BEST PRACTICE IN DIRECT PAYMENTS SUPPORT – a guide for commissioners

Revised edition January 2012

Authors: Sam Bennett and Simon Stockton for the London Joint Improvement Partnership
# Contents

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Section</th>
<th>Page</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Executive summary</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Introduction</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Direct Payments support basics</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>The challenges we face</td>
<td>5</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>A model of best practice for support services</strong></td>
<td>7</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Making it cost effective</td>
<td>24</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Choosing the best service</td>
<td>26</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Concluding thoughts</td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Executive summary

This report was initially developed by Groundswell Partnership for the London Joint Improvement Partnership (JIP) and published in November 2011. This revised edition is launched through the Think Local Act Personal partnership and the London JIP to support commissioners in all parts of the country who are grappling with the same challenges of developing support services for much larger numbers of direct payments recipients. It was written with the support of the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL) and was informed by representatives from London councils, DP support providers, people using DPs in the London area, Directors of Adult Social Services and members of the Think Local Act Personal partnership. Key messages include:

- The current drive to increase personal budgets, with direct payments as the chosen option for increasing numbers of people, presents significant challenges that demand new ways of thinking about direct payments support.
- Rising to the challenge will require a strategic response involving commissioners, providers and people with care and support needs working together to shape local commissioning.
- In future, single service solutions are not likely to be adequate and commissioners should look to develop a mixed market of direct payments support.
- There should always be a role for local ULOs in a mixed model of support also encompassing larger providers with the capacity and infrastructure to meet significant growth in demand.
- The scope of direct payments support should include support for people to use them for a wide variety of purposes other than employing staff directly. There are many examples of people using direct payments to access work, start a micro-enterprise or to pool their budgets to buy services collectively. Many others can also benefit from simply holding the purse strings and buying services directly from registered care providers.
- This report sets out a model of good practice for direct payments support, co-produced with key stakeholders, that provides a useful starting point for understanding what needs to be in place and how to know when it’s working.
- The “Choosing the best service” tool in this report will assist in local planning and decision making.
Introduction

In the roll out of personal budgets, evidence has shown that people who use Direct Payments tend to get better outcomes than people who use managed budgets.

The Government and the sector partnership Think Local Act Personal have also stressed that increasing the take up of direct payments (DPs) should be a key priority for councils as they continue to transform local adult social care systems and work towards making personal budgets available to everyone eligible to receive them in the next two years. Evidence from a number of sources, including SCIE, has found that support arrangements are vital to the successful implementation of personal budgets and for direct payments in particular. It has also been noted that more consistent support is required to encourage the take up of direct payments by some currently under-represented groups, such as older people.1

So what support do people need in order to take up and use direct payments and what is the most cost effective way of commissioning and providing it? This report, funded by the London Joint Improvement Partnership, explores what best practice support for direct payments looks like and the implications of the current policy drive to increase uptake. It also looks at different ways of thinking about cost effectiveness in this context and provides pointers and practical tools to assist local decision makers. The report is aimed primarily at commissioners, but will also be of interest to direct payments support organisations (DPSOs), micro-enterprises working in health and social care, care providers, people using or considering using direct payments and those with a general interest in this field.

In developing this paper we worked closely with the National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL), people living in London using direct payments, direct payments support organisations, local authority commissioners, the London Self-Directed Support Forum and from colleagues and experts from the Think Local Act Personal Partnership. We are grateful to all those who contributed to this paper and to Freya El Baz for coordinating the research involved.

Background

Following the publication of Think Local Act Personal, (TLAP) the London Joint Improvement Partnership identified a number of priority areas for development to support local councils to better understand and respond to the challenges outlined in TLAP, including work to undertake and evaluate different support/brokerage models that help people take up and use direct payments. The project brief was to undertake an appraisal of effective delivery of support and advice for people using or wishing to use direct payments, to explore the implications for commissioners and to consider how an improved understanding of outcomes and cost effectiveness could inform better local decision making.

Approach

Our starting point was to co-design a framework for understanding good practice in direct payments support. We did this together with people using direct payments, commissioners and DPSO’s as well as key strategic organisations with an interest in the field, particularly NCIL and the London Self-Directed Support Forum. We brought together a group of people incorporating all these perspectives to co-design the framework and debate a range of issues. This included asking people to think in some depth about outcomes, cost effectiveness and what we might need to measure to understand success in delivering direct payments support. In addition, we conducted some research into current practice across London and beyond, exploring examples of innovative direct payments support that help to bring the framework to life.

We think it is very important to understand what great support looks like for people who use or might use direct payments and to know what a support service should be doing to serve them well. We have structured the report to reflect this conviction and to provide an easy reference for people to understand good practice in a way that reflects the outcomes we are all aiming to achieve.

Direct Payments support basics

Direct payments support organisations have been around since at least 1997 when the first direct payments legislation was enacted. Accompanying guidance to this and subsequent legislation has repeatedly stressed the need for councils to provide support services for people that help them consider whether direct payments may suit them and if so, how to use them safely and effectively.

Most councils responded to this requirement by commissioning support services to accompany local direct payments schemes. As the market for support has developed over the last 15 years it has done so slowly and on a relatively small scale, operating largely at the margins of social care. Despite its niche status, it is nonetheless quite a mature and established market. Taken as a whole it offers a rich and diverse range of services to people using or thinking about using direct payments, spanning specialist employment advice, support planning, payroll services and peer support among other things. Although some services have a broad reach beyond local geographical boundaries, the market has mostly developed as a local “cottage industry” working with small numbers of people, numbers having only recently risen to an average of 9% of adults receiving ongoing care and support.

