**DIRECT PAYMENTS FORUM MINUTES**

**London Borough of Merton**

**Committee Rooms B & C**

**19th June 2019**

**1.00pm to 2.45pm**

**Present:**

Slim Flegg SF (Chair)

David Slark DS (LB Merton Procurement & Direct Payments Manager)

Joycelyn King JK (LB Merton Direct Payments Officer)

Vannya Vassileva VV (LB Merton Managed Accounts Officer) (Minutes)

Elaine Tinn ET (LB Merton Social Worker)

Pauline Mclean PM (LB Merton Direct Payments Officer)

Humaira Fawad HF (Raza home care)

Ambreen Raza AR (UK home care services)

**Speaker:**

Heather Begg HB (LB Merton Business Process Lead)

**1. Introductions & apologies**

The Chair introduced himself to everybody and opened the meeting with all attendees introducing themselves.

**2. Minutes from previous Meeting & Matters arising**

The Chair asked if everyone had seen and read the Minutes from the previous meeting held on the 15th January 2019. Attendees agreed that they had seen a copy of the previous minutes, which all agreed to be an accurate recording of the previous Forum.

Matters Arising:

Transport available for customers attending the forum: DS advised customers to contact the DP team if they believe that they required transport to get to the forum and that it could be arranged if the Council considered it appropriate.

DS agreed to send the Direct Payments Officer contact list with the minutes.

The Chair asked to get clarity about the use of transport for PA’s. ET advised that clients should discuss this with their PA when forming the contract of employment regarding the costs involved. ET advised that if a customer is also in receipt of Mobility Benefit this is paid to cover such things as travel where a PA’s assistance is required. ET advised that other Council’s do provide a pass similar to a Freedom pass for carers/PA’s but this is not something Merton provides.

DS agreed that the issue of transport would be added to the agenda for the next forum.

A customer asked why he did not receive a letter explaining the different direct payment amounts that he got. DS confirmed that all customers had been written to explaining the increase in direct payment rates and if customers have any queries, they should contact a member of the direct payments team.

DS did say that the direct payment team would review its written communications regarding increases in direct payment rates for future direct payment rate uplifts.

DS confirmed that the current direct payment rate does include an element to cover bank holiday rates. SF said that the conversation needs to be had in the near future about the bank holiday rate and this perhaps could be discussed at a future forum. DS agreed.

**3. Direct Payment Literature update - David Slark**

DS explained that unfortunately the revised direct payment literature had taken a little longer than anticipated for the launch, but was confident that the literature once launched will support customers significantly to manage their direct payment even more effectively.

DS explained that the Council had recently held a small working group of direct payment customers to review the draft direct payment literature and this had been very useful.

DS asked if any other customers wish to review the draft direct payment literature they should let him know by the end of the forum and provide him with any feedback by the end of next week (28th June 2019).

DS confirmed that he anticipated that he now expects the literature to be launched around the 1st July 2019.

DS said that all customers will be written to when the literature is launched and that this will include a new Direct Payment Agreement that customers will need to sign and return in the pre-paid envelope provided.

The literature will be published on the Council’s website but will also be available to customers in paper form should customers wish to receive it in this way.

**4. Support and Training customers may need for more efficient management of their Direct Payment**

DS asked everybody what other additional training & support they might need to more efficiently manage their Direct Payments.

Among the things that were identified was:

1. Some customers were not aware what a direct payment could be used for.
2. Organisations that could support direct payment customers.
3. Additional support for customers in finding agencies and employing Personal Assistants.

DS advised that the Council would look to consider these in more detail and in particular look to see if there is any training and support that the Council can commission for customers employing Personal Assistants.

**5. Strategic Partner Programme**

HB said that she is overseeing the Well-being and Carers services as part of the Strategic Partner Programme that will be running from April 2019 for the next 3 years. She said that the Council is committed to developing services that prevent, reduce and delay resident’s needs from increasing accessible to a wider reach of customers in Merton. There will be an Information and Advice Forum set up soon, more details to follow. For more information on the programme, please use the following link:

<https://www.merton.gov.uk/communities-and-neighbourhoods/community-groups-and-centres/strategic-partner-programme>

HB said that she is working on developing a co-produced Carers Strategy for Merton and will be engaging with carers and other stakeholders during August and September. She will circulate more information for the next forum.

**6. Warm and well programme**

Apologies were given for Catherine from the Wimbledon Guild. She will be coming to the next forum instead.

HB said that she is overseeing the Well-being programme that will be running for the next 3 years and advised that the Council is committed to making the information in general more accessible. There will be an Information and Advice Forum soon, more details to follow.

**7. Questions and Answers**

1. A customer commented that they were not fully aware what a direct payment could be used for.

Response: DS said that the direct payment officer explain what a direct payment can be used for when they are first referred for a direct payment.

However, in general terms the direct payment can only be used for what is set out in the assessed Care and Support Plan.

b) A Customer said that at the end of the financial year she always seem to have excess on the account. Can she use it to pay for medical supplies?

Response:

A direct payment cannot be used to pay for medical supplies.

c) A customer who is a carer asked how they could get respite and they find it difficult to find reliable agencies.

Response: HB confirmed that respite is for a carer’s need and this will be addressed via the carer’s assessment.

Carer’s assessments can be completed either as part of a joint assessment (customer and carer) by one of the social work teams, or a separate carer’s assessment can be completed by the Carers Hub. A Carer can be referred to the Carers Hub simply by contacting Carers Support Merton either by phone on 020 8646 7515 or email info@csmerton.org

If a carer has eligible ongoing needs, a Support Plan will be developed. This Support Plan may result in a carer’s personal budget, or their needs may be met in other ways. This other support might include a Carers Discretionary Grant- of up to £100 per annum for carers to spend to support their caring role.

The Carers Support Hub will refer carers to Adult Social Care for a carer assessment if residential respite is requested or the carer needs support quickly.

**8. Date of next meeting**

To be confirmed.