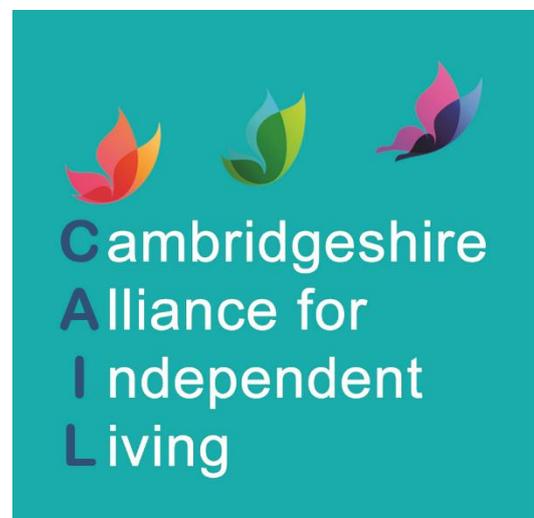


Zoey's Story

“There is so much paperwork. I understand that it has to be very thorough but it's so in-depth. I find that quite difficult.”



Zoey's Story

Interviewer: Addison

Addison: As this is all about Direct Payments, let's go back to the beginning and ask how you first hear about Direct Payments and what drew you to them?

Zoey: I have a friend who also needs carers or PAs. She knew that I was looking into it because I work and I need some flexibility around when people can come in and that kind of thing. She knew that agencies might not be the best thing for me so she suggested it. She said that she had a good experience with it, even if it was a bit stressful getting it set up.

Addison: Okay, so how did you go about actually getting Direct Payments for yourself?

Zoey: I contacted the council for an assessment for care. That was when my social worker said we don't have many Direct Payment people that we know about in the Adult Disability Team, so I'm going to have to go away and look at this.

Addison: How long ago was that, do you mind me asking?

Zoey: That was last year. I've had two social workers. I didn't meet the first social worker but my mum did. I didn't meet my new one until earlier this year and she had just started in the role.

Addison: I'm surprised to hear a social worker saying as early as last year that they didn't know much about Direct Payments. So, how did you find the process of talking with your social worker to get you onto Direct Payments?

Zoey: That was quite protracted. Partly because I was in and out of hospital quite a bit and partly because the whole process of getting carers is quite protracted by its very nature anyway.

Addison: Sure. How do you find the paperwork?

Zoey: There is so much paperwork. I understand that it has to be very thorough but it's so in-depth. Going and getting documentation from the bank can be quite difficult. It has to be approved by the bank, showing that it is a bank document rather than me just printing it off the internet. I find that quite difficult.

Addison: Did you feel like you had enough help through the process?

Zoey: In some ways yes and in some ways no. Like I say, going to the bank to get bank statements and stuff was quite difficult for myself. So, it would have been nice to just be able to upload screen capture online or something in that way. However, the help was there if I needed it, which was good.

Addison: You mentioned having two different social workers. What was that like?

Zoey: Yes, the first one left. I didn't meet her, my mum did but she said she was very nice. Having two social workers meant things took even longer because I felt I was left in the system a little bit but I guess these things happen.

Addison: These things do happen but it doesn't mean that they should happen. I can imagine that being quite frustrating, especially with things like having trouble going and getting bank statements, like you mentioned. Was that something that you brought up with your social workers?

Zoey: I haven't brought it up yet but I will do when I next speak to them because that could be done a lot easier I think. Certainly, things like getting hold of the DWP for DLA. I asked and do they need copies of my entitlement letter. It's an eight-page letter so surely, they could just speak to the DWP on my behalf if I sign things that say, "Yes, you may speak to the DWP on my behalf," just to make that easier.

Addison: Do you feel comfortable asking for help from your social worker when you need to?

Zoey: Yes, sometimes. Sometimes, I don't know quite where to go for the help. For example, Mum went away and I was trying to find a carer to cover. I was told, "No, you need to find a care agency yourself." So, I spent, probably about a morning and an afternoon separately trawling through the internet trying to find a care agency and that was quite difficult and quite stressful. So, it would have been quite nice just to have someone suggest, even if it was just for a week, "Oh, try these people or try these people," kind of thing.