At a local level, innovation and diversity are not the features that would first strike people looking to use direct payments support services. The services people can access are mostly dependent on what has been commissioned by the local council, and in the current economic climate people’s experience of support is more likely to be of overstretched services trying hard to stay afloat with decreasing staffing and budgets.
Perhaps not surprisingly, there has been a significant increase recently in the use of web-based technologies for delivering advice and support and to help networks of people to come together. There is much to learn from less resource intensive approaches that do not rely on one-to-one professional support and use techniques that enable people to do as much as possible for themselves and with the help of peers.

There are other innovations too, including the growth of organisations that support people, including direct payments recipients, to set up sustainable micro-enterprises that create jobs and increase market diversity. There are many great examples of people using direct payments to become producers as well as consumers of support services.

Typically there are three types of organisation that provide support to people using or thinking of using direct payments. These are:

- Council’s own in-house support services
- Small specialist, local services, often delivered by user led organisations, some acting as Centres for Independent Living (CILs)
- Larger national or regional organisations that offer support to councils across the country, but not necessarily as their core business.

In most instances councils commission support individually and there is not yet a pattern of support being jointly commissioned by multiple councils to service a number of adjacent boroughs. We expect that this is an area that may expand in the future, as many boroughs are hungry to explore the potential for services to be delivered on a sub-regional basis. In London, Westminster, Hammersmith and Fulham and Kensington and Chelsea have the most ambitious current programme to integrate adult social care activity across a multi-authority area, although there is as yet no plan to jointly commission direct payment support services at “tri-borough” level.

The market as it stands is not well placed to meet the challenge of a step change in the number of people with direct payments. If councils are to make personal budgets available to everyone eligible to receive them by 2013, with direct payments as the preferred delivery method, the market for direct payments support needs to grow and adapt beyond anything that it has experienced in its 15 year history. Innovation needs to be encouraged so that people have a wider range of alternatives to traditional services, are able to come together and combine their resources easily and can pursue opportunities to contribute and develop enterprising ideas. The market must also provide a range tailored direct payments support which can appeal to particular groups of people, including older people and people with mental health difficulties. The next section of the report explores some of these issues in more detail.
The challenges we face

The Government’s recent challenge to councils concerning personal budgets and direct payments should not underestimated. Although councils have so far responded confidently to the challenge of increasing personal budgets, making direct payments the preferred delivery method is arguably a much greater test. In the year to March 2011, the ADASS survey of personal budgets found that over 339,000 people were receiving personal budgets (35.2%), exceeding the government target of 30%, and nearly doubling the figure for 2010. However, the same report noted that ‘...nearly all of the increase has been in managed budgets with no significant increase in direct payments’.

This is unfortunate when one considers the evidence that taking a direct payment substantially increases the likelihood of people getting positive outcomes. Most recently, the POET survey of more than 2000 personal budget holders and their carers, which reported in July this year and was the biggest of its kind so far conducted, made some particularly significant conclusions. It found not only that personal budgets work best when delivered as direct payments, but also that direct payments work well for older people as well as for younger people with disabilities. This led TLAP to state in the paper Improving Direct Payments Delivery that ‘evidence continues to suggest that direct payments are likely to be the more beneficial approach for the majority of personal budget holders, and that councils need a stronger focus on direct payments delivery.’

The same paper included a warning that ‘excessive bureaucracy has impeded overall delivery of personal budgets, and specifically the take-up of direct payments.’

Currently, direct payments make up less than 10p of every £1 spent on social care in England. If we accept the aspiration of direct payments as the preferred way of offering a personal budget, it would seem reasonable to assume that this might mean perhaps 50% of eligible people eventually receiving them. This illustrates the potential scale of the task – at least a five-fold increase and within that, far higher increases for certain client groups not well represented in the current direct payments demographic.

Whilst this paper concentrates on direct payments support services as an essential component of any local strategy to increase take up, it is clear that change of this magnitude will require a fundamental shift in systems, processes and resources, and a drive to develop a wider diversity of provision. In this context, the development of an enhanced range of better support services is only one part of the strategic approach required, but it is nonetheless a fundamental platform from which to support the other developments necessary for personalisation to grow.

---


3 Improving Direct Payments Delivery, TLAP 2011
A number of people told us that even where there was strong evidence of the benefits of direct payments for local people, frontline staff and managers often found it hard to encourage their take up and were generally more comfortable setting up care packages consisting of directly commissioned services. Moreover, both staff and potential direct payment holders were often put off by the unhelpful and lengthy processes associated with setting them up. Managers also expressed concern that a spike in direct payments numbers could mean a lesser role for frontline staff and a reduced commissioning role for councils that could have destabilizing effects on existing services. Combined with the perceived increase in risk often unduly associated with direct payments, and it is not hard to see how many councils have struggled to make them an attractive proposition for large numbers of people or the frontline staff charged with offering them.

For those that have made significant efforts to boost numbers the road has not been easy. One issue, which has been particularly difficult to resolve for both commissioners and providers, is the relationship between support to take up a direct payment and advocacy. People told us that advocacy is a core part of what they want from a direct payments support service, but commissioners voiced concern about mixing advocacy with support to take up direct payments because of perceived conflicts of interest. A number of commissioners told us that an unhealthy dynamic had developed between practitioners and local user led organisations, where referrals to support services had sometimes come back including challenges to the budget on offer. This has in turn led to reluctance on the part of practitioners to refer to external organisations.

