

**Evaluation
of
Direct Payments
in the Borders
and
The Borders Direct Payments Support
Agency**

SUMMARY VERSION

October 2005

“One of the most liberating milestones of recent years is direct payments. No longer are we in the hands of able bodied philanthropists to provide and employ people to be our hands and legs, we can now do this for ourselves as we are the experts in our own needs.” Alan Desborough, direct payment recipient, quoted in *Five Steps: a Guide to Providing Direct Payment Support Services*¹

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This summary version of the evaluation report also contains a selection of illustrative quotations from questionnaires. The full version of the report is available on the Borders Direct Payment Agency website at www.bordersdpa.org.uk

Borders Direct Payments Agency and the independent evaluator are grateful to the Working Group who designed the questionnaires and to all who responded to them. The evaluator also thanks Agency staff and the Co-ordinator of Borders Voluntary Community Care Forum for their assistance.

The evaluation was carried out by Jane Griffiths, a researcher and management adviser specialising in community care, and based in Edinburgh.

October 2005

¹ Witcher, Sally 2002, *Five Steps – a Guide to Providing Direct Payments Support Services* Direct Payment Scotland

INTRODUCTION

1. Direct Payments were introduced in April 1997 allowing local authorities to make direct payments to disabled people who receive community care services. Since then, Scottish Borders Council has been in the forefront of Scottish local authorities in allocating direct payments. Offering Direct Payments became mandatory in 2003 for the majority of people assessed as needing community care services.
2. The Borders Direct Payment Agency (BDPA) was set up by Scottish Borders Council in 1999, and is now an agency managed by Borders Voluntary Community Care Forum (BVCCF). The Forum promotes the interests of service users and unpaid carers, bringing together groups and organisations to influence and develop community care services in the area. BDPA users are represented along with Social Work and Agency staff on a Direct Payments Working Group which guides the Agency's work.
3. This evaluation aimed to
 - Examine the effectiveness of direct payments for individuals, families, paid carers and care managers
 - Examine the effectiveness of the Borders Direct Payments Agency
 - Identify any changes that could benefit those involved, individuals, families, paid carers and care managers.
4. The evaluation was organised by a representative group of Agency users and staff who designed and sent out questionnaires to all members of the following groups on the Agency's database at 31.05.05:
 - direct payment recipients (74)
 - unpaid carers and family members (39)

- paid carers (44)
 - social workers/care managers (51).
5. Overall almost 50% of questionnaires were returned and analysed by an independent consultant. The highest proportion of returns was made by DP recipients:
- 50 DP recipients (68% return)
 - 19 unpaid carers/family members (49%)
 - 17 paid carers (39%)
 - 19 social workers/care managers (37%).

FINDINGS

EFFECTIVENESS OF DIRECT PAYMENTS

6. The survey evidence, together with the total of 267 people referred to BDPA, indicates that there is good access to direct payments in the Borders. There is a wide spread of sources of information and at least a core of care managers who are committed to and knowledgeable about direct payments. People with mental illness, learning disability and sensory impairment who often do not have access elsewhere, are all represented in the Borders.
7. Significant benefits were reported by respondents in all age groups and with a wide range of medical conditions. The benefits were:
- independence and being in control
 - the nature of personal care/support: choice, responsiveness to individual need, regularity and consistency, reliably high quality

- flexibility of times and place, and flexibility generally of accessing assistance
- ability to get out and about and “have a life”
- flexibility and a wider range of services for families with disabled children
- mutual benefits in other caring relationships
- financial support
- support from BDPA.

8. Almost all recipients reported positive overall impacts of DPs on their lives, ranging from “good” to “magic” and “total new life”, with the majority being at the latter end of the enthusiasm spectrum. Impacts were described as:

- freedom, control and independence
- a good quality of life
- a sense of security, often compared with previous struggles to manage
- freedom and empowerment for families
- financial security
- improved care regime.

8 respondents who also received payments from the Independent Living Fund (ILF) recorded very positive impacts.

9. Family carers all said DPs had a positive effect on their lives, giving them:

- freedom to pursue other interests and fulfil other commitments, do what other people take for granted
- comfort from the greater contentment and safety of the person they cared for
- satisfaction of having a more effective and efficient way of providing care
- financial security.

10. Difficulties and limitations to DPs were seen by only a few individual recipients and slightly more carers. Mentioned by more than one respondent were:
- restrictions on eligibility of family members (4)
 - difficulties in recruiting staff (2)
 - difficulties with paperwork (2)
 - occasional difficulties with providing for longer breaks (2).

