



Paul's Story

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Interviewer: Robby

Robby: How did you hear about Direct Payments?

Paul: Through Social Services because Ellie who has learning disabilities, she wanted to stay on in the foster home after 21 and we didn't know how we could go about that. We were contacted by this company that do adult services. They said that a Direct Payment was a way of doing it. As far as they were concerned it was an easy way of doing it because I just had to put the timesheets in. Theoretically I'm employing Beth, my wife, to look after Ellie and I'm paying her for it but the money's coming from Purple.

Robby: How did the company know the get in touch with you?

Paul: Through Cambridgeshire County Council 'cos although we are self-employed, that's who we predominantly do most of our work for. Cambridgeshire County Council put us in touch with this company that does the adult services.

Robby: Ellie was staying with you?

Paul: Yeah, until she was 21. So we were actually in talks with adult services before then but obviously we didn't get anything working until a couple of weeks ago really.

Robby: Yeah, obviously transitions are a big time.

Paul: Yeah and also I believe that the actual payment system was contracted to another company whom Purple have only just took it over from.

Robby: That's right. It was originally Penderels Trust but Purple has just got the contract for supporting Direct Payments in Cambridgeshire. I suppose there's a big adjustment period for a lot of people.

Paul: Yeah. It was quite difficult for us because Cambridgeshire County Council actually paid Penderels the back pay that we were owed. Penderels for some reason or other, they took a long time before they paid it back to Purple. So in actual fact, when we first started it was quite bad because we didn't get any payment at all from Purple until last week. Last Friday was the first payment. So, it did take quite a while but I think it will probably be better

in the future. It was delayed slightly because of Penderels and stuff like that you know.

Robby: Very frustrating having to chase people.

Paul: Yeah. You know I hate doing that sort of thing anyway but the fact was we weren't paid anything for quite a few months... it's sorted now really but yeah.

Robby: Okay, that's good. So, how did you find going through the whole Direct Payment process, actually applying for it, talking with social services about it, that kind of stuff?

Paul: It wasn't too bad and they said that they would send somebody down from Purple to go through it with me because I wasn't sure what they were talking about you know? So, me actually employing Beth, my wife, to do a job and paying her to do that job. I didn't know how it was going to work so they sent a guy who works for Purple and he went through it with me and explained.

Purple were friendly enough but there was a little bit of confusion on the way because the guy from Purple said he would send me some time sheets and then a week later I hadn't got any time sheets. They hadn't sent them. So, I called them up and spoke to them. I said "You haven't sent me any time sheets," and they said "You don't need any, they're going to be filled in by the social worker for Ellie on adult services." But, that was incorrect; I did need the time sheets. Purple themselves, the admin team, sent me them by email and I actually send them back to them electronically now, so it's a lot easier. That was confusing for a bit.

The only thing I'm struggling with at the moment is because they gave me a date that the payments run 'til. They said "We're doing a payment run on such and such a date and that will be for payments up to the end of the month, but we need timesheets in on same day at the end of the month by 12 o'clock." I'm going to find that difficult sometimes because I'm not always here on those specific days. I may not be here so I may not be able to send those emails but I don't know whether they'd accept them beforehand because you can't actually fill the timesheets in until the day, can you? I may assume that Ellie will be working tomorrow but she might be sick.

Robby: Unexpected things do crop up from time to time.

Paul: It wouldn't happen in our case normally because even when we're sick we still carry on because we have all the children to look after and it's my wife anyway. It doesn't really relate to me but I felt that I shouldn't send the timesheets in until the specific day because it might look like I'm fraudulently

putting that she's working you know? If I send it in on say a Thursday and I've put that she's working on a Friday and that she's done two and a half hours but she hasn't actually done that yet. Do you know what I mean?

Robby: Yeah, absolutely.

Paul: So, I would prefer it that the payment date is up to the end of the month but you have until the beginning of next month to send them. You know, if I can't send them in on the Friday, I can send them in on the Saturday or the Sunday. Although there would be nobody to answer, the emails would be there for them on a Monday morning or something like that. So, I would like to see that changed.

Robby: Do you feel comfortable going back to Purple and talking to them about this?

