

Transcript of Making it Real – Hertfordshire direct payments

I'm going to give a bit of an overview of what we're doing with the 'I/we' statements.

Particularly where it all began for us a couple of years ago in terms of our self-directed support vision for direct payment holders.

We did a survey September 2020. We wrote to every direct payment holder, just under 3000, and we got a really good return rate of about one in three, and that very much was the foundation of our three-year strategy which is currently underway.

The quotes here [refers to image] and the graphics kind of say what direct payments should be about, which is giving people a life that they want, and they choose and the money is the mechanism for doing so and it should really be flexed like that and not mirror anything like commissioned services.

As well as having a direct payments survey we also needed to know what our staff wanted - social workers, occupational therapists, anyone that's got a role with direct payments, we need to listen to their challenges [around] direct payments.

A big factor is really shifting the focus from time and task, to outcome-focused, and writing in our social care assessments [about] personal outcomes, and the personal budget being flexed to meet personal outcomes.

We re-wrote our direct payment policy, guidance and our strategy within the last year to capture that key message.

We've developed a three hour training session that our social workers, occupational therapists, and community care officers can tap into. It gives them the national overview and it also gives the Hertfordshire vision and what's available support-wise.

We created a peer group. We have a learning session every month regarding personal budgets and direct payments but we also have a Microsoft Teams 'chat'. Any person can ask a query or question and get the response from the rest of the group.

We've got about half of our workforce on this Microsoft Teams chat now and in terms of developing and changing the culture from time and task to outcome-focused and flexible and creative direct payment spend, it really kind of gives a platform to do that, plus the myths as well, and busting the jargon and bureaucracy that can sometimes get in the way of good working.

[Regarding] information and advice: 'having the information I need when I need it' was very much a message of our survey, as well as [this] statement. So what we've done is we redesigned our direct payment information booklet with direct payment holders, carers and colleagues.

We use TLAP's jargon buster, hopefully busting myths about direct payments, particularly what they can and can't be used for. We put in a lot of direct payment holder quotes so people can hear from other people that we captured in the survey, and there's a lot of guidance and places to go.

Key messages in our survey that we found out were: *it's all very well giving the money to us but if we've got nowhere to spend it it's almost pointless*. And it was taking too long to get money. So we've put in flow charts about the processes, as well as contact details for the different teams that's needed.

'Keep your family, friends and connections' - obviously this is most important for life for all of us, and it's no different for direct payment holders. Just the money needed to be used for support to keep family, keep friends, keep connections in in their local communities.

So what we're trying to do in Hertfordshire, we try to make sure that care and support plans are personalised. Obviously there's still that issue of trying to create a personal budget on that's based on hours that's transformed into outcomes, and for most that is keeping family friends and connections. We're still trying to work through that.

So our direct payment policy and guidance, like I say, it's a year old, and trying to get this through to practice is our mission.

We know direct payment uptakes is what, 3 in 10 people receive a direct payment. So our social workers, our community care officers are used to a certain way of doing things. Being able to keep direct payments in conversations, like today, like in our peer group, like in our training, like in our corporate comms is essential, to make that they are an option for anyone that's Care Act eligible.

Direct payments shouldn't be a commissioned service - it should be nowhere near it. It should be about money that the person feels 'you know what? I could do a better job than that the local authority. So we want to work in partnership with others to make sure that people have got options to spend their direct payment.

We're currently going through a tender. Our new self-directed support service is due to go live in January 2023. What we wanted was shaped by the survey but also the coproduction group that we bought together with direct payment holders, other people that receive support and the commissioned service, and carers and our staff within Hertfordshire.

And no matter how much support, whether you need a lot of support, to receive your direct payment or individual service fund, or little, you'll be able to get it under the one roof, one provider are to tap into the various different markets out there the community catalyst market, PA register and trying to increase the PA workforce in Hertfordshire as well. Having a brokerage role as well so if people are unsure how to flex that personal budget the best way, they've got someone to talk it through with that's impartial and that's not sitting within Hertfordshire County Council.

We talk to people during and after significant changes, personal outcomes are amended depending on what people want out of their life and obviously if they are still Care Act eligible.

I guess a key game changer for us is our Connect and Enable direct payments our workers are able to self-approve up to £500 themselves, so social care practitioners being social workers, occupational therapists, community care officers. So that money is available to quickly deal with any changes in a person's life. So a hospital discharge potentially, or someone's at risk of being admitted to hospital, carer breakdown, someone needs to learn or upskill, skillswise and short term support is needed.

If it's over £500 its still able to be done but it goes through the same budgetary holders as it would usually with ongoing direct payment sign offs. But what this does allow, now it's been in practice, and really effectively being used properly in the last six months in Hertfordshire, is it allows people to think outside of the box and self-approve thinking outside of the box.

Which has never been done before, and that kind of helps with creative thinking of long-term for ongoing direct payments, and us being able to think, actually, direct payments all boil down to money to improve well-being. And it actually can be spent on a variety of different things. Things that we've never really thought about before, whether it's that Alexa, that gym membership, as long as it's legal and it's linked to a personal outcome that's obviously Care Act eligible.

When we started talking in our surveys, we didn't have a personal assistant register and people struggled to find personal assistant. So what we thought was really important was to develop a PA register. Not only that but to have the right credentials so that people could be matched easily and could be matched on what direct payment holders want.

So job advert requirements are more outcome focused and value people's unique backgrounds and cultures. So if the most important thing for a direct payment holder is an interest in football, then they could make that part of the job advert.

They try to increase PA numbers, based on not just advertising a care and support job, but advertising what really truly PAa's can do which is a variety of different work, and it might be going to the pub with someone, it might be going to the local football match, but advertise that. And then we might see that more people may fancy a career in support and social care.

So there's the link to PA direct [refers to screen] which Hertfordshire Care Association is managing on behalf of Hertfordshire County Council. It's currently got about 180 PAs there. It's been active since December last year.

As well as our PAs we also work closely with Community Catalysts to develop micro enterprises. They continually have new enterprises every month and gone on that directory, and they are doing a really good job. We've got the PA workforce is now being developed and of course if people still know their family member potentially, a friend or someone that

they feel they want support from, people can still use their direct payment for that, but they've got other places to go and spend their direct payment.

Question from someone on the call: *Are DP holders worried about their PA being poached via the register?*

Naturally, can you imagine if I've got a personal assistant I really like, I don't want them to leave and go elsewhere, and people are worried that they might be paid more money to go elsewhere. But some of the PAs won't sign up to that Register because they are happily employed. Others might because they want to change, and if they don't have a change they might leave the industry anyway.

But also the PA Register is about inviting people in and getting them to look at social care and support differently because the thing with being a PA is that it's such a varied job, and I don't think we give it enough justice in our job adverts, our specs. Because it really isn't just about the typical perspective of care and support, it's about getting out into the community and doing the things that matter to people.

And when people realise that you actually get paid for that, they are like: 'why didn't I know about this earlier?'