



The Horse's Mouth

A NEWSLETTER FOR USERS OF
DIRECT PAYMENTS, INDEPENDENT
LIVING FUND OR THOSE WHO SELF- FUND

August 2007

From the Chief Executive

Whilst we are waiting for summer to arrive (!) I hope you will enjoy reading the latest news from the support service. There are many developments we are currently working on, which we hope will benefit service users. In this issue you will find news about a new Personal Assistant Register and job adverts and a peer support scheme to be run by Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living. We are also working on user's behalf with Wiltshire County Council to improve the standard Direct Payments Agreement and increase DP rates to cover the changes in legislation over paid holiday. Please read on as there are requests for your assistance with many of these projects. Our ethos is to be as user led as possible and we do appreciate your input.

On this note, our managing organisation, Compass Disability Services, is looking for two new trustees. The trustees meetings take place 6 times a year in Taunton and each trustee is expected to take on an area of responsibility. We are particularly keen to recruit someone with legal or financial experience. I realise that it will be a huge commitment for someone to travel from Wiltshire, but if anyone is interested please contact me and our Chair of Trustees will contact you.

Thank you.

Richard Pitman, Chief Executive

Paid Holiday Increases

The law about the amount of holiday employers must give their PAs has changed. From this October the minimum paid holiday increases to 24 days per annum and from April 2009 it will go up to 28 days. If you are already allowing paid time off for bank holidays in addition to the annual holiday, then you will not need to change, but very few do this. Wiltshire County Council have agreed that they will give a small increase in the hourly PA rates to cover this and you should hear from the finance department over the next month or two to tell you what this increase will be. Contracts of employment and budgets will also need checking and amending, and if you require assistance with this please contact us.

Please note that our office will be closed on Wednesday 26th September for staff training.

Our Direct Payment Advisors will also not be available on that day. Please contact us earlier in the week if you have any problems, or leave a message on our answer phone, which will be responded to on the Thursday.

The copy deadline for the October issue
is
Thursday 20 September

Payroll Pieces

<p>Information Update</p> <p>We will soon be writing to all payroll service users to ensure that the information we have is correct. This is because we have found errors in the information we hold, and to be sure that we are up to date with people who have left your employment.</p> <p>We hope that all payroll service users will help us in this task by checking and returning the form we send you. This should make sure we are more efficient in the future.</p> <p>If anyone requires help with this please contact your usual advisor, or phone the office.</p>	<p>Online filing fee</p> <p>Many of you will be expecting a filing fee from the tax office following the online filing of your end of year employer's return. The tax office will send a letter confirming the receipt of the return and the payment of the incentive. Some have already received this letter, but it could take some time for the tax office to work their way through all the employers in the country. We do not therefore advise chasing this up until November time.</p> <p>When the letter is received you can either write and ask for a cheque, or start deducting the amount from your monthly tax payments. You will still receive</p>	<p>(cont.)</p> <p>the P32 form which tells you how much tax and national insurance is due, but will need to set this off against the £150 online filing incentive, until you have reclaimed the full £150. If you require a table on which to record this please contact Alison or Pam in the office, or if you require support with this we will ask an advisor to visit.</p> <p>Reminder</p> <p>If you send a P46 for a new employee in to the payroll service, please make sure you complete the employer details on the back, or we can not match it up with your records. Thank you.</p>
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News from Other Organisations

Wiltshire County Council Finance Team

After a difficult time, the Direct Payments Finance team at Wiltshire County Hall is now fully staffed. Angela Rutty has the lead on this and is responsible for:

- Caroline Boufersaoui - Finance Officer
- Bill Jeffries-White - Finance Assistant with responsibilities for Kennet & North
- Cathy Young - Finance Assistant with responsibilities for West & South

National Centre for Independent Living

NCIL have recently launched their website following a review of its accessibility. Have a look at www.ncil.org.uk. As we are currently reviewing our website, your comments on theirs would be useful. Do phone us if you have any.

Are you unsure what all the talk about Individual Budgets will mean to you? The new NCIL website has a very good background summary.

Changing Places

A national campaign has been launched to tackle the problem faced by many disabled people in the UK caused by the lack of *fully* accessible public toilets. The Changing places consortium, which includes Mencap and PAMIS is calling for suitable toilets at all big public places, such as shopping centres and leisure facilities. More information about the campaign can be found on their website www.changing-places.org.

