

Your Support Matters

Fairer Pay For PA's in Bury

May 2019



William Case Advocacy
Your Support Matters

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Acknowledgements

Your Support Matters would like to take this opportunity to thank the PAs and Individual Employers who have openly shared their opinions on rates of pay for PAs in Bury.

We would also like to thank our Campaign Co-ordinator, Katherine McDermott, who has facilitated this campaign and helped to compile the report, Heather Davidson for her on-going support and the Your Support Matters Team for their assistance.

We would also like to thank In-Control and Skills for Care for allowing us to use their research for part of our survey.

Introduction

In February 2019, we launched a campaign to help us achieve a better understanding of the varying rates of pay for PAs in Bury and undertake research into the thoughts and feelings of PA's and Individual Employers across Bury.

We have met with James Frith MP who was particularly keen to hear our concerns in relation to the seemingly differing rates of pay and why many PA's in Bury have either left the service or have moved to other boroughs in Greater Manchester. The survey ended in late March and this report people's concerns about disability support in the borough.

Executive Summary

Following lengthy discussions from PA's and Individual Employers in Bury, the report has highlighted a number of issues which we outline in the subsequent pages of the report. Below are some recommendations and proposals that Your Support Matters (YSM) would like to see implemented going forward:

- Standardisation of pay for all PA's in Bury and across GM, no matter the package of support individual employers receive
- Bury making full use of POET (Personal Outcome Evaluation Tool)
- Recruitment more PA's
- Training for new PA's including a thorough induction process for all PA's in Bury and GM.
- Reduce the process of setting up a personal budget with the help of Your Support Matters who know the process. Currently it is lengthy and stressful for parents and individual employers.
- Training for social workers – enhanced development of the issues affecting PA's, individual employers because currently social workers knowledge can be out of date.

William Case Churchill fellow of 2011
Chief Executive of Your support Matters CIC

Background to Your Support Matters

Your Support Matters was set up in 2017 by Will Case who was frustrated with the support system and how it treated people who needed support packages and assistance. With a combined Health and Social Care experience of over forty years, Your Support Matters (YSM) has been integral in advocating for better support packages for disabled and vulnerable people across Bury, as well as being a first point of call for many disabled people who require advice and assistance.

Committee members of Your Support Matters hold various positions on disability panels including Skills for Care and recently Will Case has been feeding into the recent Green Paper on Social Care from the Government, which will be released soon.

Background to the campaign

Throughout 2018 Your Support Matters received numerous complaints and comments from PA's and people in receipt of support about the poor rate of pay for PA's in Bury and the fact that a number of PA's had left individual employers to work in other boroughs in Greater Manchester. Here was the incentive to try and improve the current circumstances for PA's and for disabled people in Bury.

But the other reason for starting this campaign is because of the current care environment is changing with a movement away from people being in care homes to being supported in the home. This means that personalisation of care and the quality of that support is paramount to enabling disabled people live independent lives and to flourish as they should, as well as recognising the importance of having well trained and well paid staff.

Political considerations and background

The Care Act states that the personal budget must be an amount that is the cost to the Local Authority of meeting a person's needs¹. In establishing the "*the cost to the Local Authority*" consideration should therefore be given to local market intelligence and costs of local quality provision to ensure that the personal budget reflects local market conditions and that appropriate support that meets the needs can be obtained for the amount of the specified budget.

From our research we have seen that Bury Council have lowered the hourly rate from 2014 for PA pay from £11.60 to £8.21 in 2018/2019². The hourly rate has stagnated since 2014 and this has seen the number of PA's leave their support roles increase year on year since the wage

¹ Care and Support Statutory Guidance Issued under the Care Act of 2014, Department of Health and Social Care

² www.bbc.co.uk/news/health-37307856

stagnation. More worrying is that the PA's are leaving the borough and working in other boroughs of Greater Manchester, leaving vulnerable people without support or alternative methods of help. PA's are deciding to work in care homes because the pay is better; This actually goes against the movement of personalisation and the social model of disability as it increases the likelihood of disabled people going into care homes *if* there's not enough PA support in the home.

It is also incredibly important that Bury are benchmarking themselves against other local authorities in this area, because then they can see if they are providing the same level of support or better than other regions, especially in terms of pay and quality standards.

POET is an essential tool to be used by all Local Authorities in England and Wales and was developed by In-Control and Lancaster University³. If it is not already being used by Bury MBC (as you were previously paying into it in 2010) it would be a way to embed person-centred thinking and Care Act guidelines into already established processes, which would improve the service provide it to those in receipts of personal budgets and personal assistance.

About the report

This campaign and the subsequent report has been completely un-funded and without any external assistance or payment. Resources have been limited and therefore our reach has been limited. In an ideal situation we would've held round tables, focus groups and spent more time targeting individuals to gather more qualitative research. Also with additional funding we would've released the report in different formats such as easy-read but this is impossible for us to do due to lack of resources.

