



Doncaster Council

Report

Date: 11th April 2019

To the Chair and Members of the
AUDIT COMMITTEE

DIRECT PAYMENTS - INTERNAL AUDIT FOLLOW UP REPORT

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1. This report represents the results of an audit follow up review of the Direct Payments audit undertaken in 2017/18 and a further follow up undertaken in 2018/19. The initial audit gave a limited assurance opinion and a follow-up review was agreed with Adult Social Care and Support and Audit Committee requested an update on progress being made in this area following progress reported at October 2018 Audit Committee. This report also updates members on progress on the recovery of overpayments identified in a further audit report from 2015/16.
2. Issues noted through the review (in summary) include:
 - Further progress in addressing the Internal Audit (IA) actions from the review. Management support and buy-in has continued to be very forthcoming
 - Good progress in implementing management actions captured within their Rapid Improvement Plan (RIP) has also been made
 - Outcomes achieved from work completed include a more focussed and consistent approach and strength based support plans,
 - Further actions required to satisfy the recommendations in the audit review are set out in **Appendix A** and all demonstrate progress against every action
 - A “limited opinion” was given in the recent audit report and this area is also included in the Council’s Annual Governance Statement (AGS). Due to the progress made in progressing these outstanding actions, this area has been marked as completed in the AGS for 2018/19.

EXEMPT REPORT

3. This report is not exempt.

RECOMMENDATIONS

4. The Audit Committee is asked to note the contents of the report, the actions taken and any outstanding actions.

WHAT DOES THIS MEAN FOR THE CITIZENS OF DONCASTER?

5. The introduction of the Care Act (2014) states that everyone eligible for on-going council funded support receives this as a personal budget. Direct payments are the main way of taking a personal budget and good quality information and advice must be available to provide genuine and maximum choice and control so that people who use services and carers are given information about options for the management of their personal budgets, including support through a trust, voluntary or other organisation. Ensuring that the service is fit for purpose and operating effectively is critical to supporting adult social care and ensuring that in providing this service, the Council complies with the Care Act and safeguards vulnerable citizens.

RECOVERY OF DIRECT PAYMENT DEBTS

6. An audit was carried out in 2015/16 which identified major problems with the overpayment of direct payments. Subsequently the Direct Payments audit function was moved to be part of the Profession Business Support team within Corporate Resources. This team have proved to be highly successful in clearing the backlog of audit of direct payments and then identifying and recovering any overpayments.
7. Overpayments arise for a number of reasons, these include:
 - final balances, where care needs have ended and there is a remaining balance
 - unpaid service user contribution, where the service user should have been contributing to the care costs
 - No bank statements provided, where the Council cannot establish how the service users have spent the budget
 - misuse of the budget on items / services not meeting specified care needs
 - excess balance, where service users have not fully used the budget
8. As at March 2019 the total debt raised figure identified for direct payments since their commencement was £5.2m of which £3.8m has been repaid and payment plans have been set up for £190k. The total remaining balance outstanding is

£703k. In total £611k has been written off against the debt raised. The write off amount is 12% of the total debt which has been raised.

Date	Cumulative Debt Raised	Cumulative Paid	Cumulative Written off	Cumulative Outstanding Balance
As at Sept 15	£922,211.13	£291,233.18	£0.00	£630,977.95
As at Jan 18	£3,807,152.42	£2,492,552.61	£423,342.58	£891,257.23
As at Sept 18	£4,525,319.18	£3,151,350.63	£425,124.20	£948,844.35
As at Mar 19	£5,154,807.98	£3,840,434.98	£611,672.16	£702,700.84

