

## **DASL DIRECT PAYMENTS PEER SUPPORT GROUP**

**7<sup>th</sup> June 2017**

### **Attendees:**

**Service users** –DV, DC, MR, CW, JH, VLM

**Speakers** – Jane Pickard: Cabinet Council Member for Children's Services (JP) and Justin Colman: Head of Service, Children with Disabilities (JC)

**DASL Staff** – Lauren Johnson (LJ), Richard Pargeter (RP)

### **Matters Arising from March meeting:**

- Video of previous meeting is now on the DASL website.
- DP rate for children has gone up. Letters should have been received.
- Panel issues to be discussed today.
- Prepaid cards: JC doesn't have any news today, will be followed up.
- DBS checks: waiver form can only be used if the person has an existing DBS check. Still needs to be checked by Lambeth. Online system can be used by PAs with existing DBS checks, so they can apply for multiple jobs – PA pays for this themselves.

### **General discussion:**

**Sarah McGarry going on maternity leave.** JC: hoping to manage rather than cover – train existing staff to do purchase orders, etc.

**Commissioning short breaks:** JP: will revisit places after commissioning. Inspection of disability and SEN coming up, by Ofsted and CQC, don't know when yet. One area they'll look at is involvement of parents – they will want to speak to people. Working groups set up through Contact a Family.

**Out of borough services:** Example given where the child was going to Linden Lodge in Wandsworth, had to go to panel for approval. Funding for transport was an issue. An example where a young person wanted to attend an out of borough animation workshop, using built-up DP money, as he has a particular interest in this and it is a way of reducing anxiety during school holidays. Discussed "want versus need" in terms of funding – good rationale required, JC willing to discuss outside of this meeting. When money builds up, need to ask why, but it was planned deliberately in this case.

JC: school holiday provision should be inclusive, so it shouldn't always fall to CWD to fund alternative provision.

**Respite:** Question about how often you can get respite – person looking after her husband has never had any respite. Council offer £200 – “Fix yourself a break”. LJ: that's part of the carer's assessment, whereas respite would be part of the person's needs/support package.

JC: Is there anything relevant in the new carers' strategy? LJ: Yes – part of the person's needs. JC advised to contact the husband's social worker. LJ to provide relevant info from the carers' strategy.

**Annual assessments:** Question about what happens if a year has elapsed and needs have not been reassessed. JC: aim to do an annual review, but not an exact timescale / required by law. Purchase orders with services are now ongoing, i.e. “carry on as you are unless we tell you otherwise”. Purpose of 6 month call is to ask parents “Is it all going OK?”

**Allocated social workers:** Parents often get asked “Do you have a social worker?” Usually don't in between annual reviews. JC: this shouldn't be necessary – you can say “My son/daughter is known to Lambeth”.

**Panels:** JC: very difficult to have parents there. Might have 10 cases in 3 hours, so not practical for all families to attend. Important to make sure the social worker has done a really good assessment – need to present assessed need. Social worker might not agree with the family about this.

It was argued that it is a right for parents to be involved in panel decisions – analogy with medical professionals, who wouldn't make a decision without directly involving the person or family.

JP: can families have something in writing presented to the panel?

JC: The family's views, if different to the social worker's views, should be clearly stated in the assessment. The social worker should present the draft assessment to the family and get their feedback before going to panel.

JP: can't necessarily trust every social worker to include everything the family has said, or every family to read the information and understand their rights.

JC: for all decisions, “let us know if you disagree” – first point of contact should be the social worker. If it goes to a stage 1 complaint, there is now a tighter procedure for logging, timescale, etc.

JP: what do other local authorities do? JC: most don't allow parents to attend panel. One borough tried letting parents in for 5 minutes at the end.

People are keen to try some sort of family involvement. JP and others agreed that it feels disempowering for families if they can't be involved.

A concern was expressed that social workers don't always understand the full picture when a person / child has medical needs.

Currently, Contact a Family is invited to attend. General feeling expressed that this is not adequate. JC: at least this helps to protect against abuse of the system.

Person-Centred Plans: having a comprehensive one taking everything into account should protect against the social worker "getting it wrong".

**Assessment by CWD:** Attendee wants their sons to be assessed, but has been reluctant because they are frightened of the assessment process, thinking they will be "taken away". How quickly can needs be assessed?

JC: call the MASH team (Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub). They will take details; get the assessment done by the appropriate team. MASH has to make a decision within 24 hours. Legal limit for CWD is 45 days, but they aim to do it a lot quicker.

MASH is supposed to be a first point of contact for "everything", but attendee described a negative experience, being told it is "only for emergencies". This shouldn't happen – should hear from a social worker within a couple of days.

LJ: you can call from here if you want to have somebody with you.

**Carers' Week:** next week – info to be circulated.

**Next meeting:** 5<sup>th</sup> July – Di Spruit attending to discuss digital payroll.

**August meeting** – agreed there'd not be a meeting in August as it's not convenient for most people to attend.