Definitions

For the purposes of ease and to help understand the contents of the report better, below are list of definitions to some abbreviations that we have used throughout the report and survey:

NMW – National Minimum Wage

PA - Personal Assistant (in relation to a disabled person)

IE - Individual Employer (in relation to the disabled person requiring support)

GM – Greater Manchester

³ Personal Outcomes Evaluation Tool for Adults, Report into the Care Act and Wellbeing 2017, page 1-4

Section One: Experiences of PA's in Bury

For both surveys to PA's and Individual Employers we used a qualitative and quantitative research methods, including a survey via survey monkey which was sent to all PA's and Individual Employers in Bury. The results have been separated between PA's in Section 1 and Section 2 for Individual Employers so that the results are clearly defined and the results aren't confused or muddled.

We have written this report into sections to fully illustrate the thoughts and opinions experiences from personal assistants to Individual Employers to members of their family and people who have supported this campaign.

The survey was sent to the following places in the hope of a broader reach:

Bury Health Watch

Bury 2Gether – formerly known as Bury Parents Forum

Greater Manchester Coalition of Disabled People

North West Training Development and Pathways

Spectrum of Possibilities

To ensure anonymity all personal responses have been marked as person A and B and so forth as we're. There was issues with PA's and Individual Employers coming forward in case we named and shamed them, disclosed their identities to the Local Authority and therefore potentially lose their job.

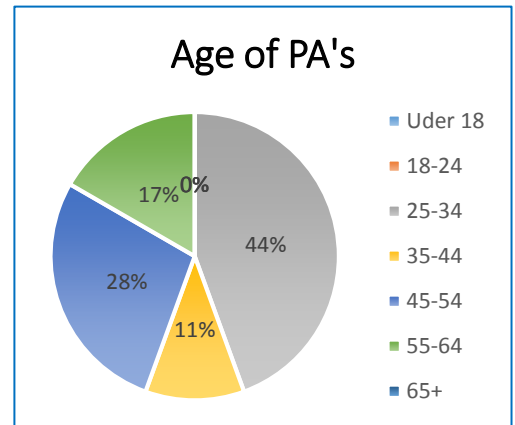
We had a total of eighteen responses from PA's. The survey allowed the respondents to provide further information and give more in depth opinions if they wanted to. From the initial email we sent out in February, we received a 65% response rate with six people coming forward to provide further information and more in depth responses.

The response rate for both surveys was high from our initial email but disappointing from our further engagement with other groups.

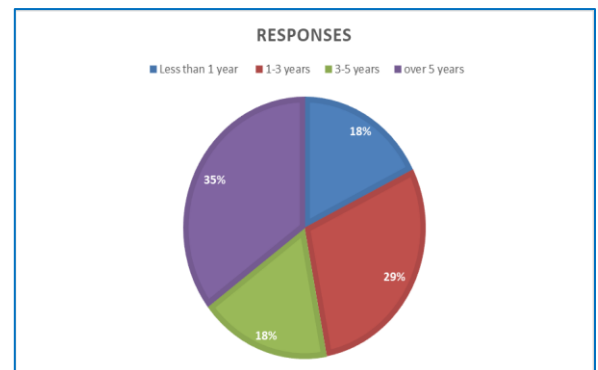
It is also worth pointing out that the results of the survey are only a snapshot of PA's concerns and are in no way representative of ALL their concerns and of course this report only reflects those PA's in Bury not the whole of GM. However, this should in no way undermine the issues raised in this report and the concerns that we have discovered.

Result from the survey

Our findings have showed that they are variations within the age ranges of people working as PA's from 25-64 with the most being in age range of 25-34 at 44.4%. The second highest was a surprise was 45-54 at 28% - the reason we say this is because most PA's are traditionally younger (because younger people prefer younger PA's) and therefore this result suggests that there is a move towards more older people being employed and older people accessing personal budgets. But also another reason for the older age range being high is due to parents providing support too.

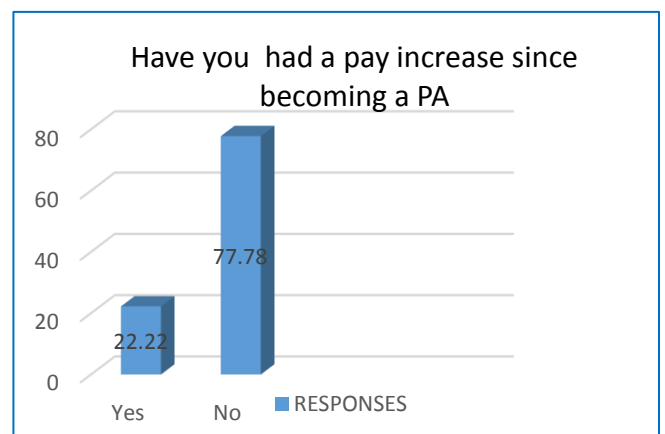


Our second question was how long people had been PA's. We asked this question to see how the breadth of the experience and knowledge of the Health and Social Care system in Bury and beyond.



