



The Horse's Mouth

A NEWSLETTER FOR USERS OF
DIRECT PAYMENTS AND THE
INDEPENDENT LIVING FUND

October 2007

From the Chief Executive

Another two months have flown by and at Wiltshire Direct Payment Support Service we have continued to work to improve things for disabled people who want to live independent lives in Wiltshire. I firmly believe that this can only be done by all those involved working in partnership and therefore Alison, our Development Manager, and myself have been involved in correspondence and meetings with several people.

Alison has visited Wiltshire Centre for Independent Living to progress their setting up of the Peer Support Scheme, whilst I have had meetings with Clare Misani, who is developing the policy around Individualised Budgets, and the Assistant Director of Community Services. Alison and I are also shortly to meet with Sue Redmond to discuss our services and Direct Payments. We continue to wish to represent your views in these meetings, so please continue to give us feedback about your experiences of Direct Payments and independent living generally. The User Meetings later this month would be an ideal opportunity to do this, but if you can't manage these please contact myself or Alison with any comments you have.

Richard Pitman, Chief Executive

RADAR keys

These are the keys that enable access to 7000 toilets throughout the country. Don't forget that you can obtain a key from us for the very small cost of £3.60, which includes postage and packaging (postal strikes allowing!). Please phone us if you would like one sent to you. They are available with a small handle for ease of carrying, or a large handle for people with a handling impairment. RADAR produce a listing of the facilities in the UK that can be accessed with the key. This can be obtained from www.radar.org.uk or by phoning 020 7250 3222.

National Minimum Wage

October is the time of the annual review of the National Minimum Wage levels. From 1 October 2007 these are now:

For 16 -17 year olds - £3.40
For 18 – 21 year olds - £4.60
For anyone over 21 - £5.52

We advise that you check the rates of pay for your PAs to ensure that they equal or exceed these levels.

The copy deadline for the December
issue is
Thursday 23 November 2007

Payroll Pieces

<p>Beware Email scams H M Revenue and Customs are warning about a current email scam, and indeed Compass Disability Services have received an email themselves. The email tells you that there is a tax repayment due and asks you to complete personal information in order to get the repayment. Do not do this. The details may be used in identity fraud.</p>	<p>Filing Penalties The tax office have realised that some electronically filed year end returns have given rise to incorrect penalty notices dated 24 September. They are investigating this and will update later this month. If you have received such a penalty notice, do not simply pay. Either contact HM Revenue and Customs at the number on the penalty notice, or contact us for support with this.</p>	<p>Online Incentive The online filing incentive of £150 can be deducted from your payments to the tax office, or a cheque can be requested for the full amount. H M Revenue and Customs have warned that there could be a delay in receiving your cheque due to the high number of people requesting payment. It is possible that the last cheques will not be processed until December.</p>
--	---	---

News from Other Organisations

Alison Barrett of **Wiltshire CIL** has negotiated with Wiltshire County Council for the restarting of the Direct Payments User Group. If you are interested in taking part in this group please contact Alison. Her email address is alisonbarrett1@tesco.net. If you do not have email please phone our office and we will get a message to her.

Wiltshire CIL, together with **West Wilts Access Group** and **Disability Equality Wiltshire** have organised a day of celebration with very interesting speakers in honour of the International Day of Disabled People on Monday 3rd December. Please see enclosed flyer for more details.

SWAN have been awarded a contract to provide advocacy services to adults living anywhere in Wiltshire and using health or social services. This is good news for Direct Payment and Independent Living Fund Users.

WDPSS are funded to provide support to people in the management of their direct payment or independent living fund, but we have not been able to advocate for people regarding their assessment or their ability to receive a direct payment, and nor have we been able to find advocates to whom we can refer unsatisfied service users. SWAN can now take on this work. A SWAN advocate would be able to talk to you about any issues concerning you and give you information, support you in meetings and appeals, help you write letters and so on.

If you wish to find out more you can contact SWAN on 01722 341851 or email them on mail@swanadvocacy.org.uk. Their website address is www.swanadvocacy.org.uk.

