



Presentation to HOSC

Direct Payments in Birmingham: Maximising choice, control and flexibility in the use of Direct Payments

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- Direct Payments (DP) was initially prioritised as an investigation topic in 2017-18.
- Our initial report was sent to Birmingham City Council (BCC) in March 2018.
- Following discussions with BCC it was agreed to continue our investigation in 2018-19 with increased focus.

Study Aim: to understand if Birmingham DP users feel supported by Birmingham City Council social workers to take control over the decision making of the services they access.



# Background Information: DPs in Birmingham

- DPs are a critically important way of making social care personalised (Birmingham City Council's Market Position Statement, 2018).
- In total 2377 Birmingham citizens have a DP.
- As of the End of December 2018 28.5% of eligible citizens have a DP.
- The target for the 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019 is 30% of eligible citizens.



# Background Information: DPs in Birmingham

- BC commissioning intentions re DPs:
  - Increase the uptake of DPs to regional and national best practice levels, including to older people.
  - Continue to roll out the use of Prepayment Cards for DP users, to improve safeguarding and value for public funds.
  - Work with GPs, hospitals and other partners to increase awareness of DPs amongst potential service users and carers.
  - Work with NHS partners to join up processes and support relating to DPs and Personal Health Budgets (PHBs).
  - Develop the market for Personal Assistants (PA), and explore the development of a digital platform to support PA recruitment and choice.



# Methodology

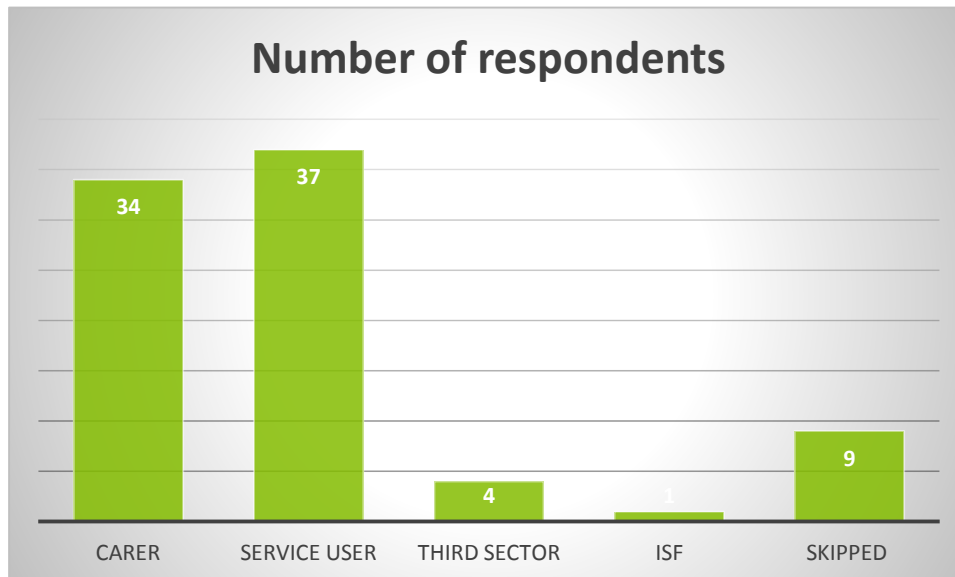
## Mixed Methods Approach

- Online questionnaires shared with DP users through BCC contact list; sent to 86 organisations on HWB stakeholder list and shared at events (Online survey run between October and December 2018)
- Interviews with service users at various engagement events
- Observations of key DP events organised by BCC (March and September 2018)
- Focus discussions with caseworkers (Anawin and Shelter)



# Methodology

We engaged with:



- 71 DP users and carers responded to the online questionnaire
- Preliminary data collection - 4 Service users and five carers engaged
- 4 third sector organisations
- One ISF Manager
- Of the total (85) people engaged over 29 individuals were interviewed



## Key Findings

- Overall, there was satisfaction with DPs and their impact on service users lives.
- However, experiences about the DP process were unsatisfactory amongst some of the respondents.

The following themes have been identified:

- Awareness of DPs
- Process and experience
- Difficulties with assessment and reviews
- Access to information, advice and support
- Capacity of social care professional in implementing DPs
- Services paid for by DPs
- Maximising choice and control



## Awareness of Direct Payments

- Majority of respondents heard about DPs from their social workers - 70% (service users) and 75% (carers)
- 5 respondents heard about DPs from local carers group or voluntary sector whilst 7 by word of mouth (i.e. Family or friends)
- 3rd Sector orgs noted that there was a lack of awareness of DPs and that they were not informed:

*“We have had clients that have had a social worker, and we’ve engaged and liaised with that social worker, and the client has had a care plan in place, and this sounds like one of those things that if you don’t ask you don’t get, if you ask about it then you’ll get it.” (Third sector caseworker)*





# Process and Experience

- Experiences varied widely - whilst some respondents were happy with the process, others faced difficulties in navigating the process
- More service users (73%) than carers (46%) felt they were informed and involved on how they receive DPs.
- Some found it easier to use a prepayment card