A rather worryingly trend is that back in 2012 the NMW was £6.19 and PA's in Bury were paid £8. The NMW is now £8.21 and PA wages have only gone up by 21p since then.

The discontent felt by PA's in Bury and the reason for carrying out this campaign has been due to the lack of pay increases (which we acknowledge is felt right across Local Government)

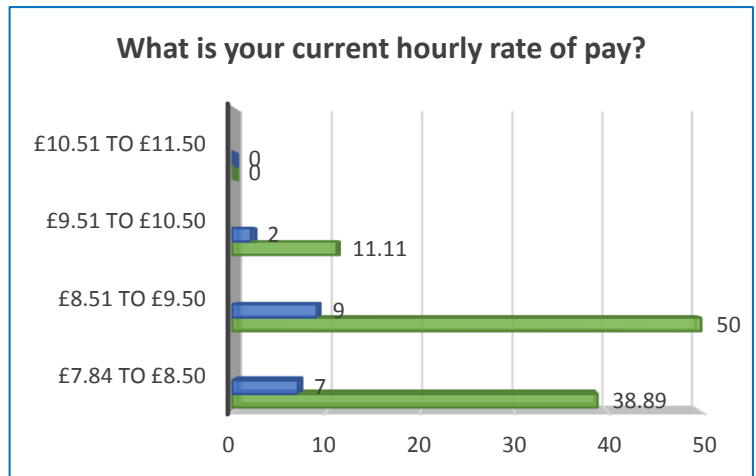


The hourly rates of pay for PA's in Bury appear to be average of however it doesn't reflect the reality of what PA's receive.

As part of our research, a representative from Bury Council confirmed that they pay £9.97 per hour for PA's supporting someone on a personalised budget, which we were grateful to her responding to us promptly and efficiently.

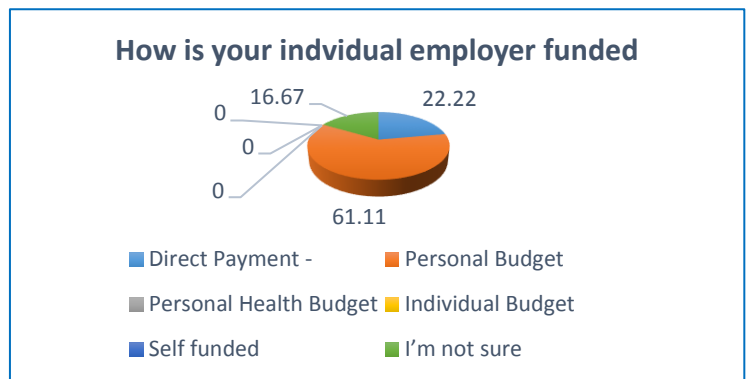
But the trend as shown by the results on the right, show a different story and therefore has to be properly assessed.

We offer some recommendations on page 16 of this report.



It is worth noting that the pay rates for PA's follow the same regional patterns as the rest of the Adult Social Care sector, with a general North/South divide. PA's in London and the Southern regions were paid more than those in the North. ⁴

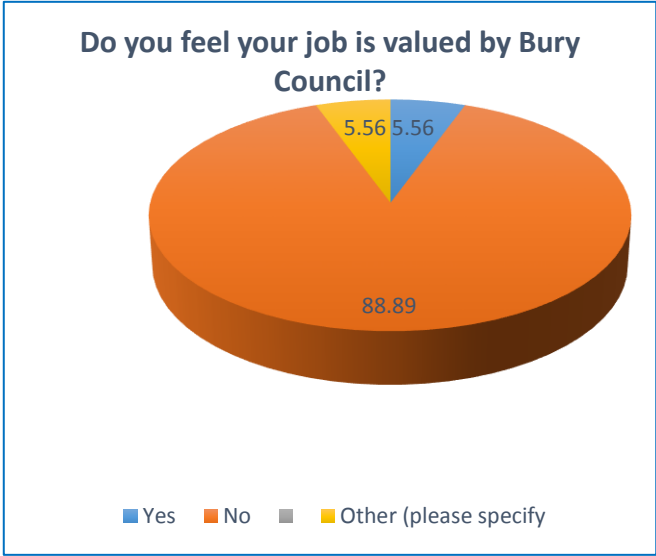
We asked this question because PA's need to know whether there's regular and accurate funds to be able to afford the PA. We wanted to know whether anyone was funded by the old system of a Direct Payment and more often than not, PA's funded via a Personal Health Budget are paid more.



