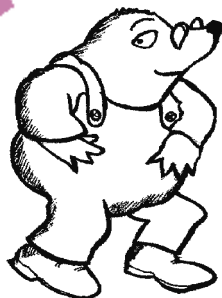


*** disability advice service lambeth**



November 2008

The Mole

News and information for
disabled people in Lambeth

LAMBETH'S HOUSING STRATEGY

Housing is a vital issue for disabled people. Good quality, affordable and accessible accommodation can make all the difference to people's health, wellbeing and ability to live independently. Lambeth Council is consulting on its new Housing Strategy for 2008—2013. We need to make sure disabled people's needs are full recognised. See page 9 for more details of how you can send your comments to the Council.



Hello again and welcome to another issue of the Mole. Having your say is a main theme this time with news about DASL's own user involvement projects as well as information about how you can tell Lambeth Council what you think about housing and how it should spend its budget in 2009/2010. We also look at important changes in the benefits system with the introduction of Employment and Support Allowance and tell you where you can get help with debt problems. Individual Budgets are high on the agenda and we update you on developments on the centre pages. As usual, there's also lots of other news and information. Enjoy the Mole and don't forget to let us know what you think of it and what you'd like to see in future issues.



LAMBETH COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION

The Council wants the views of residents and local organisations on its spending priorities for next financial year. You can give your ideas by completing an on-line survey. More details on page 9.

independent living for disabled people

User Involvement Services and Direct Payments

We are delighted to welcome two new members of staff to DASL who will be taking forward vital user involvement initiatives with disabled people. Richard Farnos, our User Involvement Worker Disabled and Older People, takes over the role from Hannah Gordon. Deborah Sowerby, our first Stroke User Network Coordinator, will be working closely with people living with stroke in Lambeth and Southwark. They both have lots of experience of working with users to strengthen their voice in shaping services but both will need your ideas, energy and participation to make their projects a success.

Find out more about our new team members and their plans on pages 4 and 5.

On page 8, our Information Worker, Vasiliki, reminds you that the DASL website discussion forum is also a great way to make your views known on a wide range of issues.



Margaret
Farrell
Direct
Payments
Service
Manager

The Direct Payments Team have been busy, as always, working with over 80 clients during October on a range of issues related to their Direct Payment or Individual Budget. As you can see from the article on pages 6 & 7, the Government has indicated very clearly that the move towards Individual Budgets will continue. It is essential that the voice of users and their allies is central to all developments both locally and nationally. As a local User-Led Organisation, DASL is committed to ensuring that this voice is heard and that Self-Directed Support in all its forms works to promote the goal of Independent Living

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Advice & Information Service



Robin
Ramsdale
Advice
Service
Manager

Employment & Support Allowance

October 27th 2008 marked an important change in the benefits system for people who cannot work due to disability. From that date the government abolished Income Support (IS) and Incapacity Benefit (IB) for people incapable of work. In comes a new benefit called Employment and Support Allowance (ESA). The emphasis of this new benefit will be very different from IB and IS in that it will concentrate on what people can do rather than what they can't. Effectively, it will be a much tougher benefit to get and even if you do qualify for it you may be expected to do a certain amount of work-related activity in return. If you are currently getting IS or IB there is no need to worry at this stage as you will not be immediately affected by the changes although the Government will at some point in the future move you to the new benefit. We have

enclosed a basic fact sheet explaining how ESA works but please ring our Enquiry Line on 020 7738 5656 if you need more information.

Debt advice

The credit crunch never seems to be out of the news at the moment. It now seems that the UK will be entering its first recession in 16 years. Many people have been suffering with relentless increases in their fuel and food bills and rents and mortgage payments. It's no surprise that some people in debt are turning to fee-charging companies to try and help them out of their difficulties. Unfortunately, some of these companies can make the problem worse rather than better. Luckily there are a lot of organisations that give free advice to people in debt. The services that these organisations provide range from negotiating a repayment schedule to representation at possession hearings. They can also advise clients on budgeting and apply for grants that might help with certain costs such as fuel bills. We have included in this issue a directory of national, London and local organisations that can give free debt advice. However don't hesitate to contact us for more information.