The resultant under utilisation of support services makes them appear very expensive and can render them unsustainable. These issues were reflected in the experience of numerous support providers we spoke to that complained of complex processes and poor referral levels, combined with inadequate communication with local commissioners. Despite these issues it is worth noting that there was also an appetite for finding ways to work together better and to meet the new challenges in partnership.

People using direct payments told us that having support to build their confidence to take them up was vital, including information about how they can be used. For some people this meant information about purchasing support directly from care providers, while for others it meant access to options that removed or reduced their responsibilities as an employer. In addition, knowing that ongoing support would be available if things went wrong and having someone to turn to who had “been there and done it” were seen as pivotal factors in making it feel possible to “take the leap.” None of these things is currently available to the extent needed to support the step change anticipated. Nevertheless, it was striking that no one we spoke to regretted the decision to take a direct payment. One person captured the strength of feeling well “however hard it’s been, I’d never go back, never.”

All of these pressures are happening at a time when Local Authorities are facing huge financial upheavals and the pressing need to do more with less. To meet the challenges of making direct payments a truly mainstream, accessible and attractive option for the majority of people, the need for shared understanding of what’s required and a commitment to work together to achieve it could hardly be more acute.
A model of best practice for support services

From the work we undertook together with people using direct payments, providers and commissioners, we compiled a list of “must haves” for what an ideal support service, or range of support services, should be doing and delivering. This includes for people who are using their own money, because many of the services which a good DPSO provides will be of equal value to people funding their own support. Indeed, TLAP has stated that a council’s core offering to everybody, should include ‘support and advice for people to help them understand how to make the most of the resources available to them, both financial and non-financial.’

This section describes the 10 key features of the model in some detail and includes “success statements,” which are the sorts of things local direct payment holders and people using their own funds to arrange support might be saying if each feature of the model were working well for them. Also included are a range of suggestions for how else we might know people were getting really great support. Taken together, these 10 key features represent a co-produced view of what people might want from direct payments support services. Where relevant we have included case studies illustrating particular features of the model. The case studies are not intended to give a comprehensive picture of the support provided by the organisation described, but rather to highlight a particular aspect or aspects of their service. We are indebted to all of those organizations that agreed to share information with us in preparing these case studies.

4 Improving Direct Payments Delivery, TLAP 2011
1) Taking a strategic role

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **My support service represents me and other people using direct payments and we can directly influence how direct payments develop at a strategic level.** | • Developing a clear vision  
• Formally representing the views and interests of particular groups  
• Making and maintaining strong relationships with commissioners and other stakeholders  
• Supporting and promoting people’s engagement in the coproduction of local transformation programmes for social care  
• Supporting and influencing local decision making | • Shared vision with strategic partners clearly understood and communicated widely  
• Agreed and functioning processes are in place for capturing and representing the views of people who use direct payments  
• Mutually respectful relationship with local commissioners  
• Provider displays a clear leadership role in promoting the values underpinning direct payments and promoting take up  
• A more diverse market for people to purchase from  
• Direct Payments recipients are active producers as well as consumers of services |
‘RUILS’: An innovative ULO responding to a difficult economic climate

RUILS are a local user led organization based in the Richmond Upon Thames, a borough with one of the highest rates of direct payments take up in the country.

They provide an innovative range of services to promote direct payments and support people to use them well including a personal assistant (PA) finder service and a variety of direct payments related training for PAs, PA employers and frontline staff in the borough. Their strong local leadership and talent for innovation recently won them an award for the ‘best local not for profit organization’ at the Richmond Local Business Awards. RUILS see themselves as having a key role in promoting the ethos of personalisation and leading cultural change. They produce a regular high quality newsletter, which is distributed to staff at the local authority as well as local people with social care needs. They also make good use of social media in building and maintaining a local community of interest around personalisation and direct payments. Over the last year, they have increasingly focused on exploring ways to respond to the difficult financial climate by finding ways to do more with less and make both the support they offer and the money people have as direct payments stretch further.

Most recently, RUILS staff have begun to use Skype to keep in contact with service users as an alternative to home visits wherever possible saving valuable time and resources. They have also run a ‘speed-recruiting’ event (similar to the concept of speed dating) to help people recruit personal assistants. A volunteer coordinator has been employed in order to make the best use out of volunteers, and a direct payments pooling guide has been established along with a series of seminars that people can attend to learn more about pooling their budgets.

www.ruils.co.uk
2) Information and advice

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *I can get the advice and support I need when I need it and I can trust it to be accurate.* | • Use of multiple channels to communicate information and advice about direct payments, including new media  
• Accessible information in different formats  
• Practical step by step guides designed to minimize formal support requirements  
• Information and advice on a wide variety of ways of using a direct payment  
• Frequently Asked Questions  
• Translation  
• Agreement by other organisations to signpost to the service  
• Regular local and national updates  
• Available on the phone and face-to-face  
• Available when you need it and not just 9-5 | • Customer surveys  
• “Where did you hear about…?” questions asked at first contact  
• Number of other organisations and community venues holding information and signposting  
• Reduction in contact hours for people taking up direct payments and/or reduction in numbers needing formal support  
• People have access to advice and support outside of office hours |
Penderels Trust, a large independent provider in Wandsworth

Penderels Trust is a national organisation based in Coventry that provides direct payments support services to a number of councils in London and in other areas of the country. In Wandsworth they provide most aspects of direct payments support for people in the locality, including general help and information, specialist employment support and quarterly peer support meetings. A separate payroll service is also commissioned and provided by ‘Payroll Masters’. The council is looking into developing a pre-paid card system but already offers people two different types of direct payment:

1) A ‘standard’ direct payment – where the service user has their own account and is personally responsible for their direct payment

2) An ‘assisted’ direct payment account – where the payroll provider holds the direct payment and the support service assists with all aspects of using it.