PA's need to ensure that have a fixed and permanent set number of hours per week and that their roles are appropriately funded to ensure that they're going to get paid.

⁴ Skills for Care Survey report, 2019

Unsurprisingly morale amongst PA's is low partly because of the lack value shown by the Bury Council. Respondents commented the lack of communication they've had since becoming a PA (which you can read more about below) but also because of the poor wage, the lack of opportunity to either progress and training opportunities.



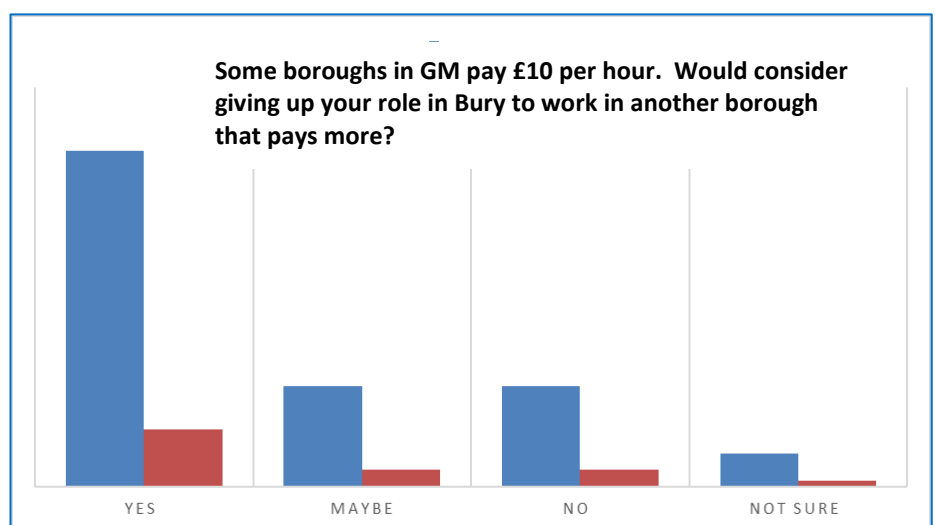
Comment Focus

Person X added a comment that they had not had any contact with the council since becoming employed as a PA either from the social workers or for from the team who had recommended him to the family.

“ I have had no contact with the council since becoming a PA ”

It highlights a disconnect between the PA's and the council, that their work in helping vulnerable people is undervalued and that the social workers aren't interested in building up a professional relationship with the PA's. Is it any wonder then, that PA's feel undervalued?

This question raised the most concerns for PA's and for IE's and confirmed to us that there is a trend towards more PA's wanting to stop their PA work in Bury and work in a borough that pays more. Oldham was cited as being the most attractive proposition for many PA's as it is closest to where they lived.



Comment Focus

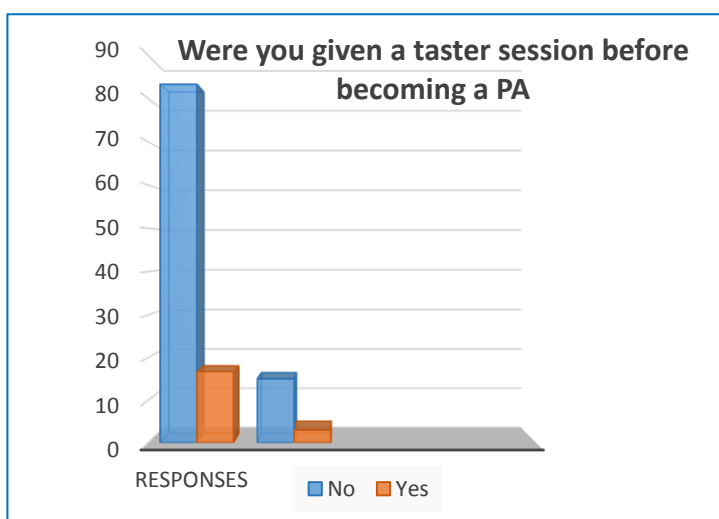
Person Y stated that they already helped another IE in Oldham as a PA and was tempted to take on more hours with them and reduce their hours with the IE in Bury.

There is a worrying trend that we have highlighted that suggests more PA's are prepared to leave their jobs in Bury, which will result in disabled people struggling to recruit help.

“ Pay in Oldham is £3 per hour more than in Bury ”

Rather worryingly only one person said that they had received a taster session before becoming a PA. Only one person said they had which was in Oldham, but 17 PA's had no session offered.

Taster Sessions are necessary for helping PA's deal with certain social situations, such as being in a restaurant or another social situation. Sometimes PA's can feel overwhelmed which could be resolved or limited. We provide read our recommendations at the end of this report.



Further Comments

The last question on the survey was for respondents to give more in-depth responses and to provide further information.

