

Pooled Direct Payments

Friends United Together was formed when the commissioned care and support a number of individuals were receiving was being re-tendered.

A number of individuals were worried by the proposals because they had received support from the commissioned provider 'Community Lives Consortium' for many years, had built close and enduring relations with care staff, and were active participants in the organisation.

In response to the proposed changes and with the support of Andrew from the Direct Payment team and Lisa from the Commissioning team, the group set up a 'cooperative', with support from Cwmpas, to manage their direct payments and agree how they would use the direct payment to meet their collective needs.

Lisa said: "The individuals involved in Friends United Together have been an absolute pleasure to work alongside. It has been their certainty of knowing what works for them, their determination not to be derailed by endless bureaucracy and their ability to collaborate which has led to their success. They just needed council officers to keep the door open and facilitate conversations with the right people for them to succeed. They have shown that it is possible to take control and live better lives, and they are happy to share their learning to support others to do the same."

The cooperative model has given the group flexibility and control and they can bank their hours and decide when to use them.

A representative from Cwmpas said, "Cwmpas supported the Friends United Together to set up as a cooperative, to enable them to keep the care organisation, (Community Lives Consortium) that people were used to and happy with...Their determination to be able to choose who provides their care and to be able to control how and when that care is delivered was amazing. The Friends themselves felt it was worth doing and wanted to help others to do the same by learning from their experiences."

The Direct Payment team have said, this is an exemplary piece of work enabling a small community to have autonomy, being able to direct where they go and what support they have, even down to having a say in who they employ to help them. It enabled them to have a say in what activities are essential to them, what matters to them, and how they make those things come to fruition. It shows that people should have a say in their support and that it should be designed around their needs and support them in their best vision of a good life.

This case study was chosen as a good practice example from Wales for the IMPACT study (Improving Adult Social Care Together) a UK centre for implementing evidence in Adult Social Care.

IMPACT's feedback reported that the Friends United Together initiatives ensures:

- More choice and freedom in how support hours are used.
- More choice over who works with them – more say in recruitment.
- More members joining Friends United Together.

- More events in the community, as they did before the pandemic (coffee mornings etc.), giving support and being involved in the community.
- Keep challenging and trying new ways of doing things, always looking to improve things.
- Be an example to others of what can be achieved.
- Help others to do what they have done.
- New guides and materials – 'a pathway for a Co-operative'.

And the long-term goal of the project state: "Ultimately, we want to help more people set up care Cooperatives".

Following on from the success of this project, the Direct Payment Support Team are now supporting a new and innovative project supporting the development of a Shared Living Home where residents have full voice, choice and control over where the home is, what it looks like and who lives there, including choosing who it is that provides their support.

The group have formed themselves into a cooperative organisation, they have developed a project plan, design principles for the housing and support (including social, economic and environmental factors) and are currently working with a group of young people to work out who can live together and a Housing Provider are currently looking for accommodation/plots.