Penderels are making significant efforts to build good working relationships with local voluntary organisations and charities and run monthly meetings to share information and best practice with local organizations. Their aim is to create symbiotic relationships between all local charities and voluntary organisations so that they no longer have to rely solely on councils for referrals.

The council also provides inclusive training aimed at frontline staff working with people using personal budgets and direct payments which Penderels staff attend. The aim is to develop a joined up approach to how frontline staff work and avoid confrontational patterns of working.

www.penderelstrust.org.uk
3) Peer support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *I have access to people who’ve been here and done it and I can get hold of them when I need to.* | • Sharing personal experiences of using direct payments – what to look out for, what to avoid, what has worked well, what not so well  
• Encouraging people to take up direct payments  
• Increasing people’s ability to do as much as possible for themselves with informal support  
• Offering ideas about support  
• Helping people work through problems  
• Broadening people’s support networks  
• Building a community of experts by experience | • People report they are able to access support when they need it from knowledgeable people who have been there and done it  
• Frequency of signposting from social work teams to peer supporters  
• There being a variety of ways for people to engage and share their views  
• A growing number of people agreeing to provide peer support  
• A reduction in formal support hours per direct payment user – at set up and for ongoing management |
‘Real’ – A ULO in Tower Hamlets, building a support service from the local community:

Tower Hamlets commissions a local Disabled People’s Organisation (DPO), ‘Real’, to work as a one-stop-shop for people using direct payments and personal budgets. Real, which was recently formed from the merger of two local DPOs, provides support in the following areas:

- An information service which includes an advocacy and advice service and ongoing support
- Guidance on setting up and managing direct payments, and an independent support planning function
- Drop-in sessions for IT training, “being a good employer” training and volunteer programmes.

Local commissioners say the change to include independent support planning was necessary due to the low take up of direct payments and the complexities of communicating them well to such a diverse population:

“If from a local perspective the social care population have not embraced direct payments and this is partly because they have been poorly communicated, but also because of the nature of the demography of the population – a lot of work needs to be done on changing the culture.”

70% of Real’s client-facing staff are disabled, and the organisation has made an equal effort to represent the diverse demographic of their local community. Many of their customers do not speak English as a first language. As a result, Real has recruited a staff team which speaks a variety of languages including Somali and Bengali. Real also pride themselves on staying with their customers beyond the set up period, an important factor in building people’s confidence to use direct payments. Real provides tailored support to enable individual direct payments holders to track how their money is being spent and manage any changes to their support package. The service is widely regarded as achieving positive outcomes for people that are both cost-effective and empowering.
4) Generic advocacy

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *My interests are represented strongly and fairly.* | • Representing the interests of people to statutory bodies and other fund holders where required  
• Ensuring people’s voice is understood and heard  
• Supporting people and families to make decisions in the person’s best interest  
• Ensuring a clear separation between direct payments support and advocacy | • Advocacy is available to the full range of people who are using or might use direct payments and is taken up where appropriate  
• There are clear boundaries between advocacy and support to take up and use a direct payments  
• Referrals processes for advocacy are simple, are well used by staff and result in timely interventions |
5) Support planning

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| I get the support I need to plan for the future and I keep control of the process. | • Taking referrals from care management teams  
• Explaining support planning and its benefits  
• Supporting someone to develop their own plan and use resources innovatively  
• Providing a range of information and practical advice about support planning  
• Providing 1:1 support where necessary and appropriate  
• Using person-centred thinking tools to help people develop plans that are right for them  
• Helping to ensure support plans are robust, realistic and will help meet agreed outcomes  
• Ensuring plans cover contingencies  
• Ensuring plans are within the available budget or acceptable variance  
• Explaining Local Authority procedures and ensuring plans are likely to meet local sign-off requirements | • Costed plans completed with clear outcomes  
• People reporting better experiences of support more suited to them  
• More plans right first time and fewer complaints  
• Reduction in plans rejected or delayed at sign-off  
• % of plans completed within agreed timeframe/formal resource  
• Reduction in formal support hours required to develop plans  
• An increase in people doing innovative things with the resources available to them  
• People using direct payments to create opportunities for themselves to contribute to their local community |
## 6) Money management

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| **I have support to help me budget and manage my money that fits my needs. I know how I can spend my direct payment and I have support to keep records and submit information when I need it.** | • Support to match available budget to assessed needs and outcomes  
• Helping people make the most of their budget by drawing on other financial and non-financial resources where available  
• Support to open a dedicated bank account  
• Support to manage a dedicated bank account, including managing accounts on behalf of people where necessary and appropriate  
• Support with budgeting: saving and ensuring funds are set aside for holidays, contingencies etc  
• Helping people understand local rules and flexibilities around spending  
• Helping people understand local accounting requirements, keep the records needed and complete monitoring returns | • Reviews show people are making good use of their budgets to meet assessed needs and outcomes  
• People report a smooth and straightforward experience opening and managing bank accounts  
• People able to budget effectively – reduction in issues reported  
• A clear, transparent audit trail  
• Timely and accurate returns available for financial monitoring and audit  
• Fewer issues raised from financial monitoring and audit  
• Reduced staff time on financial monitoring and audit  
• Fewer complaints  
• Absence of concerns about financial abuse for people receiving direct payments |
OCS365: a complete solutions provider for pre paid card schemes

