

# Financial Assessments and Direct Payments Newsletter

It's the start of a new year at the Financial Assessments (FA) and Direct Payments (DP) team, and we have lots to share with you. To find out more about the benefits of prepaid cards and one reader's own story of their DP experience read on...

## Universal Credit and PIP

Benefits are changing. Here is a quick summary of the changes you can expect to see...

### Universal Credit

UC is an integrated single benefit with a 'one fits all' approach. Universal Credit will be the umbrella term for the following benefits: **Income based JSA, Income related ESA, Income Support, Working Tax Credits, Child Tax Credits and Housing Benefit.**

The launch for this will be October 2013 and all claimants of the benefits listed above will be gradually phased over to Universal Credit by the end of 2017.

**Please note you do not need to do anything for this change.**

**Contact:** Welfare Benefits Service  
Support & Development Team  
London Borough of Merton  
2nd Floor Merton Civic Centre  
London Road Morden SM4 5DX  
Telephone: 020 8545 4178  
Email: [welfarebenefitsteam@merton.gov.uk](mailto:welfarebenefitsteam@merton.gov.uk)



### PIP

From 8 April 2013, a new benefit called Personal Independence Payment (**PIP**) will replace Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for disabled people aged 16 to 64.

*The changeover will begin October 2013 and everyone on DLA will have been contacted with details of what they need to do next by 2016.*

**If you have any queries regarding this article, more information can be found on [www.dwp.gov.uk](http://www.dwp.gov.uk)**

**Alternatively, you can come and talk to a Welfare Benefits Officer at the Civic Centre every Wednesday/Thursday.**

To arrange an appointment with the Welfare Benefits Service, you can contact them on the contact details to the left of this page.

## Prepaid Cards

Last year we introduced the prepaid card scheme. To date over 400 of you have signed up for a prepaid card to pay for your chosen services!

In July 2011, the Direct Payments team began issuing prepaid cards to all new customers as a more convenient and up to date way of making payments for care services. At the beginning of last year the team started the process of transferring all existing Direct Payment customers onto the card.

Benefits to our customers include no more filling in and sending us paperwork every month and the convenience of being able to make a payment from home by telephone. For those customers who have chosen to use the online service, payments can be transferred at any time, including evenings and weekends.

Payments into individual bank accounts will be phased out shortly and support is available to activate your card and understand how to make payments.

**Any customer who has not yet received their card should contact our duty number on: 020 8545 3632**



## Charity Fundraising

The FA and DP Team recently held a charity event in aid of three great charities: Shooting Star Chase, St Raphael's Hospice and World Society for the Protection of Animals.

The team baked cakes and asked local businesses to donate prizes for a tombola and silent auction. We raised an impressive £1793.56!!!



*Kiri and Diane on the tombola*

### Direct Payments Forum

The Next DP forum date is as follows:  
**Monday 11<sup>th</sup> March 2013 at 12:30 – 14:30**  
at All Saints Day Centre, Wimbledon

## Independent Living Fund Changes

The Independent Living Fund (ILF) was created in 1988 when direct payments could not be made by local authorities and there was very limited choice and control available for disabled people within the mainstream system. Since it started the ILF has played a valuable role in helping disabled people purchase their own support using direct cash payments.

However, the care system has undergone fundamental reform since the creation of the ILF.

Unfortunately, it has been decided by the government that on 31 March 2015 the ILF will close, and from that point local authorities in England will have the responsibility for meeting the care and support needs of current ILF users.

Until 2015 the commitment to maintain current awards remains.

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## Merton CIL (Centre for Independent Living)

Merton CIL will be running a series of Information and Advice Surgeries around Merton in March. The dates for these are:

12.03.13 – St Marks Centre, Mitcham  
21.03.13 – Pollards Hill Library  
22.03.13 – Raynes Park Library



## Merton Managed Accounts Update 2013

Currently 115 customers are receiving a Merton Managed Account Service. The service is supporting those customers who perhaps feel unconfident in managing a Personal Budget (care funds), it provides customers with the freedom to choose their own care services just like a Direct Payment but with the benefit of the council managing the payment of all the acquired invoices.

The service is now in its second year and continued improvements are being made where possible. We are very happy to hear from community members if they have any suggestions for improvement.

We hope the Merton Managed Account service continues to enable more and more customers to benefit from using a Direct Payment as part of their care package. Happy New Year!

*Daniel Clark*  
Merton Managed Accounts Officer  
020 8545 3925

### PA Training

If you are interested in finding out more about bite size training courses for your PA or you need help filling out an application form for training you can contact:

**Selena Gardiner on 0208 274 5270**

**There are no proposed  
increases to Adult  
Social Care charges for  
2013/14**

## Your Shout

In every newsletter we like to share with you the experiences of a DP customer and how DP has benefited them. This issue we have interviewed George and Pam and their very unique Personal Assistant, Michael, who is a British Sign Language PA.

George and Pam have been receiving Direct Payments since September 2011.

Being on Direct Payments has enabled us to employ Michael as our PA. As we are both deaf, having a British Sign Language PA has made the world of difference to us.

***“Things were becoming impossible but now Michael helps us communicate with the outside world and also with the housework, things have improved greatly”***

Pam says: Having epilepsy and mobility problems means going out of the house can be difficult, but now Michael attends hospital appointments and any other outbound trips with me to assist and interpret I have more freedom to go out, which makes me really happy.

Michael also helps with the weekly food shopping and little walks out to get milk and small items as and when needed.

Michael will do any paperwork, making sure we're up to date, check the post, explain bills and any letters we have difficulty with, book appointments and chase up any problems over the phone.

George has chronic arthritis and is bed bound most of the time. He says:

***“The help from Direct Payments has meant that we are still able to keep running our home”***

With Michael helping us to contact companies, we have even started to redecorate. We have done the bedroom now and plan to do the living room next.

Michael says: George and Pam are a lovely couple and I enjoy my time with them.

*George, Pam and their PA, Michael*



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 M Crosby from Mitcham. Congratulations!