



Report of the Cabinet Member for Care Services

Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel – 8th November 2022

ACTIONS FOLLOWING WALES AUDIT OFFICE REPORT (APRIL 2022) – DIRECT PAYMENTS FOR ADULT SOCIAL CARE

Purpose	To Provide an overview of Social Services actions in response to the WAO report on Direct Payments
Content	This report includes a summary of the findings of the WAO report and an assessment of the departments performance against the areas identified in the WAO report.
Councillors are being asked to	Consider and endorse the findings of the report
Lead Councillor(s)	Cabinet Member for Care Services Cllr Louise Gibbard
Lead Officer(s)	Amy Hawkins HoS for Adult Services & Tackling Poverty
Report Author	Richard Davies Strategic Manager for Direct Payments Peter Field Principal Officer for Commissioning Adult Services

1. INTRODUCTION

- 1.1 This report provides a summary of the findings of the Welsh Audit Office (WAO) report into use of Direct Payments across Wales. It highlights the key messages and recommendations made by the WAO and provides a summary of our response to these recommendations.

2. A SUMMARY OF WAO KEY FINDINGS

- 2.1 The report published in April 2022 highlights the following:

- Direct Payments support people's independence and are highly valued by service users and carers but there are inconsistencies in the way they are promoted and managed.

- Services are not always equitable and it is difficult to assess overall value for money.
- People are not consistently encouraged to take up Direct Payments.
- Engagement and involvement by local authorities is inconsistent.
- While the value of Direct Payments is recognised by senior managers, social care staff do not always display confidence in promoting their use with service users and carers.
- Managing and supporting people to use Direct Payments varies widely and service users and carers are receiving different standards of service.
- Personal Assistants are essential to people making the most of Direct Payments, but service users often struggle to recruit them.
- People have mixed views on the support they receive from their local authority after they have taken up Direct Payments.
- The interface between use of NHS continuing healthcare and social care on access to Direct Payments also remains a problem.
- Despite some significant challenges, local authorities ensured service users and carers were mostly supported during the pandemic, but a significant number of service users and carers surveyed experienced difficulties.
- Direct Payments are used slightly differently across Wales. There is a need to address this 'post-code lottery' to ensure people are being treated fairly and equally

2.2 Other notable findings include a relatively small proportion of adults supported by Social Services used Direct Payments:

- In 2018/19 of 125,415 adults that Social Services supported only 6,262 (5%) received Direct Payments.
- In 2018/19 £2.29 billion was spent on all Social Services across Wales, of that, £79.5 million (3.5%) was spent on Direct Payments.

2.3 The table below contains an extract from data in the WAO report which explains the proportion of people receiving Social Care (in 2018/19) who have a Direct Payment. This table shows that in Swansea 5.8% of people have their care needs met in this way. This is slightly over the national average of 5%.

LA	Number of Adults receiving Social Care	DP recipients	Percentage
Swansea	8,932	517	5.8%
Bridgend	7,059	232	3.3%
Carmarthenshire	7,658	538	7.0%
Neath Port Talbot	3,371	433	12.8%
Wrexham	8,814	272	3.1%
Gwynedd	8,774	137	1.6%

Flintshire	8,041	437	5.4%
Wales Total	125,415	6,262	5%

4. WELSH AUDIT OFFICE RECOMMENDATIONS

To address the key findings the Welsh Audit Office published 10 recommendations within its report. These are set out below with a summary of our progress in relation to each.

Recommendations for Local Authorities

R1: Local Authorities should review public information in discussion with service users and carers to ensure it is clear, concise and fully explains what they need to know about Direct Payments.

Our Response:

Co-production is at the centre of DP development in Swansea. A DP forum has been created and arrangements for developing DP services are developed co-productively via this group. Examples of areas where co-production approach to review information include the following:

- Development of Carers' and Practitioners' information Leaflet.
- Development and updating of website.
- Via the Direct Payment Carers Forum
- Development of tender evaluation processes
- Development of letters and communications to explain relevant issues impacting Direct Payment recipients.

R2: Local Authorities should undertake additional promotional work to encourage the take up of Direct Payments.

