

SOCIAL AND HEALTH CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE

Date of Meeting	09 th December, 2021
Report Subject	Direct Payments
Cabinet Member	Cabinet Member for Social Services
Report Author	Chief Officer for Social Services
Type of Report	Operational

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Direct payments (DP) are monetary amounts made available by local authorities to individuals, or their representatives, a DP enables people to arrange individual solutions that meet their assessed care and support needs, and achieve agreed well-being outcomes. A DP can support Adults, Children and informal carers.

Direct payments are an important mechanism by which people can exercise choice, voice and control to decide how to meet their needs for care and support and achieve their personal outcomes.

Direct Payments support a collaborative approach to designing bespoke care and support solutions. Individuals with eligible care and support needs are empowered to focus on what matters to them, identify key outcomes that enable them to live their best life. . A direct payment can be used to purchase support from others and moves away from the traditional approach of buying in care from commissioned providers offering much more flexibility and choice often at a lower cost.

Direct payments feature strongly throughout the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 as a means of helping people exercise choice and control.

Fundamentally, the direct payments approaches adopted in Flintshire focus on strengths and outcomes. Flintshire County Council are recognized Nationally for their leading work in relation to supporting individual choice and control and specifically are seen as an exemplar in relation to our direct payments scheme.

RECOMMENDATIONS

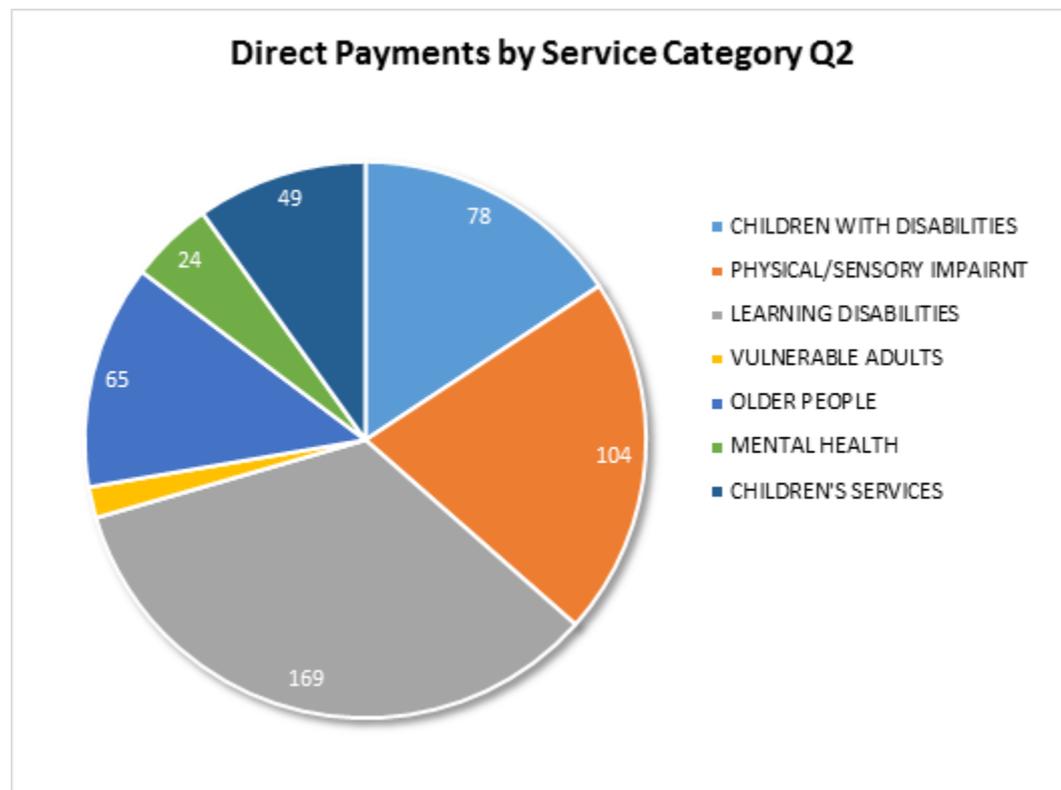
1	Members note the information contained in the report and the progress made.
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REPORT DETAILS

