

# Welcome to the Direct Payments Newsletter

Issue 1

December 2019

**You told us that you wanted a newsletter that shares developments and news. So here we go.**

*This newsletter has been produced by members of the Direct Payments Board. If you would like to comment or contribute ideas or stories, then get in touch directly through [sophie.caine@shropshire.gov.uk](mailto:sophie.caine@shropshire.gov.uk). The newsletter will be a quarterly publication.*

## Enthusiastic welcome for our Direct Payments workshops

A total of 185 people attended two Direct Payment workshops in early October. Those present had an opportunity to discuss how we improve and 're-humanise the Direct Payments system'.



We shared our stories and experiences of using Direct Payments as well as processing and supporting them. We were encouraged to think about Direct Payments in different ways with the aim that we would leave the day feeling inspired to bring about change in the use of Direct Payments.

The workshops were delivered jointly by Experts by Experience, staff and the national organisation – Think Local Act Personal (TLAP) to people in receipt of Direct Payments, Carers and staff (including Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Business Support, Audit & Housing).

The need for 'flexibility' and 'trust' were raised in an activity to identify key words for our new Direct Payments Vision. The right culture will inspire positive and supportive ways of working together.

Two people who use Direct Payments gave innovative examples of how they have used visual and Facebook based adverts to engage new Personal Assistants. They gave simple but



practical examples of how they are thinking out of the box.

To end the day, we were asked to make a commitment of our own based on what had been seen and discussed during the day. Many ideas came up, such as 'keep it simple', 'ensure collaboration' and 'create flexible support' but one idea must not be forgotten: 'Understand that there is a human at the centre of it all'. The work being taken forward by the Direct Payment Board, along with the Task and Finish groups and Peer Support groups mentioned in the newsletter will make sure that happens.



## Katies Story



Katie Rose Stone

**“It takes a village to raise a child. This is exactly what came to mind when I was asked to write a piece for this newsletter, why? Well here’s why....”**

**I have** just recruited a Personal Assistant (PA) after nine months of advertising.

In this difficult time, I have personally grown.

My ‘village’ have supported me whether it be the peer support provided by Caroline, who had produced an engaging yet humorous advert for a PA, who helped me adapt it for my circumstances, or Chris supporting me with undertaking interviews.

Or an event I attended at which I listened to a member of Council staff, Darren Edwards. Wow!

(See <https://strengththroughadversity.co.uk/> ).

Both Darren and I are living our lives after ‘life changing’ accidents. To hear him was like déjà vu with feelings, his physical journey as well as the places he climbed – were

so familiar to me.

I found a new drive and determination.

I realised the importance of the things I’d done in the last 9 months: I finished my first year of university (and passed!), I had a couple of surgeries that healed well, as well as receiving my second life (I had a severe anaphylaxis and cardiac arrest – all rather boring when I look back!).

I hadn’t been able to go swimming nor been able to use my walker for over 2 years due to health and PA situation.

However, my new PA knew I wanted to push boundaries (I wonder who planted that seed?). She was up for it as well and within 3 weeks of her starting I have swum 10 lengths with no floats and walked confidently with my frame. Both are things I hadn’t done since my

accident in January 2011. Getting the right PA has made a huge difference, but without my ‘village’ I wouldn’t be achieving.

You could say I found **“Strength through Adversity”**. Thank you, Darren and everyone else around me.



Darren Edwards



## Our new Direct Payments Board is an exciting development for Shropshire

**As part** of our new approach Direct Payments in Shropshire we have created a Direct Payment Board. The Board meets monthly and includes people who use Direct Payments alongside members of Shropshire Council staff such as the newly established Direct Payment Support Team. The Board is co-chaired by Mary, an Expert by Experience who uses Direct Payments, and Tanya, the Head of Adult Social Care. They work well together.



The aim of the Board is to lead change and shape a Direct Payment service that is a more responsive and flexible to individual needs and circumstances.

Together, members of the Board are seeking creative options for the better use of Direct Payments and support of individuals.

The Board gives an opportunity to work closely together, to co-create and share our experiences of Direct Payments on all levels whilst considering the current systems in place and what is really needed to bring about change. We recognise that we are on a journey in Shropshire and whilst we have started to implement change, such as setting up systems for DBS Checks, establishing peer support groups and developing training options, we acknowledge that we still have some way to go. Our quarterly newsletter will keep you up to date with our progress.



## Meet the Direct Payments Support Team

**As part** of strengthening Shropshire's Direct Payment offer the newly appointed Direct Payment team began their posts this month. Many of you will already know Chris Roberts, Business Lead, who has been promoting Direct Payments in Shropshire for several years. Tammie Doyle and Beth Baker are both Social Workers who have jointly taken on the Operations Lead as a job share.

"With Chris we are working to promote Direct Payments and make them easier to use. Direct Payments should offer the best way of achieving personal goals, so the team is looking at how we can develop Direct Payments to make it first choice when support planning.

We will be providing advice, support and training to adult social care teams to build confidence in a wider more varied use of Direct payments. Your social care practitioner or team remains your main contact point. If further advice is needed, we can support directly."

There is much going on in Shropshire to ensure Direct Payments truly offer choice and control to the people who use them. We look forward to achieving a clear vision for Direct Payments in Shropshire and building on the collaborative contributions of the Direct Payment workshops and Board.

And a final word from Chris:

"I am keen to work with Beth and Tammie as part of the Direct Payment Team. Our aim is deliver a creative and flexible Direct Payment offer. We will continue to work with people who use Direct Payments to find out what is working well and what isn't."



*Left to Right: Tammie Doyle, Chris Roberts and Beth Baker Adult Social Care's new Direct Payments Support Team*

## The future

Since the Direct Payment events took place (see page 1), three task and finish groups have been set up to take actions forward:

- 1) A Recruitment and Retention group will focus on developing a recruitment pool of Personal Assistant's as well as creating a suite of training for Direct Payment employers and Personal Assistants.
- 2) A Support Planning group will focus on ensuring that support plans are both creative and flexible. This will tie in with some money we have sourced for a project called 'Mend the Gap'. More on that in future newsletters.
- 3) A Finance and Communication group will focus on the finance processes and the documents and letters that are sent to those in receipt of Direct Payments.

We look forward to working with you all in 2020. If you have any questions about Direct Payments and how they might affect you – please just get in touch with your Social Work Team or the First Point of Contact Team: 0345 6789 044