Addison: Yeah, a bit more signposting of where to go. You're using Purple, aren't you? Do you find them quite easy to approach?

Zoey: They're very easy to approach and I have to say that they've been absolutely brilliant. They have been amazing. They sent me all the templates for sending out adverts and things, so yeah.

Addison: That's good. I think for a lot of people find PAs or like appropriate care agencies quite a struggle. One of the things Purple are doing is a matching making application where they link up PAs with people that want to find them.

Zoey: I've got such a long list of my needs. They sent me the job advert and said, "What would you want from your ideal PA, I'm like your matchmaker." I see where their coming from and it makes so much more sense. A lot of people that I know who want to do Direct Payments are my age so of course a care agency isn't going to right for everyone. Okay it'll be fine for some cases but for somebody like myself who works or goes out quite a lot, having a care agency say, "Well you need to be in the house between 2 and 4," isn't really going to work.

Addison: Yeah, and that isn't the point of Direct Payments anyway. The point is to give you control over your care so you're in your house when you want to be. Okay, so what would be some of the problems you've found with Direct Payments?

Zoey: The paperwork. Really, the paperwork. There is so much of it. Like I say, going through bank statements and the financial assessments and all that kind of stuff. I understand why they do it but it would have been nice to have somebody make an appointment with you, like Purple did. Maybe someone from the council can have like a really long appointment with you and just go through all the paperwork that you need. Then you don't have to scabble around for bits and pieces.

Addison: So, someone like a social worker to come and go through all it with you?

Zoey: I know it isn't the point of it but yeah, that would have been nice.

Addison: I can imagine getting all that paperwork can literally be quite daunting as well?

Zoey: Yeah.

Addison: Okay. Do you think you found a way to resolve problems?

Zoey: Yeah, I did. Luckily, I keep everything in a file so I had most of my documents, apart from the bank statements, to hand. I do all my banking online, because it's easier.

Addison: Brilliant. Okay, how easy is it for you to do all the things that you want to do using Direct Payments?

Zoey: I haven't got carers at the moment, because I'm still struggling to find one. Once I get that sorted I'm hoping it will make life a lot easier and take away a lot of the stress. I've gone for the premium service from Purple. Gold Standard if you like, so they do all the payroll and stuff.

Addison: What sort of things have you tried to do to find a PA?

Zoey: Adverts and things but I've still got a lot of work to do and I was kind of expecting to have this issue because as I said a friend who used Direct Payments but didn't use Purple. It took her about 6 months to find a PA. I think it's just the nature of Cambridgeshire as a whole.

Addison: Some people we've spoke to advertise through Facebook. Has that been something you've thought about at all?

Zoey: I've not considered it because I'm a bit dubious about that kind of thing. I don't know quite why but I just am really. Is it worth doing?

Addison: Potentially, yeah. Always worth find out more information I think. How do you feel about the interview process?

Zoey: Purple said they'd be in the room but I've not really heard much about it to be honest. I know that I'd have to interview and they'd have to probably go through a DBS check and that kind of thing, just for my own piece of mind.

Addison: How do you feel about potentially conducting interviews?

Zoey: It's gonna be strange because I'm usually on the other side. I'm usually the interviewee so being the interviewer would be quite interesting but I think it's necessary. I don't think you can let just anybody into your house.

Addison: That's true. So, what would be the benefits you've found with using Direct Payments? Have there been any so far?

Zoey: So far, I think the benefits are, having an organisation like Purple that aren't a care agency in and of themselves but who take on a lot of responsibility of things like payroll and the matching making service which can be quite stressful.

Addison: Brilliant. Okay, what advice would you have for other people who are potentially wanting to use Direct Payments?

Zoey: I guess if you don't know how to do something ask. Ask Purple, ask your social worker. If you're lucky enough to have people you know who use it, ask them. Be patient because it does take a long time. That's all I can think of really.