



## Scott's Story

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**Interviewer: Robby**

**Robby:** Do you want to start by telling me about how you found out about Direct Payments and how you got into it?

**Scott:** I think it was my social worker who suggested it to start with. It was a while ago so I'm trying to remember to be honest. But, I think my social worker said it was an option. The agencies were... well you know what agencies are like, it's a bit unpredictable. You don't know who you're gonna get and so on.

So, I knew somebody who was retiring from the agency and she wanted to carry on doing some care work but not at the same pace as she was doing working for an agency. It seemed like it would be a good opportunity for her and for me really. She lived round the corner so she could come and do my personal care without having a load of other clients to rush through and I would have just her working for me, so no competition. So, that's how it started I think.

**Robby:** That's good. How did find the assessment process?

**Scott:** For Direct Payments? I'm sorry this is not going to be much use to you but I can't remember anything about it. I can't remember actually having to be separately assessment for it, so it obviously wasn't that difficult.

**Robby:** Oh well, that's good. I mean, that's a bit surprising actually.

**Scott:** Oh really?

**Robby:** Well some of the people I've spoken to have had issue after issue getting it. It's nice to hear someone like you say it relatively straightforward and easy.

**Scott:** Wow, okay. It was, yeah. My social worker assessed me. They were ready to do the work. It was about as easy as its been to sign up for this with you today. I don't remember it being complicated or difficult in any way.

**Robby:** So, mostly it was done through your social worker?

**Scott:** Yeah. My social worker encouraged me to do this. She said, or he, maybe it was a he. He said, "The government would like people to set this up and these are the advantages for you." It all seemed good to me.

**Robby:** That's good to hear that. Can you think of any issues with Direct Payments that you may have had?

**Scott:** From a logistical point of view, no. It really surprises me to hear you say that other people you've spoken to have said it was an arduous and complicated task because it just hasn't been like that for me at all. I mean, there have been issues with managing my carers through a Direct Payment that I'm sure will come up in the course of the interview. But, in terms of setting it up and the logistics of it, I don't remember it being anything other than just straightforward.

**Robby:** Well that sounds good. I suppose my next question would be about the other issues that have come up. Could you tell me about some of those?

**Scott:** Right, well I've got issues right now because the first person I employed through Direct Payment retired two, maybe three years ago. My original carer, Betty, was retired and I was her only client, so she had lots and lots of time. Whereas the woman who took over from Betty had a lot of clients and was quite stressed really. She'd arrive and she'd be stressed and she'd be rushing, not ideal.

She wasn't able to do Tuesdays and Thursdays because she had young children as well. Again, Betty was retired so she had a husband at home who was able to look after himself and that was it really. Whereas my second carer had young children who needed her at home. So, she had a lot more pressure on her and that inevitably affected the level of care she was able to provide for me. She wasn't able to do Tuesdays and Thursdays because she had to take her daughters to school, so she got somebody else to come in for her. This person didn't speak English very well and that was very difficult really. Then I got somebody else to cover Tuesdays and Thursdays and that was fine. But, both of those people have since left for various reasons. The Tuesday and Thursday person's gone off to Australia. The person who was covering Mondays to Fridays had a real personality clash with my partner, so she ended up resigning.

I've had somebody to cover her on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. I'm covered by getting the agency to come in on Fridays regularly. So, it's all been a bit piecemeal for, for a while. The person who's doing Mondays and Wednesdays at the moment is gonna have to stop in a few month because she's got a daughter who's gotta to go to school. So, I've gotta find a new carer basically, or a couple of new carers. Um, and that is proving to be quite stressful and difficult. Yeah, so that's, that's the biggest issue for me.

**Robby:** Yeah, that's one of the things that other people have brought up, where do you go to get carers? I've heard that a few times.

**Scott:** Really? Yeah, I'm still struggling to find carers. I thought I had somebody who was gonna be able to do it all and then he phoned me on Friday afternoon and said he wasn't gonna be able to do any of it after all. So, I'm back to square one for trying to find somebody who is just gonna come in and sort things out. If I can't find anybody I'll have to go back to an agency, which is not what I want but it might end up being like that, you know?

**Robby:** Just because there are no other options?

**Scott:** Yeah exactly.

**Robby:** Okay. Well one of the things that one of the other people said to me was they're trying to look for carers via Facebook. I don't know if you've tried that?

