

ALLIANCE NEWS

MAKING SURE VOICES ARE HEARD

Issue 10 - August 2007

Direct Payments- More Work Needed?



The Scottish Executive has sent out new information on Direct Payments encouraging more people to take some control over their own care planning. Direct Payments should be seen in a wider context as one form of Self Directed Care.

This is part of a plan to improve health through emphasising self-help and support. It should also make it easier to get educational and employment opportunities.

The new guidance says local authorities should:

- fund local support services to help people prepare early for assessments and to manage their individual budgets.
- support training for people on using self directed support (and also for social work staff)
- name special self-directed support lead officers.
- Support employment of Personal Assistants by helping with enhanced disclosures and indemnity insurance.

The guidance reminds councils that individual budgets can be used to purchase services from service providers but doesn't make any special suggestions for helping this process.

Getting this guidance is good. It shows that the Scottish Executive really wants to make a difference. However this is the third set of guidance issued to councils and health boards. The pace of change remains very slow, with actual take up of Direct Payments and other forms of Individual Budgets low.

Some Bad – Some Good

As usual some local authorities are very poor at implementing this reform. The following league table is drawn from statistics published by the Scottish Executive late last year.

People with Learning Disability getting a Direct Payment

Council	No	%
Inverclyde	0	0.00
E. Dumbarton	0	0.00
East Renfrew	1	0.26
Renfrewshire	1	0.11
Falkirk	2	0.31
North Ayrshire	3	0.52
Dundee City	4	0.39

There is some good news. Some local authorities such as Highlands, Argyll & Bute and Fife are using more and more Direct Payments to help people manage their own care.

What's wrong?

There are many barriers to taking up Direct Payments: lack of knowledge, the difficulty of managing funds and so on. But sometimes these problems can be managed when it suits the interests of the local authority.

We have heard reports that some councils encourage the take up of Individual Living Fund payments rather than Direct Payments as they bring in new money to the area. ILF payments usually involve the same challenges as Direct Payments; managing a separate bank account, having a capability to manage funds and so on.

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It appears that at least 4 local authorities have much higher than the national average take up of ILF payments while having much lower than average rates of take up of Direct Payments for people with learning disabilities.

Local Authority	DP per 10,000	ILF per 10,000
East Renfrew	1.7	11.0
Glasgow	2.1	11.4
North Lanark	0.7	12.0
South Lanark	1.0	11.1
Scotland	3.6	6.5

There are real problems facing local authorities in the costs of promoting self directed care. Using Direct Payments ends up saving money in tax and benefits but costs councils more for extra support services to help individuals manage individual budgets.

We welcome the guidance being issued as another step towards empowerment. But the fact that ten years after the legislation was first introduced, guidance is still being issued shows that the good ideas of the Scottish Executive don't always work out on the ground. As we have argued in the Alliance there is a need to seriously examine how these policies can be turned into a reality.

In February's newsletter we published our analysis of how spending on services for people appeared to be a postcode lottery. We released the story to newspapers across Scotland in the following weeks.

The Association of Directors of Social Work did not agree with our figures and have asked that we publish their comments. We have done this in the box at the bottom.



Were we wrong to suggest there is a postcode lottery?

The information that we used is taken from the figures supplied by local authorities themselves. Once a year they tell the Scottish Executive what they spend on different types of service. They do not say how much supporting people money is spent on people with learning disabilities.

There were lots of different ways to work out what was being spent in each area. We thought the best way to see what was happening was to examine spending on services per council tax payer. This would allow us to see equally what happens in small and large areas.

We took out the money that was involved in spending on people who used to be in hospital. We wanted to know what local councils spent out of the money they were responsible for. The decision to close the hospitals

was made by the government and some local people might feel left out of getting services.

There are still large variations from area to area if, as ADSW suggest, we look at the total reported spending divided by the number of people with learning disabilities known to each social work department we get a range of spending from just over £10,000 per person in Dundee up to over £36,000 in East Lothian.

At one end of the scale are

Dundee City	£10,644
North Ayrshire	£13,906
Inverclyde	£14,193
West Lothian	£14,788
Dumfries	£16,080
Falkirk	£16,841
East Ayrshire	£16,918

At the other end of the scale

Shetland Islands	£27,394
Aberdeen City	£32,213
East Lothian	£36,596

The difference is not due to the numbers of people living locally. North Lanarkshire had

the highest proportion of the population with a learning disability but still spent over £19,000 per person. Nor does the pattern change that much once you add in Supporting People spending.

These big differences tell us something unusual must be happening. Why should the quality and extent of services and support that individuals expect vary from area to area? **Surely support should depend on need and not on the postcode you live within.**

You can still get a copy of February's newsletter on our website and you can also get more details on supporting people spending by local authority.

The Cross Party Group on Learning Disability has been re-established for a new session in the Scottish Parliament. Meetings focus on current principal political concerns. The next will be in September.

For more details and to be put on the minutes list get in touch with the Secretary to the Cross Party Group, Mike Holmes, Enable Scotland, 0141-226-4541.

RIGHT OF REPLY

"The Association of Directors of Social Work Learning Disability Sub Group would like to express its concern regarding the article within the February edition of the LD Alliance Newsletter.

"ADSW believes that the article presented an inaccurate view of the services provided for people with learning disabilities across Scotland and the funding levels within different areas, using inaccurate data and comparing non-comparable information.

"ADSW suggest that following the article, people with learning disabilities or their families who are concerned about the level of funding in their particular area should contact their Local Authority and request information based on the gross learning disability budget and the number of people in receipt of a service as opposed to dividing the net budget (which will not include Supporting People funding or resources transfer agreements) by the total population of the area."

www.adsw.org.uk