

DASL DIRECT PAYMENTS PEER SUPPORT GROUP MEETING

FEBRUARY 3RD 2016

As our DP Peer Support Group Meetings tend to attract adult service users over parents using Direct Payments to arrange services for their children; and as a number of issues pertaining to child clients had arisen recently, it was decided to hold a Children's and Young People's Service user meeting.

In order that these issues could be more easily resolved, a number of people involved in delivering social services for children in Lambeth were invited. Of those invited Councillor Jane Pickard, Cabinet Member for Children and Families attended, as did Serena Nelson Direct Payment Officer CYPS. Nobody from the office of Ian Smith (Director of Children's Services) attended, though an invitation was offered.

Jane told the group that she had met with Ian Smith in the summer and they endeavoured to get to the root of the problems in CYPS. One problem identified was that the department was working from two different computer systems. Another issue, which some of the parents considered the bigger problem, was the fact that Serena was required to single-handedly manage childrens' DPs (around 90 clients), in addition to dealing with invoices from another 130 organisations used by disabled children in Lambeth.

The meeting threw up quite a few complaints and observations made about the CYPS that included:

- Emails from clients not being answered**
- Nobody at the end of a phone when clients needed to speak to an officer**

- **The length of time it took for DP monies to be paid – in some instances three or four months. In such cases the PA/carers are penalised by paying extra NI contributions as the back-pay is paid as a lump-sum**
- **Monies being paid into accounts with no accompanying breakdown of budget**
- **The length of time DBS checks take to complete**
- **Most clients lack of awareness of procedures and systems – for instance, the relationship between a service user and social worker**
- **A lack of training for service users and their carers – adult service users in Lambeth can access free training**
- **The need for a proper transitional process between CYPS and Adult Services**
- **No parent representation on the Improvement Planning Group dealing with the Ofsted report from last year**
- **Parents were not happy with the fact that CYPS did not increase carer rates from December in line with PA rates for Adult Services – the low hourly rate was also cited as a factor that made it difficult to employ carers in Lambeth when neighbouring boroughs paid substantially higher wages**
- **One parent stated that having to complete a monthly expenditure form was an onerous task; and asked when the Pre-Paid Card would be on offer**
- **Denise Campbell suggested that Lambeth conducts a consultation around the CYPS**

Jane and Serena responded to the complaints and observations made by the parents. Serena informed us that an interim manager of her department was starting soon.

Jane then went on to make the following suggestions to improve the service:

Lambeth Council would

- Look to put in place training and information sessions within the next 6-months
- Produce an information pack for both social workers and parent clients
- Provide a back-up for Serena
- Ensure there is a properly functioning Transitions Team in place
- Improve communications while affording greater transparency to processes and procedures
- Ensure the DP Peer Support Group know all relevant members of the social worker teams as well as those of DASL's Direct Payments Support Service.
- Speed up payments
- Set up regular meetings between representatives of parent service users and the CYPS staff
- Hold a meeting in three months on 4th May 2016

Jane and Serena remained behind after the meeting officially closed in order to speak to individual parents on specific issues. The next meeting of DASL's DP Peer Support Group is at 11 am on Wednesday 2nd March in the 1st Floor Meeting Room at 'We are 336', 336 Brixton Road, SW9 7AA.