



Promote awareness of the existence of social care funding direct payments

Top Line

Recipients of social care are legally entitled to a choice about whether to receive funding in the form of direct payments (by which they can privately pay for care), or for funding to be channelled through local authorities. Both options have supporters and critics. However, many disabled people state that they are unaware that they even have a choice.

Key Asks

We are calling for all political parties to commit to undertake a public awareness campaign about:

- the existence of direct payments for recipients of social care (as an alternative to funding being via local authorities);
- recipients of social care having the decision-making choice as to whether social care funding is received as direct payments or paid to local authorities.
- ensuring that local authorities make recipients of care funding aware that they can choose whether social care funding is received as direct payments or paid to local authorities.

Stats

- In the financial year 2018-2019, 75,741¹ individuals aged 18 or over received social care services from their local authority.
- Of these, only 6,262² individuals benefited from direct payments.
- That indicates that approximately 69,479 individuals are not receiving direct payments as their preferred form of care.
- This equates to only 8.3% of disabled people in Wales who use direct payments.

Context

Direct payments are intended to empower disabled people to have autonomy over their care, and how they want to receive it. Some people may prefer for a local authority to provide assistance or services, others may prefer to purchase such themselves. But the key point is that the individual has control over their own life, helping to increase independence, promote social inclusion and enhanced wellbeing.

However, the number of individuals opting to use direct payments in Wales is low, and many disabled people in Wales tell us that they are not aware of their existence.

¹ Social Care Data Wales – 2018-2019. Link: <http://www.socialcaredata.wales/IAS/themes/adults/adultsreceivingcareandsupport/tabular?viewId=2212&geoid=1&subsetId=>

² Stats Wales. Social Services – Adult Services. Link: <https://statswales.gov.wales/Catalogue/Health-and-Social-Care/Social-Services/Adult-Services/Service-Provision/adultsreceivingservices-by-localauthority-agegroup>

Background information

Direct Payments were introduced by the UK Government as part of the Community Care (Direct Payments) Act (1996). This allowed local authorities to offer direct payments to those who they deemed eligible as part of a pilot of the scheme. Subsequently, the Health and Social Care Act (2001) placed a duty on local authorities to make individuals aware of their right to request care in the form of direct payments.

In Wales, direct payments are governed by the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014 and the Care and Support (Direct Payments) (Wales) Regulations 2015.

