



## **Deafblind Direct consultation report: Deafblind people and families' experiences of direct payments**

Summary of key findings and recommendations  
February 2008

### **Introduction:**

Sense, the national deafblind charity, has published a report on its research into direct payments. From June to November 2007, Sense's Deafblind Direct project consulted deafblind people and families on their experiences of direct payments. Respondents included individuals who use direct payments and those who had thought about using them. The full report includes key findings, individuals' own experiences and recommendations for the Government, local authorities, CSCI, local support services and Sense.

### **Key findings:**

Despite having legal force, the Department of Health guidance on direct payments (2003) is not always implemented for deafblind people and families.

#### **Contrary to guidance:**

- A quarter of respondents said they had no choice to receive a service from the council instead of receiving direct payments
- The hourly rate of direct payments given is often insufficient to pay specialist staff with the skills to work with deafblind people
- The hourly rate often does not take account of other expenses
- Only a third of respondents first heard about direct payments from their local authority when local authorities have a duty to tell individuals who are eligible about direct payments

#### **Barriers to using direct payments included:**

- Lack of appropriate information provision; over 75% of respondents' comments on information on direct payments were negative
- In some cases, information was not given in the format needed such as Braille
- Over half of respondents felt that the local authority had not promoted direct payments enough
- Some respondents were unclear on what they could spend direct payments on and the procedures they should follow
- A shortage of appropriate staff to hire

#### **Why people choose direct payments:**

- 30% felt direct payments offered more flexibility and choice
- But 25% said they had no choice or no other service was available

**Why people did not choose direct payments:**

- Over half did not want to take on the extra responsibility
- Over half were happy with the current situation
- Nearly half felt there was not enough support for direct payments users
- Over 40% felt it was hard to find qualified or experienced staff
- 65% of respondents who currently use direct payments felt that direct payments had changed things for the better, but in some cases people were not likely to receive an alternative service
- 45% of respondents felt they had more control over the services they received through direct payments

**Managing direct payments:**

- 60% of respondents needed support to manage their direct payments
- Services have varied widely; respondents reported a wide range of experiences of using direct payments support services

**Key recommendations:****Department of Health:**

- Ensure that the Department's guidance on direct payments is implemented for deafblind people and families
- Recognise the specific challenges faced by deafblind people and families that are highlighted in the report

**Local authorities:**

- Implement the Department of Health's guidance on direct payments including allocating an hourly rate that covers any appropriate expenses
- Ensure that individuals and families are presented with a real choice between direct payments and an alternative service
- Ensure individuals are given information in accessible formats

**Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI):**

Implementation of the Department of Health's guidance is key. The lack of its proper implementation by local authorities has led to individuals not being able to afford appropriate support. Sense recommends that CSCI:

- Makes implementation of the guidance part of its inspection process
- Ensures that targets for increasing the number of people receiving direct payments does not disadvantage service users

**Individual budgets pilots:**

- Take account of the barriers to using the system identified in the report
- Ensure an inspection regime is in place to enforce the Department of Health's guidance.

The full report is available at: [www.sense.org.uk/directpayments](http://www.sense.org.uk/directpayments)

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