Staff now working for OCS365 were a major part of the team which developed East Cheshire Council's pre pay card scheme, a project which won the Council an MJ award in 2011 in the category of Personalisation and Choice. Pre-paid cards themselves have been around for some years but have recently seen a resurgence of interest and a number of London Councils have now either set up or are in the process of setting up local card schemes.

Pre-paid cards can offer benefits to both councils and people using direct payments. For councils, they offer a simplified audit trail and reduced paperwork for setting up and monitoring direct payments. They can also help to reduce financial risk because the cards tend not to have overdraft facilities. For people using direct payments, the need to open a separate bank account is removed and paper-monitoring returns become simpler or even redundant.

Such schemes can however be controversial as councils are able to control expenditure categories in ways that can be restrictive. Some schemes for instance restrict the card holder to purchasing services from a discreet set of providers which runs counter to direct payments guidance and would not be recommended. Not all councils do this however and some cards are able to be used with any provider as well as at ATMs, making them highly flexible.

So long as they are not used in restrictive ways, pre-pay cards can be a useful additional option for people who don’t want the hassle of setting up their own bank account and submitting paper returns.

Unsurprisingly in the current climate, providers such as OCS365 focus their offer on the significant savings they say councils can realise to back office functions from implementing a local prepaid card scheme. They also offer a companion card, which can be used by a trusted carer if the direct payment recipient has difficulty in conducting transactions directly. OCS365 also offer a training package for in house staff and providers involved in implementing local schemes.

www.ocs365.co.uk
7) Employment advice and support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *I feel confident to employ people if I want to but I know there are other non-employment options I can use which still give me control.* | • A range of accessible information and advice in different formats  
• Signposting to other sources of information and advice, including NCIL, ACAS, Sharedlivesplus, direct.gov  
• Basic information and advice about employment law and ability to refer to specialists when needed  
• Information and advice about insurance options and liabilities  
• Personal Assistant (PA) finder service  
• Offers that help people take on PAs without assuming employer responsibilities, including advice on self employment, mutuals and co-operatives  
• Advice and support in setting up and establishing micro-enterprises  
• Information, advice and support with recruitment, including advertising, job descriptions, short listing, interviews and selection  
• Template contracts and terms of employment  
• Information, advice and support regarding CRB checks  
• Support with ongoing PA management  
• Payroll services  
• Information, advice and guidance on staff supervision, appraisal and disciplinary issues  
• Good mechanisms to support people to share their experiences about what works | • Increase in number of direct payment holders employing their own staff  
• People reporting better experiences of support more suited to them  
• Growth in local PA market  
• People reporting they were effectively matched to PAs, “right first time”  
• Lower PA turnover  
• Fewer employment tribunals  
• Fewer employment issues and support breakdowns reported  
• Quality checks through “mystery shopping” |
Four London Boroughs, Barking and Dagenham, Havering, Redbridge and Waltham Forest, have joined forces to commission a specialist employment service for people looking to recruit personal assistants.

People 4 People, is a new venture from the not for profit care provider Outlook Care offering services to both self-funders and direct payment holders.

The service offers a comprehensive employment matching service, providing support to both personal assistants and to potential employers through the whole recruitment process and up to 12 months following a successful appointment. The service charges an upfront fee of £250 to its customers which can be paid by 12 monthly installments where required.

In response to demands from people who don’t wish to take on staff directly, People 4 People have recently expanded their service to include an ‘Individual Support Service’ which works to the same ethos but which takes on the employment responsibilities for personal assistants on behalf of the customer.

People are offered the same high levels of engagement throughout the whole recruitment process so that they can choose the right person for them and personalise the way in which their personal assistant works with them. If people at a later stage decide they wish to take on the employment role themselves, they can also choose to switch to the People 4 People service.

www.people4people.org.uk
## 8) Training

**SUCCESS MEANS**

*I can get good quality relevant training that suits me and helps me feel confident to manage my direct payment.*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>A range of training available for direct payment holders, e.g. budgeting, IT skills, being an employer, interview skills, running a micro enterprise etc</td>
<td>Surveys show improved public awareness of direct payments</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Involving direct payment holders in design and delivery of training</td>
<td>More disabled and older people involved in designing and delivering training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>A range of training available for PAs</td>
<td>Numbers of care managers and other stakeholders who have received awareness training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Information, advice and signposting to other training: specialist conditions, accredited NVQs etc</td>
<td>Increased PA numbers</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness training available for care managers and social work teams, e.g. what are direct payments, what support we offer etc</td>
<td>Better staff retention</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Awareness training available for other organisations and stakeholders</td>
<td>Higher levels of staff satisfaction</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Training to build people’s confidence and assertiveness is available</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>People understand how to take appropriate steps to guard against harm or abuse</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
9) Setting up support

