

Dear Freedom Pass Holder

### **Important changes around Merton Council's issue of 'discretionary' Freedom Passes (mental health)**

In 2011 as part of a corporate savings programme, the Council agreed to stop funding 'discretionary' Freedom Passes for individuals with a mental health disability, who would not otherwise qualify for a statutory disabled persons' Freedom Pass under the Transport Act 2000. The seven categories of eligible disability criteria are:

- i) individuals who are blind or partially sighted;
- ii) individuals who are profoundly deaf;
- iii) individuals without speech;
- iv) individuals who have a disability, or have suffered an injury, which has left them with a substantial and long term adverse effect on their ability to walk;
- v) individuals who do not have arms or have a long term loss of the use of both arms;
- vi) individuals who have a learning disability that is defined as 'a state of arrested or incomplete development of mind which includes significant impairment of intelligence and social functioning';
- vii) individuals who, if they applied for the grant of a license to drive a motor vehicle under Part III of the Road Traffic Act 1988, would have their application refused pursuant to section 92 of the Act (physical fitness) otherwise than on the ground of persistent misuse of drugs or alcohol.

This means that unless you qualify for a statutory disabled persons' Freedom Pass, from 01 April 2013, your 'discretionary' Freedom Pass will no longer be valid for free travel on London's public transport network and it will stop working at barriers or card readers on public transport.

All current Freedom Passes are printed with the expiry date of March 2015 or March 2016, but we will automatically deactivate them, so they will stop working on 1 April 2013. You do not need to return your pass to the Council. However, we ask that you cut the Freedom Pass in half on this date and **do not attempt** to use it when you travel. If a public transport staff member asks you to hand over your pass because it is invalid you must do so.

Before we deactivate your 'discretionary' Freedom Passes, we would like to invite you to re-apply and we will review your circumstances to identify if you are eligible for a statutory disabled persons' Freedom Pass. You will need to reapply by 1 March 2013 (please see enclosed application form). This enables us to consider your application and make arrangements for the replacement to be issued before your current one expires. If you are currently in receipt of services from South West London and St Georges Mental Health Trust, Merton Adult Community teams then please make sure you discuss this with your care coordinator.

If you choose not to re-apply, then we will still deactivate your Freedom Pass on 1 April 2013.

In terms of other support with travel that is available you may be eligible for the following:

- The Mayor of London's 60+ Concessionary Scheme - If you are aged 60 or over, you may qualify. The Mayor of London, Boris Johnson, has announced that Londoners who reach 60 years of age can apply for a new type of Oyster photo-card. The new pass restores their entitlement to free travel on Transport for London services 24 hours a day and seven days a week. The concession - the 60+ London Oyster Photocard - will expire when a customer's age reaches the age of eligibility for the London Councils Freedom Pass.
- TFL scheme; Oyster Bus and Tram Discount photo-card. Criteria aged 18-60 and in receipt of Income Support, Employment and Support Allowance, or Jobseekers Allowance for 13 weeks. Pay half fares.
- TFL Student discounted fares.
- Disabled Persons railcard cost £20 reduces cost of fares by 1/3, plus travel for another person.
- Taxi cards - allocated number of journeys at a reduced cost.
- Short-term travel costs as part of a personal budget.
- DWP - if individuals are seeking work, or are engaged in a training programme approved by the DWP
- Hospital Travel Cost Scheme- Claiming fares for appointments with your doctor or care coordinator- The South West London and St Georges Mental Health NHS Trust uses this scheme for all patients who are in receipt of means tested benefits; ESA, JSA, Child tax credit. The process is simple; all receipts for travel and proof of benefits should be taken to the cashiers at Springfield Hospital and they will provide a book which can then be used to claim fares for the cost of travelling on public transport.

If you have a specific question or concern, please discuss this with your care coordinator or staff in the Recovery and Support Team. For those who no longer receive a service from Community Mental Health services please contact Merton Support Services on 020 8274 4901.

Yours sincerely

Sean Cunniffe

Merton Support Services