PEARLS OF WISDOM

The sliding scale of responsibilities: negotiating with a Host Provider

Many people who direct their own supports in Queensland under the Your Life Your Choice program choose to do so by working with a Host Provider.

The following examples show how four people have negotiated support from their Host Provider. In some cases, the level of support has changed during the time they have been self-directing.

In the first three examples, people indicate that they may consider adjusting the level of support again if the need arises. They know that they can do this by re-negotiating the arrangement with the Host Provider.

Example 1

Jane and her family live in a small town in Western Queensland. She has been using self-directed funding for her daughter, Sarah, for eighteen months now. When Jane made the decision to move to direct her daughter's funding on her behalf through *Your Life Your Choice,* she chose to work with a Host Provider rather than using the method of Direct Payments. Jane said, "We wanted the extra layer of support from a Host Provider. We were happy with this idea because it also meant that the Host Provider would do as much or as little as we wanted in terms of helping with administration, recruiting, payroll etc. I knew that I wanted to concentrate on getting the right kind of support around Sarah rather than worrying about acquittal of funds to the Department and other administrative parts of the business".

At the moment Jane has negotiated that the Host Provider:

- Manages acquittal and reporting to the Department
- Works with the family on their Planning Document

Jane has responsibility for:

- All levels of recruitment and management of staff
- Putting planning schedule together
- Payroll
- Acquitting payroll invoices monthly with Bank Statements and reporting to the Host Provider monthly

After eighteen months of directing her daughter's support Jane says that she feels more confident to take on other responsibilities. She is not considering changing the arrangement yet but knows that she can negotiate this with the Host Provider if she wants to.

Read more about Jane's experience with self-direction, including her particular situation of working with a Brisbane based Host Provider while she lives in Western Queensland, in the story, *Self-direction in regional Queensland: making it work.*

Example 2

Narissa has been directing her own supports for more than five years. Although she feels confident that she could use the Direct Payments system, managing all the aspects of self-direction herself, she prefers to work with a Host Provider. Narissa and her network see this as one safeguard in their risk management plan.

When Narissa first began directing her own supports the Host Provider took responsibility for payroll. Four years down the track Narissa felt that she had developed the skills needed to do this herself with people in her network. The administration fee to the Host Provider was re-negotiated once she took on the role.

Under the current arrangement the Host Provider is responsible for:

- Acquittals and reporting to the Department

Narissa has responsibility for:

- All operational matters including rosters
- All financial matters including budgeting and payroll
- All human resources matters including recruitment, training and management of staff

Although Narissa has responsibility for all these matters she has engaged contractors to carry out some of these functions. She uses a recruitment service when she needs to employ new staff and has engaged a coordinator to work with staff in some areas including training and developing rosters.

Read more about Narissa's experience of self-direction in *Plan and prepare: the change to self-direction*.

Example 3

Kath has been directing support on behalf of her son, Troy, for over three years now. She was attracted to the idea of self-direction rather than using support from a disability service because she knew that this would give her and Troy more control over who they employed and how the support hours were organised. She said, *"The processes were not simple for me at first but now I have a system in place and it works well and easily. We have been lucky with finding good staff. Mainly by word of mouth".*

Under the current arrangement the Host Provider is responsible for:

- Acquittals and reporting to the Department

Kath has responsibility for:

- All levels of recruitment and management of staff
- Payroll
- Reporting to Host Provider monthly

Kath likes the idea that she can negotiate with the Host Provider to take responsibility for some of what she does now if the need arises. The flexibility of the arrangement is one part of Kath's succession plan. For example, if her daughters take over the main role of directing Troy's supports in the future, then it is likely that they would negotiate a higher fee with the Host Provider in return for taking more of the responsibility for engaging staff.

Read more about Troy's story in *Morning in Tewantin*.

Example 4

Dan has been directing his own support, with his mother, Sharon, for over 3 years. Since the move to self-direction Dan is learning to be clear about his needs and what he requires from support and is enjoying having support arrangements that reflect what he wants, when he wants it and from whom he wants.

Dan and Sharon have negotiated an arrangement with a Host Provider based outside their regional town and are happy so far with how the relationship is working and the level of responsibility they have for directing the support.

Dan is learning to be active in the recruitment, interviewing, employment and training processes.
He is taking the decision making role as he matures.

Under the current arrangement the Host Provider is responsible for:

- Acquittals and reporting to the Department
- Payroll

Dan and Sharon have responsibility for:

- All levels of recruitment and management of staff

Apart from these delineated roles the relationship with the Host Provider offers ongoing support when needed. For example, support to set up initial systems and processes, support when requested to assist with staffing issues including dismissals.

Different host providers would negotiate different payment arrangements for this kind of support. In some cases this would be on a fee for service basis, in other cases it would be included in the overall initial agreement.