Paul: Oh, I haven't spoken to them yet. I was just happy that it went through okay and that they got all the payments through and we've now been paid off. So, I've just got to make sure that I send them in on time. But, it would be a lot easier if the payment day is always a Friday, it would make sense that Monday would be the cut off day for sending the emails.

That's the only problem I've got with them really. It is a struggle for me sometimes because I don't know what I'm going to be doing on a certain Friday. I could be at a meeting all day or, in the job we have to do a lot of courses and the courses are sometimes quite a way away and it's an all-day course where I won't have the facilities to send an email with the time sheets. But yeah, I'll give Purple a call.

Robby: I suppose the important issue is if you feel comfortable going to back to them.

Paul: Yeah. I've got a few contact names now who I can actually speak to 'cos I know the name of the young lady who does the payment runs, so I can speak to her. If I speak to the original person who saw me then he'll just pass me on to someone else.

Robby: So, was it mostly with Purple you did all this stuff then, rather than Social Services?

Paul: Yeah, it was set up initially by Social Services.

Robby: How did you find dealing with Social Services?

Paul: Fine, because we deal with them all the time. Alice is the young lady who I'm dealing with at Social Services and she's quite good. She had to take

it to panel to get us approved not just for the Direct Payment but also approved to look after adults with learning difficulties. That went through panel okay, then she put me in contact with Purple and they took over from there really. That's basically how we got started. We've only had one payment since we've been doing it, so I can't comment on whether their payments are always on time and stuff like that.

Robby: You're employing Beth your wife?

Paul: Yeah the payment is going directly into her bank account.

Robby: She must have found that quite frustrating, not getting the payment?

Paul: Well yes. For some reason or another they decided to only pay us from the last month. So, we lost 20 days but that's neither here nor there really.

Robby: Is that something that you brought up with Social Services?

Paul: Yeah and they said that's when they decided they're going to pay us from. I think that was when it was approved. So, even though we were looking after her, we weren't approved for it, so we wouldn't get paid for it. That is a bit mean but you know, it's neither here nor there with us. We're not going to argue the toss over 20 days.

Robby: Fair enough. It's a good attitude but still you want to be paid for the work that you're doing.

Paul: Yeah that's right but I think the reason why was because we weren't approved until such and such a date. So, when it was approved that was when they said, "Right you get paid from that date not from the day she was 21," but so be it.

Robby: Okay. How did you find all the paperwork?

Paul: Oh, it's not too bad really. There isn't a great deal to do, we just have time sheets, which I've got on my laptop and I just make a copy of it, put all the time sheets in, save it electronically and then I ping it over. As soon as that time sheet is done, I ping it over, so I don't wait until the last day and then send all four time sheets over. I send them as and when they're done in case I get the scenario where I'm not here on that particular day when it is the cut off day.

So at least Beth will get paid for three weeks. The last week she might have to wait until the following month if I can't do it on the day. That's what happened this last time. I actually put the time sheet in on the next week because we went away for the weekend to see Boyzone in concert and Mrs Brown's Boys.

So, we had the whole weekend away and we didn't come back 'til the Monday, so I did it on the Monday.

Robby: That sounds like a nice weekend. Were they okay with you doing it on the Monday?

Paul: I never actually spoke to them about it; they just said that the cut off day was the end of the month. They'd already got all the previous time sheets. The only one they hadn't got was that particular week. So, I sent that out on the Monday when I came back. A good thing as well, they actually send you an email saying that they've received the time sheet and that they would get in contact if there were any problems with it. So, it is quite good. Then they also send you an email to say the time sheet is fine and they'll put it through their system. They told me that they received the timesheet I sent anyway, which is a good thing.

Robby: So quite a few positives things about Purple then. I'm sure they'll be happy to hear that feedback. Okay, do you feel like you've had enough help and support through the process of getting Direct Payments?

Paul: Yeah. We've got it sorted now but it was a bit frustrating at the start because each week was going past and we weren't getting any payment through. There was the transition from the previous company to Purple, which didn't go that smoothly so that didn't help with the situation. It was quite frustrating for us at the start.

