

PRODISABILITY PROFILE

PRO Disability was launched in December 2002, with a Board of Trustees made up of local disabled people. The Independent Living Coordinator was seconded to the organisation by the Borough of Poole. The Board of Trustees took responsibility for day-to-day line management for the post. It was agreed that disabled people should always make up the majority of the staff and ideally be managed by a disabled person.

The organisation sees Direct Payments as a crucial part of Independent Living and disabled people's rights. Whilst working closely with the local authority, PRO Disability provides a service primarily supporting and advocating for existing and potential Direct Payment users, both collectively and individually.

The Trustees and Independent Living Co-ordinator made an application to the Department of Health and received an award of £106,000 to help increase take-up over an 18 month period. This was used to employ 4 part-time additional staff, who took up post in September 2004.

The project allowed the organisation to develop the full range of services it now has to offer direct payment users. This includes the payroll service, banking service, financial returns, recruitment, support with interviewing, advertising, conciliation, advocacy plus creatively looking at new ways in which people can meet their care needs with Direct Payments

In 2006 PRO Disability commissioned an independent evaluation of the service; this was led by Professor Peter Beresford of Brunel University. The service was rated highly by all stakeholders, and PRO Disability was able to share its experience in developing Direct Payments with other areas at their conference in March 2006. Also in 2006 the Independent Living Co-ordinator's secondment ended and PRO Disability now employ a part time manager.

In December 2006, we were awarded the Tender with the Borough of Poole to provide a Direct Payments Support Service to all adults until December 2009.

Our support begins when an interest is expressed in Direct Payments. The majority of our referrals come from the Adult Service Office. We offer an initial consultation with a Direct Payments Support Officer to explain all aspects of the Direct Payments Scheme i.e. obligations, requirements and responsibilities.

For those who decide to take up a Direct Payment we offer a range of support depending on their individual needs. This can be support with:

- **The recruitment process; advertising and interviewing**
- **Writing job descriptions and contracts of employment**
- **Information and advice on becoming an employer and being a good employer**
- **A dedicated Payroll and Accounts service**
- **Managing the Tax and National Insurance responsibilities**
- **Assistance with managing Direct Payment money**

Although our service is tailored to their requirements, we always encourage where possible maximum independence and control.

For those who choose not to run their own Direct Payment, we offer the services of a financial holding account, where we will do everything for the person. This includes payroll payments, dealing with expenses and completing the cash account sheets.

PRO Disability has a long term plan to expand and diversify. This will include the possibility of making PRO Disability into a Centre of Independent Living, so we can continue to improve the quality of life of service users and carers.

For more information on Pro Disability please contact us on:

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