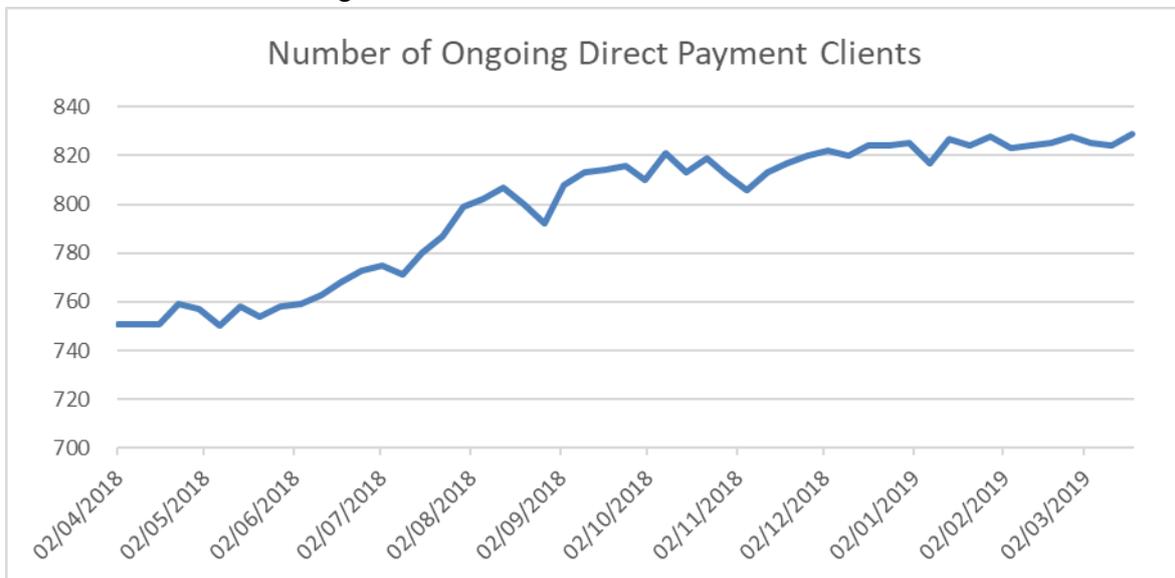
9. As informed at the October Audit Committee, the direct payment audit team are continuing to work on auditing and raising debtor accounts for direct payments where necessary. They are currently completing an audit after the first 8 weeks of the direct payment starting which will help to identify any key issues early. Additional work they are completing is to review the older outstanding debts to assess whether they are collectable and also review whether action has been taken following the outcome of the Direct Payment Financial Monitoring Reviews.
10. Accounts totalling £332,975.29 are currently with Legal Services; this includes 21 cases although two cases have only recently been referred.
11. One workstream which is looking at the outcome following a Direct Payment Financial Monitoring review has currently looked at 130 cases and as a result of action being taken by the team, they have identified a weekly reduction of £5,202.07 which is an annual saving of £270,507.64. The majority of the scenarios are as follows:
 - Direct Payments that are in place are no longer required,
 - A reduction in the care package after identifying excess balances,
 - Care had ended as identified from an audit but payments had continued as the service agreement had not been ended.
12. Although the majority of the care packages reviewed have decreased, some however have increased (4 cases) due to:
 - Low balances – the actual spend was more than the package, which may have been due to incorrectly calculated costings or the hourly rate may have increased.
 - Over package, the costs may have been calculated incorrectly or the hourly rate may have increased.
13. 15 cases have been identified that do not appear to have had any action / issues addressed issues following a Direct Payment Financial Monitoring Review and are

therefore awaiting prioritisation. Additionally, further work has yet to commence on the cases where concerns have been made following a review.

14. Queries were raised during the October 2018 Audit Committee around the income from the outstanding debt. The income is recognised in the council's accounts on the relevant budget code in the year in which a debtor account is raised, whether or not the invoice has been paid. Any cash the council collects just reduces the outstanding debtor balances and doesn't bring more income to the budget code, as they have already accounted for this income in the year in which the debtor account was raised. A provision for bad debt is created for any outstanding debt older than 3 years and is charged to the budget code. The debt is being treated as if the debt has been written off, whereas in practice, we will still continue to recover the debt.

