**CONTINGENCY PLANNING FOR THOSE WHO RECEIVE DIRECT PAYMENTS AND THEIR PERSONAL ASSISTANTS**

**Bringing Us Together – Direct Payments Zoom Session December 7th 2020**

The Covid pandemic has been really hard for everyone. There are also a lot of other emergency situations when it is really useful to have a back-up plan.

We discussed what needs to be in a plan if things go wrong with our Direct Payments when it comes to staff e.g who may be off sick with Covid

**There are some templates of plans that can be completed to get all the important emergency information in one place , in case something happens ..e.g to a Personal Assistant, the person who holds the budget or manages the budget, or a family carer….**

[www.actionforcarers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Emergency-Planning-](http://www.actionforcarers.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2020/03/Emergency-Planning-)

[www.carersinherts.org.uk/doc-links/carer-services/carers-week/936-carer-s-informal-backup-plan/file](http://www.carersinherts.org.uk/doc-links/carer-services/carers-week/936-carer-s-informal-backup-plan/file)

COVID-19: Individual employer - Skills for Care

<https://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Employing-your-own-care-and-support/>...

Skills for Care has identified training that remains a priority during this period. This includes working with our endorsed providers who are delivering training. PAs can access this training, but you should discuss this with your employer first, who should contact the learning provider to make sure the training course would be suitable.

<https://in-control.org.uk/self-directed-support/> for more information on Direct Payments

**Our TIPs for Contingency Planning**

1. Put the shift that needs filling and put it on a WhatsAppp group.
2. Have someone who knows how management works and the “rules”, e.g. Covid positive PA was away for 14 days, need to know the rules and a plan to deal with the situation, have a group e.g. WhatsApp or Messenger to cover any shifts that need cover)
3. Open communication is really important, give and take, having people’s backs helps get through
4. Having a team of people who know you reasonably well and who are willing to be flexible based on what you need on any given day, as this might change from week to week.
5. Plan for the unexpected!
6. Ensure PAs are talking to one another outside of work, to sort dates out etc then to come back to the person who is Individual Employer...a fully rounded conversation taking everyone’s view
7. See the person first, ask me, help me understand what’s happening, ask me, read my medical notes. An example was given*“ I might have a fit tonight, and might need more help tomorrow...so what’s written in my Health Plan won’t actually say what's happening NOW”*
8. Don't make assumptions, talk and ask!
9. Someone got Covid but didn't disclose due to stigma, people need to be open and honest to safeguard vulnerable people and everyone
10. Build up funds for contingency. Get information about what these funds can and cannot be used for. Find out if unspent funds can be used flexibly or if they will be taken back.
11. If managing an individual Personal budget becomes too much, then there is an option to get help
12. Change to an Individual Service Fund ISF where the Local Authority/ provider do a lot of the managing
13. .Support brokerage can be paid for Support Brokerage <https://www.imagineer.org.uk/supportbrokerage>. *Support Brokerage originated in Canada in the 1970’s when a group of families approached their local authority to request a greater level of input and control over planning the support their children needed. They requested to be given control over the funding that the local authority had for building and delivering a service to their children.*
14. Payroll services can help e.g. <http://www.akpayrollservices.co.uk/>

**Some people mentioned problems getting help**

1. Useful helplines if you are having financial or problems sorting things out with your local authority or benefits, e.g Citizen Advice Bureau, Home Farm Trust, SCOPE, Turn2US
2. Make sure you have a notebook and pen to record every call you have with CAB and DWP, mark down the date and time and the name of who you spoke with - photocopy your application...CAB may also be able to put you in touch with other local organisations who can help you complete the forms?
3. It's worth joining DPAC (Disabled People Against the Cuts)*. They are made up of the original social model fighters for rights and justice.*

**Acknowledging our Strengths**

We talked about difficult situations and what we have learned from them. We recognised that planning for emergencies requires strength and resilience.

For many of us getting Direct payments, managing Direct Payments and dealing with problems that happen is very difficult. ”*Exhausting”*

Some of us said that we feel proud after getting through difficult times

What else helped us get through?

***“It’s about not giving up and about staying calm, and knowing you will get through it”***

*”I remember who I am”*

*“Being reminded that ..”You are a man now”*

*“In difficult situations, own being scared, then own what is needed to do”*

*“My WIN, What’s Important Now? Wristband and emotional first aid kit”*

*“Speak to someone who can understand”*

*“Getting Moral support”*

*“Sometimes you have to let go and ask for help, learned it’s not a weakness”*

*“Fighting and challenging the system to get the right support for my son”*

*“Patience, perseverance and prayer!”*

*“I looked for people with the skills and experience I lacked and looked for as much help as I could get; tried to focus on one step at a time and not be overwhelmed by all the things still ahead; not be concerned about how I might appear to others or be judged, remember it's not about me”*

Some people shared their own experiences of how they faced and overcame their challenges in new or emergency situations.