Our Response:

A Strategic Manager post has been created to promote take up of Direct Payments and ensure that these services are optimised for people where this option is preferred. Examples of promotional work underway include:

- Creation of Direct Payment leaflet and written information, including information for carers to promote use of DP services
- Creation of Information Packs for practitioners to assist Social Work Teams to understand and promote direct payments, and to enable them to support service users through the assessment and application process.
- Introduction of information sessions delivered to student Social Workers at Swansea University to enable them to understand the range of innovative ways that care needs can be met and potentially improve the number of PAs available to provide services via a DP.
- Development of the Council's website with relevant DP information and further exploration of other digital strategies and on-line platforms.
- Ongoing marketing and promotion at various other public / educational events e.g. Parent Carers Forum, Carers Forum and local recruitment fairs.
- Relationship building with key partners, Swansea Council for Voluntary Services, Swansea Carer Centre, South and West Wales Traumatic Brain Injury Service, Swansea University.

- Creation of assessment routes for carers and fast track processes for accessing DPs for Carers, including to access Micro- enterprise services which can assist carers to maintain their caring roles.

R3: Local Authorities should ensure advocacy services are considered at first point of contact to provide independent advice for Direct Payments to service users and Carers.

Our Response:

This is an area where further work is required. Adult services has commissioned advocacy services to meet general advocacy obligations arising under the SSWBA. Further work will be undertaken to understand how these commissioned services can assist with this recommendation.

The Direct Payments team has commenced a pilot project with our Community Initial Assessment Social Work Team. This involves matching Direct Payment staff with social work practitioners to provide support to service users at first point of contact. This initiative is designed to address technical and process questions and ensure that service users are in the strongest position possible to understand how DP could benefit them.

R4: Local Authorities should ensure information about DP is available at the front door to social care and are included at the initial discussion on the available care options for service users and carers.

Our Response:

The Strategic Manager is actively introducing measures to improve knowledge and understanding of Direct Payments across our Social Work Teams. Steps taken to achieve recommendation 4 include:

- Training and information sessions for Common Access Point Staff.
- Ongoing training and information sessions for all Social Work Teams
- Ongoing work between the Carers Centre and the Direct Payments Team to ensure the Carers Centre can provide information and advice about Direct Payments at the first point of contact.

R5: Local Authorities should provide training to Social Workers on Direct Payments to ensure they fully understand their potential and feel confident promoting it to service users and carers.

Our Response:

- A comprehensive information and training schedule is underway. Detailed information packs have been developed and social work training is being provided. To date relevant teams trained include: Community Initial Assessments Team, Local Area Coordination, North Hub Social Work Team, Swansea University Student Social Workers.
- Further training sessions are currently scheduled for West Hub, CAP, Hospital SW Teams, Traumatic Brain Injury Service, Sensory Services, Mental Health Teams, Older Peoples Mental Health Teams.
- All other social work teams across the Directorate will receive this information and training over the coming months.

- Weekly 'drop in' sessions have also been developed to enable social work practitioners to access Direct Payments Team advice and receive support and guidance.

Recommendations for Local Authorities and Welsh Government

R6: Work together (with Social Care Wales and the All-Wales Direct Payments Forum) to develop a joint Recruitment and Retention Plan for Personal Assistants.

Our Response:

Recruitment of PAs in Swansea is progressing well. New initiatives to recruit PAs are working and at October '22 the team have a bank of approximately 180 people who would like to become PAs. This recent growth in PA numbers has been aided by the following:

- The recruitment of an additional PA Coordinator to recruit PAs.
- Additional support and advice for PAs via SCVS.
- Training and support for PAs via access to Swansea Council E-learning suite.
- An ongoing recruitment drive in partnership with Swansea Council Workforce, SCVS Micro Enterprises.
- 'Recruit Local' campaign and attendance at multiple locations and events to promote recruitment.
- Uplifts to DP rates (to £14.10 gross) to allow PAs to receive a maximum of £11.00 p/h.

Recommendation for Local Authorities and Welsh Government

R7: Clarify policy expectations in plain accessible language and set out:

- What Direct Payments can pay for;
- How application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes work;
- How monitoring individual payments and the paperwork required to verify payments will work;
- How unused monies are to be treated and whether they can be banked; and
- How to administer and manage pooled budgets.

