

Report title: Value for Money – Direct Payments

Local or National Report: National

Completion date: Published April 2022

To be presented to Governance and Audit Committee on the 18th October 2023.

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer / group	Business Plan
R1	Review public information in discussion with service users and carers to ensure it is clear, concise and fully explains what they need to know about Direct Payments	<p>In July 2023 Gwent Directors for social Services and Adults Heads of Service appointed a Direct Payments Lead Manager whose role is to provide project management support to the 5 local authorities over a 2-year period.</p> <p>Public information will be reviewed, in consultation with service users/carers, during the course of the project.</p>	Timescale to be agreed. (No later than July 2025)	Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager	Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning
R2	Undertake additional promotional work to encourage take up of Direct Payments	<p>As stated in R1, In July 2023 In July 2023 Gwent Directors for social Services and Adults Heads of Service appointed a Direct Payments Lead Manager whose role is to provide project management support to the 5 local authorities over a 2-year period.</p> <p>Additional promotional work to encourage the take up of direct payments will be considered during the course of this project.</p>	Timescale to be agreed. (No later than July 2025)	Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager	Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning
R3	Ensure advocacy services are considered at the first point of contact to provide independent advice on Direct Payments to service users and carers	<p>Robust Advocacy Services are already in place across the Gwent region. This service provides free independent support and advice to the citizens of Blaenau Gwent.</p> <p>The Authority actively promotes Advocacy Services. It also has an in-house Direct Payments Support Team who are available to provide support and advice on direct payments to citizens and all professionals.</p>	Completed	Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager	Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning

Ref	Recommendation	Organisational response Please set out here relevant commentary on the planned actions in response to the recommendations	Completion date Please set out by when the planned actions will be complete	Responsible officer / group	Business Plan
R4	Ensure information about Direct Payments is available at the front door to social care and are included in the initial discussion on the available care options for service users and carers	<p>Direct Payments information is advertised on the Authority's website and intranet. Citizens, Social Care Professionals, and 3rd Party Organisations, have easy access to this information.</p> <p>The Authority also has an in-house Direct Payments Support Team who are available to provide support and advice on direct payments to citizens, social care professionals and 3rd party organisations/ partners. Discussions often take place between social care teams and the direct payments team, and joint visits are arranged with services user/carers, at their homes.</p> <p>Social Care Professionals are aware of the SS&WB Act (Wales) 2014, and that direct payments are an integral part of meeting a person's needs through care and support planning and the option of having a direct payment is discussed as part of this process.</p>	Completed	Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager	Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning
R5	Provide training to social workers on Direct Payments to ensure they fully understand their potential and feel confident promoting it to service users and carers	As part of the induction process, all newly qualified social workers are provided with information and an explanation of direct payments. The Authority also has an in-house Direct Payments Team who are on hand, to provide support and advice on direct payments to all social care staff, on a daily basis.	Completed	Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager	Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning
R6	To ensure there is sufficient Personal Assistant capacity, we recommend that local authorities through the All-Wales local authority Direct Payments Forum and with Social Care Wales:	The Authority welcomes the opportunity of working with other local authorities and Social Care Wales to consider the options available to progress the development and management of a joint recruitment and retention plan for Personal Assistants who	The progress of this recommendation is dependent on the engagement of other local authorities, in conjunction with Social Care Wales.	To be achieved via the All-Wales local authority Direct Payments Forum and with Social Care Wales	Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning

	<p>Work together to develop a joint Recruitment and Retention Plan for Personal Assistants.</p>	<p>support direct payments recipients throughout Wales</p>	<p>A timeframe for this piece of work, will be confirmed by April 2024 and reported to Directors of Social Services</p>	<p>Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager</p>	
R7	<p>To ensure services are provided equitably and fairly we recommend that local authorities and the Welsh Government:</p> <p>Clarify policy expectations in plain accessible language and set out:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> what Direct Payments can pay for. how application and assessment processes, timescales and review processes work. how monitoring individual payments and the paperwork required to verify payments will work; how unused monies are to be treated and whether they can be banked; and how to administer and manage pooled budgets. <p>Public information should be reviewed regularly (at least every two years) to ensure they are working effectively and remain relevant.</p>	<p>The Authority welcomes the opportunity of working with other local authorities to review direct payment policies and practices to provide further clarity and transparency, if required. This will ensure a consistent approach is in place for all direct payment recipients throughout Wales.</p>	<p>The progress of this recommendation is dependent on Welsh Government’s engagement with local authorities, and if Welsh Government need to provide additional guidance on the administration of direct payments.</p> <p>A timeframe for this piece of work, will be confirmed by April 2024 and reported to Gwent Directors of Social Services</p>	<p>To be achieved jointly between Welsh Government and LA</p> <p>Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager</p>	<p>Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning</p>
R9	<p>Work together to establish a system to fully evaluate Direct Payments that captures all elements of the process – information, promotion, assessing, managing and evaluating impact on wellbeing and independence.</p>	<p>The Authority welcomes the opportunity of working with Welsh Government and other local authorities to explore the options of establishing a system that captures all elements of the administration of direct payments throughout Wales, thus providing a streamlined and consistent approach</p>	<p>A timeframe for this piece of work, will be confirmed April 2024 and reported to Gwent Directors of Social Services</p>	<p>Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager</p> <p>To be achieved jointly between Welsh Government and LA</p>	<p>Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning</p>

R10	Annually publish performance information for all elements of Direct Payments to enable a whole system view of delivery and impact to support improvement.	The Authority welcomes the opportunity of working with Welsh Government and other local authorities to explore the creation of meaningful performance management information for direct payments throughout Wales	A timeframe for this piece of work, will be confirmed by April 2024 and reported to the Gwent Directors of Social Services	To be achieved jointly between Welsh Government and LA Lead Officer – Andrea James, Direct Payments Manager and Andrew Day, Adults Service Manager	Tier 1 Safeguarding and Commissioning
------------	---	---	--	--	--