

# Direct 2 You

August 2009  
Newsletter 7

## South Gloucestershire Local Involvement Network (LINK)



Would you like to have a say in how services are provided in Health and Social Care?

Would you like to have a say about Direct Payments, the introduction of Individualised Budgets and Personalisation?

### Who or What is the LINK?

The LINK is a network of local people, voluntary and community organisations and groups that want to make health and social care services better for everyone.

### Who can take part?

Anyone who lives in and or

receives health or social care services in South Gloucestershire.

### LINK's Choice and Control (in your health and social care for Independent living) group

The aims of this group are:

- To look at the plans that the local authority has for personalisation and Direct Payments and Individualised Budgets and assess whether people are getting fair access to services and care.
- To assess whether there is sufficient advice for people using Direct Payments and Individualised Budgets.
- That South Gloucestershire Council provides back

up for emergency care and where carers and Personal Assistants are unable to meet needs.

- And to look at how service users are being supported to manage the process of managing their own budgets.

If you would like to participate in the LINK and become part of the way for local organisations and people to have their say about local health and social care services, and about the way they are run and developed then contact :

### South Gloucestershire LINK

0117 9589351

07896918205

Fax 0117 9650200

[infsouthglos@](mailto:infsouthglos@linksouthglos.org.uk)

[linksouthglos.org.uk](http://linksouthglos.org.uk)

[www.linksouthglos](http://www.linksouthglos.org.uk)

[.org.uk](http://www.linksouthglos.org.uk)

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### Special Points of Interest:

- 'what am I letting myself in for'
- 'Search for PA's using the quick search or detailed search facilities'
- 'A4e would like to say a big thank you'
- 'The difference can be seen in such a short space of time'
- 'form the basis of how the support group is to be shaped'

## Disability Living Allowance—Update

From 2011, Visually impaired people will be eligible to claim a higher rate of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) the Government has announced.

Visually impaired people claiming the lower rate of the mobility component of DLA will be able to claim the higher rate which is currently worth an additional £29 per week.

It is estimates that around 20 thousand people would be eligible.

The secretary of state for work and pensions James Purnell said: "This additional money could make a real difference helping

people to go out to find a job, for instance having the extra cash to pay for a taxi to a job interview."

The former secretary of state for work and pensions David Blunkett paid tribute to John Robertson for tabling the amendment and James Purnell and the Minister for Disabled People, Jonathan Shaw, for supporting the campaign.

He said: "I spoke at the hugely successful RNIB lobby of Parliament earlier in the year and I know that this decision by the Government is right and just."

### Focus on: Dave Owen



**Name:** Dave Owen

**Area:** Coalpit Heath

**Interests:** Scouting, Paul's Place, Computing and Photography

**How long have you been using Direct Payments?**

4 Years

**What do you use your funding for?**

"I attend Paul's Place and have funding to arrange my own transport. I have also recently been assessed for some PA hours".

**What would you say are the positives regarding receiving a Direct Payment ?**

"Getting and having the responsibility for receiving this funding is such a good thing. As I arrange my own transport, if the taxi company are not giving

me a very good service, I can just say goodbye and find another company! When the council arranges services you can't do too much about it. Having a Direct Payment also speeds up the process of paying Paul's Place for my attendance".

**And what would you say are the negatives?**

"None at all. Receiving a Direct Payment helps get my mind working!"

**What advice would you give to other people considering using**

**Direct Payments?**

"When you first look at Direct Payments you can think 'what am I letting myself in for'. Once you have done them for a while it becomes really easy".

**Is there anything else Dave?**

"Yes, go for it!"

Dave has kindly agreed to be contacted by anyone who would like to talk to him about his experiences. Please contact A4e who will be happy to arrange this.

### PA Pool: 'Introducing the instant, hassle free way of finding a Personal Assistant (PA) or working as one'

PA Pool provides members with a browsable database of Personal Assistants (PA) and PA Users (also known as PAE), where information about each person, plus who or what they are looking for, can be accessed at the click of a button.

Unlike conventional advertising, you can register and search the database whether you are recruiting or looking for work and then contact available people instantly

**How PA Pool works**

PA Pool makes employing a PA easier. It's cheaper than advertising and quicker than sifting through applicants to find someone suitable. Unlike other advertising websites, as long as you log onto the site regularly, your profile will always be one of the first in search results!

Here's how you can start enjoying the benefits right now...

**By registering FREE as a member you can:**

- Create a profile about yourself and what you're looking for
- Search for PA's using the quick search or detailed search facilities.
- Save specific searches so you can search according to you needs at the click of a button
- Add members you're interested in to your favourites so you can easily find them when you need them
- Control your saved searches, favourites and emails quickly and easily from your 'My PA Pool' homepage
- Receive recommendations from other members and recommend others yourself
- Access useful links

**Why is PA Pool better than placing or answering an advert?**

PA Pool is a specialised PA / PA User introduction site, you won't find adverts for anything else here! The easy-to-fill-in Profile form allows all your relevant

information to be stored on the PA Pool database meaning you only have write about you and what you're looking for once!

Other Members can then view your Profile and see exactly what you're looking for. With PA Pool you don't have to wait for someone to find you either - take control - you can do tailored searches specific to your needs and find that suitable person quickly and easily!

Finally, you don't have to subscribe (PA Users) until you've found someone you are interested in, from there on a website email service keeps your personal contact details safe until you decide the time is right to call or meet the person.

