

Direct Payments User Group Meeting Minutes 12th March 2008

Guests - Yvette Fowles (Direct Payments Finance Officer, Lambeth)
Jim Heron (Commissioning Officer Disability and Older Persons, Lambeth)
Hannah Gordon (User Involvement Worker Disabled and Older People, DASL & Age Concern)
Apologies - Jyoti Shah (Direct Payments Project Lead)

Margaret welcomed everyone to the meeting and thanked everyone for attending.

Developments in DASL

DASL have won the Direct Payments Contract for another 18 months starting from Jan 08, there is an option to extend the contract.

DASL will be working in partnership with Sutton Centre for Independent Living and Learning (SCILL) to deliver a third party service for DP users. SCILL also have a Social Enterprise to support people with payroll, which we will be recommending.

DASL will be having 4 user meetings a year, each with a topic and will be inviting a member of the council to speak at the meetings.

DP Handbook

DASL have also been working with Lambeth to develop and update the DP Handbook. Lambeth are currently consulting with service users over the content of the handbook. The idea of the handbook is to provide info on all aspects of DP's to use as a reference guide, it will also include contact details for relevant organisations. It will include copies of the paper work that people will need when managing their DP's such as employment contracts and monitoring forms. Yvette said she would send out copies to those present who would like one. It was suggested by a meeting attendee that it would be good to meet in a group to go through the handbook together, someone else thought that phoning or emailing would be easier because not everyone can attend a meeting. Jim suggested that when new DP Users start their DP's it might be a good idea to arrange a meeting.

Developments in the Council

Jim said that the council are looking to increase the take up of DP's and making them available for a wider range of services and client groups. The take up of DP's in Mental Health is not good. The council are developing an action plan to focus on mental health.

The government and national policy indicates that Individual Budgets and Self Directed Support is where the future is heading. Lambeth are in the process of recruiting a Director of Self Directed Support. They are also looking into recruiting a DP Manager to run the service as more and more people take up DP's.

Social Workers and Care Managers in Lambeth are currently receiving training on DP's for the first time. DASL have had limited involvement in the training and would like to be

involved more. User Involvement in the training for Social Services staff also needs to be looked at. Each Social Work Team will be appointing a DP Champion within the team.

Training for PA's is also going to be looked again so that training in manual handling, food hygiene and health and safety can be offered.

Maxine Bennett from the Children with Disabilities Team was invited to the meeting but was leaving Lambeth so did not attend. Cynthia Winifred the new Manager of the team is very positive about DP's and is looking into replacing Maxine.

DP Queries

Issues raised by the meeting participants included -

- It is stressful when things don't work out with a PA, you are always learning.
- If a PA leaves will you be left without support - Social Services continue to have a duty of care and can put in agency support if your support breaks down.
- Lambeth not paying the DP money on time.
- Social Services giving out your information to your PA's is an issue - this should not happen, Social Services generally do not speak to PA's.
- If there is an employer / employee problem DASL can support with the grievance procedure that is attached to the contract of employment. It was also suggested that a Peer Support Group would be a good place to look at employer / employee relations.
- If a PA is on holiday or off sick, you can use an agency to cover or employ another PA to cover.
- One participant found it very daunting when they first started their DP's, now it is the best thing that happened to them and their family.
- When finding the right PA you can often tell after a few days if they are going to interact well with your child. Having a probation period in the employment contract is a good idea.
- It would be very useful for DP Users to be able to get together to share their experiences.
- The issue of not being able to employ a family member that lives with you was raised. You can employ family members who do not live with you, if they do live with you then Lambeth has to agree for you to employ them.
- People find that doing the monitoring every month is too much.
- People are confused about the calculation to work out annual leave entitlement for their PA's.
- Some people felt that they need more support hours - your Social Worker can carry out a re assessment of your needs to determine if they can provide you with more support.
- The lack of advocacy for young disabled people in Lambeth was raised - DASL can support people by telling them who to contact but do not have an advocacy role.

Peer Support

Hannah led a discussion on peer support; the suggestions and issues that were raised by meeting participants are attached.

We will keep you informed on developments and progress on peer support.