UPTAKE OF DIRECT PAYMENTS

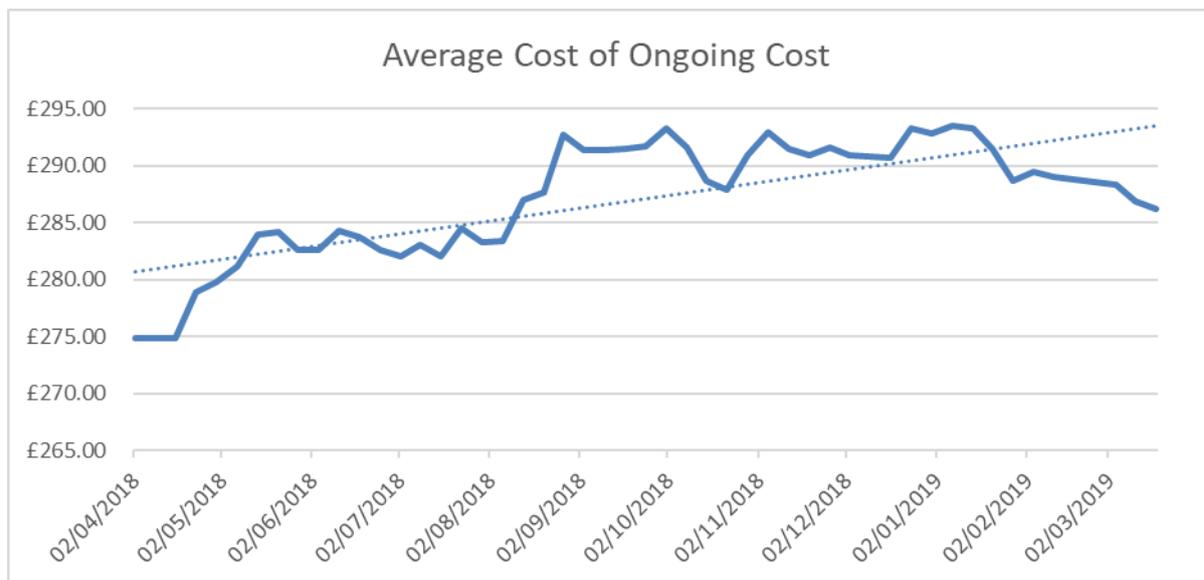
15. The table below shows that between April 1st 2018 and 18th March 2019 there has been an increase in the number of ongoing Direct Payment packages of 78 from 751 to 829. In October 2018 Direct Payment Panel was introduced and during the 5 and a half month period to 18th March 2019 the number of ongoing packages increased by 19 (3.5 per month). In the previous 6 months from 1st April 2018 to 30th September 2018 the increase in ongoing packages was 59 (9.8 per month). This is positive and in line with the policy to increase numbers of Direct Payments but this is now being done in a more controlled manner.



16. The table below shows the average weekly costs of Direct Payment packages has risen from £274.84 at 2nd April 2018 to £286.19 as at 18th March 2019. The below averages do not include one-off Direct Payments. When the Direct Payment panel came into effect 1st October 2018 the average weekly cost of a package

was £293.30 and that figure has not been breached in any week from that point until the last reported figure at 18th March 2019.

17. Work to identify the last recorded adult social care review of each of the current ongoing clients as well as the top 20 costliest packages was completed on the 21st March 2019 and provided to the service (Adult Social Care) for any necessary review procedures to begin.



18. As reported previously, since October 2018 all new Direct Payments are required to be presented at risk panel before being authorised. Whilst the number of people taking a Direct Payment has continued to increase as projected, the spend on direct payments has also continued to increase. This could be for a number of reasons including care package increases, higher costs packages being needed and lack of availability of care commissioned through the CCaSH contract. Work is ongoing with colleagues in commissioning to look at direct payment care packages and the Direct Payment operational lead is about to commence a piece of work with commissioning to stimulate the Direct Payment market in response to the gaps identified through the Direct Payment cases coming to risk panel for authorisation.
19. Appendix C provides some background on the direct payment process and management response to the internal audit report in March 2018 taken from the October 2018 Audit Committee Report..

RECAP OF KEY ISSUES RAISED AT THE MARCH 2018 INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT

20. 24 audit recommendations were raised as part of the last audit, these were split as follows:

No. Raised	Major	Significant	Moderate
24	9	14	1

21. Key Conclusions / improvement areas highlighted included:
- Insufficient management focus leading to inconsistent processes, practices, and procedures. The drive and focus has been on increasing direct payment numbers without ensuring that adequate knowledge and expertise is in place to govern and manage these.
 - A lack of responsibility within Adult Social Care of the financial implications once a direct payment had been set up with not all staff obtaining any relevant information which may need to be taken into account when conducting assessments or reviews.
 - There was a backlog of care plan reviews.
 - The Resource Allocation System (RAS), which guides the social care worker in making a decision about resource required to meet needs, had not been reviewed.
 - A major concern previously raised was that Direct Payment audits were overdue and therefore it was unclear if people were spending their direct payment allocation as agreed. Following the transfer of this team to the Professional Business Support Team, these direct payment audits are now well established and the overpayment position is continuously managed and monitored. The direct payment audits identify excess balances, missing bank statements, shortfall of client contribution and misspends. The audit process is much more streamlined and debtor accounts are raised where required.
 - There was minimal benchmarking against other authorities.
 - Prepayment cards still required rolling out to all service users.
22. Personal budgets and direct payments was acknowledged by management during the March 2018 audit as an area which needs step improvement over its governance and control arrangements and a Program Management Team was established to this end.

