
**A SWOT analysis of the
direct payment system
in Scotland**

**EASPD Conference
Sofia, 11 May, 2007**

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SPAEN

- Scotland-wide organisation
 - 350 PA Employers
 - Advice / support on Human Resources, employment law, direct payments, independent living
 - 24 hr advice and (£2m) indemnity scheme
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SPAEN

- Disclosure scheme
 - Coaching and Development Training
 - Partnership working with local disabled people's organisations
 - Consultancy to LAs and Scottish Executive
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Overview

- Thank you for inviting me to speak today and for your kind hospitality
 - It is, indeed, a privilege and honour to be here
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Overview (cont'd)

- Today, I shall be talking about *the Scottish system* of providing direct payments ...
 - Not about the direct payments themselves
 - A direct payment is unquestionably an excellent tool to empower people
 - What is questionable is *the Scottish system* of providing them, or any such similar, but not identical, system elsewhere, e.g. that in England
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Overview (cont'd)

- In order to question the system of direct payments I propose to use the rather basic management exercise of a SWOT analysis
 - Because I have only been given a few minutes to talk this morning, I cannot do a thorough exercise
 - But I will draw your attention to – what I consider to be – the main concerns in each of the four areas of the analysis
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What is a Direct Payment?

- Money from a local authority given directly to the person with a disability instead of a direct service (home care, or day care, etc.)
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Eligibility for a direct payment ...

- The person must be 'eligible' for such care, according to local criteria
 - In addition, **the person must be** assessed as being '**willing and able**' (**with support**) to use a direct payment
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A direct payment can be used to ...

- Employ a Personal Assistant (helper)
 - Engage a home care agency
 - Buy equipment to aid personal care
 - Buy services from another local social service authority
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What is a SWOT analysis?

- It is a basic management exercise to gain an understanding of the
 - Strengths of (S)
 - Weaknesses of (W)
 - Opportunities for (O)
 - Threats to (T)

an organisation or system

Why use a SWOT analysis?

- The outcome of a SWOT analysis enables organisations to
 - focus on its strengths
 - minimise its weaknesses
 - address its threats, and
 - take the greatest possible advantage of any opportunities available to it.
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Strengths of the direct payment system

- It came from the thinking and lived experience of people with disabilities; incl. people who lived in segregated, impoverished environments of institutional care
 - It is based on their principles of independent living
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Strengths of the direct payment system

- It puts the power of choice and control in the hands of people
 - It allows people to maintain standards of support appropriate to themselves
 - It relieves families from caring and supporting their members who have a disability.
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Strengths of the direct payment system

- It allows the use of advocates to support people with learning disabilities as well as mental health service users.
 - It creates user-led support systems based in the community to assist people leave institutional care
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Strengths of a direct payment system

- It is better value for money, creating more flexible support, appropriate to the individual
 - It allows greater freedom to take normal everyday risk with appropriate support
 - It enables people to find employment and participate in the life of the community
 - It develops different and more appropriate systems of support, including peer support
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Weaknesses of the direct payment system

- There is a need for additional finance, resulting in the slow take up and role out of direct payments
 - There is a lack of up take among those with mental illness and learning difficulties
 - It fails to consider the different cultural norms among some ethnic minority populations relating to the role of caring within the family & the role of the person with a disability in that society
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Weaknesses of the direct payment system

- Very few people are either good employers of people or assertive buyers of goods.
 - There is, therefore, a need for training to use direct payments, properly, either in terms of being assertive purchasers of quality services or proficient employers of support staff
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Weaknesses of the direct payment system

- This training has been given by organisations called “Centres for Independent Living”, run by people with disabilities; but their funding by the authorities has been minimal
 - There is also a tremendous lack of training among the ‘gate keepers’ of social services
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Weaknesses of the direct payment system

- There is a lack of user involvement in setting up and monitoring direct payment schemes
 - This is particularly evidenced in the poor quality of assessment and assessment procedures
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Weaknesses of the direct payment system

- Poor quality assessment is compounded by the restrictive and inconsistent criteria for eligibility.
 - There is a lack of appropriate local support systems to manage the direct payment proficiently
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Weaknesses of the direct payment system

- The unfair system of means testing and charging for community care results in many people not applying
 - The low level of wages and lack of annual wage reviews results in difficulties in the recruitment and retention of personal assistants (care staff)
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Opportunities for the direct payment system

- There is 'political will' to develop direct payments and individualised budgets
 - Social policy initiatives are moving towards a more joined up system of health and social services; as well as individualised budgets
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Opportunities for the direct payment system

- There is a proactive network of DPO's, nationally and internationally
 - DPOs, mainly in Sweden, are working to standardise and register the training of personal assistants and offer the facility to take responsibility for the management of staff and money
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Opportunities for the direct payment system

- In Scotland, SPAEN is offering several 'back room' support services, including training and vetting prospective workers
 - Elsewhere, as in the Centre for Inclusive Living in Glasgow, CILs are providing support at job interviews and payroll services
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Opportunities for the direct payment system

- Finally, with the spread of direct payments, both nationally and internationally, people with disabilities are beginning to come together to work out problems, to campaign and raise the awareness among the general public and politicians to the issues around independent living and equality
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Opportunities for the direct payment system

- To this end, here in Europe, we have such groupings as
 - the European Network for Independent Living;
 - the European Council for Community Living; and
 - the European Forum on Disability's Independent Living Task Force
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Threats to the direct payment system

- There is institutional discrimination within social services, which favours the 'duty of care' to the 'duty to empower'; and considers people with disabilities lack the capacity to be responsible for their own care
 - Potential conflict between adult protection and independent living
 - There is a cultural backlash to direct payments from unions and professional bodies fearing loss of power, fear of deskilling and job losses
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Threats to the direct payment system

- Moves to involve ‘family’ members as either ‘purchasers’ or ‘providers’ of support may impinge on the values and principles of independent living
 - Direct payment schemes often uncover unmet need which can overwhelm the system
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Threats to the direct payment system

- Calls from professional bodies to 'improve' the training of personal assistants may impinge on the values and principles of independent living as well as the flexibility offered by direct payment systems
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Threats to the direct payment system

- Support organisations controlled by people with disabilities are being squeezed out of the market by other organisations which cannot provide the same quality of peer services
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Conclusion

- This SWOT analysis has clarified where the weaknesses of and threats to the direct payments system in Scotland lie.
 - It will be up to the independent living movement and its allies, there, to maximise the system's strengths and opportunities so that it may overcome such weaknesses and threats.
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Conclusion

- Otherwise, I fear there may be a strong backlash against direct payments from those who wish to maintain the power of the existing care system of institutionalised provision either in a residential “Home”, or the person’s own home within the community.
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Conclusion

- However, if we can resolve issues around the weaknesses and threats by turning our weaknesses into strengths; our threats into opportunities.
 - For example, SPAEN has entered into talks with a trade union which was critical of direct payments. Now we have a joint statement welcome the advantages of direct payments; and we are working with them on a national study of the working conditions of personal assistants
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Conclusion

- If we do build on the strengths and opportunities of the direct payment system in Scotland, and elsewhere,

then, I am sure, the empowerment of people with disabilities as equal citizens, fully participating in society, will be secured for future generations to come.

Conclusion

- **Thank you for listening.**
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