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *I know what services are available and have the help I need to choose things that suit me. I can get support to put what I want in place and make sure things are settled.* | • Providing information to help people choose the most appropriate provision for themselves  
• Supporting people to take appropriate risks  
• Supporting people to develop contingency plans  
• Ensuring people understand how they can get ongoing support  
• Making sure support arrangements are fully established and working well for people | • People use a diverse range of services  
• Fewer breakdowns in support  
• Fewer people give up direct payments  
• People report good levels of confidence at start up  
• People have access to information and advice about protecting themselves, and what to do if they are being harmed or abused |
In Bexley, most community based social care to older and disabled people is delivered as a personal budget. Although not everyone takes their budget directly as cash, Bexley have removed all block contract provision for community based services and have concentrated on negotiating terms with providers which people can purchase directly using their personal budget. The results so far seem good and Bexley report seeing significant improvements both in terms of what is available in the market and in people's satisfaction levels.

Providers are adjusting to an environment without block-contracts where all support is purchased via a person’s personal budget. Spot purchases can be made directly by the council’s internal brokerage team or by people directly using a direct payment. Providers themselves have begun to focus more on the needs of customers to keep their businesses vibrant and sustainable.

The Council hopes that this will in turn lead to savings in procurement, as an average tender process often take about 9 months and involves hidden costs for providers, as well as for the council. Since making the change, Bexley have found that customers have a wider choice and suppliers are offering more flexible services, as they start to see themselves as more directly accountable to the people who buy their services. There are some early indications that prices have also begun to be more competitive which council officers attribute to the market being “open” rather than “closed” and the number of complaints the council receives from people using services has also reduced. Bexley are mindful that people also need support to recruit staff directly and are in the process of setting up a service that will assist clients to recruit their own staff and provide support to recruit personal assistants and provide payroll and ongoing support.
## 10) Ongoing support and trouble shooting

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SUCCESS MEANS</th>
<th>WHAT IS INVOLVED?</th>
<th>HOW WOULD WE KNOW IT WAS WORKING?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| *My support stays with me. It’s not just a one off. I know where to get help if things go wrong and I can talk to people who know what I’m going through.* | • Support that stays with you beyond the initial set up period  
• Having someone to talk to who has direct experience of using a direct payment when needed  
• Help when staff breakdowns occur  
• Specialist advice on tap just in case  
• Ongoing and up to date advice for people who are employing staff or running a micro-enterprise | • People are more confident to take up a direct payment and trust help will be there when they need it  
• Contracts include provisions for ongoing support including developing peer support  
• Peer support and advice is available and is used and valued  
• Absence of concerns about financial abuse for direct payments receivers |
Making it cost effective

In the current climate, it is hard to see DPSOs growing and expanding without a more robust approach to measuring their impact, including their cost effectiveness. The discussions we had with commissioners and providers gave the clear impression that there is not currently a well developed understanding of what cost effectiveness means in this context or how to go about measuring it. Where local attempts have been made, they appear to have been fairly crude and ill suited to the purpose with both commissioners and providers struggling to articulate their expectations and objectives. Such a position is unsustainable. Investment in direct payments support must be increased to enable more people to safely and meaningfully use direct payments and that cannot happen without a better shared understanding of how to measure cost effectiveness.

Councils have historically had difficulties costing the type of work involved in direct payments support. A comparative study of support planning published in May 2011 by the Office for Disability Issues (ODI) aimed to compare care managed support planning with user led support planning in three council areas. Although the report contained some interesting findings, it struggled to make meaningful cost comparisons, ‘largely because of the difficulty in identifying LA staff time spent on support planning,’ but also due to differences in the data collected, the availability of council data and because some activities undertaken by ULOs had no direct comparison within the Local Authority. In short, they were doing different things, and it is hard to compare apples with pears. However, the study also found that the average time to complete a support plan for the ULO was 11 hours, versus 2-4 hours for care management. This raises all sorts of questions about cost and quality that the report was unable to answer, but it certainly provides food for thought.

It is not altogether surprising that councils have found costing direct payments support work difficult. Supporting people to take direct payments and helping them through the process forms a small part of a wider set of responsibilities for a care manager, involves a number of back office functions and may happen over a period of weeks or months. While costing the work is difficult, it is nonetheless important to note just how critical good processes are in delivering support. The POET survey found that if the processes involved in setting up a personal budget are complex and poorly communicated this creates inefficiencies and has a major impact on people's experience. It also found that most councils do not make the process easy for people and that this was the single biggest factor impacting on their outcomes.
Similarly to the ODI report, the POET survey found that people were more likely to get positive outcomes and to take their personal budget as a direct payment when supported through the planning process by a non-statutory body. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that councils should pay close attention to both simplifying processes and valuing outside support when devising their strategies to make direct payments the preferred delivery method for personal budgets. This makes the question of measuring the cost effectiveness of commissioned direct payments support all the more important.

So what can be done? Firstly, we think that it will be important for commissioners, providers and people using direct payments to come together to develop a shared understanding of what outcomes are expected from great direct payments support and how success in achieving them should be understood and measured. The best practice framework in this report, co-produced with council officers, providers and people using direct payments, is a good starting point for developing a shared language and set of indicators at local level.

Secondly, it will be important to avoid broad assumptions about cost effectiveness when comparing services and to ensure that any approach is sensitive enough to account for the full benefits of different delivery models. In particular, it will be important to understand the broader social returns that ULOs and other external bodies can offer and to ensure these are given appropriate consideration alongside comparisons of costs when commissioning support.