P A Register

We will soon be ready to launch our online Personal Assistant Register. People who are looking for caring roles will be able to place their details on this register, and anyone looking for a PA will be able to search the register for suitable people, and then contact the office for details. This could be particularly useful if you are looking for cover when your PA is sick or on holiday, and the register will make it clear who is willing to work at short notice on a temporary basis.

For users who do not have access to the internet, our office staff will search the database on your behalf.

We are now trying to build up our database of PAs for the register. As many packages mean PAs work only a few hours per week, many of your employees may be able to combine two or more jobs, or may be willing to work for someone else as emergency cover. If this is the case, please encourage your PA to contact us and go on our PA register. By working together in this way, people who currently struggle to find PAs for their small packages may find it easier.

Direct Payment Agreement

Have your say!

We are currently working with Wiltshire County Council to review the Direct Payment Agreement, which is in many respects very out of date. We have been given a draft of the revised agreement to comment on and would welcome as much user feedback as possible. If you would be interested in reading the proposed document and commenting, please contact our office and we will either email or post it to you.

Website Update

By the end of the summer we hope to have a revised website. We are exploring ways of making it more accessible to disabled people, especially those who are visually impaired. More news will follow in the next newsletter.

Job Adverts

Side by side with the PA register, we will be advertising on our website any jobs that users currently want filled. We will also include them in the Horses Mouth. If you know anyone who is looking for work in Wiltshire, please pass this on. This month's jobs are:

LT19 Carer, Calne, 3 hours weekly

LT20 PA/Carer, Salisbury, 24 hr – 4 days on, 4 days off

JC03 PA Devizes, 4hrs weekly

Anyone interested in any of these can contact the office for more details.

If you are looking for a PA and not using our advertising service, let Alison know and she can include your job in a future Horses Mouth.

Peer Support Network

Are you passionate about Direct Payments and want to see their use expanded?

As one of the ways to make Direct Payments more accessible and easier to use, we are contracting Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living to run a peer support scheme. A small group of current DP users will provide phone and/or internet support to new DP users. The group will meet on a regular basis to share their experience and to update their knowledge. The group needs to be drawn from the full cross section of Direct Payment users in Wiltshire, and will therefore include service users of all ages of DACS, learning disability and mental health services and parents of disabled children.

In taking part in this project you would be helping others who are going through what you have been through, and may also build up your own knowledge and experience.

All travel and phone expenses will be met by the project, and there will be a small fee for attendance at the meetings. Alison Barrett of Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living will co-ordinate the group, so if you would like to be involved please email her (alison.barrett2@tesco.net) or phone our office on the number below.

Did you know?

A carer of a disabled person may be entitled to a reduction in Council Tax if:

- you live in the same property as the person you are caring for
- you provide at least 35 hours a week of care
- the disabled person is not your spouse, partner or child.

Some disabled people may also be entitled to a reduction, and if you need to live in a larger house as a result of your impairment you should be entitled to a banding reduction.

If you think this may apply to you then you should contact your local council.

Any employer is responsible for ensuring the safety of their employees, and could be financially liable if there is an accident at work. It is therefore very important to be insured for this. This is called employers liability insurance. Wiltshire County Council will pay for insurance from a company called Fish, and Independent Living Fund Users can normally claim the insurance premium from ILF. If you do not already have insurance set up we can help you do this.

DP User's Corner

This space is for DP users to give to or ask for advice from one another. If you have any difficulties in managing your Direct Payment, or have found any great solutions, share them with others. If anyone wants an entry here please let Alison know through the contacts below. Once the Peer Support Group is established they will also be reviewing this column, but anyone's response is equally welcome.

CRB Checks

A recent change in Scottish law means that Criminal Records Bureau checks are compulsory for all PAs and carers in Scotland. It is therefore possible that our Government and local Council could follow suit. CRB checks are currently only compulsory in Wiltshire where children are involved, although, they are recommended for all. We are working with Wiltshire County Council to make the process of applying for a CRB check easier and to avoid the need for employees to take identity documents to council offices.

We would like to send this letter by email to as many people as possible. This will save both paper and postage. If you would like to receive it electronically, please let Alison or Pavla have your email address.

If you would like this newsletter in any other format or language, please tell us.

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