I heard that it was Purple who were doing the Direct Payments but I hadn't got any contact numbers or names, so the only person who I was plaguing with emails was Alice, who's Ellie's adult services social worker. She was difficult to get hold of at times because she was out on callouts and stuff like that. We'd perhaps go two or three days without being able to get in contact with each other. She was the only name I had so she had to be inundated with the emails and the phone calls.

Robby: Was she receptive when she did pick up?

Paul: Oh yeah, she was more than helpful once I got in touch with her. Then she put me onto Purple and then Purple came down and went through it with me and gave me some paperwork to look through and explained how the system works.

Robby: Did not having the money put a strain on your lives?

Paul: No, it was just frustrating really. I mean, we had the money to pay for Ellie's upkeep but it's nice now it's being paid anyway.

Robby: Has you changed social workers much?

Paul: Yeah because Ellie's original social worker was working for children and fostering and adoption. So, he was with Cambridgeshire County Council and he was quite good but then at 21, they pass it over to adult services and Alice took over it. She's been in contact with us and come down and seen us and spoke to Ellie and introduced herself. Alice was the one who took it to panel to get it approved, which all went well. The transition didn't make any difference to us because she was already living here and it didn't make any different to Ellie. So, she was more than happy with it.

Robby: Okay. Do you know where to go now for help and support if you have an issue with anything?

Paul: Well we've got Alice on Cambridgeshire County Council as a social worker. She's the main contact if there are any issues with Ellie. And, I've got a contact name and number for Purple, so I can go directly to them if there's a problem with the payments. So, I'm quite happy with it now. Like I say, the only issue I've got is that you don't get enough time to put in the time sheets. I will talk to them about that but if that's the system I don't know whether they would be receptive to changing it now.

Robby: I think feedback is important to them, especially in this early stage. They're still quite new in Cambridgeshire.

Paul: It is a good system. Well as long as you get paid, any system is a good system. But yeah, I'll have a word with them and see if I can move the deadline day so it gives us the time to send in the time sheets.

Robby: Sure. Well, I've worked with Purple and they always seem very receptive to new ideas. They've just taken over the contract for Direct Payment support in Cambridgeshire and I'm assuming they want to get it renewed once it runs out, so they've got to do their best to make a good impact, I think.

Paul: So, who do you work for then?

Robby: I work for Cambridgeshire Alliance for Independent Living, which is slightly different. We're all about providing voice for people rather than a service.

Paul: Have you got anybody else who you're seeing regarding Direct Payments?

Robby: Oh yes. We're trying to get as many people as possible to talk to us.

Paul: And have they had any similar issues?

Robby: A few, yes. Mostly it's been setup issues and transition from Penderels to Purple.

Paul: Yeah, if they was already with Penderels. See, I wasn't actually with Penderels. The one and only payment we've had come from Purple, so I can't comment on Penderels, whether they was good or bad or indifferent. But, I know that Cambridgeshire County Council mistakenly paid our back pay to Penderels and it did take them quite a while before they pay it back. I think because they'd lost the contract they weren't too bothered when they sent the money back, you know.

Robby: Penderels are still doing payroll for a lot of people. It's just that all the new people will be going to Purple. Penderels will certainly be doing bit and pieces for a while I think.

Paul: Oh, so Penderels is still doing some Direct Payments?

Robby: Yes, for people who are already using them.

Paul: Oh right.

Robby: Okay. How easy do you find it to do the things you want to do on Direct Payments?

Paul: Oh, it's simple. You only have to fill in one time sheet for a week and just email it through to them. It's easy, you know. You just have to put the hours down and then add it up at the bottom. I always do it on the laptop.

Robby: How many hours does Ellie have through Direct Payments?

Paul: I'm pretty sure that Ellie is allocated 2.5 hours a day for Beth to work with her.

Robby: And that's seven days a week?

Paul: Seven days a week, yeah. We have got Ellie over in the self-contained flat. It's got its own kitchen, lounge, ensuite shower, toilet and two bedrooms. She could be quite independent, but she tends to spend most of her time over here. She only goes over there to sleep 'cos she loves it over here.

When we first built the extension it was gonna be for a single parent people who'd been thrown out because their parents don't agree they've got themselves pregnant at a young age or mother and child or something like

that. Those sorts of people were our initial intention for using it but we just use it for whatever.