Each one of them was focussed on PA pay and the changes they'd like to see, namely increasing the level of expertise necessary and also rewarding hard work for a job that is highly responsible, for instance:

“ Anyone who works with a vulnerable person should be given a pay review ”

(Person A – March 2019)

One respondent also raised the issue of how some PA's aren't taking holidays because of a lack of cover:

“I don't get paid for bank holidays and am unable to take a break/holidays as Social Services refuse to cover me with an agency” (Person B – March 2019)

This poses some questions about PA morale, the differences between some conditions and how some PA's terms and conditions of employment differ from one PA to the next. At present it is a mind-field and confusing.

There was also a further comment about how some PA's are paid more for the weekend, whilst others aren't:

“Weekend staff get paid £10phr and I feel it should be the same as I do more in the week” (Person C – March 2019)

As already highlighted in the previous comment, the current PA pay system (and how it's calculated) is confusing and seems to be unworkable. Where some PA's are unable to take a break will only lower the morale felt amongst the workforce.

Section two: the Experiences of Individual Employers (IE's) living within Bury

Rather disappointingly was the low response rate to this particular survey. Only 8 Individual Employers answered and completed the survey in full despite the survey being distributed widely, beyond our own network of PA's that we know.

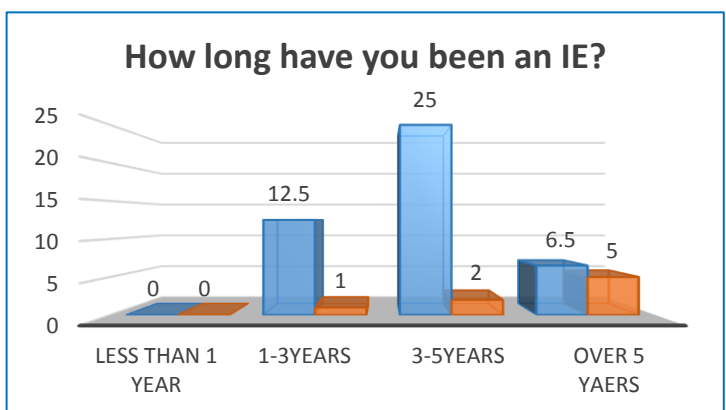
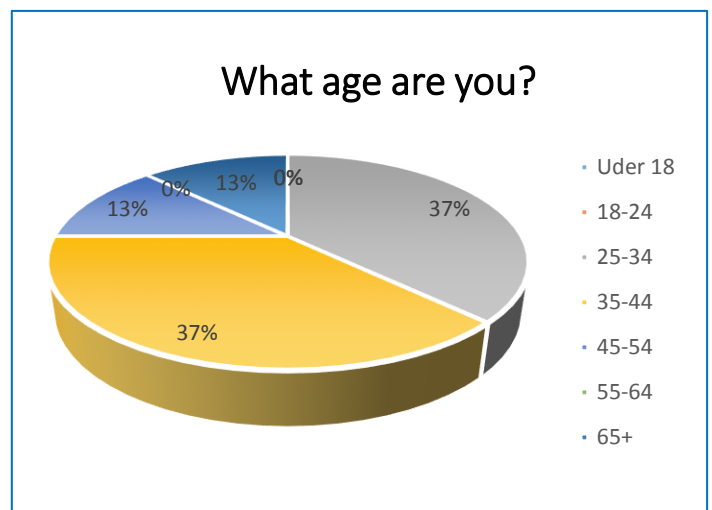
Some of the reasons for the low response rate included lack of time and also a deep suspicion that by speaking out or speaking truthfully and expressing their concerns that their personal budget would be stopped by Bury council.

Survey Results

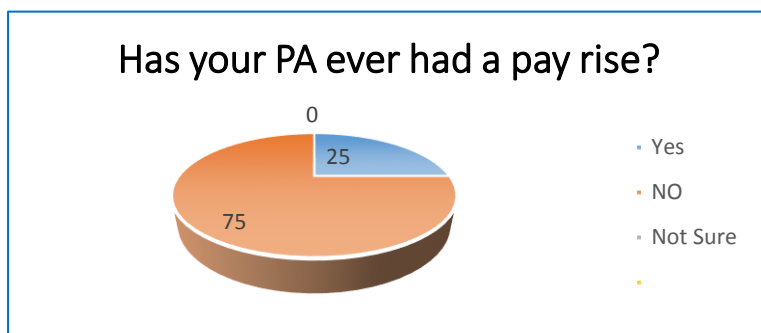
There is now a broader range of IE's now from 25-65 which suggests that more people are accessing personalised support amongst the older age group. Traditionally older people have been expected to go into nursing homes, so there is upward trend of people choosing to stay at home.

A trend we have identified is that children can now access personal budgets but they're not legally responsible for them. The child is not at the legal age to directly employ their own staff so we have considered that a family member or a legal guardian has taken on this responsibility. As reflected within our findings and comments within this section, it is important that we highlight this information as a true representation of data.

