

LIVING A FULL LIFE WITH DIRECT PAYMENTS



I am a musician, facilitator and have just started writing and training freelance after completing a degree in Education. As a disabled man I have been living independently for at least fifteen years. In the last two years my independence has grown further by receiving direct payments. I am assessed as having high needs and I know that for me this is no barrier to living an independent lifestyle. Why? Because independence is not about how much you can do on your own, independence is about having choice and control over the things that are important to you, and it can't get more important than your own personal and social care as this is all about how you live your life.

As many disabled people have experienced, throughout my life, I have had a variety of care packages, each of which has been decided by someone else. Direct Payments has put me in the driving seat. For the first time in my life I have chosen who gets me up, who dresses me, who washes me and who helps me get on with the rest of my day. Most importantly it's not only about who does it but also about how I have more control over how these things are done. Well, it's important to have my socks on the way I want and it's important that I can choose when I get up or go to bed, isn't it?

All these things sound very basic but without Direct Payments I would not have the same level of choice and control that I do now.

After an initial assessment with my social worker, a Direct Payments Support Worker visited me in my house and helped me to work through what needed to be done. It was honestly very simple, set up a bank account so that my Direct Payments can be paid to me on a monthly basis, identify a job description for all the things I need my personal assistant to help me with, and then find the people. Finding PAs was not so difficult either as I could pass the word around through my own social networks. Finding people who I could trust and get on with was important as they would be working in my house which by nature is a private place that is my own little sanctuary, so I had to feel confident and comfortable with whoever works with me. With Direct Payments it was the first time I could choose my own people.

I understand the thing that can put people off getting Direct Payments is the amount of work there is in setting it up and running it all. I have found that there is

support and help out there to help me manage with these things. I was worried about managing the money side of things; I'm not an accountant and my maths is not the best so this was my concern, but the Direct Payments team is friendly, supportive and very approachable and are there to help.

There is also a regular Direct Payments forum, where anyone that receives Direct Payments can come to chat and find out how others are managing their independent lives. The first part of the forum is where we can chat freely about our experiences and difficulties and how others have found solutions. We then identify any questions from that chat and we can put them directly to the Direct Payments team in the afternoon. So we meet face to face with people and we get to know each other and build up a better understanding of the issues faced living independently.

I would like to encourage more disabled people to get Direct Payments as it really can make a difference to your life. I live a full and active life and I could not do any of this if my needs were in someone else's control. I can get out when I want and go where I want as I have a personal assistant who knows me and knows how I wish to be supported.

As you are in control, Direct Payments is built to suit you. The idea of Direct Payments was developed by disabled people fighting for independent lives and I work with other disabled people with a range of impairments, physical, sensory and learning difficulties and I have seen how individuals have made Direct Payments work for them and they never look back.

Independence is about getting out there and living the full life that you choose for yourself. Direct Payments has critically enabled me to have a loving, caring relationship with my family and friends, who I am no longer totally dependent upon for everything I need to do. It means I can do things for them to, and our relationship is like that of any other person. A personal assistant is very different from a carer - my family and loved ones care, as I do for them. My personal assistant is employed by me to do a job that job is helping me to live independently, as I choose them, they are good at their job and we respect and get on well together, we all work as a team and get on with the important things in life like shopping (!!!), working and of course getting out and doing my thing, whatever that may be!

MERTON COUNCIL
PUTTING YOU FIRST

DIRECT PAYMENTS

- ◆ Are you or anyone you know, receiving care services from London Borough of Merton?
- ◆ Do you want to have more control over your care arrangements?
- ◆ Would you like to choose your own support and be given money to pay for it?

Then Direct Payments could be for you!

Direct Payments is all about choice and independence. With full support from Merton's Direct Payments team, you can arrange exactly how you receive your services.

To find out more, come along to our
Open Day
30th January 2008

The Hub, Bishopsford Road, Morden, SM4 6BF

Or contact the Direct Payments Team for more
information on 020 8545 3632

COME ALONG, EVERYONE WELCOME!
REFRESHMENTS PROVIDED!

