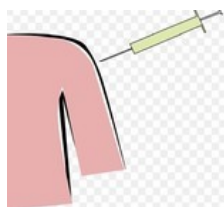




Welcome to the Direct Payment Autumn Newsletter

We hope this finds you safe and well. It's hard to believe that we are already heading into the last few months of this year. We are all living in a new reality of constant uncertainty and change. It's difficult to know what to do for the best and how to keep ourselves and others safe. Yet, people continue to support each other in our communities and there are so many unsung heroes quietly going above and beyond for family, neighbours and friends. As a team, we want to support each of you to be able to live life well, even in current circumstances. This newsletter is to keep you updated on local developments, opportunities and stories from people using direct payments in Shropshire.

Flu vaccinations for PA's



Autumn brings the usual cold and flu season. It is more important than ever to look after our health during the cold months. Free flu vaccinations are available now for anyone working as a Personal Assistant.

1. You will need a letter (Found here: <https://www.shropshire.gov.uk/adult-social-care/adult-social-care-and-coronavirus/direct-payments/>)
2. The direct payment holder, as employer, will fill out this letter, to prove they employ the PA. Once the PA has this, this will act as their 'letter of entitlement' to the vaccination.
3. They will then need to visit their local GP or community pharmacist, who will be able to give them the flu vaccination. If they need to prove their entitlement, they can use the letter of entitlement
4. The vaccination will then be given to them, free of charge.

For more information please look at the website above where further information will be added as guidance follows

Sarah's Story

Sarah supports her sister with her Direct Payment (DP). She recently joined a working group called 'Mend the Gap' and along with other users of direct payments (DP), social workers, students, and the DP team, she's been working to make DPs better.

"My fears about DP's changed when I heard Caroline speak at a large Council event in 2019 (see newsletter #1). Out loud and in front of council workers and bosses, she raised every concern I had been thinking. How brave, I thought...or foolish! Did she not want money for next year? Caroline, and the fact that the council encouraged her to say what she said, inspired me to join 'Mend the Gap'. It felt much needed change was coming.

So together, over 6 sessions we started to fix some of the issues such as "social work speak"; how to create a support plan together that supports someone to live the life they want and why the focus always seems to be on the money not the person's outcomes.

At the end, we were asked to creatively feedback using CLAY!



Before Mend the Gap I felt like the person in 'The Scream' by Munch. Every time we tried our hardest to do what we thought was right, there was a letter asking for unauthorised spend!

Working with others changed my views. I had previously experienced the Council as 'the enemy'. After seeing the faces behind the letters, I realised that they are people who care about what they're doing. We're all just trying to do our best. That is the reason for the heart in the middle of the tile.

In my tile I camouflaged some coins (look closely) this reflects the feeling of wanting to hide the fact we're in receipt of DP money. Previously we didn't want to stick our 'head above the parapet' in case the money was taken away.



At the top of my tile is the Houses of Parliament because understanding the legal implications and the requirements of DP was life changing for me. We aren't fraudsters, my sister is legally eligible for the money she gets. Understanding the eligibility criteria and that my sister fits the criteria, made me feel validated. We should have the money and we've been using it the right way all along - to make her life better.

That leads to the cloud and rainbow. The cloud was to signify that there is still work to do. And the rainbow colours show my learning. I learnt a huge amount through 'Mend the Gap' and so did the social workers and other staff. Now it's time to share the learning.

Working Groups

Mend the Gap



Mend the Gap has come to an end. It has been great learning for us all and changes are happening as a result. The work from this group is now influencing Direct Payment vision, policy, development of support plans as well as social work training in Shropshire as well as nationally for students. Feedback from one participant:

“For me; We are each a piece of that puzzle that will work well when all joined up, interconnecting and completing a bigger picture.

Care and Support Plans

Care and Support Planning is key to confidence in using a direct payment to do the things that are important to you. Recognising this, a group of DP’s users, social care staff and other council staff looking at changes to Care and Support Plans to make them easier for you, and anyone supporting you, to use.