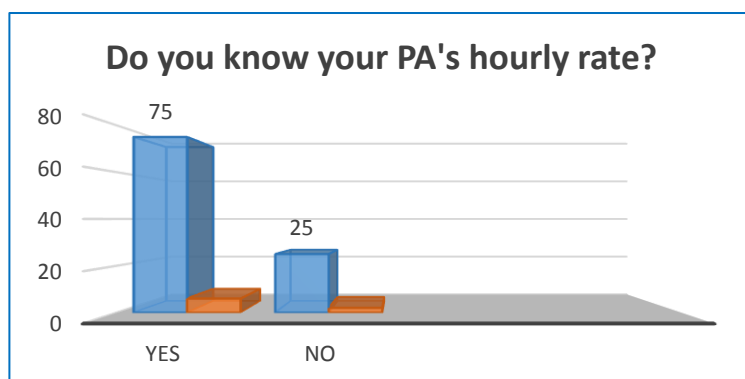
This is a useful question to ask because it will give us an indication of how long they have been in receipt of support and what kind of support they have likely to have received.



Those who answered 'yes' to this had to arrange this themselves rather than it being agreed to by the council.

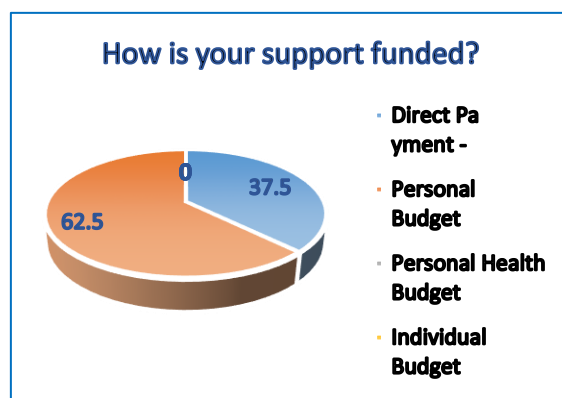


This question was asked because some of the respondents have learning difficulties and receive help with the budget, especially some of the younger respondents who are likely to be cared for by their parents and support workers.



Please note this data was in putted into the survey before April 1st 2019 and we have taken into account the April changes of National Living wage now set at £8.21

We asked this question because members of our committee know that some IE's aren't being offered all the options of funding.

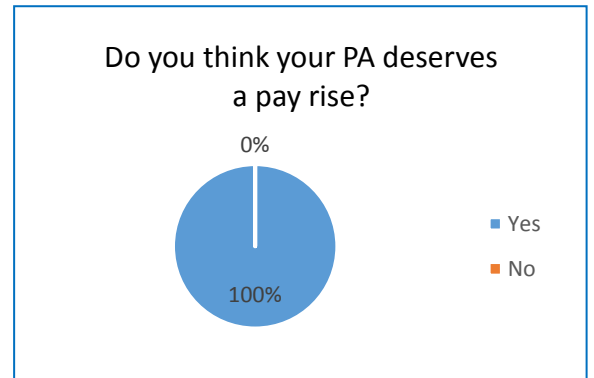


Some people are only being offered a pre-paid card as the only option for paying for their support but also please refer back to page 8.

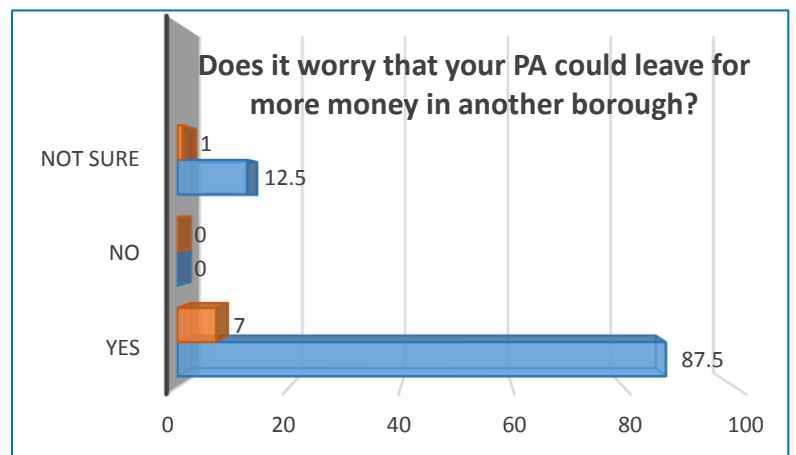
There are other reasons for asking this question: it's a good indication of whether people are in control of their budgets and know the ins and outs of their support plan. Some may have chosen not to know this information, which is fine, especially if someone else is managing the budget on their behalf.

Are people actually being told every part of their budget? Have they been supported to make an informed decision around their support, because in our experience of supporting disabled people in the home and handling advocacy case work, some people haven't and resulting in them being unaware of the PA hourly pay.