ACTION TAKEN BY MANAGEMENT AS AT MARCH 2019 FOLLOWING INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT MARCH 2018

23. The current status of recommendations and their status is detailed in the table below:

Status	Major	Significant	Moderate	Total
No. Raised	9	14	1	24
No. Completed (as at March 2019)	5	13	1	19

No. Outstanding and in progress as at October 2018	5	5	1	11
No. Outstanding and in progress as at March 2019	4	1	0	5
Raised October 2018 and outstanding	1	0	0	1

24. 19 out of the original 24 recommendations have been completed, however 5 remain outstanding. These figures give a positive reflection of the work carried out in this area, as all actions are in progress with clear plans in place for the completion of all the remaining actions. A further action has been raised following the internal audit follow up completed in October 2018.
25. The key outstanding actions include (**See Appendix A** which details the outstanding actions):
- Procedures need updating and disseminating to all staff,
 - Review of care plans need to be up to date to ensure service users have the most appropriate care needs,
 - Benchmarking needs to be completed to assess the Councils overall performance and
 - Direct payment debt management needs embedding into the processes.
26. Direct Payments have been a key priority for Doncaster Council for a number of years, little progress had previously been made embedding them within a strengths based social care assessment process has been achieved. This was due to a number of factors including;
- A clear lack of senior leadership
 - The Direct Payment policy, procedure and guidance being inconsistent
 - Lack of staff buy in to using Direct Payments
27. Consequently, two internal audits have been undertaken, both of which led to a series of recommendations being produced which required urgent actions. However, despite attempts to progress the implementation of the recommendations, limited progress was being made until the newly appointed Head of Service commenced in post in June 2018.
28. Debbie Crohn (Head of Service Adult Social Care and Support) continues to be the nominated person for Direct Payments and has identified Direct Payment champions within each of the Locality Teams and is in the process of further developing our Community Led Support Model which takes a strengths based approach.

29. A Business Change Lead with extensive experience of Direct Payments continues to work alongside Debbie Crohn to ensure a Direct Payment process is developed which is fit for purpose and Audit compliant. A robust rapid improvement project (RIP) plan was produced in response to the outstanding audit recommendations. The RIP focused on the following areas;
- End to end review of the Direct Payment process
 - Identification and refresher training for staff on Direct Payments
 - Embedding of strength based and outcome based assessments and conversations
 - Review of the Resource Allocation System
 - Increasing the number of service users in receipt of a Direct Payment enabling service users to have control over care which meets their care needs
30. The RIP action plan was monitored on the Council's performance management system. This has now been handed over to the Head of Service Adult Social Care and Support and any outstanding actions are being progressed. As stated above the outstanding actions are included within Appendix A.as
31. Key actions completed prior to October 2018 include;
- Head of Service for Adult Social Care and Support identified as overall Lead for Direct Payments,
 - Identification of a business change lead to support the implementation of the internal audit recommendations,
 - A revised Direct Payment Agreement has been sent out to all Direct Payment recipients,
 - Training for frontline staff has been delivered on the correct use of Direct Payments,
 - Direct Payment Card Issuing process developed and operational across the Borough,
 - All new Direct Payments and Managed Accounts are issued a pre-payment cards and will not receive a Direct Payment through their own bank account,
 - Quality Assurance is routinely undertaken to ensure staff are working appropriately and a consistent approach is followed by all staff,
 - Terms of Reference for the Resource Allocation System (RAS) Panel are in place,
 - RAS Panel Approval decisions process in place,
 - A process has been established to share debtor information with frontline staff in order to help in the decision making processes taking place at reviews and assessments,
 - Regular case audits are now completed by Advanced Practitioners to look at the quality of support plans,
 - Employment checks are part of the Direct Payment Procedures,