Finance and Communication

This group have reviewed and rewritten the letters that get sent out to you in the Reconciliation process. They will be checked by the Council’s legal team and then go live. This group are now developing a direct payment (DP) agreement for people new to DP’s. The agreement will clearly set out the expectations of the DP user and the Council in a straightforward way



Recruitment and Retention

We are trialing a Personal Assistant (PA) recruitment website called UKCIL.com. They support people to recruit PAs by posting job adverts for PAs, not only to a pool of PAs held on the site, but also to national job sites such as Indeed, Adzuna, Total jobs and the Job Centre. If you are interested in trialling, please contact:

direct.payments@shropshire.gov.uk

Policy

Never an exciting topic! However, a group of DP users, social care staff and other council staff looking at a new DP policy in line with our vision – Open and Honest; Flexible and Creative and Clear and Simple.

Shropshire Council Direct Payment Webpage Project



Hi I'm Bob Busk and I'm completing my final Social Work Placement.

I like motorcycles and enjoy vehicle restoration

Hi I'm Clare Kear, Student Social Worker.

I'm not really a horse, just full of cold at the moment and the horse photo is better than my red nose!



If you are already using a Direct Payment; have a family member who uses a Direct Payment; are employed as a Personal Assistant or thinking of working as a Personal Assistant, we want to hear from you!

We are working with the Direct Payments team as part of the bigger transformation to make sure Shropshire Direct Payments are Open and Honest; Flexible and Creative and Clear and Simple.

We want to find out what people want in a new Direct Payments website so it's important to hear from the people who will use it. What information and advice do you need and where you go to find it now?

Do you like videos, pictures, written information; interactive learning resources; links to relevant guidance or all the above?

Please contact us at direct.payments@shropshire.gov.uk if you have any suggestions, ideas or would like to be more involved in building a direct payments website.

Teme Training

We are pleased to announce that working in partnership with 'Teme Training', we will provide four free 'Good Boss' Training Sessions and four Covid-19 Training sessions.



The 'Good Boss' Training will be facilitated by Hillary Delaney Hall who said, "These are interactive sessions. We cover a diverse range of topics from advertising; Contracts of Employment; keeping records; setting boundaries such as "should my PA be my friend?" through to "what to do if it all goes wrong?"



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Good Boss Training - 11.00 – 16.00

There may be opportunity to attend in person or online - TBC

Covid-19 Training will be available via Zoom Link.

There will be four individual sessions to be held at various times throughout the day.

If you are interested in attending any of these contact:

Bob Hall training@surreyilc.org.uk or 07514 093616 or the Direct Payment team **direct.payments@shropshire.gov.uk**

Individual Employer Funding now available through Skills for Care



The fund can be used for training to develop you as an employer and/or to develop the skills of your PA. Any training must be started by 31 March 2021.

The funding can cover the direct costs of training and qualifications, travel and the cost of hiring replacement support whilst your PA is attending training.

More information can be found at the link below:

www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Learning-development/Funding/Individual-employer-funding/Individual-employer-funding.aspx

If you wish to apply for this funding, and have any difficulty in completing the forms, please contact **Bob Hall training@surreyilc.org.uk or 07514 093616.**

Agencies

For anyone using an agency for their support, please be aware that all agencies have been informed that Shropshire Council will pay up to a maximum of £19.20 an hour. Some agencies are charging people using direct payments more than this amount. It is possible to choose to top up your direct payment for an agency of choice who isn't on the Council framework. However, most are on the Council framework and have agreed to our framework rates, so shouldn't be charging more just because it's paid via a direct payment. If you think this applies to you, please contact your social care team.

Insurance

Every employer using a direct payment has an annual amount of £61 paid into their direct payment account. This covers fully/or in part a Home Employment (Public Liability) insurance policy which is essential protection for anyone employing a personal assistant. Please check your insurance policy is in date and hasn't lapsed. Contact **direct.payments@shropshire.gov.uk** if you need any help setting up a new insurance policy

Be Human

Be-human have been hosting a series of webinars since the start of the Coronavirus crisis to help people and families gather information and practical tips. They have covered recruiting PA's and employment issues, management of DP's and other topics. If you'd like to catch any of them, they can be found at the link below.



<https://be-human.org.uk/webinars/>

This newsletter has been produced by members of the Direct Payments Board. If you would like to comment or contribute ideas or stories, or receive the newsletter via email, then get in touch directly through

direct.payments@shropshire.gov.uk

The newsletter will be a quarterly publication.