The single biggest issue was the fact IE's are unable to give their PA a pay rise. The responders each said that they wanted to pay their PA more for the job that they did as a way of making them feel valued but that they were unable to do this.



For many of our respondents, the 2nd biggest worry for them is that there's a threat their PA will just stop providing support and work in another borough. This simply can't be acceptable considering their vulnerability and stress that they already experience on a day-to-day basis.



FURTHER COMMENTS

Question 8 was open ended for further and more in-depth comments which were more varied and far-ranging than in the PA survey but a number of the responses brought up issues that concerned us.

These responses came from the Individual Employer and where necessary, from the family member looking after their child or person who had to fill it out on the IE's behalf.

One of the issues that was raised was that due to the low pay that PA's receive there is a perception that it's only for unskilled people and is menial and for people to earn a bit of extra cash to supplement their income. This means that there is often a high turnover of staff, not valued and is generally poorly paid.

People who are vulnerable need familiarity to enable them to build up relationships with their support workers and PA's who aren't just there to make the tea, but to get to know the disabled person and to know about their needs, medical history etc. It's a highly responsible

job but is often considered unskilled and menial, so instead vulnerable people experience a lot of disruption and they don't know if their PA will even turn up to work:

“I want to employ qualified and experienced workers but the rate doesn't reflect this. Often it only appeals to students and casual workers. They often leave and it's disruptive for young people”

(Person C – March 2019)

The impact of other boroughs paying more for PA's and the threats of their PA's leaving has a physical toll on those people who receive support. Sometimes they manifest into medical problems and complications which are unacceptable:

“It causes me anxiety all the time and this gives me seizures. I've asked for £10 per hour but my Social Worker wouldn't allow it”

(Person A – March 2019)

Then there are other effects of low PA pay in Bury where they leave vulnerable people without. The anonymous comments brought up the fact that more and more PA's don't turn up for shifts and this leaves people without support or help:

“People aren't coming into work which means that there are people waiting for a fast turnover of staff ”

(Person D – March 2019)

There doesn't appear to be an appropriate or reliable system that supports a vulnerable person when a PA fails to attend a shift and therefore creates stress.

PRE-PAID CARDS

We never asked people how they received their budget but respondents disclosed to us informally about how they did and a worrying trend was that many were still using pre-payment cards.

Experts in the field of Health & Social Care and Individual Employers highlighted the problems of choice and flexibility they may have faced personally or with their clients, for example not being able to bank hours for times of crisis and having days deducted at the end of the year without their knowledge while on prepaid cards.

In 2017 the Independent Living Strategy Group (ILSG) made up of people living independently, organisations and activists that support the movement for independent living chaired by Baroness Jane Campbell, conducted research based around a freedom of information request to Local Authorities after concerns were raised about the use of prepaid cards. We do not know if Bury was involved in this research, but we thought it was important to highlight the statistics found⁵

During this research ILSG found 46% of local Authorities (that responded) used payment cards. In the 69 areas that said they used prepayment cards, 15% of personal budgets were managed this way. The research found that these cards often come with many restrictions and monitoring, for example specifying care providers, limiting or not allowing cash withdrawals and listing every activity or transaction made for more in depth information please see page 28-29 of ILSG report.

If these restrictions are placed on card and then ultimately on people's budgets it goes against the guidance in the Care Act which states pre-paid cards, *"Can be a good option for some people using direct payments, but must not be used to constrain choice or be only available for use with a restricted list of providers"*.

It also adds *"it is important where a prepaid card system is used, the person is still free to exercise choice and control. For example, there should not be blanket restrictions on cash withdrawal rules from prepaid cards which could limit choice and control"*.

The main concern raised to us was that those on prepaid cards **had not been told the other options available to them or what the implications were of using a prepaid card**. If this advice has not been given it would go against the guidance in the Care Act by stopping people having agency over how their funds are held and used to meet their desired outcomes.

The decision to use the prepaid card must be that of the disabled person, so that they have come to by themselves in a way that clearly lays out all possible budget management options and implications in a person-centred way.

Pre-payment cards were said to be direct payments by all but 2 respondents. Many consider this not to be a true direct payment as those in receipt do not have an agency, choice or control of the money they are allocated. This goes against not only the Care Act but the original ethos of the independent living movement and personalisation agenda.

In the future, Your Support Matters was to continue research into PA pay and personal budgets it would explore how individual employers chose the method they received their budget and how Greater Manchester uses prepaid cards. **There are many cost implications of prepaid**

⁵ Payment Cards in Adult Social Care, A National Overview 2017, Independent Living Strategy Group

cards. On average to set up a card was £66.28 and there were many running costs that could not be mirrored with other options and there are other costs associated with using them which could potentially be costing the council more money and the person using the card more money than necessary.

