

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 read on...

MMA- Shortlisted for the LGC awards

Merton Managed Accounts has been shortlisted in this year's LGC awards in the Innovation category.

The awards saw their highest number of entries ever so to be shortlisted is a fantastic achievement.



Daniel Clark – Merton Managed Accounts

Direct Payment Forum Dates



DP Forums will be held at the All Saints Centre, Wimbledon, on the following dates:

- Monday 24th March @ 1pm
- May 19th @ 1.30pm
- September 22nd @ 1.30pm
- December 8th @ 1.30pm

Read the interview with the DP Forum chair, Slim Flegg, on page 6.

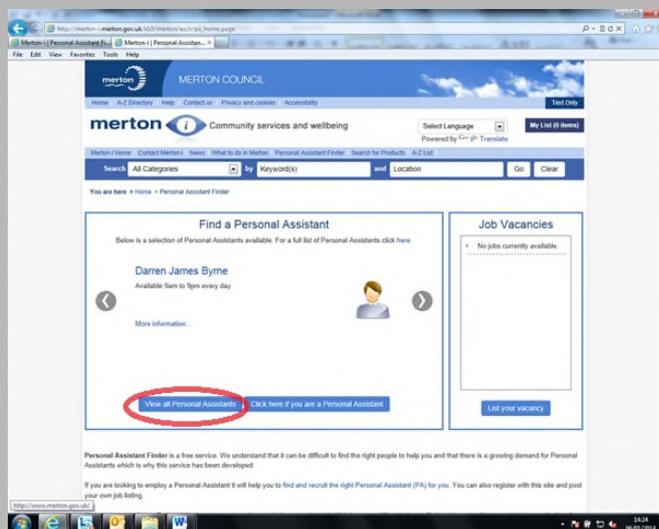
There are no proposed increases to adult social care charges in 2014/15

Personal Assistant Finder

We have an exciting new development in the Direct Payments team. Our brand new Personal Assistant finder is up and running.

We understand that it can be difficult to find the right people to help you and that there is a growing demand for personal assistants. This is why we have developed a database of personal assistants.

The database can be found on the Merton-i portal, which is part of Merton's larger website.



This database enables our customers that are looking for a PA, to search for suitable candidates themselves.

You will be able to select helpful filters such as male/female and the type of care provided by the PA to narrow your search and ensure you find the best matches for your needs.

If your PA is looking for more work, encourage them to register and keep their details updated...

How to access the PA Finder

Simply type 'merton i' into google or type the web address below.

<http://www.merton.gov.uk/>

Once you are on the home page for merton, type merton-i into the keyword search and you will be able to click on the merton- i homepage.

Once you are on the merton-i page (see below), click on the 'Personal Assistant Finder' link at the top of the page, and you will be able to:

- Read and contact our list of PA's
- Find details about how your PA can register with us
- Read through employer information
- Read and print our care and cleaning agency lists
- List a job vacancy if you are looking for a PA

If you experience any trouble logging on, please call 020 8545 3610



Auto enrolment for workplace pensions

People are living longer yet too many people are under-saving or not saving at all for what could be a long retirement. The law on workplace pensions has changed to make it easier for millions more people to build up a pension, particularly those on lower incomes.

Automatic enrolment means that, rather than having to actively choose to join a pension scheme, all staff are put into one by their employer as a matter of course. If they don't want to be in the pension scheme, they must actively choose to opt out. It's to encourage people to stay in pension saving.

The new law means that every employer must automatically enrol workers into a workplace pension scheme if they:

- are aged between 22 and State Pension age
- earn more than £9,440 a year
- work in the UK

For more information, you can contact **The Pensions Regulator** on:

Tel: **0845 600 1011**
customersupport@autoenrol.tpr.gov.uk



Rates

Here is a reminder of the charges for community care services.

Home care	£16.64 per hour
Transport	£2.70 per day
Day centre charges vary. Below is a guide:	
Woodlands day centre	£31.37 per day
JMC day centre	£50.20 per day
Cumberland day centre	£54.28 per day
High Path day centre	£36.00 per day
All Saints day centre	£35.80 per day
Eastway day centre	£37.80 per day

The above charges are the standard charges applied to the services. However, you are entitled to receive a financial assessment to see if these charges can be reduced, in part or in full.

Please note; the Homecare charge of £16.64 is the rate per carer. If your needs mean you require more than one carer to visit you **at the same time** (if you require hoisting, for example), you will be charged this amount for each carer. This is known as a double up service.