- From October 2018 all Direct Payment requests will be authorised by the risk panel for a 3 month period to quality assure the policy and procedure where the care plan cost exceeds the RAS.
32. Key actions completed between October 2018 and March 2019 include (shown in Appendix B);
- All new direct payment support plans are being taken to the risk panel and are being reviewed to ensure that they are being completed appropriately and clearly states how it should be spent. This will help when reviews are undertaken.
 - Nominated persons guidance has been updated as part of the direct payment policy.
 - A contractor has now been commissioned to provide a direct payment support service on behalf of the Council, which includes setting up direct payments and / or recruiting and employing staff.
 - Frequency payments have been reviewed and options are available within the new system which will replace Carefirst.
33. All of the outstanding actions are in progress and suitable actions are in place to be able to implement these. The key outstanding actions are summarised below and detailed in **Appendix A**:
- Development and training of Direct Payment procedures; the policy and guidance has been approved and clear documented procedures will follow to ensure a consistent approach,
 - Regional and national benchmarking information is being developed,
 - Ascertain what the current levels of Direct Payment reviews are so resources can be allocated to reduce the outstanding reviews,
 - Further work needs to take place to understand the number of direct payments in the system as well as projecting the budget for direct payments for subsequent years,
 - The RAS is being reviewed as part of the new system,
 - Funding has been secured on an invest to save basis for temporary additional resources to reduce the level of Direct Payment debt and additionally reduce Direct Payment packages where excess balances are identified and reviews are completed. The current outcomes of this are detailed in points 8 -13 above.

OPTIONS CONSIDERED

34. There are no specific options to consider within this report.

REASONS FOR RECOMMENDED OPTION

35. Not applicable.

IMPACT ON THE COUNCIL'S KEY OUTCOMES

Outcomes	Implications
<p>Doncaster Working: Our vision is for more people to be able to pursue their ambitions through work that gives them and Doncaster a brighter and prosperous future;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Better access to good fulfilling work • Doncaster businesses are supported to flourish • Inward Investment 	<p>There is potential with transformation to reinvest in more appropriate services and create local jobs for local people. This will in turn result in people having greater levels of income and therefore contributing more to communities.</p>
<p>Doncaster Living: Our vision is for Doncaster's people to live in a borough that is vibrant and full of opportunity, where people enjoy spending time;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The town centres are the beating heart of Doncaster • More people can live in a good quality, affordable home • Healthy and Vibrant Communities through Physical Activity and Sport • Everyone takes responsibility for keeping Doncaster Clean • Building on our cultural, artistic and sporting heritage 	<p>People will be supported to have more choice, independence and control over living a more independent life.</p>
<p>Doncaster Learning: Our vision is for learning that prepares all children, young people and adults for a life that is fulfilling;</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Every child has life-changing learning experiences within and beyond school • Many more great teachers work in Doncaster Schools that are good or better • Learning in Doncaster prepares young people for the world of work. 	
<p>Doncaster Caring: Our vision is for a borough that cares together for its most vulnerable residents;</p>	<p>There is potential with transformation to reinvest in more appropriate services.</p>

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Children have the best start in life • Vulnerable families and individuals have support from someone they trust • Older people can live well and independently in their own homes 	<p>People will have greater levels of income and therefore contribute more to communities.</p>
<p>Connected Council:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A modern, efficient and flexible workforce; • Modern, accessible customer interactions; • Operating within our resources and delivering value for money; • A co-ordinated, whole person, whole life focus on the needs and aspirations of residents; • Building community resilience and self-reliance by connecting community assets and strengths; • Working with our partners and residents to provide effective leadership and governance. 	<p>A review of these services will enable the Council and the CCG to ensure that future services provide value for money and that they align to the personalisation agenda.</p>

RISKS AND ASSUMPTIONS

36. Potential risks include:

- Reputational damage to the Council as a result of a failure to undertake assessments within the required timescales;
- Litigation as a result of any failure to / delay in the assessment of an individual's circumstances should they be determined need in a care environment;
- Financial loss as a result of a failure to control payments being made to Direct Payment recipients

LEGAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials HMP Date 27.03.19]

37. It is essential that there is a robust documented process in place. This ensures that vulnerable adults are appropriately supported and also allows the Local Authority to recover sums through the litigation process where a debt has arisen. The Statutory Guidance on Direct Payments contained within 'Care and Support Statutory Guidance' at Chapter 12 should be complied with.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: PW Date: 27.03.19]

38. The estimated annual expenditure relating to Direct Payments as at Month 10 of 2018/19 is £12.3m, relating to approximately 880 service users. The direct payments

budgets for 19/20 has been increased to £14.8m assuming a continued increase in clients of approx. 14 per month, but this figure also includes savings targets of £436k relating to improved front door processes and reductions in high cost packages of care.

