

Financial Assessments and Direct Payments Newsletter

We've had a busy year at the Financial Assessments (FA) and Direct Payments (DP) team, and have lots to share with you. To find out more on everything from a successful welfare benefits project to leading the way in new technology, read on ...

New technology increases independence

Last year the DP Team launched a new product, the pre-paid card, used by DP customers to pay for their chosen services. Merton Council are leading the way in transforming social services, and the launch has been hugely successful.



If you don't receive DPs but are interested in finding out more, please contact us on: 020 8545 3632.

There are no proposed increases to Adult Social Care charges for 2012/13

Giving something back

The FA and DP Team recently held a charity event in aid of four great charities: Shooting Star Chase, St Raphael's Hospice, World Society for the Protection of Animals and the Children's Chronic Arthritis Association. The team baked cakes and savouries to sell to staff and asked local businesses to donate prizes. We raised an impressive £2,090 – bringing our total over three years for charity to over £5,500. The day was a great success and enjoyed by all!



Subhash Parmar, DP officer, selling samosas at the cake sale

Helping you maximise your income

The Government estimates that over £5 billion in benefits goes unclaimed every year. Over the past year the FA Team have been visiting customers in Merton to help them apply for extra income from the Department for Work Pensions (DWP). So far we have helped customers receive an extra £16,000 per week in total in benefits such as Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance.

If you would like us to check if you could be entitled to more benefits, please contact us on: 020 8545 4036. We will carry out a benefit check with you over the phone, and if you are entitled to more money we will help you apply.

Do you pay the full cost for your services?

If you pay the full cost for your social services, such as having home care, there is another option that could save you money. Did you know that you could receive support from the DP Team to purchase your care privately, often at a lower rate than you would pay to the council? We can help you find an agency suitable for your needs, or even help you recruit a private personal assistant (PA) if you prefer.

To find out more contact us on: 020 8545 3632.

Merton Managed Accounts

The Merton Managed Accounts service started last August, to provide social care customers with a new option on managing their personal budget. Having a managed account gives customers the freedom of a DP without having to manage the finances. We now have over 50 customers receiving a direct payment using a Merton Managed Account.



Daniel Clark making a payment for a customer

Daniel Clark from the Merton Managed Accounts team says:

This new service is going really well. For our customers, having the flexibility to select their own social care services without having to manage a pot of funds is often a great relief. It is brilliant to see how many customers are already benefiting from the service in such a short time, while we are actively listening to our customers and will continue to make improvements where possible. Exciting times!

Automatic Financial Reassessment

We are getting ready to complete your annual reassessments, so look out for a letter telling you your new contribution towards your community care services in April. As you know, every year we increase your income by the standard amount used by the DWP to increase your state benefits, which this year is 5.2%. When you get your letter, please check the figures we have used to complete your reassessment. If any of your details are different to those used in your reassessment, you can contact us for a full reassessment.

Self-Directed Support (SDS) update

LINK (Local Involvement Network) Merton is currently doing independent research to find out more about your views of SDS and Personal Budgets. If you would like to express your views, you can go online to fill out a survey at www.mertonconnected.com/sds.

The results of the research will be used by LINK Merton in a report that will be shared with people who took part and Merton Council.

Don't forget to complete the attached questionnaire to be in with a chance of winning a £40 Marks and Spencers voucher. Our lucky winner last year was Ms D from Colliers Wood

MASCOT Telecare

MASCOT Telecare provide a range of initiatives enabling people to remain at home with independence and security.



We will shortly be consulting on whether the charging for this will be brought in line with other adult social care charges. If recommendations are taken forward it is likely changes will take place from April 2013, although changes may be introduced before that, once consultation has been completed. Look out for more information on this.

If you are interested in finding out more about Mascot, contact: 020 8274 5940.



Are you receiving DP to employ a PA?

If so, you should have recently received an invitation for your PA to attend some bite-size training sessions, on subjects such as effective communication and emergency first aid. The sessions are due to take place between 12 and 31 March, so if your PA is interested you should contact us as soon as possible on: 020 8274 5270.

Your Shout

In every newsletter we like to share with you the experiences of a DP customer and how DP has benefited them. Here is the viewpoint of DP customer Paddy Daly, who is a member of Merton's new Centre for Independent Living, a partnership group run for people with disabilities, by people with disabilities.

I was introduced to DP in 2005 and it has made a real difference to my everyday life in the community.

Since I have been on DP I can live more independently. I organise my own care and choose whom I employ regarding carers or PAs. I do my own payroll and my own accounts, which I choose to do myself as it keeps my mind occupied from time to time.

“My wife Mary has time to do what she wants”

I can keep in touch with my community and go to different committee meetings for the groups I am involved with. I have my PA with me to support me at meetings or just out for some leisure time.

My wife Mary has time to do what she wants, like going swimming, visit her friends, or go shopping at her leisure.

I choose to go to the Scill Centre in Sutton to have physiotherapy in the gym and do a computer course on the same day, all through DP. I organised this myself with my social worker and the DP Team.



Paddy Daly putting his computer skills to the test

I would recommend that anyone who has a disability, or is receiving care should try and improve their lifestyle by going on DP.

I would like to say thank you to everyone in the DP Team and in the Social Services Team for all their help. Whenever I had any queries, I got straight answers every time and they got back to me within a day or so. DP has really improved my life, as I am out a lot more in the community and keep in touch with the outside world.