Public information should be reviewed regularly (at least every two years) to ensure they are working effectively and remain relevant.

Our Response:

The current DP Policy is under review and a Project Board has recently been established to assist with this work. The revised DP Policy will address each of the areas referred to above and will be kept under review by the Project Board.

Recommendations for Welsh Government

R8: Ensure that people who receive both NHS continuing healthcare and Direct Payments have greater voice, choice and control in decision making.

Our Response:

This is a recommendation for Welsh Government. The Local Authority supports these objectives and has responded positively to consultation proposals which will potentially enable Health Board to fund Direct Payment arrangements in the future.

Recommendations for Local Authorities and Welsh Government

R9: Work together to establish a system to fully evaluate Direct Payments that captures all elements of the process – information, promotion, assessing, managing and evaluating impact on wellbeing and independence. Managing and evaluating impact on wellbeing and independence.

Our Response:

The Strategic Manager is working closely with colleagues from across the department to establish enhanced performance management arrangements. These arrangements will enable a robust analysis of all aspects of the Direct Payment service. These revised arrangements will include:

- A core data set which identifies key metrics. This will assist with evaluating effectiveness of processes, timeliness of services and identification of barriers and bottlenecks which cause delays for service users.
- Metrics which allow more effective evaluation of volume and spend in relation to each type of DP activity including use of DP by Carers and spend on micro enterprises.
- Data which allows for close monitoring of unspent allocations and processes for ensuring decisions about unspent allocation reconcile with care management reviews.
- Development of tools for assisting with analysis of outcomes and quality of life impacts for those who receive DP.
- Systems and process which ensure opportunities to co-produce are optimised and that actions for change are achieved co-productively.

To date Welsh Government has not published or consulted on any proposal to develop new data sets or performance management arrangements. The department will collaborate with Welsh Government to develop these arrangements as required.

R10: Annually publish performance information for all elements of Direct Payments to enable a whole system view of delivery and impact to support improvement.

Our Response

To date Welsh Government has not engaged local authorities to develop these requirements. Currently the department has systems in place for monitoring of key performance metrics via our monthly Performance and Finance Monitoring programme. Monitoring also occurs via the Adult Services Scrutiny Performance Panel.

5. NEXT STEPS

- 5.1 The WAO report provides clear direction regarding the areas where Local Authorities can improve performance to achieve better services for residents. The Direct Payments Team recognises the potential to improve in many of these areas and is actively working to achieve this. Significant work in many of the areas referred to has already underway.
- 5.2 Other priorities include establishing fit for purpose staff structures, ensuring processes are as efficient as possible, and ensuring consistent practice across Adults and Child and Family services.

- 5.3 The recent implementation of a cross departmental Project Board will ensure that progress is closely monitored, and Directorate wide governance of ongoing performance at a senior management level.

6. Integrated Assessment Implications

- 6.1 The Council is subject to the Equality Act (Public Sector Equality Duty and the socio-economic duty), the Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 and the Welsh Language (Wales) Measure, and must in the exercise of their functions, have due regard to the need to:

- Eliminate unlawful discrimination, harassment and victimisation and other conduct prohibited by the Acts.
- Advance equality of opportunity between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and those who do not.
- Deliver better outcomes for those people who experience socio-economic disadvantage
- Consider opportunities for people to use the Welsh language
- Treat the Welsh language no less favourably than English.
- Ensure that the needs of the present are met without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

- 6.1.1 The Well-being of Future Generations (Wales) Act 2015 mandates that public bodies in Wales must carry out sustainable development. Sustainable development means the process of improving the economic, social, environmental and cultural well-being of Wales by taking action, in accordance with the sustainable development principle, aimed at achieving the 'well-being goals'.

- 6.1.2 Our Integrated Impact Assessment (IIA) process ensures we have paid due regard to the above. It also takes into account other key issues and priorities, such as poverty and social exclusion, community cohesion, carers, the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) and Welsh language.

- 6.2 An IIA screening has been undertaken (Appendix B). The IIA demonstrates impacts are positive if the Local Authority adopts the recommendations of the WAO report. A full IIA is not required

Appendix A – Welsh Audit Office Direct Payments for Adults Social Care report



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Appendix B – Integrated Impact Assessment Screening



IIA - Appendix B -
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