39. The measures identified in this report are more about operational measures around process, control, training, and support systems and not directly in regard to Financial Management. No savings are identified or expected from this piece of work but improvements in these areas should have the benefit of a better use of financial resources and a better understanding of what outcomes those resources are delivering. The greater scrutiny given to Direct Payment packages of support via an improved panel process and work on the RAS may actually reduce spend, although this is not yet quantifiable.

HUMAN RESOURCES IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials KG Date: 28.03.19]

40. A robust training and development programme for officers involved in the Direct Payment process to progress, develop and embed the necessary delivery changes is recommended.

TECHNOLOGY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: PW Date: 28.03.19]

41. There are no specific technology implications in relation to this report. As outlined in Appendix A, the Resource Allocation System (RAS) will form part of the new Integrated People Solution.

HEALTH IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: RS Date: 27.03.2019]

42. Personal budgets and direct payments are one way that the council can transfer control and maintain the independence of local (eligible) residents. This transfer of control can empower local residents and this is likely to improve health and wellbeing. However, poor policy, poor support and a limited menu of support to choose from as well as poor governance (including overpayment of direct payments) will undermine this improvement in wellbeing. Decision makers will want to assure themselves of both the governance and the 'reach' of direct payments so whilst 858 residents use direct payments, it's not clear what the aspiration is for take up. Decision makers will also want to assure themselves that all groups of residents are able to take up direct payments even where additional support may be required.

EQUALITY IMPLICATIONS [Officer Initials: PRJ Date: 26.03.19]

43. Direct Payments are available to all adults in Doncaster with an assessed care need irrespective of age, disability, ethnicity, sexual orientation or religion.

CONSULTATION

44. None / expand

BACKGROUND PAPERS

45. Previous internal Audit reports on Direct Payments.

REPORT AUTHORS & CONTRIBUTORS

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**Doncaster
Council**

APPENDIX A

Outstanding Internal Audit Recommendations

Issue Identified	Risk Exposure	Agreed Management Action and current status	Revised Date of Completion:
Procedures:	Major	<p>Procedures will be documented for all the systems and processes in operation to ensure that all staff are consistent in their work. This is in progress. Guidance and procedures will be completed and training provided to staff to ensure everyone understands the information provided.</p> <p>Progress:</p> <p>A direct payment policy has been approved and distributed to all staff. Training has been provided around the new policy. Due to operational capacity the completion date has been extended to the 30th April 2019 due to delivering mandatory training. The procedures are being produced to ensure all staff follow the same processes and ensure a consistent approach.</p>	30 th April 2019
Resource Allocation System	Significant	<p>The Resource Allocation System (RAS) will be part of the new system being implemented next year.</p> <p>Progress:</p> <p>This is being reviewed by the Adults Health and Well Being implementation group. The RAS has been updated in Mosaic. This action will not be completed until the Mosaic system goes live.</p>	31 st August 2019
Backlog of Reviews:	Major	Work has continued with area teams to reduce the backlog figure and ensure these are as up-to-	30 th June 2019

Issue Identified	Risk Exposure	Agreed Management Action and current status	Revised Date of Completion:
		<p>date as possible. One member of staff per locality team is focusing on reducing the number of reviews and this has been included as a task within the Direct Payment Rapid Improvement Project. The teams are closely performance managed by the Head of Service Adult Social Care and Support and holds regular clinics and this is a standing agenda item including backlog of reviews</p> <p>Progress:</p> <p>The operational lead has contacted the performance team to obtain the latest figures for annual reviews of DP support plans. It is believed that this is in a good position and the backlog is reducing. However this needs evidencing and is monitored through the ASC and Support monthly Performance clinics. Additional capacity has been identified to ensure that the outstanding DP reviews are completed by the 30th June 2019.</p>	
Benchmarking Information:	Major	<p>Some benchmarking has been completed using ASOCF data for Yorkshire & Humber. Management are working with the Performance Team to review the information that they hold in order to provide performance indicators for monitoring purposes.</p> <p>Progress:</p> <p>Work has commenced on the benchmarking project on behalf of the South Yorkshire teaching partnership.</p> <p>A Freedom of Information request that has gone out to the four local authorities requesting benchmarking information and this is expected to be complete by the 10th April 2019. Focus groups have been held in each of the four Local Authorities with staff and social workers. A questionnaire has been sent out to social care Practitioners asking them for their views on direct payments as well as ascertaining if they have any learning and development needs. Once the benchmarking data has been collated a report will be produced and made available.</p>	30 th May 2019