*It was only bank account when I started ... have since been given the choice but don't like prepayment cards so asked to stay with the bank account system that I know (Carer)*

*I have received Direct Payments for over 12 years and back then there was only one way of managing it. Now there are more options I have discussed this with them and am allowed to keep to the system I know (service user).*

- 33% carers and 15% service users = partially involved
- 13% carers and 3% Service users = not involved
  - Some respondents felt they were being steered to use a prepayment card rather than bank account
  - Expressed concern about flexibility and lack of information when using prepayment cards (limited services when using a card and lack of clarity on what you can pay for etc)



# Difficulties with assessments and reviews

## Concerns expressed around:

- Timely and accurate assessments
- Accessing ACAP over the phone to request an assessment therefore difficult for those without the means or skills to apply online.

*Original assessment never took place. Details were not accurate and confusing. Even using 3rd party to manage the payment, information was contradicting (Service User).*

*They filled out forms and rushed the process. It took 3 months to get it sorted (Service User)*

*Direct payments are a headache and often they do not match the assessment (Carer)*

- Delays in access were attributed to lack of access to social workers:

*I have not had a permanent social worker and the last one took a year to do my review. March 2017 to April / May 2018 (Service User)*

*For one and half years I had no social worker and no review (Service User)*



# Access to information, advice and support

How well did the social worker inform you about your DP package and how it can be spent?

	Service Users	Carers
Fully informed	42%	30%
Partially informed	32%	45%
Not informed	16%	20%
Do not know	10%	5%

Although some respondents felt informed, a higher percentage of service users (48%) and carers (65%) felt they were partially or not informed. Reasons for this are:

- Lack of clarity on what the DP covers
- No information on who DP users can contact in the event of a problem
- No clarity and flexibility on how underspends will be dealt with
- No information on how users get support to cover when a support worker or personal assistant is not available
- Lack of information and support for the financial and administrative side of managing DPs
- Management agencies - lack of personalisation, transparency, and independence
- Respondents suggested that BCC should develop a user manual and explain the application process and likely timelines to new applicants



# Capacity of social care professionals in implementing DPs

- Respondents have indicated that there is variability in how social workers inform and support users in the DP process
- Those that felt they were well informed and supported pointed to the following as being important:
  - Their views being listened to
  - Including their views in care plans

- Concerns:

- Lack of ongoing support

*Social workers signed off from me before the Direct Payment was up & running  
(Service User)*

*Funding was agreed, but no other support provided since implementation and use  
of Direct Payment card (Carer)*

*Social workers didn't offer any help. I was given my budget, and it was up to me  
to sort out everything (Service User)*



## Cont...Capacity of social care professionals in implementing DPs

- Social workers have poor understanding of DPs and services available therefore unable to effectively inform or support users

*Social worker was very poorly informed herself. Current social worker is only one step ahead of us (Carer)*

*At the moment it seems I know more about Direct Payments than some social workers (Service User)*

*Because social workers have little knowledge of what's out there to use your Direct Payments on they cannot advice you (Carer)*

- The system in which social workers operate in and the constraints this places on them:

*Really my answer would be the social worker supported us 'just about adequately' but that isn't an offered response. It's not the social workers fault I believe, it's the systems (Carer)*

*Social workers are not to blame. The blame falls on those monitoring, they need to stop making it difficult for Direct Payment users who want to be innovative (Carer)*



# Services paid for by Direct Payments

- 52% of users felt that they could choose from a variety of services.
- 60% of carers felt that they could not choose from a variety of services
- Majority of respondents use their DP to pay for carers support, care agency or for a personal assistant
- A small number use DPs to pay for wider services (i.e. Assistance dog's expenses, exercise classes, befriending services)
- It was felt by some respondents that there are:
  - Issues around innovation, adaptability and flexibility
  - Issues around undeveloped market



# Maximising choice and control

- Some respondents found it difficult to choose some services or have their needs taken into account
- More service users (42%) compared to carers (30%) indicated that there were services that they felt met their needs; but it was not possible to pay for these using DPs

*I would like to pay for some payroll services but this would take money away from care. It does not allow me any luxuries (Service User)*

*I have mental health needs too and im exploring my options about using my Direct Payment to pay for therapy but I'm not holding out much hope (Service User).*



# Working with Birmingham City Council

- We met with colleagues at Birmingham City Council on Monday 07.01.19
- At the meeting the report was welcomed and felt to be useful for developing ongoing plans around Direct Payments.
- In Particular, it was felt that the findings of this report will be used to shape the future customer journey and support the roll out of work programmes:
  - Three Conversations
  - Neighbourhood Networks
  - Locality Models





# Next Steps

- Following the meeting on the 7.1.19 we have asked BCC a number of clarification questions to truly understand how current work programmes will address the issues raised in this report.
- Birmingham City Councils commitment and actions taken will be included in the final report. This will include measures to know that actions taken are working.
- Healthwatch Birmingham will monitor changes made by BCC and an Impact Report will be published in 2019-2020.



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