Carers UK have published a booklet called 'New to Caring' for anyone who has recently become a carer. It is full of practical help and advice and is designed to reassure and prepare new carers. It can be obtained by calling 0845 241 0963.

Direct Payments Report

A new report following research by the London School of Economics shows that direct payments are receiving very different treatment by different councils across the country. 42,000 people are now receiving direct payments, but this is only 4.2% of those eligible and the spread of direct payments across different groups of service users is also very uneven. Mental Health service users in particular have a very low take up nationally. The funding of an independent support service (such as WDPSS) also varies from county to county. On a local basis, more than 5,000 people across the South West now receive Direct Payments according to the latest statistics from the CSCI. County figures at 31 March 2007 show Devon and Cornwall are the only counties with more than 1,000, with Somerset on 546, Dorset on 342 and Wiltshire on 320. Everyone else, with the exception of the Isles of Scilly, has more than 100, Swindon the lowest with 102.

Commission for Equality and Human Rights

From 1 October 2007 the Equality and Human Rights Commission replaces the three former equality commissions: the Commission for Racial Equality (CRE), the Disability Rights Commission (DRC) and the Equal Opportunities Commission (EOC). Their website has dedicated sections where you can find up-to-date information on disability, gender and race, as well as separate sections on age, sexual orientation, religion and belief and human rights. Any problem you may have taken to the Disability Rights Commission should now be taken to the Equality and Human Rights Commission.

Individualised Budgets

Individualised Budgets are the next step beyond Direct Payments in the campaign for independent living. They will incorporate other sources of funding, as well as your direct payment, and will be more flexible. Wiltshire County Council recently held a meeting, to which all direct payment users were invited, to see how much interest there was amongst you in individualised budgets. We understand this was well attended. The NCIL website has more information on individualised budgets and has a report on the pilot schemes which are already taking place in some counties. This can be found at www.ncil.org.uk/news.asp, where a link will take you to the full report. One positive finding is that individualised budgets have often been found to be simpler to manage than direct payments.

There is also now a forum on the NCIL website specifically for individualised budgets, where anyone can join the discussion, or simply read to catch up with what's happening.

Staff Changes at WDPSS

There have been some changes in our office staff over the last couple of months. Natalie Warren, who was with us during her gap year, has now gone to University. As well as answering the phone, Natalie was our back up in the payroll department when Pam was away. Don, our finance assistant, is now doing this. Natalie may return during the long student holidays, to cover Pam's main holiday times. Pavla has returned from maternity leave and will also be training in payroll to give us fuller cover.

We have two new members of office support staff, David and Jamie. Both could be new voices at the end of the phone when you call us. Both David and Jamie are being supported into work by Access to Work, as David is blind and Jamie has dyslexia. David is also receiving support from Action for Blind People, who supported him in finding employment.

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.

Congratulations



Congratulations from all at WDPSS to Ali Pearce's Dad, Tony on your Western Daily Press Carer of the Year Award – well deserved. Congratulations too for Ali and her exhibition. The full encouraging story can be found on the Western Daily Press website, for those that missed the paper.

Direct Payment User Meetings

We look forward to seeing you at the forthcoming DP user meetings. To refresh your memory they are at:

Southwick Village Hall on 17th October
Figheledean Village Hall on 19th October
Ramsbury Memorial Hall on 29th October
Lyneham Village Hall on 31st October.

All start at 1.30pm, with the exception of the Southwick meeting, which starts at 2.00.

In addition to our own staff, Alison Barrett who is managing the peer support scheme on behalf of WCIL will be at the Lyneham meeting.

If you haven't signed up yet there is still plenty of space. It would be helpful if you could let us know if you are coming, so we can make sure we bring enough scones! However, if you suddenly find you are available on the day please feel free to pop in.

We would like to encourage people to share transport to the meetings. If you are able to offer a lift or share a taxi, or if you would like a lift, please let Alison know and she will put you in touch with one another.

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.

Contact Us

WDPSS
Unit 11-12,
Belvedere Trading Estate,
Taunton
Somerset
TA1 1BH

wdpss@sain.org.uk

0844 984 2828



Managed by Compass Disability Services