To have a look at PA Pool go onto [www.papool.co.uk](http://www.papool.co.uk)

### Did you know? - National Travelcard— (Diamond Card)

Following requests made to A4e for information around concessionary travel in South Gloucestershire, we have decided to pass on the following information that we have taken from the Council's website.

If you're 60 or over, or eligible disabled and live in England, you can apply for a bus pass providing free off-peak travel on local buses anywhere in England.

You can use your card for Local off-peak travel hours in South Gloucestershire, Bristol, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset, are anytime from 9.00am Mondays to Fridays and all day weekends and Bank Holidays.

In the rest of England (outside South Gloucestershire, Bristol, North Somerset and Bath and North East Somerset) off-peak hours are from 9.30am until 11pm Monday to Friday and all day at weekends and Bank Holidays.



Off-peak times may vary in other regions so please check before you travel.

Starting from 6th October 2008, Wessex Connect are charging a £1 flat fare to people who travel before 9am on Mondays to Fridays on presentation of a Diamond Travelcard.

The concessionary National Travelcard provides free travel on local services throughout England. 'Local' services in this case are those buses which are part of the local bus network. In a few instances this may include longer distance bus and coach services. You will need to check with the operator or local authority before you travel to see if they are included.

Journeys can still be made into Wales From South Gloucestershire on the XII and XI4 direct services to Newport and Chepstow, however the Travelcard cannot be used for other services in Wales.

The concessionary National Travelcard is not valid for the sightseeing tour buses in Bath and Bristol. Some long-distance coach operators, such as National Express, Berrys and Bakers Dolphin will give you a discount.



You need to ask them about this when you book your ticket.

You can also get application forms from libraries, one-stop shops, all council offices and some post offices. Once the form is completed please send it to:

**South Gloucestershire Council  
Concessionary Fares  
Freepost (SWB 2078)  
Chipping Sodbury  
Bristol BS37 6ZZ**

### Thank you—Financial Statements & QFS Monitoring

A4e would like to say a big thank you to the 91% of Direct Payment recipients who returned their QFS within the deadline. This compares to just over 50% for the same period last year.

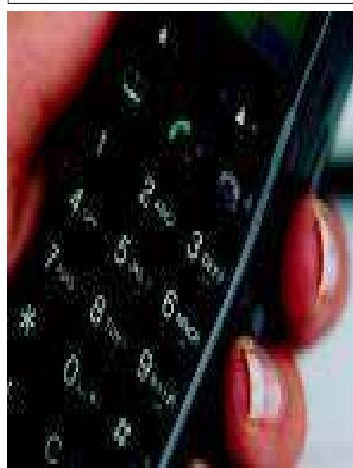
77% of people who were asked to complete their agency monitoring, returned them with the correct time period and again the figure for the same period last August was around the 50% mark.

May we also remind those not completing their monitoring on time or some cases, not at all, that their Direct Payment could be jeopardised by this as it is part of the contract taken out with South Gloucestershire council.

Should you be having problems with the completion of these forms please call A4e on **0117 9679540** and we will be very happy to assist you.



### Low Cost BT Telephone Service



British Telecom have launched a telephone service for low income families. BT offers 'BT Basic' line rental for £4.50 for people in receipt of income support, income based job seekers allowance and Guaranteed Pension Credit. For further information contact BT on **0800 7831675**.

### Focus On: Mandy De La Mare



**Name:** Mandy De La Mare

**Area:** Kingswood

**Interests:** Reading and listening to music

**How long have you been using Direct Payments?** 5 years  
**What do you use your funding for Mandy?**

"I use my funding to employ my own staff. I currently have 4 personal assistants"

**How did you feel when you were first offered a Direct Payment?** "I was very lucky to have a good advisor, Nick from the WECIL support service.

He helped me to learn all the things that I needed to know to become a good employer".

**Has receiving a Direct Payment made a difference to you?** "Yes! I can now be in control. You can do things at a time the suit you. I have also met some very people and made some very good friends".

**Are there any aspects that you find difficult?** "I didn't like the assessment process.

I found that to be quite degrading. It can also be hard when you call social services and are told that you will be seen by another different person! Generally, I have had some great support though".

Mandy has agreed that anyone who would like to discuss her experiences can contact her.

Please call A4e for further details

### Meet the A4e Team: Neil Spooner

For those of you who have already had to put up with my endless stories relating to the 'one that got away'...here is the proof of one that didn't!

For those who I have not met as yet, my name is Neil and I am employed by A4e as an Independent Living advisor (ILA). I have been working within the field of Direct Payments for over 4 years and enjoyed meeting lots of different people in that time.

The role of an ILA is to support people with any aspect of their Direct Payment from the initial

setting up to on-going advice and guidance including recruitment of staff, support with using agencies and



My other role's include supporting people around Independent Living Fund packages of care and assisting the Local Authority with the training of Adult Community Care staff.

The most rewarding part of my job is to see the difference that can be made when a person takes control over their own services and makes a success of it.

The difference can be seen in such a short space of time.

It never fails to amaze me at just how positive people can be despite the effects that their impairment has on their daily lives.

### Peer Support Survey

Please take the time to complete the survey enclosed with this newsletter as it will form the basis of how the support group is to be shaped for the future.

A4e are currently reviewing the Peer Support Group meetings and would like as much feedback as possible to enable us to make improvements.

Please feel free to contact A4e if you have suggestions and would prefer to talk to someone in person.



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WORKING  
IN  
PARTNERSHIP



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