2 of the 8 respondents who also received ILF found dealing with the Fund problematical.

11. The majority of paid carers who could make comparisons with other care work said that employment through DPs was better, because of more satisfying employment relationships and fair payment. No changes were proposed but one carer suggested employees needed some kind of support mechanism.
12. Care managers were clear that direct payments benefited them through reducing and simplifying their work, and enabling them to set up more satisfactory arrangements for their clients. They saw clients benefiting through a better quality of life, empowerment and independence.
13. More care managers described difficulties than did recipients and carers. These were administrative hitches and difficulties, and staffing, including recruitment difficulties. Changes to family member restrictions were wanted by 4 care managers.

EFFECTIVENESS OF BORDERS DIRECT PAYMENTS AGENCY

14. **Range and type of service wanted by users**
The services offered fulfilled contractual obligations to the Council and also included most services suggested

by Direct Payments Scotland as relevant for support organisations. The high usage of all services indicated that these services are needed; the high value placed on them was expressed throughout recipients' and carers' questionnaires.

15. **Making direct payments accessible**

Evidence of a range of access routes and of effective liaison with care management staff confirmed that the Agency is working well to develop awareness of and confidence in the direct payments scheme.

16. **Effectiveness of service for users**

The evident success of individual direct payment arrangements, praise for the Agency from recipients and family carers and an almost total lack of criticism confirmed that the Agency was providing an effective, highly valued service. Particularly appreciated were:

- support to achieve the best arrangements for individuals
- accessible, on-going support
- reliable, knowledgeable and committed support that goes the extra mile for Agency users
- employer support – people using these services expressed a particularly high level of satisfaction with direct payments.

17. **BDPA and the Independent Living Fund**

- Recipients of combined DPs and ILF were very positive about their support arrangements
- Care managers mostly acknowledged the help of BDPA in working with ILF. Barriers to greater use of the fund by care managers were client groups not being eligible and lack of knowledge and confidence. Training and information, including public information, were suggested as likely to improve promotion of ILF.

18. **Reservations about the effectiveness of Agency services**

Almost no reservations were expressed but suggestions were made for extending what was already being done. A few respondents suggested a need to increase

- assistance with recruitment
- individual support
- information.

Overall, the Agency appeared to be carrying out its role of monitoring use of direct payments to the satisfaction of recipients and Council.

19. There was almost unanimous satisfaction with present arrangements for managing the Agency and involving users in guiding its work.
20. There was limited interest in future training amongst paid carers and DP employers, although interest was expressed in a wide range of topics by individual paid carers.

RECOMMENDATIONS

21. Action indicated by this survey lies primarily in ensuring that the Agency can maintain its current high standards and that more people can benefit from its services and the improved quality of life offered by DPs.
22. It is recommended that the Agency
- contributes to review of DP rules on payments to close relatives, possibly through Direct Payments Scotland

- builds on existing measures to increase carers available
 - continues to offer support through peer contact and example.
23. It is recommended that the DP Working Group
- reviews information needs of existing and potential recipients and carers, to ensure all have full and accurate information about DP rules and the support service
 - reviews Social Work staff needs for information and training on ILF and independent living
 - considers how to meet paid carers' support needs.
24. It is recommended that Scottish Borders Council
- continues to give high priority to effective direct payments
 - fine-tunes payment administration.

IN CONCLUSION

25. Direct payments have achieved remarkable results for many people in the Borders, and fully bear out hopes held for this means of people directing their own lives. As well as enabling individual aspirations of disabled, frail and ill people and family carers, direct payments are facilitating a more effective role for care managers and providing satisfying employment for paid carers.
26. In working well for those most directly involved, the scheme has also achieved policy objectives of social justice, value for money and support for family carers in the area.
27. In the shared view of the different groups of respondents the success of direct payments in the area

is largely due to the vision, knowledge, understanding, skills, commitment, energy and good management of Borders Direct Payments Agency.

BDPA's structure and operation combine independence with the benefits of partnership working. With a relatively small staff (3 full time equivalent) it complies well with the essential requirements for locally adapted, user focused and guided support organisations set out by Direct Payments Scotland in *Five Steps*². The commitment of Scottish Borders Council has been a key factor in the successful arrangements.

