

Direct Payments: A National Survey of Direct Payments Policy and Practice

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Direct payments give greater control to people assessed as needing social care or support and form a key part of the agenda for the developing social care system. But they also raise many challenges – for the individuals holding the budgets, for the people they employ, their families and other unpaid carers, local authority staff and the organisations set up to support them. As more people take up the opportunity to purchase their own services, including employing their own personal assistants, so the commissioning, provision and regulating functions of social care agencies may need to change. This report describes how local authorities across the UK are responding to the practical challenges of policy change.

Data collected in two UK-wide surveys allow us to explore how the national policy of direct payments has been implemented locally. This report documents the main parameters of such implementation: the numbers of people receiving direct payments, the funding they receive, the support they are offered and the typical utilisation of this service. It also identifies the challenges that will need to be met if this policy is really to achieve the objective of enhanced individual choice to which so many people subscribe.

PARTICIPATING ORGANISATIONS

The direct payments survey combines the work of three multidisciplinary research teams involved in national studies of direct payments: a team from the Personal Social Services Research Unit at the London School of Economics; a team from the Universities of Leeds, Edinburgh and Glasgow; and a team from the Health and Social Care Advisory Service, the Foundation for People with Learning Disabilities at the Mental Health Foundation and the Health Services Management Centre at the University of Birmingham.

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