

Minutes of Direct Payments Peer Support Group Meeting October 5th 2016

Present: DC (Co-Chair) MN (Co-Chair) MR, Sylvia Willis, DV, PN, MB, PS, VM, MS, RLT, GV, FA, AF, IH, NNH, SB, GA, RH, JH, Sharon Kitson (Contact a Family), Joseph Healy (DASL) Seán Mc Govern (DASL) Sarah McGarry (Payments Officer, Children with Disabilities) Malvina (Lambeth Council Commissioner for Adults with Disabilities)

Apologies: Councillor Jane Pickard

The meeting started with the Co-Chair (Denise Campbell) saying that she was very disappointed that no representative of the care management at Children with Disabilities had attended the meeting despite having been invited. It was important to stress that service users were in control.

It was decided to have a joint meeting with those attending the BAGET (Being a Good Employer) course for the first hour. It was also agreed not to take the minutes or other agenda items but to move immediately to issues concerning parents of disabled children and problems connected with the Children with Disabilities section of Lambeth Social Services.

Denise Campbell said that Ofsted were coming next month to investigate CWD and the Peer Support Group was going to watch closely. A question was raised by a parent about the amount of time it took to bring a case to panel. Her PA was waiting for DBS checks and she was putting in an official complaint about the time it took to start a Direct Payment because of this. Sarah McGarry apologised for the fact that the social worker had not been in contact with her. A mother said that the hours for her child had been reduced from 25 to 15 but nobody had communicated this with her. Sarah said that the social worker needed to explain to her the reason for the reduction in hours. A question was raised about service users being able to represent themselves at panels. Could parents challenge their non-representation at panels under the Human Rights Act? Malvina said that it would not be practical to have a service user at every panel – she attended panels – and gave input on the general needs of service users as a result of their disability/illness. However, Malvina said that an assessment should have been given to the service user for them to respond to before the panel decides. Malvina said that although she was an Adults Commissioner, both she and Sarah would feed back comments to the Children's Commissioners. Sarah said that social workers in Children with Disabilities were being reviewed on how they do their assessments.

One service user complained that DBS checks had taken so long that she had had to pull out of receiving Direct Payments for her child. The Co-Chair (Denise) said that her experience of delays in setting up DP had been horrendous, mainly due to the DBS application sitting in Serena Nelson's office (the former Payments Officer for Children with Disabilities) before going on to Human Resources. Another service user said that CWD procedures were leading to long delays in payment. Sarah McGarry said that she was working hard to overcome the delays and issues. There had been lots of problems connected with payment systems.

One person said that she had been waiting 2 years for a Direct Payments assessment. Another service user said that Lambeth were not paying the bill to Family Link who were providing services for her son and that as no money had been paid since February her son was about to lose the

service. Malvina said that there was an advantage in having Sarah and her revisit some of the issues raised as a new set of eyes could sometimes solve historical problems. Sarah said that she was trying to educate some of the old school social workers in the ways of personalisation. One service user responded that there was a danger of changes not happening in Lambeth as the change makers usually moved on before any change was made – high staff turnover. Sarah said that she intended staying.

It was agreed that Sarah Mc Garry would bring back the request for parents to attend panels to Lambeth. There was also a request for a prepayment card to be introduced for direct payments service users from Children with Disabilities. Sarah Mc Garry is going to put a request for this to the service manager. The meeting also raised again the issue of the different pay rate for PAs working with children. Sean Mc Govern said that Cllr Marcia de Cordova was raising this as a member's question with the council. But he would also pursue it with the council on behalf of the group. There was also a request from the Co-Chair (Denise) for consultation and co-production rights for the Peer Support Group from Lambeth Council.

The meeting then closed. As the discussion on CWD had taken up all of the time for the meeting, it was agreed to deal with the minutes and other outstanding issues at the next meeting.