Wider benefits that may not have visible or commonly have explicit value attributed include:

- Supporting people to feel confident to take up direct payments
- Promoting the benefits of direct payments and personalisation
- Empowering local communities to have a greater voice, greater local ownership and accountability
- Developing local peer support and engagement
- Improving community based leadership in local transformation programmes
- Supporting people to have a good experience of the process of getting a personal budget
- Employing disabled people.

Some of these factors might already be factored into contracts but others might currently go unnoticed or be seen as useful side effects. We think they will be critical factors in the success of local direct payments programmes and should be recognised accordingly.

Finally, we think it will be important for cost effectiveness to be considered in the round and for direct payments support as a whole. Snap decisions that favour one model over another at the expense of a mixed economy of options should be avoided. When local work has been done to understand the costs and benefits of different models, it should be possible for multiple providers to coexist and for people to make decisions for themselves about the model that is right for them, including the balance between cost and quality. The next section includes a tool to support local decision-making.
Choosing the best service: 
a planning tool for commissioning 
direct payments support

In this section we provide a practical tool designed to support commissioners and local 
decision makers. It will help you plan a response to the current policy drive around 
direct payments, understand your local strengths and weaknesses in relation to direct 
payments support, and develop an informed commissioning response that delivers 
better outcomes and value for money. The three sections are loosely based around 
the familiar commissioning cycle of understand, plan, do and review and consist of:

1) **Strategic planning questions:** a list of 
questions to help you think about your current 
situation in relation to direct payments and the 
implications of a step change in uptake

2) **A 10 point review:** A template incorporating 
the good practice model contained in this paper, 
designed to help you assess current provision, 
identify gaps and plan specific improvements, and;

3) **A commissioning checklist:** to help you ensure 
that you develop an inclusive commissioning 
approach to meeting the challenge ahead

The different sections can be completed as an 
internal exercise, as the focus of several meetings or 
a single workshop. However, section two in 
particular would benefit greatly from a more 
inclusive approach, working together with people 
using direct payments, local ULOs, DPSO’s and 
other care providers. Groundswell Partnership have 
an interest in supporting partners to get the best 
out of these tools and welcome enquiries by those 
using or planning to use them. If you would like 
more information about how we can support you 
to make use of the tools in this paper please email 
us at sarah@groundswellpartnership.co.uk.
## Part One: Strategic planning questions

### A) UNDERSTANDING WHERE WE ARE NOW – THE BASICS

1) How many people use DPs right now and how does this compare to national averages?

2) What % of spend on ongoing care and support does this represent?

3) What is the segmented distribution – by client group/by area?

4) What is our current £ investment in DP support?

5) What are the current commissioning arrangements? (Include estimates of internal resources and commissioned services)

6) What is our assessment of current capacity to respond to increased demand from DP recipients and self funders, and how does this differ for different client groups?

7) Is there sufficient focus on supporting people to use direct payments innovatively other than employing PAs, e.g. pooling budgets, developing microenterprises etc?

### B) AGREEING STRATEGIC PRIORITIES

8) If DP numbers increased by 10%, 25% and 50% from current levels what impact would we expect to see on other services?

9) Could increased take-up free up resources and/or lead to cost savings and if so where and over what time period?

10) What are our aspirations for DPs as a % of personal budgets? Year on year

11) What are our aspirations for DPs as a % of eligible people with ongoing support needs? Year on year

12) What practical advice and support is available to enable people to remain safe and take appropriate risks (e.g. support for CRB checks) and is this adequate?

13) What factors will impact on our ability to deliver these projections – internal/external?

14) What is our preferred market shape – are we working towards a diverse market or a single solution?
## Part Two: 10 Point review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Key features</th>
<th>Success statements for people using support</th>
<th>How well are we doing?</th>
<th>What do we know about the outcomes for people?</th>
<th>Is it cost effective?</th>
<th>Is it scalable?</th>
<th>Commissioning priority?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – 5</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>1 – 5 high – low</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1) Taking a Strategic role</td>
<td>My support service represents me and other people using DP’s and we can directly influence how DP’s develop at a strategic level</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2) Information and advice</td>
<td>I can get the advice and support I need when I need it and I can trust it to be accurate</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3) Peer support</td>
<td>I have access to people who’ve been here and done it and I can get hold of them when I need to</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4) Generic Advocacy</td>
<td>My interests are represented strongly and fairly</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5) Support planning</td>
<td>I get the support I need to plan for the future and I keep control of the process</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6) Money management</td>
<td>I have support to help me budget and manage my money that fits my needs. I know how I can spend my DP and I have support to keep records and submit information when I need it</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Key features</td>
<td>Success statements for people using support</td>
<td>How well are we doing?</td>
<td>What do we know about the outcomes for people?</td>
<td>Is it cost effective?</td>
<td>Is it scalable?</td>
<td>Commissioning priority?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------------------------------------</td>
<td>----------------------</td>
<td>-----------------</td>
<td>------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7) Specialist employment advice/suppor</td>
<td>I feel confident to employ people if I want to but I know there are other non-employment options I can use which still give me control</td>
<td>poor – great</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8) Training</td>
<td>I can get good quality relevant training that suits me and helps me feel confident to manage my DP</td>
<td>poor – great</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9) Setting up support</td>
<td>I know what services are available and have the help I need to choose things, which suit me. I can get support to put what I want in place and make sure things are settled</td>
<td>poor – great</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10) Ongoing support and trouble shooting</td>
<td>My support stays with me. It's not just a one off. I know where to get help if things go wrong and I can talk to people who know what I'm going through</td>
<td>poor – great</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Part Three: Commissioning checklist