ILLUSTRATIVE QUOTATIONS

Effectiveness of direct payments

1 Benefits for recipients

- "One to one: I can chose who I want to spend time with. I can ask people to help me and pay them" (learning disability 22-45)
- "Due to my illness it has been very important to employ people I want." (physical disability/mental health 66-75)
- "I am able to choose my own carers at times that suit me and they deal with my specific needs" (physical disability 22-45)
- "Same staff, regular times" (physical disability, 46-65)
- "Provides time for mother to spend with younger son doing activities which can otherwise prove difficult. I can relax for a few hours knowing [child] is well looked after" (disabled child)

² Witcher, Sally 2002, *Five Steps – a Guide to Providing Direct Payments Support Services* Direct Payment Scotland

- "Mother . . . spends most of time at home, always looks forward to her carers coming and spending time with her..." (physical disability 66-75)
- "Gives me more control and flexibility" (dementia 76+)
- "It has let me out of the Social Work gaol. I am able to socialise and carry out activities of interest to me" (physical disability 22-45)
- "The opportunity to get out and about . . .and very importantly allowing him to be part of general life" (learning disability 22-45).

2 Overall impact on recipients' lives

- "Total new life"
- "Restored my self esteem"
- "Independence and caring that suits my lifestyle"
- "Freedom to choose and control life as a disabled person"
- "Given me my life back again by helping me regain control over day to day things"
- "My life was a struggle until I had help and it has made a tremendous difference"
- "It has made everything so much easier. No worry or stress"
- "It has made a tremendous difference to my life and has also added to the improvement to my health".
- "We are able to go on holidays"
- "Very positive impact. [recipient] has benefit of company of other people, and I have as main carer a good social life which was non-existent before"
- "It makes it possible for me to stay with my [relative and spouse]"
- "Tremendous, empowering and the whole family have seen a benefit".

3 Impact on carers' lives

- "Favourably as it is so flexible and I feel I am in control of my own time to do my own thing"
- "Has allowed me to find time to spend with my daughter who misses out on such a lot because I'm unable to leave her granny unattended"
- "Makes it possible for my husband and I to go out together."
- "Simplified, and control of hours and employees"
- "Has helped me to cope with looking after my wife and employ people who are compatible with her"
- "DP targeted to recipient and is hassle free good initiative".
- "Given our son the chance to holiday in various ways more suited to his needs, freedom of choice"

4 Effectiveness of direct payments for paid carers

- "Problems are sorted out more quickly when you're dealing directly with your employer"
- "I'm more involved. I now feel I play an important part in client's life. I thoroughly enjoy it"
- "I have found the different types of care work I've done interesting and rewarding. It fitted with my needs as a retired but still reasonably active person. It has given more focus to my life as well as earning a little extra money".
- "I'm always paid on time and any overtime due"

5 Effectiveness of direct payments for care managers

- " Reduces amount of contact and constant paperwork"
- "Small day to day problems resolved without contacting me. Easier to manage"
- "Service runs smoothly after initial set up"

- “Less frustration re not meeting clients’ individual needs. As care providers we are often very limited re provision”
- “Clients are more settled and happy when able to choose their own staff”
- “More flexibility, choice, stops numerous people arriving to carry out homecare tasks”
- “Gives client control and empowers them to keep a grip on their life and destiny. More choice for them so they can live life to the full”.

Effectiveness of Borders Direct Payments Support Agency

6 Effectiveness for DP recipients and carers

- “[Agency staff named] have advised us; helped us to fill in forms correctly and we think independent living funds have made our life easier thanks to advice and help from BDP team”
- “No changes I can think of – found them very amenable to new ideas and finding solutions to our situation”
- “Has made a difficult job so much easier; and there is always the Agency to ring at a moment’s notice for help”
- “When enquiring those who answer the phone are so helpful and if they can’t give the answer then will ring you back and give you all the relevant details. BDPA is something which has made life easier. You have no worries as they are always willing to help. At 87 I feel so comfortable and secure”
- “BDPA are possibly the only advocates for disabled who have met disabled people. We could do with a team

- like them in every town in the Borders to make life better and to point out the blatantly obvious . . .”
- “The only ones that bother when Social Work are short of workers. i.e 7 months for an OT, 6 months waiting for a social worker . [Agency staff named] keep my family together”
 - “[Agency staff named] and her co-workers have been the first workers involved in my husband’s care who have made a real difference and they have been able to explain in simple terms how to obtain – and manage – help for me”

7 BDPA effectiveness for care managers

- “Have found DPA extremely helpful in providing advice, guidance and practical involvement in respect of both Direct Payments and Independent Living Fund”
- “Excellent source of information on procedure”
- “Good all round support”.