Meet Richard Farnos



Hi. My name is Richard Farnos. I am the new User involvement Worker for Disabled and Older People. I am employed by DASL and jointly managed by DASL and Age Concern Lambeth. At DASL I work with people with physical and sensory impairments and I am excited by the challenge of strengthening the voice of Disabled people in Lambeth.

I have previous experience of helping people have their say in a couple of my previous positions: at the Southwark Group of Tenants' Organisations, a federation of tenant and resident associations, and at Polari, an organisation that works to make older people's services more gay friendly.

Next year will be an important one for Disabled people in Lambeth. A new joint Council / Primary Care Trust strategy for people with physical and sensory impairments is being developed. Your views must be properly and centrally reflected.

I share Hannah, my predecessor's, long-term aim for a Disability Forum for Lambeth. Such a forum would certainly increase the visibility and participation of Disabled people; moreover it could not only respond to issues but help set the agenda.

Any forum to be effective, however, must be representative of the diversity within the Disabled community; both the range of disabilities and the diversity of ages, races, sexualities, faiths and gender. This can't be constructed overnight and there is the thorny issue of how this forum would be financed and supported.

In the meanwhile, we hope to try and establish a core group of 10 to 15 Disabled people with physical and sensory impairments. Principally, they would work towards representing the interests of users on the Disability Partnership Board, but hopefully, they would be able to take up other issues including pioneering the development of a fully fledged forum. If you would be interested to help set up such a group please contact me. You can either write to me at DASL, email me, richard.farnos@disabilitylambeth.org.uk, or phone me on 020 7642 2054.

Introducing Deborah Sowerby

I'm Deborah, the new co-ordinator for the Lambeth and Southwark Stroke User Involvement Network. I arrived at DASL two days ago but already feel quite at home. Everyone is very friendly and welcoming.

Although I have a lot to learn, I have a lot to bring to the Network. As well as being a disabled person myself, I have nearly 15 years professional experience in empowering disabled people to have a strong voice, to exercise choice in control in their lives and to participate in decision-making. My work has included training, advocacy, group development and project management.

A great deal of excellent work has been done to create the Network and bring it to the stage that it is at. Peer support is up and running and doing very well. Involvement by people affected by stroke has had a big impact and as a result there has been real improvement in services. However, there's still some way to go. The good news is that commissioners, planners and practitioners have at last recognised that they need the help and input of disabled people to ensure that individuals and families affected by



stroke receive the services and support they need. In the past there has been too much isolation and the network is a good way to put an end to this.

My role is to develop the Network and to enable as many people as possible to become involved. We aim to provide a range of opportunities and activities so that there is something for everyone. People are not all the same but everyone has something to offer. The Network welcomes and values everyone's contribution. I look forward to hearing your ideas for the future.

We'll be holding many events to give us a chance to meet and get to know each other, as well as exchange experiences and views. Contact me by phone, email or letter. Best of all, talk to me in person - just don't all arrive at once! T: 020 7642 2054. deborah.sowerby@disabilitylambeth.org.uk

Focus on Self-Directed Support

Margaret Farrell writes :

In 2005 the government's policy report *Improving the Life Chances of Disabled People* set out a new vision for the services that support older and disabled people. At its heart it proposed that, by 2012, all people who use services would control their own support. Self-directed support is the name given to the redesign of the social care system so that the people who get services can take much greater control over them. Direct payments and individual budgets give people who use social care the opportunity to control the resources allocated to their support.

The underlying principle of self-directed support is the development of a culture and the tools to enable people to take greater control of their lives and the support they receive, so that they can make the decisions and manage their own risks. This puts people at the centre of assessing their own needs and tailoring support to meet those needs.

Individual Budgets have four crucial components:

- **Transparent** – they give disabled people (including older people and people with mental health issues) an entitlement to a cash-limited level of funding which they can control.
- **Universal** – they are for everybody and for every type of service. Even people who do not wish to take up a Direct Payment can use an Individual Budget.
- **Flexible** – they can help people achieve the outcomes that they want; and they must be highly flexible.

- **Integrated** - they can be used to integrate other funding streams. The government is exploring the possible integration of resources from the Independent Living Fund (ILF), Supporting People, Access to Work, Integrated Community Equipment Service (ICES) and Disabled Facilities Grants with social care funding.