Conclusions

Within this report, there has been an underlying uncertainty of frustration and emotion from both personal assistants and individual employers across Bury.

There is stress felt by personal assistants who maybe working part time in the Bury area then understandably switching to other areas within greater Manchester to supplement their earnings. On top of this personal assistants are feeling frustrated and disconnected from the decision makers and the social workers.

PA's get to choose who they work for just as IE's choose who they want to help them, but both of them are rarely consulted with by their local authority and PA's are offered no terms of employment or training and there's no opportunity for advancement or being mentored. Understandably, PA's don't feel valued and this is a recipe for an unhappy workforce and will want to leave and work for another borough.

We now turn to the experiences and frustrations of the individual employers living within the Bury area who have highlighted their frustrations of not knowing where to turn for the right support and knowledge.

As highlighted elsewhere in this report by various IE's, there is always that fear of a personal assistant choosing to go and work in another borough of Greater Manchester for more pay and recognition leaving the individual and family's with the deep anxiety and dread that their PA may choose on any day to leave. This has been a massive impact on individuals, putting them back to square one with no PA's in place to meet their needs.

It's also deeply worrying and wrong for individual employers to be expected to negotiate an increase in their personal budgets to cover any pay increase for their PA's. This adds to the stress from the threat and possibility that their request could be rejected by the local authority decision makers. This all goes against having a budget that is meant to enhance the quality of life for a disabled person or someone who requires support that has choice and control over their own lives.

Recommendations and Proposals

Problem	Recommendation
Pay is lower than other boroughs in GM	Make it £10 per hour like Oldham
People across GM are on different rates for the same job	Standardise PA pay across GM for those without complicated or enhanced needs
PA's don't turn up for shifts and there is a high turnover of staff	Introduce guidelines that imposes a 48hr cancellation policy so that the IE can find a replacement. This should be council wide policy not just in Bury but across GM.
PA's aren't paid a yearly increase or pay review	Introduce a loyalty payment for those people who are PA's in Bury for a minimum of 2 yrs
PA's have no contact with the Council after they've agreed to help an IE	Introduce all PA's with a local buddy system that means that PA's have support from more experienced PA's and the local authority nominates them. Social Workers should be made aware of who is working in Bury as a PA so that they can recommend them to new IE's and people in receipt of personal budgets.
PA's not received an induction	Introduce an induction scheme/buddy up scheme for new PA's. Introduce quarterly meets with PA's and their Individual Employers to check that everything is okay
No annual pay review for PA's	Introduce a long service award for PA's across GM.
IE's have to negotiate pay increases which can be stressful	This should be done by the social worker or brokerage service that can work on behalf of the Bury council
PA fluctuates depending on council budgets	Ring Fence payments to disabled and vulnerable people in Bury so that their budgets and PA pay is protected.
Further Proposals	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Create an information hub on the council website about the Skills for Care information resources and tools such as contracts of employments etc – not just for PA's and IE's but social care professionals etc. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bury Council should allow IE's and families requiring support for a disabled relative to be able to advertise for PA support in the home, without this having to come out of the individual budget 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Social Workers and professionals should be given a refresher course on personalisation of social care which Your Support Matters could facilitate. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Taster Sessions for new PA's should include: dealing with challenging situations and conversations. The importance of not patronising disabled people, the need to help and offer assistance even when its' not asked. Dealing with everyday situations. 	
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Bury MBC should ensure that they are making full use of POET to ensure that the your policies meet the needs of the people living and requiring support in the borough, transparency and accountability within the Adult Services and Care sector in Bury. 	

Final Thoughts

Your Support Matters understand that local budgets are tight and have been hit hard by austerity, but it's incredibly concerning that PA's are leaving vulnerable people for more money in another borough.

As an organisation we want to work with the local authority to provide good quality personal assistants in Bury, who are also residents in Bury and choose to work in their home town rather than travel to other boroughs. We must acknowledge the dedication and hard work that PAs demonstrate when supporting disabled people, and I am pleased the government has recognised the shortage in Health and Social Care.

Disabled people in GM have been the catalyst for change for many campaigns over the years and there is an opportunity to include them to improve your policies and support for disabled people across Bury as well as for the assistants who work for them.

But there is also a local economic incentive for improving the personal assistants pay and for helping disabled people in Bury; it will help retain money in the local area, improve employment figures and therefore increase the investment from local residents. This is vital for the local community, that talented people are working in the borough and disabled people are independent and spending their money in the local area.

We should never forget that disabled people over many years fought to live in the community with their own support and choose how they want to live and work. Personalisation allows disabled people to fulfil these wishes with the right support. In my opinion, personal assistants enhance the true value of Health and Social Care and they have been overlooked by the general public and successive national and local governments over the past few decades.

For more information on Your Support Matters log on to:

www.yoursupportmatters.com

Tel: 01706 960741

Will Case – CEO of Your Support Matters