**Shielding Families, Direct Payments & Corona Virus: TRAINING**

**Zoom Consultation Meeting, 21st September 2020**

This was a zoom peer support and consultation meeting organised by Bringing Us Together and involving 17 family members. The core theme was “Training”; in the widest sense, but primarily regarding Personal Assistant’s training needs.

**Theme - One of the more common themes related to a lack of knowledge about training and how to access it; also some confusion and inconsistency regarding how P.A. training should work in practice.**

*“We’ve never had any training for our P.A.s. I’ve asked Social Care how we can access training, but had nothing back.”*

*“We’ve issues managing behaviour. I’ve been asking the Social Worker – the staff have no experience of managing behaviour… there’s no provision. The Social Worker has said that I need to arrange it myself. Behaviour issues have gone up and they have increased the hours, but there’s never been any guides about training.”*

**Theme – Some family members felt somewhat abandoned by various services regarding their P.A. training needs.**

*“If you recruit your own P.A.s then Social Workers are not helpful in accessing training.”*

*“My daughter is now aged 20 and she did have an EHC plan in place. Then she transitioned as an adult and Education just dropped out, saying that Health and Social Care can now meet her needs…yet surely the EHC plan is the ideal support plan which could include training needs…I thought it was an ‘Education, Health and Care Plan!?’”*

**Theme – Various contributors made the point that P.A. and other training needs should be clearly built into the support plan and, therefore, the overall budget.**

*“*Training for P.A.s should come out of your budget…included as part of the support budget… first aid training, safety, safeguarding..*.”*

*“If you are employing P.A.s directly, you are responsible for training…you have to work within the budgets that you have been given.”*

*“Training needs to be a key component in all care packages…one idea is to have some extra “floating hours” for the whole shadowing, training and cover hours.”*

**Theme – Several family members mentioned the real challenge of being able to find and recruit P.A.s with the right levels of ability, skills and experience. In this context, one participant also mentioned the potential to develop templates, models and pathways in which P.A.s could be accredited regarding their continuing professional development.**

*“We are in need of clear training models for P.A.s. Couldn’t we have a system of accreditation, so that there would be a career development pathway, or advancement for P.A.s.”*

**Theme – Other participants mentioned the need for easily accessible guides to both identify and access the training needed for P.A.s**

*“We need to be able to know where we can get the training we need… some way of knowing that it’s good training and it’s what we need.”*

For the most part the participants’ discussion regarding training produced a number of ideas, as well as questions, regarding accessing appropriate resources, signposting, peer and P.A. support, networking, key local and national agencies – as well as advice regarding how to embed training into your support budget. These included:

* ***Clear and transparent information regarding the differences between support plans and support funding and how they relate to each other – Education & Health Care Plans; Personal Health Budgets as part of Continuing Healthcare Plans; and Direct Payments from Adult Social Care. Also, some people are in receipt of joint funding.***
* ***Widely available and skilled trainers re. challenging behaviour. Possibly a role here for The Challenging Behaviour Foundation.***
* ***Some of the best providers do offer appropriate level training, over a range of areas.***
* ***Regular peer support group meetings, sharing and disseminating the knowledge of the group.***
* ***The training budget should be robust to include shadowing, induction, specific courses and supervision.***
* ***Production of central and local lists of available training and trainers.***
* ***Awareness of young people and others who are new to the support system of employing P.A.s. Particularly crucial issues such as boundaries and how to co-ordinate and manage your employees.***
* ***Various disability and brokerage organisations – such as Choice Support – do offer some free training places.***
* ***Some agencies, such as Skills for Care, offer grants for Direct Payment recipients’ P.A.s to attend specialist training courses.***
* ***Support budgets could include opportunities for P.A.s to attend specialist events or conferences to develop their knowledge and skills, e.g. Alternative Augmentative Communication/Facilitated Communication events.***
* ***The need for the development of a pathway/system of accreditation for P.A. professional development and career advancement.***
* ***The importance of good, regular supervision for P.A.s and forums for discussion around the best working models for this.***
* ***The value of some regular over-arching information sessions delivered by experienced agencies, such as Imagineer, Skills for Care and In Control.***
* ***Clear guidelines regarding rights and access to advocacy services.***
* ***What is the impact of Covid-19 and social restrictions on the above.***