**Scott:** No, I didn't know Facebook had any bearing on this at all. I've used Penderels' website.

**Robby:** A different organisation has been offered the contract for support of Direct Payments in Cambridgeshire now, they're call Purple.

**Scott:** Oh right, okay.

**Robby:** I will forward you the link to their website.

**Scott:** Yeah, please send me that link 'cos I am struggling. I haven't found anybody yet and I've been looking for a little while.

**Robby:** Who was it that you said was your first carer, Betty?

**Scott:** Betty yeah. She's probably 70 now. She retired from the agency and started to come to me under Direct Payment when she was probably 62, 63 or something like that. She did it for four or five years and then she didn't want to do it any more. She's still on my books and she'll come out and help me occasionally.

**Robby:** Well five years, that's a good amount of time to be with someone who you get on with. I guess it is very difficult moving on and finding someone else, especially if you build up a relationship with that person.

**Scott:** Yeah, I mean, anybody that you see every day is gonna irritate you in some way whether it be it a partner, a friend or a boss. There were things about her... She was quite a garrulous woman and sometimes she had nowhere else to go because she was retired. So, she wanted to talk all day and sometimes I wanted to get out and get to work. When she left and the

next person took over who had less time that was better in some ways but you know it's all swings and roundabouts. Nothing's perfect.

**Robby:** Yeah. So, what about interviews? 'Cos I would have thought that would have been the point of Direct Payments? You could go through a session of interviewing people and find ones you like?

**Scott:** Oh yes. That's never actually happened, I've never formally interviewed anybody. That might happen yet this year as I'm trying to recruit people through Penderels.

**Robby:** I think one of the problems is that although you can get the Direct Payments, the actual carers are difficult to find. There is not as many carers out there, as there is a need for carers. Lots of people like yourself and colleagues, other charities, other organisations, have said there's a sort of an underspend in Direct Payment 'cos although people want carers but there just aren't the carers around to support them.

**Scott:** And, everybody probably wants somebody about at the same kind of time of day I should imagine. If everybody wants a carer between about eight and nine ideally, one carer can't have ten clients all at that time. So, that's another problem.

**Robby:** Very true. Do you know where to go for your information and support?

**Scott:** Well, Penderels mostly.

**Robby:** Um, when we spoke before you said people like ECDP helped you with things like paperwork?

**Scott:** Yep, that's not something I've had much of a headache about. One thing is that my social worker changes every year and it's difficult to know who they are. I'd like it if social workers had better communication with me.

**Robby:** Yeah, communication with Social Services is very important. That's something good we can feedback to the County Council.

**Scott:** Right. That's good to know you are doing that.

**Robby:** So, holidays, Christmas, Easter, etc. is it difficult finding people to cover at those times? Can you ring up an agency if you don't have anybody in and say, "Look I really need someone?"

**Scott:** Yeah, I can do but there's no guarantee that they can what you want. You just don't know how long you're gonna wait or who it's gonna be. But yeah, that's why I think I would advise anybody who's having a Direct

Payment to stay on the books of at least one agency and stay on good terms with the call handlers. I don't complain hardly at all because I want them to like me and want them to help me, you know? I find it's good to be on the books of an agency.

**Robby:** But, is that a good thing though, not feeling like you'd be able to complain?

**Scott:** Well, that's a continual bone of contention between my partner and me because he thinks I'm too soft with everybody. But, my philosophy is generally things are good enough. If there's something really seriously wrong then I would complain but I'm not gonna complain about every little thing because then, you know...

**Robby:** Sure, sure. I like criticism myself personally. I think if I get criticism in my job I can look it and think, "How can I do this a little bit better?" But, I think most people aren't like that, which is a shame. We need to have a better culture where we feel more able to complain about things we're not happy about, especially when it comes to things like personal care.

**Scott:** It's an English disease, isn't it?

**Robby:** Haha, I think so! One more of question. What advice would you have for other people who want to get onto Direct Payments?

**Scott:** I would definitely recommend that you don't cut off your ties with an agency, so that you've got safety net if something goes wrong on a particular day or a particular month. Because, at the end of the day, it is just you and the person who's meant to be caring for you. I suppose if you've got a few different employees on Direct Payment system, then you've got more cover.

Any other advice? I'd say go for it! I'd say do it because my it's certainly made managing my care a lot easier and given me more control.

**Robby:** That's one of the taglines. It says that Direct Payments are designed to give people more of control. So, it's good to hear that it is actually doing that for you.

**Scott:** Yeah, definitely. I'm very glad I took this up and I would recommend it.