Focus on Self-Directed Support

What all this means in practice is that someone with an Individual Budget is told up-front how much money they can spend on their support. If they need help to plan and organise their support then this would also be available; but decisions will flow from the person and from their key allies.

The Individual Budgets pilot programme was a cross-government initiative led by the Department of Health working closely with the Department for Work and Pensions, and Communities and Local Government. Its role was to evaluate the effectiveness of Individual Budgets and to see how and if people's lives improved as a result. The pilot was conducted over two years 2006-2007 involving 13 local authorities. The pilots were evaluated by teams from York University and King's College London. They found that individual budgets had particular benefits for mental health service users and younger disabled people, whilst older people felt less positive. However, the evaluation recognised that this is the very early days and that there is much more to be found out. The Care Services Minister, Phil Hope has said that the Government is committed to rolling out Individual



Budgets and will learn from the pilots to ensure that all older and disabled people benefit from them.

Lambeth Council's own plans for personalising social care services are still being developed and we expect them to talk to service users and local organisations in earnest soon. We will be keeping you up to date with these vital issues through the Mole, DASL's website and by supporting people to have their say.

Where to find out more

Department of Health Individual Budgets website <http://tinyurl.com/6yefm3>

Care Services Improvement Partnership Personalisation Network <http://tinyurl.com/55jj49>

Social Care Institute for Excellence <http://www.scie.org.uk>

In Control <http://tinyurl.com/5hqjtt>

HAVE YOUR SAY ON DASL'S DISCUSSION FORUM



Vasiliki Boutopoulou invites you to use DASL's website discussion forum.

Here at DASL we are committed to service user participation and feedback. We want to know what people think of our own services and all the other issues which affect disabled people in Lambeth. A way of making this more possible is through opening the channels of communication between us all and to use feedback in order to make changes that can make a difference.

So I would really like to take the opportunity to remind you of DASL's website 'Have your say' discussion forum which was set up for you all to bring your ideas on services and various topics and exchange them with others. For this to work the more people getting involved the better. Some of the areas you could be writing about are services efficiency, accessibility, customer handling, meetings, and it would be great if it could include both good news well

as challenging criticism.

For example, a current topic to reflect on might be the new NHS constitution and what you think should be included to improve NHS services and patients' rights.

You can go straight to the forum on DASL's website by entering <http://www.disabilitylambeth.org.uk/yoursay> into your search engine. We put different topic areas for discussion on or you can start your own. At the bottom of the page you can log in and send your ideas through. You will need to register to participate in the forum, but this is very simple and you can ring me if you need help.

We do of course understand that not everyone is able to use the internet, or have easy access to it, so you could always contact me with your views in other ways instead including email (see back page). I'm really looking forward to hearing your ideas.



LAMBETH HOUSING STRATEGY 2008—2013

Lambeth is a borough facing many housing challenges. There are ever growing waiting lists, high levels of overcrowding and specific demands to meet from different sections of the community. Disabled people have had a particularly raw deal and Lambeth's new Housing Strategy 2008 - 2013 must give a high priority to addressing their needs. The draft strategy identifies six key issues:

- improving the supply of dwellings in the borough
- improving neighbourhoods
- improving access to housing and supporting vulnerable people in the borough
- mixed and sustainable communities
- tackling worklessness
- empowering residents



The Council wants views before the strategy is finalised. The consultation period will last until 21 November 2008. You can see the draft strategy on the Council website at <http://tinyurl.com/5qq2s6> where you can also fill in an on-line form to send your comments. You can also get more information from Tunde Hinton on email: thinton@lambeth.gov.uk or telephone: 020 7926 3109.

LAMBETH COUNCIL BUDGET CONSULTATION 2009/2010

This year, the Council is particularly interested in residents' perceptions of Lambeth's financial management and performance, and in how people like to be communicated with about council finances. Opinions are sought on reducing waste and increasing recycling, street care and cleaning services, the fitness and well being of the community and crime and disorder concerns. You can find out more at the Council's website at

<http://tinyurl.com/6rkz5h> and complete an on-line survey. If you prefer to order a paper copy of the survey ring 020 7926 0866. There is a chance to win £50 in vouchers. The deadline is 28th November.



