

Self Directed Support Factsheet – 12

Purchasing your own support: managing and supervising staff

As there are different ways to find staff to meet your needs, there are different things you will need to do depending on the kind of staff you use. This factsheet is about the ways you can manage staff time as well as how you can motivate staff and develop their skills. For more information on your legal responsibilities, see 'Purchasing your own support: employing people, using self-employed workers, using an agency or provider'.

Managing staff time

It is important to be clear with staff about when you will need them to work for you. This might mean that you need to write out a rota or the times when you expect staff to work. If you are purchasing your own support, you may want to ask staff to support you at short notice or at times you hadn't planned for. You will need to be clear on how much you expect staff to be flexible but also respect that staff may not always be able to be flexible.

Delegating tasks

It is not always easy to delegate tasks and tell staff what to do. For some tasks it might be useful to establish a set routine or have a written checklist. Delegating tasks should be easier if you have guidelines for staff and a good relationship with them. It may help to talk to others who manage staff about the techniques they use when managing staff.

Managing the relationship between you and your staff

If you are being supported by staff it is often on a one-to-one basis. This means that the relationship between you is personal and

sometimes can become very intense. It's important to have things in place to make sure the relationship works well. If you decide to purchase support from family members or friends, you may need to think about how to manage the relationship with them when they are supporting you on a paid basis. It is very important to try to maintain good communication between you and staff. You may want to think about making sure communication happens between you and staff, especially if you are both just getting to know each other.

Guidelines for staff or 'house rules'

Decide on what you think are reasonable guidelines for staff. These guidelines might cover what you think is acceptable behaviour for both you and your staff. You might need to add to the list as you go along. It is important to make sure staff understand why you want to introduce the guidelines.

Confidentiality

Depending on the kind of support you need, your staff may know personal and private things about you. Maintaining confidentiality is about protecting personal information. For example if someone supports you to go to the bank, they may need to talk to someone who works in the bank about your bank account. However they shouldn't talk to anyone about this kind of information if it's not necessary. It's important to talk to staff about what information you expect them to keep private.

Supervision meetings

While you can tell staff how to support you as you go along, it may be useful to set up regular supervision meetings to review how things are going. This gives both you and your staff an opportunity to think about successes and discuss any issues that either of you may have. Supervision meetings should be a 'safe' time where both you and your staff feel able to raise concerns. It's also a time to discuss ways to develop staff skills, such as training.

Motivating and developing staff

It is important to remember that staff will need encouragement from you. It is useful to tell staff what they have done well so that they feel valued. This should also make it easier to tell staff if there is something you'd like them to do differently. This is true even if you are supported by a friend or family member.

Case study: being supported by a friend

Thomas is a deafblind man who employs Derek, a friend, as his communicator guide. Although Thomas and Derek know each other well, it's important that they manage their working relationship well. Thomas wants to make sure he can tell Derek what is going well and how he would like Derek to support him differently. Thomas explains new tasks to Derek before they start to make sure it's as clear as possible. When an activity is finished or at the end of Derek's shift, Thomas makes sure there is time to have a chat with Derek about what they both think went well and what could be improved.

Training for staff

Providing staff with training can benefit both you and support staff. While you are the best person to guide staff on how to support you, there may be training that you are unable to provide yourself. Providing training can mean that staff will be able to support you better. If you support training for staff, staff should feel that you are helping them to develop their skills and that you value them.

You may not need to pay for the training yourself. Your council may include training costs in your direct payments. For more information, see 'Direct payments and personal budgets: making sure you receive the right amount of money. There may be some free training in your area. You may just need to allow your staff time out from supporting you to attend training. If you are supported by self-employed or agency staff, you may just need to tell them about some training you think would be useful. Not all training will mean that staff need to attend a course. They may be able to learn through reading or accessing computer-based resources, but they will still need to be paid for the time spent doing this. For ideas on the kind of areas that

you might want to provide training for, see Sense's factsheet 'Purchasing your own support: deciding on your needs and finding support'.

Training opportunities

Signature (formerly CACDP) offers information on qualifications and teaching centres for people who work with deaf and deafblind people.

Case studies: Training

Michelle has a deafblind son called Jonathan. Jonathan has been assessed as needing an intervenor. Michelle thinks someone who supports Jonathan at school would be the best person to support Jonathan at home as it is very important for Jonathan to be supported by someone who knows him well. So Michelle is thinking about receiving direct payments so that she can employ someone herself. The worker agrees, but if he is going to be able to meet Jonathan's assessed needs, he will need to attend a training course for intervenors. Social services agree to include the cost of this training as part of the direct payment as this is the most effective way to meet Jonathan's needs.

Managing conflict

It is important to try and prevent problems escalating. You should try to tackle things as soon as they happen. The above suggestions can help to manage difficult situations or disagreements. If problems arise you may find it useful to refer to the job description, person specification or guidelines. This could help you clarify issues around what you or your staff should be doing. If you employ staff yourself you can use a probation period. This is a set time for trialling staff before they become permanent staff. If you use workers from an agency or provider organisation, you should be able to talk to them about any problems. See the NCIL information on 'When things do not work out' for more information.

Resources

National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL)

Post: Unit 3.40 Canterbury Court, 1-3 Brixton Road, London, SW9 6DE.

Telephone: 0207 587 1663

Fax: 0207 582 2469

Email: info@ncil.org.uk

Web: www.ncil.org.uk

Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service (ACAS)

Post: Brandon House, 180 Borough High Street, London, SE1 1LW.

Acas offer a free and impartial telephone service that can answer your employment questions in one confidential phone call.

The Helpline is open from Monday to Friday, 08:00-18:00.

Telephone: 08457 47 47 47

Textphone: 08456 06 16 00

Web: www.acas.org.uk

Training contacts:

Signature (formerly CACDP)

Post: Signature, Mersey House, Mandale Business Park, Belmont, Durham, DH1 1TH.

Telephone: 0191 383 1155

Textphone: 0191 383 7915

Fax: 0191 383 7914

Email: durham@signature.org.uk

Web: www.signature.org.uk

Sense

Post: 101 Pentonville Road, London, N1 9LG.

Telephone: 0845 127 0060

Textphone: 0845 127 0062

Fax: 0845 127 0061

Email: info@sense.org.uk

Web: www.sense.org.uk

Deafblind UK

Post: National Centre for Deafblindness, John and Lucille van Geest Place, Cygnet Road, Hampton, Peterborough, PE7 8FD.

Telephone: 01733 358 100

Textphone: 01733 358 100

Fax: 01733 358 356

Email: info@deafblind.org.uk

Web: www.deafblind.org.uk

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