Issue Identified	Risk Exposure	Agreed Management Action and current status	Revised Date of Completion:
Direct Payment Debt Management:	Major	<p>Work continues with the Business Support Unit to look at embedding robust processes to manage Direct Payment debt management.</p> <p>Progress:</p> <p>Funding has been secured on an invest to save basis for temporary additional resources to reduce the level of Direct Payment debt and additionally reduce Direct Payment packages where excess balances are identified and reviews are completed. The proposed additional resources will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • manage the reduction in Direct Payment debt which currently amounts to £1m • reduce the level of excess balances being raised • reduce the level of unmet client contributions being raised through early intervention • reduce the level of misspent or unaccounted for debt • provide Direct Payment support to citizens in the management of their direct payment • where excess balances are identified, this could potentially reduce care plans and consequently the values of the direct payments where appropriate • Transfer direct payments onto prepayments card accounts where currently payment is made into an individual's private bank account. <p>See points 8 – 13 in the report for the progress made so far in this area.</p>	30 th June 2019
Increase in average cost of Direct Payments packages	<i>Major</i>	<p>The team are currently undertaking a deep dive audit of all Direct Payments authorised to date this financial year to ensure the costs associated are reasonable and appropriate plans are in place for service users care needs.</p> <p>Progress</p> <p>All new DP packages will be scrutinised as part of the deep dive audit which will take place at the end of the financial year.</p>	30 th April 2019

APPENDIX B

Internal Audit Recommendations Completed since October 2018 Audit Committee

Issue Identified	Risk Exposure	Agreed Management Action	Status
Support plan details:	Major	All new Direct Payment support plans will be brought to the risk panel and will be reviewed to ensure that they are being completed appropriately and clearly state how it should be spent so that it is clear when it comes to a review. This became operational from 8 th October.	Completed
Nominated person for Direct Payments:	Significant	The arrangements for assessing nominated persons will be reviewed and then clearly communicated to all staff with training provided as appropriate.	Completed
Direct Payment Support Service:	Significant	The Direct Payment (Money Management) Support Service is planned to be commissioned and operational by 31st January 2019. The tender has been sent out at the end of September, due to be returned in October and be operational by January 2019.	Completed
Renaming Payment file:	Moderate	This process will be for resolved when the new system is operational in 2019.	Completed
Frequency of Payments to Service Users:	Significant	The frequency of payments for Direct Payments from weekly to 4 weekly can be accommodated within the new system. Consultation is currently being undertaken with service users to understand any concerns they may have to resolve before this is implemented.	Completed
Training and qualifications:	Significant	Central arrangements will be in place to ensure training and qualifications are collated to evidence appropriate qualifications and training to complete their role.	Completed

APPENDIX C

BACKGROUND - THE DIRECT PAYMENT PROCESS

The Care Act (2014) states that everyone eligible for on-going council funded support receives this in the form of a personal budget. Direct payments are one of the ways of taking a personal budget. However the success of Direct Payments is dependent on having good quality information and advice being available to provide genuine and maximum choice and control enabling service users and carers to make informed choices on how they manage their personal budgets, including support through a trust, voluntary or other organisation.

Personal budgets and self-funding are important for Doncaster Council as they increase choice and independence for service users and carers enabling them to feel in control of their care so they are empowered to;

Decide the kind of support they need and when, where and how they receive it
Know the amount of money available to them for care and support needs, and can determine how this is used (whether it's their own money, direct payment or a council managed personal budget)

Get access to the money quickly without having to go through over-complicated procedures
Get skilled advice to plan their care and support, and are given help to understand costs and make best use of the money involved where they want and need it

Council managed personal budgets offer genuine opportunities for real self-direction.

People who use social care (either people who use services or carers) are able to direct their available resource with processes and restrictions on the use of budgets must be kept to a minimum. To do this Doncaster Council must ensure that there is a market of diverse and culturally appropriate support and services that people who use services and carers can access to ensure that people have maximum choice and control over a range of good value, safe and high quality support provision.

However, following on from the initial audit review, it was recognised that Doncaster Council recognises it needs to better understand how people are spending their money on care and support, tracking the outcomes and using this information to improve delivery.

Over the past 2 years the Adult Social Care and Support Locality Teams focused on increasing the number of service users in receipt of a direct payment. The number of Direct Payments has increased from 450 in April 2016 to a forecast of 858 in April 2018. Uptake has increased by 91% in just over 3 years in line with the policy to increase the uptake of personal budgets onto direct payments.