1.00	EXPLAINING DIRECT PAYMENTS
1.01	Direct payments are monetary amounts made available by local authorities to individuals, or their representatives, to enable them to arrange individual solutions that meet their assessed care and support needs, and achieve agreed well-being outcomes. In the case of informal Carers direct payments can be used to meet their eligible support needs.
1.02	Direct payments replace care and support provided directly, or commissioned by, a local authority. They can be for all, or part, of a person's care and support arrangements.
1.03	Direct payments are an important mechanism by which people can exercise choice, voice and control to decide how to meet their needs for care and support and achieve their personal outcomes.
1.04	Direct Payments support a collaborative approach to designing bespoke care and support solutions. Individuals with eligible care and support needs are empowered to focus on what matters to them, identify key outcomes that enable them to live their best life.
1.05	Fundamentally, the direct payments approaches adopted in Flintshire focus on strengths and outcomes, they aim to enable citizens to retain autonomy over their life, support, self-determination and autonomy and efficient use of resources.
1.06	Direct payments feature strongly throughout the SSWB (Wales) Act 2014 as a means of helping people exercise choice and control. In the provision of, and operation of direct payments, local arrangements are aligned with 'The Care and Support (Direct Payments) (Wales) Regulations 2015' made under sections 50, 51, 52 and 54 of the Act.
1.07	<p>Direct Payments in Flintshire</p> <p>Flintshire County Council are recognised Nationally for their leading work in relation to supporting individual choice and control and specifically are seen as an exemplar in relation to our direct payments scheme. The Flintshire Scheme has a long standing relationship with WG direct payments policy leads and we have supported a wide range of WG led initiatives to embed citizen directed principles and practice.</p> <p>The recent CIW Social Care Quality Assurance Inspection recognized the contribution being made by our direct payments scheme to enable citizens to exercise choice and control.</p>

There are currently 488 people receiving a direct payment in Flintshire. This represents the highest number of recipients per head of population of any Welsh Local Authority.

During Quarter 2 (July to Sept) 498 people received a Direct Payment in Flintshire. This represents the highest number of recipients per head of population of any Welsh Local Authority. Direct Payments currently make up 39% of Home based services.



1.08

Direct Payments Team

In April 2019 FCC made the decision to establish an in-house direct payments support service. Prior to this date FCC had contracted with a specialist company to discharge statutory responsibilities for providing information, advice and support to Flintshire direct payments recipients.

The service has been completely redesigned and now provides a far more holistic service benefitting both Flintshire Citizens, social services and third sector partners. The team are unique in that they support people from across society regardless of need, from birth through to older age, informal Carers and people with mental ill health. They are available to work alongside all of Flintshire SS operational and social work teams as well as key partner organisations.

1.09

Key Benefits

- Far greater control over the service and how it meets the department's priorities.
- Service works collaboratively with social work teams to embed person centered practices in line with the SSWB (Wales) 2014 Act

- Shared systems, improved communication, and better access to the service.
- Outcomes focused Referral process centers on what is to be achieved and supports joint working with the individual to own the outcome and develop bespoke solutions.
- Better placed to work in partnership with third sector organisations.
- Autonomy to develop, test and imbed innovation in line with the depts. Ambition and priorities.
- Far more holistic approach centered on the needs of citizens in the first instance, but also practitioners, communities, partners etc.
- Consideration for the Personal Assistant market in terms of standards, quality, training and opportunities for progression.
- Support that is proportionate. Importantly, we don't want to over support people, but enable them to manage their own arrangements.

Some feedback from citizens using Direct Payments.

- *“My life before direct payments was sometimes chaotic with Agency support. My team support each other and I am never let down now!”*
- *“Yes, it means our son has time away from the family unit to build on his confidence and gives the rest of the family some down time to do things we couldn't normally do”*
- *“It provides the freedom to use the funds to enrich my son's life in ways best suited to his needs and well-being. I recruit my Personal Assistants for my son so that he has a mix of ages and sexes and train them myself to help them better understand his needs”.*
- *The system has enabled me to find the most appropriate care for my husband, its flexibility has given me as a carer much needed support”.*
- *“I employ a Personal Assistant, without him I would be lost”*

Prevention – Direct payments are increasingly being used to nurture opportunities for people to collaborate and use their direct payments collectively.

