

# A Day In The Life Of An Employer

## Independent Living

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Due to social policy reforms, it was deemed necessary for the chronically ill and disabled community to become designated *employers* in order to access home care funding by the county councils.

There was no discussion or consultation. The chronically ill and disabled community in need of home care were presented with this reality, with no training and certainly no concern as to the implications of such a vast legal responsibility for many who are living with chronic ill health. There was also no consideration for those in greatest need, who are unable to concede to such responsibility, to conduct the necessary administration or to complete monthly timesheets for their care staff.

The difficulty is that, once assessed, the disabled community are dependent upon the regional councils to fund third party independent funding companies, who pay care staff salaries upon receipt of monthly timesheets from the designated *employer*. Assuming the councils fund the third party funding companies, all is well and the care staff are paid on time. But, things can go wrong...

Following a re-assessment last October by Cambridgeshire County Council (CCC), my care package was increased. I was sent confirmation emails and official paperwork to confirm an increase of four hours care per week, plus the necessary additional funding to cover the additional costs. Guided by the CCC social worker who conducted the re-assessment, I increased the working hours of my care staff accordingly and anticipated the monthly cash increase arriving in the funding account.

Until last October I had been provided with a monthly statement by the funding company, so I was always confident that there was enough funding to pay the care staff. For reasons yet to be explained those monthly statements stopped, so I was not alerted to the dwindling resources as I funded my care staff additional hours without realising that the increased funding had not been provided.

Following receipt of the quarterly funding statement in December, I alerted CCC staff to the fact that the additional funding had yet to arrive and was once again reassured that it would be paid in full and backdated, which didn't happen.

This situation came to a crisis when I was alerted by the funding company that there wasn't enough cash in the account, and so my staff would not be paid in January. Following various exchanges of emails, with the CCC assessor and the funding company, I was belatedly advised via email from the CCC finance department that the allocated increased funding had been an

*“error in the system”* and that my actual care package would now be reduced by almost £5,000 per annum.

My difficulty is that the CCC finance department actually presumed that such a statement would be accepted, that I would advise my staff that they would not be paid in January, and that I would tolerate such remarkable claims that I did not believe. The situation rapidly deteriorated, as I was not prepared to accept that my staff would not be paid for work already completed. I made my position very clear to both the CCC finance department and the social worker who was attempting, and failing, to minimise what was a funding crisis impacting on my care team.

Once it was established that I would not accept this situation, the finance department offered a small injection of cash to cover the costs of my staff salaries for January, which they claimed would take days to complete. The funding company agreed to pay my staff on time if they had a guarantee, in writing, that CCC would provide the necessary additional funds.

With the immediate funding crisis resolved, and my care staff paid on time, I made a formal complaint to CCC whose response was rapid. They advised that it would take 25 days to complete a formal investigation of my complaint.

Happily, and unexpectedly, the resolution to the funding problem was not dependent upon the outcome of the investigation. I received an unexpected email from a senior member of staff from the CCC physical disabilities department. It seems that she had held a meeting with the Manager of the finance department, they both confirmed that my re-assessment last October had identified an increase in my care package, and the additional backdated funding was being transferred to my funding account. So, there should be no future problem funding my care staff the allocated additional hours as identified at my re-assessment last October.

The only remaining problem is the thought as to what would have happened, and what could have happened, if I had accepted the claims from the CCC finance department that my increased funding package was an *“error in the system.”* Whilst central government have caused a cash crisis for regional government by reducing their funding by almost 50%, it is cause for serious concern that regional government seem to stop at nothing to reduce care costs. First it was stealing Personal Independence Payment from the disabled community to fund home care, and now it’s trying to manipulate the conclusions of an annual re-assessment to resist any suggestion of an increase in costs of a care package. I very much doubt that my circumstances are unique.

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