#### Designing an approach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1</td>
<td>Do we know which elements of direct payments support are we looking to commission (final column section 2)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>Have we involved people using direct payments in developing the specification and agreeing the outcomes we want?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>Have we identified if there is capacity for the local market to respond?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>Do we have a view of the role that different types of provider might play – ULOs, independent sector, in-house?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>Have we chosen a proportionate approach that will ensure a level playing field (i.e. small and local providers are not disadvantaged)?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>Have we agreed how we will evaluate bids – including the balance between quality, cost, value for money and social returns?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Managing quality and performance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>Have we agreed key performance indicators, how they will be measured, by whom and how frequently?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>Do we know how these indicators relate to the outcomes we specified and agreed?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>Is our approach to quality assurance proportionate without placing unduly burdensome demands on providers?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10</td>
<td>Have we agreed an approach to involving people using direct payments, their carers and families in managing quality?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11</td>
<td>Are we keeping track of the choices people are making and keeping providers informed so they can adapt and respond?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12</td>
<td>Does our approach incentivise improvement and better value for money?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13</td>
<td>Are we supporting people to take appropriate risks and guard against harm or abuse?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### Learning and review

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Yes</th>
<th>No</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>14</td>
<td>Have we fixed a date for reviewing the direct payments support we deliver/commission?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15</td>
<td>Have we an agreed set of outcome measures that are specific, quantifiable and attributable?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16</td>
<td>Have we agreed what additional qualitative information we will use to better understand people’s experiences?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>17</td>
<td>Have we agreed an approach to involving people using direct payments, their carers and families in reviewing the support they receive?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18</td>
<td>Have we agreed an approach to communicating our learning back to frontline staff and people using direct payments?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>19</td>
<td>Will we be able to compare this information with similar data for personal budget holders with managed budgets?</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

---

*BEST PRACTICE IN DIRECT PAYMENTS SUPPORT – a guide for commissioners*
Concluding thoughts

Making direct payments the preferred delivery method for personal budgets requires new thinking. Rising to the challenge will require commissioners, local ULOs, care providers and people with direct payments working together to develop a shared vision of success and a plan to commission cost effective support that meets people’s needs and aspirations. This needs to happen alongside work to stimulate a more diverse range of support where people can not only purchase services but also have opportunities to contribute and to develop the market for themselves.

We think the scale of growth required and the need to make direct payments accessible to a wider group of people strongly suggests that a single provider is not the answer to great direct payments support. It is very unlikely that any one organisation could deliver the range of support described here to everyone who might benefit. The future should involve diverse local markets of support with providers working towards shared outcomes defined through an inclusive and engaging dialogue between commissioners, local people, providers and community organisations.

In any mixed economy of support, there should be a role for local ULOs whose contribution will always be more than just service delivery. Engagement with ULOs is essential for co-producing credible local change programmes. Evidence also suggests that ULOs are an effective vehicle for harnessing the intelligence and energies of local populations to deliver peer support and encouragement for people to take up direct payments and that their involvement in support planning and training is also of great value.

However, ULOs also need freedom to maintain their independence and being tied to large volume contracts for service delivery can conflict with their role in representing the interests of local communities.

Maintaining the right balance has been a hard dilemma for many local organisations. In reality, small community based organisations often lack the infrastructure to deliver support at scale for large and diverse groups of people and the re-orientating and restructuring required to do so can serve to compromise the very culture and integrity that makes them so valuable and distinctive in the first place. Commissioners and ULOs should be mindful of this dynamic when considering the preferred “market shape” for direct payments support and the role of different parties in making it happen.

We think there is an important role for bigger organisations with established infrastructure working in partnership with local organisations, to deliver comprehensive support with each party playing to their strengths. There will also be greater roles for specialist organisations providing advice on budget pooling and developing micro-enterprise.

We envisage a future where a diverse range of organisations are engaged in delivering a broader range of support to a wider variety of people. In this context there is a place for larger organisations to provide back office support and additional capacity to community based organisations providing specialist advice and support at local level.
Although this would no doubt challenge some sensibilities, we think a market without a range of players would not be viable and that finding a way to work together towards shared goals and outcomes will provide the best chance of meeting the challenges ahead.

**Increased diversity also needs to be accompanied by increased consistency.** Research by SCIE has shown that people with dementia and their carers, older people and people with mental health problems can benefit most from consistent contact with a known, trusted person. Direct payments support organisations will need to be able to provide this level of continuity to successfully expand the reach of direct payments for all groups of people.

We think there are **potentially important and complimentary roles for in-house services** but that they should not be the sole solution or play a major role in either support planning or promoting take up. Where in-house services exist they should focus on coordinating local resources, promoting coproduction and representing and the interests of direct payments holders to the market so that the right support is available at the right price.

Coordinating and supporting the development of a healthy, mutually respectful, mixed economy of support will be no small task. But this is the only viable response and that the benefits will be significant when we get there.
Think Local, Act Personal is a sector-wide commitment to moving forward with personalisation and community-based support, endorsed by organisations comprising representatives from across the social care sector including local government, health, private, independent and community organisations. For a full list of partners visit www.thinklocalactpersonal.org.uk