Date	No. of Direct Payment Service Users	Direct Payments Spend (£)	Average £ of Direct Payment
April 2016	450	£5,684,639	£12,633*
April 2017	608	£7,927,231	£13,038*
April 2018	751	£10,340,635	£13,769*
As at Feb 2019	828	£12,344,106 (month 10 forecast)	£14,908*

*These figures are a rough guide, which is just the total spend divided by the number of users at a point in time however there are lots of variances and differences with client count throughout the year which this does not reflect. This can be seen for 2018/19 in point 15 of the report.

The amount of money spent on Direct Payments has increased from £5.7m in 2015/16 to projected spend of £12.3m in 2018/19. This shows an increase of £6.6m (116%) within the 3 years.

Viewed alongside the increase in Direct Payment uptake of 84%, there is also an 18% increase in the average cost of a Direct Payment, which is a significant increase. The team are aware of this and looking into it, currently including undertaking a deep dive audit of all Direct Payments authorised to date this financial year, (Included in **Appendix A**).

The CareFirst system is used to create an assessment of the care required for a service user. A Resource Allocation System (RAS) is used to give an indication of the financial amount for the care required. An outcome care and support plan is then created to show how the care needs will be met. A financial contribution may or may not be required by the service user dependent upon their financial circumstances. The financial assessments team gather financial information on a service user in order to establish whether a financial contribution is required and for what amount if applicable. Reviews should then be completed after 6 weeks of the commencement of care and then also on an annual basis after this to ensure that the care in place is meeting the needs of the service user. There are currently 1064 reviews outstanding for all areas, however there are 206 reviews outstanding for service users with a Direct Payment. Team Leaders who manage the locality teams have been to identify one member of staff per team to focus on reducing the number of reviews and this has been included as a task within the Direct Payment Rapid Improvement Project.

Once in place, direct payment audits are conducted by a separate team in Professional Business Support based in the Corporate Resources directorate according to the risk rating being applied to a case. The direct payment audits are completed on a rolling program. This information is currently stored outside of the CareFirst system and is therefore reliant upon care workers requesting this information when reviewing the status of a care plan. This information is required to ensure the personal budget is being spent as approved.

Once an audit has been completed, if any discrepancies are found then additional information will be requested and a Sales Invoice raised through the Accounts Receivable system if information is not subsequently provided or the direct payment is deemed to have

been misspent. The debt recovery of the invoices raised is also monitored to try to maximise the income being received back to the Council.

MANAGEMENT RESPONSE FOLLOWING INTERNAL AUDIT REPORT MARCH 2018

The historical context of direct payments in Doncaster over the last few years has been changeable. A previous Head of Service had developed a Care Act compliant Direct Payment's policy and this was signed off by a previous Director in December 2016. However, the guidance was incomplete and was therefore never adopted. Subsequent Heads of Services came and went and groups were formed to develop paperwork and processes but this detail was never 'owned' by anyone or properly communicated resulting in Social Care Worker under-confidence and confusion. More recently direct payments were identified as requiring improvement including areas that internal audit had previously highlighted.

The Director has established Rapid Improvement Plans (RIP's) covering several areas within the directorate where a greater degree of pace and oversight was required. Direct Payments became part of an RIP led by new Head of Service, Debbie Crohn. Since commencing in Post in June 2018 Debbie Crohn has been responsible for tracking and delivery of outstanding audit actions and has established an Operational Group made up of Adult Social Care staff to work on these actions and others captured within the RIP.

Based on feedback from stakeholders, the Direct Payment Policy has been refreshed and other paperwork in relation to direct payments is being reviewed to ensure compliance with the Care Act. A robust workforce training plan is currently being developed and there will be mandatory training provided across the adult social care workforce from October 2018. Other initiatives include a plan to change direct payments to service users from weekly to 4 weekly in line with other local authorities. Letters inviting feedback from service users on this proposed change will be sent out shortly.

New Direct Payment agreements have been sent out to service users to reflect any changes and benchmarking information is being sought to ascertain how Doncaster performs in relation to similar authorities. A dedicated project manager for Direct Payments was identified in July 2018 and the Direct Payments Rapid Improvement Project action plan is part of the 'weekly oversight' meeting to maintain momentum and implementation of the internal audit recommendations.