Ellie fitted the criteria for going over there. It gives her a little bit of independence and she can have her boyfriend over. So, instead of sitting in here with her boyfriend and all the kids all laughing and giggling and being silly, then she can go over there and have some adult time with him over there. But, she's still got the support of you here; we're always here for her.

Robby: That is very good. You said this was a long-term arrangement?

Paul: Yeah, I can't see Ellie wanting to leave ever really, but I don't know. We're happy to have her here and she's a lovely girl and as long as she needs a place then she can stay here. I don't know about the future, whether her boyfriend... She's been quite serious with him; she's been going out with him about a while now. So, whether that will move on to moving in together or getting married, I don't know.

Robby: So, if she does move out do you think your wife would continue to provide support?

Paul: Oh yeah. She'd be here for her, we both would. We have had children... we've got a young lady, she's in her late 20's now and she left us when she was 18. When she got married she asked me if I'd give her away.

Robby: That's really sweet.

Paul: She comes down most weeks and her husband is a real nice guy and we get on really well. When we went to see Mrs Brown's Boys, they came with us.
So, we have a very large extended family, you know. We're always here for everybody.

Robby: Do you think if and when circumstances change, you'll feel comfortable going back to Social Services and talking to them about things that need to be updated?

Paul: Yeah. I'm quite happy to speak to Alice about it and Purple.

Robby: So, usually it's about once a year they have an annual review of how you're doing and if there are any changes but you can do it before then if you want to.

Paul: Yeah. Well we had a bit of a bad start but we're working okay now. So hopefully it will continue and I can get the timesheets emailed through quick enough.

Robby: So, Ellie has two and a half hours a day. Would you feel comfortable hiring someone other than your wife to give her those two and a half hours a day?

Paul: I don't really think that criteria will happen because we both do the job we do together. I mean Beth spends a lot more than two and a half hours with Ellie. We were trying to get Disability Living Allowance for her and Beth was on the phone to lots of different people involved with it. Ellie just doesn't know what to say and she gets sort of tongue-tied on the phone and just passes the phone over to Beth. So, we're happy to do that for her. It just so happens that the way we do the payment is that, theoretically, I'm employing Beth to do the job and I wouldn't employ anybody else to do it. I wouldn't need to.

Robby: Well that sounds good. What are some of the benefits that you found of having Direct Payments?

Paul: Having only just been in the system I don't really know whether I can answer that. Benefits? Well now they've actually sent me all the dates for the payment for the rest of this year, I know when we're going to get paid. That's always handy to know. I know when I've got to put the timesheets in by. It's quite easy because we've always been paid with our salaries directly into the bank on a two-week or one-month basis. It's an easy way to get paid. It may be a bit difficult if you don't do online banking but I can just go on my phone and have a look and make sure the payment's gone in and you can check that in seconds. So as far as I'm concerned, it's easy. And I'm quite happy with them paying it directly into our bank, or into Beth's bank.

Robby: Well, it being easy is defiantly a good benefit. Okay so, what advice would you have for other people who want to use Direct Payments?

Paul: Obviously it's a lot easier if they've got a laptop and internet so that they can just email them through. I believe that Purple has got a facility for faxing them over but you'd still have to have a fax machine. But as long as you can ping them over there's nothing difficult about it.

Robby: Would you recommend that you use an organisation like Purple?

Paul: Yeah. We got off to a bad start but we've ironed things out now.

Robby: I think one of the things that people find very daunting about Direct Payments is becoming an employer with everything that that encompasses but Purple deal with a lot of that stuff for you.

Paul: Yeah, 'cos Purple actually supplied the employers' insurance and they dealt with all the insurance documents came through. They paid for that as

well out of the money that's allocated towards Ellie's adult services that we provide her with. It's like an indemnity insurance isn't it? So, theoretically because I'm employing Beth, if she was to fall over and break her leg or something like that, then she could claim damages off of me, her husband, ha-ha! So I'm insured against that.

Robby: Goodness. Okay is there anything else that you want to tell me?

Paul: No. It's all working okay and I hope I can still say that this time next year.

Robby: Well fingers crossed. Thank you very much.