If you have a query about your financial assessment, direct payment or your Merton managed account and would like to contact us by email, here are the contact addresses you need:

- Financial.assessment@merton.gov.uk
- Directpaymentsduty@merton.gov.uk
- mmaduty@merton.gov.uk

Employers Liability Insurance

As an employer, you need to take out insurance. This is mandatory because you have a legal duty to insure against accidents or injury to your employee, or accidents or injury caused by them while they work for you.

Employers Liability Insurance is the minimum requirement. This will insure you against your PA having an accident or becoming ill while working for you, where you might be held responsible and therefore liable

Insurance also entitles you to employment advice covering issues such as disciplinary, grievances, money issues and disputes.

There are a number of companies in the market that provide this type of insurance and you can use the direct payment lump sum to pay for this.

We have had great feedback from our customers about Fish and Premier Care

It is very important that you do not allow your insurance cover to lapse; it must be renewed every year!

If you are unsure whether you have insurance or would like to talk to a member of the Direct Payment team about how to take out insurance, please call on **020 8545 3928**.



National Conference for Personal Assistants 2014



Ruils (a user led charity that supports individuals to live independently at home and in the community) have secured funding from Skills for Care to host the first ever **National Conference for Personal Assistants**. This is a really exciting opportunity for PAs to get involved and raise their professional profile. It will also be an opportunity to meet with their peers but also learn from specialist providers.

The first conference will be held at the Friends Meeting House in Euston on the 12th March.

PA's will need to contact Julie at juliebrotherton@ruils.co.uk or call on **020 8831 6083** if they would like to attend.

Update about ILF

On 6th November, the Court of Appeal overturned the government's decision to close the ILF. This means the transfer review programme has stopped for the time being.

The Government is considering the Court of Appeals decision carefully and will write to all concerned once there are further updates on the future of the ILF.

Do you need Benefits advice?

The Welfare Benefits Service offers residents of the borough help and advice with the benefits they could be entitled to.

The service offers advice about:

- Whether you are entitled to claim the above benefits, allowances and tax credits;
- Help with filling in the forms;
- Sending the forms to the correct place; and
- Help with first stage Department for Work and Pensions appeals.

You can come and talk to a Welfare Benefits Officer at the Civic Centre every Wednesday or Thursday.

30-minute appointments are given for:

- Advice on eligibility for benefits.
- A general welfare benefits check to see if you are receiving all the benefits you may be entitled to.

1-hour appointments are given for:

- Advice for more than one person (i.e.: you and your carer)
- Help filling in a form to apply for benefits.

Once an appointment is made, we will confirm the appointment in writing and let you know what information you will need to bring with you when you come for your appointment. You should contact the service if the time or date doesn't suit you.

Home Visits:

The Welfare Benefits Service provides a Welfare Benefits Advice home visit service to clients who are housebound or are unable to come to the Civic Centre due to limited mobility.

Please contact us to discuss your requirements for a home visit.

The home visits will include welfare benefit checks and help completing benefit claim forms.

Once an appointment is made, we will confirm the appointment in writing and let you know what information you will need to have ready when we visit you.

You should contact the service if the time or date doesn't suit you.

To arrange an appointment with the Welfare Benefits Service, you can contact the service using the contact details below:



**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**

Your Shout

Slim Flegg has been receiving Direct Payments since 2000 and chairing the Direct Payments Forum since its inception ten years ago.

“Direct Payments have enabled me to do what I want, when I want, and to carry on living independently in my own home which is so important to me”

I use Direct Payments to employ my own personal assistants. I advertise, interview and select the best match for me.

I have been chairing the DP Forum for over 10 years and I really enjoy doing it. I have got so much out of DP so I want everyone else to be able to do the same.

The DP forum is very important because it enables people to share their experiences and learn from each other. You can discuss your problems with other DP users that can understand and talk to DP staff too. We often have guest speakers sharing helpful information and I personally have learnt a lot from these sessions.

Past speakers have included people from social services, occupational therapy, Merton CIL, Insurance companies, disability advocates and the ILF. We will have more guest speakers this year.

The forum is also a perfect opportunity to give feedback on how you think the service could be improved.

“My hope is that the forum will continue for a long time and expand”

It would be very nice if more DP users could attend and share their stories.

If you have any ideas for the forum or suggestions for people you would like to see speak at a forum, please get in touch with us on 020 8545 3632.



Slim Flegg (DP Forum Chair)

Don't forget to complete the attached questionnaire to be in with a chance of winning a £40 Marks and Spencer's voucher. Our lucky winner last year was Irene P from Morden. Congratulations!