



#### **4. Financial Implications**

- 4.1 Shropshire Council currently spend approx. £8.5m per annum on Direct Payments.
- 4.2 Direct Payments are seen as a more cost-efficient way of procuring care for service users that require domiciliary support.
- 4.3 There are no direct financial implications of the new direct payment policy

#### **5. Background**

- 5.1 Direct Payments are monetary payments made to people to meet some or all of their eligible care and support needs. The legislative context for direct payments is set out in the Care Act, Section 117(2C) of the Mental Health Act 1983 (the 1983 Act) and the Care and Support (Direct Payments) Regulations 2014.
- 5.2 Direct payments are the Government's preferred way to provide personalised care and support. They provide independence, choice and control by enabling people to commission their own care and support in order to meet their eligible needs.
- 5.3 The Statutory Guidance relating to Direct Payments states 'For direct payments to have the maximum impact, the processes involved in administering and monitoring the payment should incorporate the minimal elements to allow the local authority to fulfil its statutory responsibilities.'
- 5.4 The local authority has a key role in ensuring that people are given relevant and timely information about direct payments, so that they can make a decision whether to request a payment, and, if doing so, are supported to use and manage the payment appropriately.
- 5.5 In 2019 as numbers of people with a Direct Payment had dropped, Shropshire Council Adult Social Care began to rethink the use of Direct Payments and to reconfigure services to allow people to direct their own support in different ways, with better systems in place for help and support. The desire to change and work in co-production was shared across Adult Social Care, Finance and Audit.
- 5.6 Direct Payments Team was established in house to guide and support the Social work teams and direct payment recipients, rather than an external provider model as used before. A Direct Payment Board was established to lead this change.
- 5.7 The Direct Payments Board is co-chaired by a person who uses Direct Payments and is an Expert by Experience and Executive Director for Adult Social Care (ASC). It is made up of people who use Direct Payments or support others with Direct Payments alongside staff, including members of the Direct Payment Support Team.
- 5.8 Working together with the national organisation, Think Local Act Personal (TLAP), the Board organised a development session and two larger sessions offered across ASC towards the end of 2019.

- 5.9 People who used Direct Payments expressed a real sense of vulnerability and challenge about their experiences of using Direct Payments and asking for change.
- 5.10 The Board made plans following these events to jointly create a new Vision for Direct Payments that inspires the right values and behaviours, for staff and people who are using Direct Payments.

## **6. Mend the Gap**

6.1 Shropshire Council bid to be part of a funded programme called Mend the Gap offered by Wolverhampton University, during 2020. Mend the Gap included people who use Direct Payments or manage them for others, social workers, students and an academic from Wolverhampton university. The aim was to look for gaps in understanding, in three directions:

- 1) People who use and experience Direct Payments;
- 2) Adult Social Care and the gaps in understanding;
- 3) Universities training people to be social workers and how this can be improved with better understanding.

6.2 There was an academic report at the end to be presented at a national event later in 2020 (delayed due to Covid 19).

6.3 Shropshire Council's bid was based on its recognition of the many gaps and differing perspectives across the whole system about direct payments. To achieve change would require a new culture, with meaningful conversations to find a way forward through co-production.

6.4 Mend the Gap supported this to happen by bringing together a dedicated group of people to begin breaking down some of these barriers and to address some of the tricky issues.

6.5 Mend the Gap identified the top three gaps which needed addressing:

- Knowledge gap of eligibility and Care Act specifics for the Direct Payments users;
- Knowledge gap on theory and practice for students. Eligibility criteria, acceptable costs and financing are the areas to review;
- Knowledge gap for ASC staff to better understand DPs, their role, the importance of support plans and the right information at the right time.

## **7. Next steps**

7.1 Following Mend the Gap a time limited programme of work was established. This report provides feedback on this programme of work.

## 8. Vision statement

- 8.1 The vision statement was consolidated from the TLAP work and the work arising from Mend the Gap. The words were agreed quite early on but the visual images have developed over the year. At the end of Mend the Gap participants all created a tile which represented their experience of the project and these tiles have been used to illustrate the vision.



- 8.2 The vision is made up of the following three statements:

1. **Open and Honest:** Working together, through open and honest communication the right information can be shared from the first decision to have a Direct payment and every step of the way after.
2. **Flexible and creative:** Working together, Direct payments can be used in flexible and creative ways, so that they support wellbeing and the lives people want to lead.
3. **Clear and simple:** Working together, Direct Payments can be straightforward and managed in a clear and simple way which develops skills and confidence as an employer.

These statements are used as the benchmark for all other work.

## 9. Task and Finish Groups

- 9.1 Task and finish groups were established in the following areas:
- Communications, paperwork, finance, audit;
  - Policy;
  - Recruitment and retention;
  - Support Plans.

All the task groups have utilised a co-production model. People who use Direct Payments or support others with Direct Payments working alongside Council staff across ASC including Finance/Audit.

9.2 Completed outcomes from these groups are

- All paperwork and letters used by Finance, Audit and Reconciliation teams have been reviewed in line with the Vision statement;
- A new Direct payment Agreement has been co-produced in line with the Vision statement;
- A new Direct Payment Policy has been developed this is attached at Appendix 2 and Members are asked to approve it;
- Recruitment and retention of PAs has been addressed by the development of a website, online training for social workers, promotion of the PA role;
- The task and finish group looking at Support Plans is still operational.

**10. Direct Payment Policy**

10.1 Shropshire Council Adult Social Care has achieved a co-produced Policy which is unique nationally. This is currently for age 18 plus but the intention is to work towards achieving an all age policy later in 2021.

10.2 This has required careful negotiation and open discussion between stakeholders with differing priorities such as a carer supporting a family member and a Legal Services solicitor often dealing with disputes after complaints or problems. The final Policy reflects a careful balance, it is easy to read yet contains all the necessary requirements to promote and provide Direct payments in Shropshire.

10.3 The areas where Policy decisions have had to be made are few as statutory guidance is clear what the Local Authority position should be.

10.4 Discretion could be exercised in relation to how and where employment support is offered, temporary support plan changes and contingency planning, how quickly the Council will endeavour to respond to Direct Payment requests and what happens to recover funds such as after a person's death. These have all been covered in line with the Vision statement, in the Policy.

10.5 The Policy is written in a clear and easy to understand style with explanations of complex words given throughout.

**11.0 Conclusion**

11.1 Members are asked to recognise the innovative and impressive work carried out to date and to approve the Policy for immediate implementation.

<b>List of Background Papers (This MUST be completed for all reports, but does not include items containing exempt or confidential information)</b>
<b>Cabinet Member (Portfolio Holder)</b> Councillor Dean Caroll
<b>Local Member</b> All
<b>Appendices:</b> Appendix A – Direct Payment Policy