as we manage remote admin staff and deal with some legal issues which I can't go into but are extremely stressful and time consuming.

To counter that, there have been loads of dog training webinars and virtual get together sessions within the same community which keep me happy.

Life goes on.



Caroline & Sera

GUIDANCE

Due to the frequently changing situation it is best to find guidance and advice specific to Direct Payments, PPE and COVID 19 through these links below: If you are unable to get online, you can contact the First Point of Contact team on **0345 6789 044**

<https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus> or <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/coronavirus-covid-19-guidance-for-people-receiving-direct-payments>

locally <https://shropshire.gov.uk/coronavirus/>

If you struggle to resource PPE from usual suppliers please ring **0345 6789 080** for further advice

This newsletter has been produced by members of the Direct Payments Board. If you would like to comment or contribute ideas or stories, then get in touch directly through sophie.caine@shropshire.gov.uk. The newsletter will be a quarterly publication.