Volunteering for mental health services.

To follow the celebration of World Mental Health Day on 10th October, we would like to let you know of some great volunteering opportunities available within three local mental health organisations. Volunteering is a great way to rebuild confidence, learn new skills and meet new people and can be a good way back into paid employment.

Capital Volunteering helps mental health users get involved in various projects including mentoring and befriending work. For general information visit: www.capitalvolunteering.org.uk or ring 020 7812 0032. Read details on the following organisations' volunteering schemes and the relevant people to contact.

Fanon Capital Volunteering Project helps people from black and minority ethnic backgrounds get involved. Their initiatives involve music making, sound production and performance and they are also setting up a befriending scheme and looking for people interested to train and become a befriender. For more information please telephone: 020 7737 2888 or email: joy.sutherland@southsidepartnership.org.uk.

Lambeth Mind works with partner organisations as well as providing general volunteering information. Volunteers are all mental health service users and are involved in all aspects of each organisation's work from helpline to website design, administration, befriending and more. For information please contact Rob Harrison on 020 7735 3505 or email info@slmind.freeserve.co.uk.

Website : www.lambethmind.org.uk
Telephone 020 7733 9600



South London and Maudsley NHS Trust (SLaM) supports people who use mental health services to volunteer both within the Trust and with local community organisations. They cover a variety of voluntary jobs and offer encouragement, support, and training for people to have a positive experience in volunteering. Please contact Sarah McDonald on 020 7926 2327 or email sarah.mcdonald@slam.nhs.uk

NOTICE BOARD



I-count card If you are a disabled adult or child residing in Lambeth, you could be eligible for an I-COUNT card, which works as a discount and queue priority pass to many locations and events such as hospitals, GP surgeries, theatres, cinemas, football matches, themed parks and other venues. You can register through referral or filling in an application form. The golden rule to know where to use the pass is simply to ask. For more information visit www.i-count.org email register.services@smpct.nhs, or telephone 020 8770 8201.

Adapted Car Hire specialises in the hire of vehicles for use by disabled

Drivers and passengers or people with mobility issues.

Vehicles include hand controls, good wheelchair accesibility, lightweight ramps and other features. From £80 per day including insurance and delivery. For more information please contact 0845 6862 007, website www.adaptedcarhire.co.uk



Furniture Aid South Thames
Has your community care grant been turned down? Do you need low cost furniture? You could now buy quality second hand furniture at good cost plus delivery through FAST. You will need to be in receipt of either Income Support, Housing Benefit and/or Family Tax Credit and be referred by a professional. Please telephone 020 7793 7787 or email furniture@furniture-aid.co.uk website www.furniture-aid.co.uk

Free skills training and work experience project available for disabled people

wanting to move back into employment. All courses lead to recognised qualifications and cover catering, administration,



gardening, computing, skills for life. They will also help you with your job search and offer work experience placements. If interested call New Horizons on 020 7801 9813 or email Newstart@sharecommunity.org.uk

who we are & how to contact us

www.disabilitylambeth.org.uk



We are an independent charity serving disabled adults with all types of impairments in Lambeth, providing:

Advice & information on
living with a disability

Direct Payments Support Service
direct.payments@disabilitylambeth.org.uk

User Involvement Project for people with
physical & sensory impairments
user.involvement@disabilitylambeth.org.uk

Advice casework in
welfare benefits, housing
and community care

Lambeth & Southwark Stroke User
Involvement Network

You can contact us Monday to Friday 10am to 1pm on :

020 7738 5656

enquiry.line@disabilitylambeth.org.uk

Teams: Advice & Information
020 7738 5656
Direct Payments
020 7642 0041 / 2016
User Involvement
020 7642 2054
Stroke Network
020 7642 2054

Fax: 020 7924 9621
Post: 336 Brixton Road
London SW9 7AA

Join us ... DASL
membership is free!

DASL provides vital services to local disabled people. Building a strong and active membership is a key part of our organisation's future. We want more disabled people and others who support our work to become members. When you join you will receive this newsletter regularly and have opportunities to get more involved with what we do.

Contact us on 020 7738 5656 for more details.

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