Further to this people have been supported to manage their own difficulties with natural supports rather than requiring more formal statutory responses that often take the control away from citizens.

Example 1:

A Yoga group established by a handful of people experiencing mental health difficulties. The group has expanded to a close support network of up to thirty people who have created their own safe space where they can establish relationships and support each other to overcome challenges. The social return on investment is significant and we are very keen to explore other similar arrangements alongside people.

Example 2: We have supported a group of gamers who had previously been quite isolated. They have now come together to form a small gaming

	<p>group where they meet, engage with each other, provide mutual support and manage their difficulties without the need for statutory services. This has proven highly successful as well as being empowering and resource efficient.</p>
1.10	<p>Flintshire Direct Payments Hub Working in partnership with Flintshire I.T we have realised a vision to create a one stop shop for citizens to obtain information, advice and support in relation to direct payments. The platform encourages people to find out about direct payments and consider whether they might benefit from a different approach to meeting their assessed care and support needs.</p> <p>Over a two year period, we completely redesigned the FCC Direct Payments Web pages. Our approach to providing proportionate support and information has been very well received, with positive feedback from citizens, personal assistants, professionals, third sector partners, Welsh Gov and UK wide LA's.</p>
1.11	<p>Next Steps The team are working with a Flintshire based film company to create short films show casing the benefits of direct payments to citizens and personal assistants. These will be made available through the hub in a space dedicated to showcasing exciting examples of how direct payments are helping change lives in Flintshire.</p>
1.12	<p>Personal Assistant Workforce For many citizens wanting maximum choice and control over how their physical support is met, employing Personal Assistants is a very attractive option.</p> <p>Personal Assistants are employed directly by the person needing help and support, or by an appointed Suitable Person. Supported by the Flintshire Direct Payments team citizens are assisted to explore their networks to identify and recruit the perfect person for them. People generally want to employ people they can develop a trusting relationship with and many PA's stay with their employer and adapt to their changing needs over considerable lengths of time.</p> <p>There are approximately 500 personal Assistants working across Flintshire, supporting some of our most vulnerable citizens. They are a diverse workforce made up of a wide range of people delivering support for numerous different reasons.</p> <p>The Flintshire direct payments scheme has consciously set out to change the support available for this significant, but sometimes disassociated workforce. Some of the initiatives to date are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Assistant Coordinator engaging with the workforce. Pastoral support for PA's working in complex/isolated positions being built into the role.

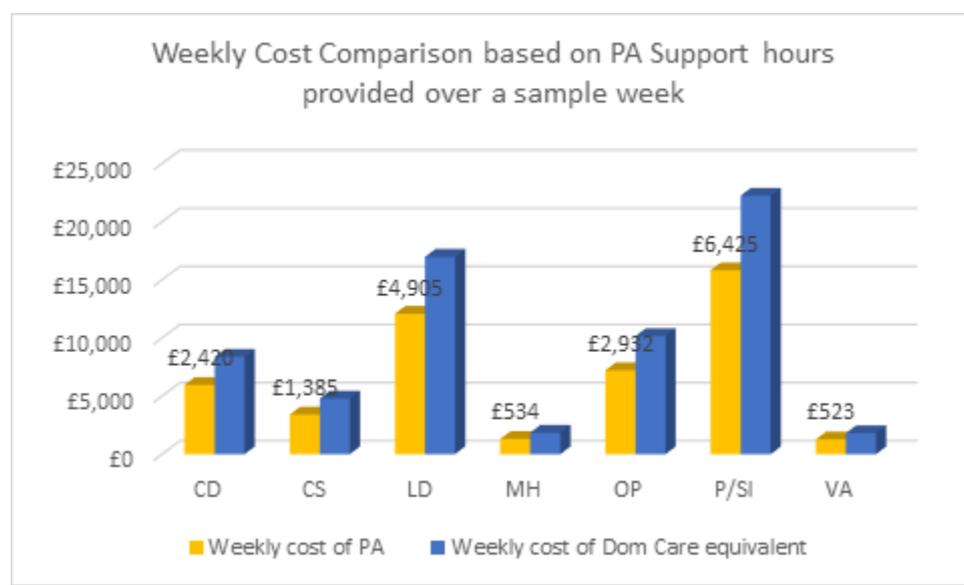
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Personal Assistant Code of Conduct developed and implemented. This has helped PA's understand their role, where they fit in and what the expectations of them are. • Flintshire Personal Assistant Induction Certificate developed around 7 core modules and designed specifically around the PA role. Since its introduction 11 PA's have completed the certificate and a further 35 are working towards the award. For PA's enrolled on the scheme there are a further 50 training modules that they are able to access in their own time. This is the first initiative of its kind and we are in discussions with Social Care Wales regarding the potential for a National approach. • Personal Assistant Portal developed to aid recruitment for direct payments employers and to promote work opportunities for prospective PA's. • Dedicated Direct Payments Social Media pages developed and being embedded.
1.13	<p>Personal Assistant Portal Another first for Wales, the Flintshire PA Portal enable direct payments employers to search for available PA's in their area autonomously and for PA's to promote themselves and their availability to work.</p> <p>Personal Assistants complete a profile describing themselves, their experience, availability etc. and prospective direct payments employers can search the data base and engage with people they feel may be able to help meet their needs and/or achieve personal well-being outcomes.</p> <p>The Flintshire Direct Payments Team undertake back office tasks to ensure the system remains safe for everyone using it.</p>
1.14	<p>Next Steps The team are working with I.T to develop and roll out a vacancy tool that enables citizens to post their requirements i.e. needs to be met/outcomes to be achieved, making the system a two way process. We are also exploring whether the platform could be used to help join people together so as they can jointly procure solutions to assessed needs collectively where appropriate and beneficial, rather than having everyone arranging individual support.</p>

2.00	RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS
2.01	<p>Direct Payments – Value for Money The Flintshire Direct Payments Scheme is highly transparent. Funding is paid into dedicated accounts to be used to meet assessed needs and outcomes. Direct payments recipients only use the funding when it is needed, rather than for scheduled care calls. This level of flexibility is highly valued by individuals. Unspent funding is returned to the council to support other people. Year on year approximately 200K of unspent direct payments is returned to social services.</p>

The hourly rate made available to individuals to employ personal assistants is £13.28 per hour. This hourly rate all goes to the individual worker in the form of wages, cost for training and holiday cover. There is no managerial costs as are present in care agencies. The following was made over a sample week and provides a crude comparison of the direct financial savings being realized.

The following chart was calculated from a sample of 255 DP recipients who use a PA, using their weekly hours x the PA rate (13.28) week. This provides a crude comparison* and the direct potential financial savings being realised, in comparison to the hourly Dom Care agency rate of (£18.67).

*These figures do not take into account contingency arrangements, avoidance of in county / out of county residential care and/or specialist provision.



3.00 IMPACT ASSESSMENT AND RISK MANAGEMENT

3.01 Positive impact on individuals able to use the scheme as well as low risk from an organisation perspective in that we have robust monitoring in place.

4.00 CONSULTATIONS REQUIRED/CARRIED OUT

4.01 Fundamentally, the direct payments approaches adopted in Flintshire focus on strengths and outcomes, they aim to enable citizens to retain autonomy over their life, support self-determination and autonomy and efficient use of resources. There is a key focus on enablement, reciprocity and coproduction. We are also committed to work with individuals and their communities to build a level of resilience that enables people to remain independent & interdependent for as long as possible.

5.00 APPENDICES

5.01	None

6.00	LIST OF ACCESSIBLE BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS
6.01	None

7.00	CONTACT OFFICER DETAILS
7.01	Contact Officer: Mark Cooper Telephone: 01352 701101 E-mail: mark.cooper@flintshire.gov.uk ;

8.00	GLOSSARY OF TERMS
8.01	<p>Direct Payments - a form of payment to people assessed as having Care and Support needs in accordance with Social Services and Well Being Act to achieve agreed outcomes.</p> <p>Outcomes - What is important for the person to achieve to maintain or improve their quality of life.</p> <p>Citizen - Person assessed as having Care and Support needs.</p>