

# Direct Payments Newsletter

## Welcome to the 3<sup>rd</sup> edition of the Direct Payments Newsletter!

Our newsletter is brought to you quarterly and is an opportunity for us to provide you with up to date information, and for you to share with us and other direct payment users, your views and experiences.

The newsletter can also be viewed on our website at [www.merton.gov.uk/directpayments](http://www.merton.gov.uk/directpayments)

In this issue you'll find articles on the Personal Assistance Database and the Independent Living Fund. There's also an update about what the Direct Payment Team have been up to, including information on the Customer Service Excellence Award.

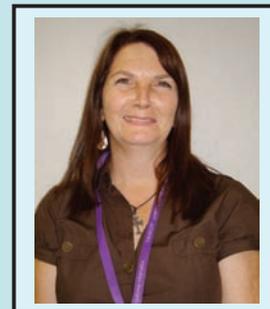
## Welcomes and Goodbyes!

We are pleased to welcome Vicky Pombo back to the team. You can contact Vicky between Wednesday and Friday on 020 8545 3925.



Vicky Pombo

At the same time we sadly say goodbye to Ruth Bayley. Ruth has been with the team for 14 months. Good luck Ruth!



Ruth Bayley

[www.merton.gov.uk](http://www.merton.gov.uk)



The Government Standard



## New Direct Payment Rates

The following figures are effective from 27 April 2009:

Private PA's	We give £10.65 per hour. You can then pay your PA up to £8.42 per hour
Hourly rate for agencies	£10.47 per hour
Half hour rate	£6.75 per half hour (agency only)
$\frac{3}{4}$ hour rate	£8.63 (agency only)
Day rate for 24 hour care employed PA	£123.32
Weekly live in rate	£680.28 per week
Sleep in rate employed PA's	£37.10 per night
Day Care rate	£40.30 per day inclusive of transport

Full details of the new rates, other updated appendices, lists of care agencies and contact details can be found on the direct payments website (address on page one)

If you have any questions contact Diane Spicer on 020 8545 3415 or Krishna Dave on 020 8545 3609.

## Personal Assistant Database

The personal assistant (PA) database is a list of carers available for work. Access to this list allows those who are looking for a PA the ease of using the database rather than going through the recruitment, process. This method saves time and money.

Carers could be employed to do anything from personal care to assisting someone to the park. We are especially looking for male carers, and younger carers happy to assist with outdoor activities.



Photo: Mencap 2007

In order for the PA database to provide you with better support, it needs to grow. If you know anyone who is a carer, or interested in becoming one, and is available for work, they can add their name to the database.

You can apply via the website at [www.merton.gov.uk/personal-assistant-database](http://www.merton.gov.uk/personal-assistant-database).

Alternatively, request an application form by calling 020 8545 4624.

## Independent Living Fund



The Independent Living Fund (ILF) was set up by central Government, and is designed to help disabled people live independently at home.

### Who is eligible?

You would be eligible if you:

- Are between 16-65 when you apply
- Already get support from social services, including direct payments, up to the value of at least £320 per week, but less than £785 per week
- Receive or are entitled to the highest rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance
- Have capital of less than £23,000

You can use payments to employ a care agency or personal assistant for personal and domestic tasks. However, the money cannot be used for things such as equipment or adaptations to your home.

If you would like to find out more about ILF, please contact:

**Telephone** 0845 601 8815 or  
0115 945 0700

**Website** [www.ilf.org.uk](http://www.ilf.org.uk)

## Self-Funders

We are pleased to announce you can now be a direct payments user even if you are a self-funder. You might be a self-funder because you have savings over the current savings limit of £23,000, or you might have chosen to pay the full cost of your care.

In these cases, the Direct Payment Team are now available to help you choose the care that will best suit your needs. You will still be liable for paying for care and won't receive any money from Merton Council for your care. But the team will assist you in finding a PA or perhaps an activity you are interested in pursuing.

Why not make use of the expertise and knowledge of the team to find something suitable for you?

For more information, please contact us on 020 8545 3632.

## Finance Surgery

If you need assistance in completing your monthly monitoring forms, we can help. We are running finance surgeries at the Civic Centre on the first Tuesday of every month, where you can meet with the Direct Payment Finance Officer, who will guide you through the monitoring process and advise you on how to complete the monitoring form. If you would like to make an appointment to come in at these times, please contact Tina on 020 8545 3632.

## Suggestions and Comments

We would like you to share with us and other Direct Payment Users Any useful tips you have picked up whilst receiving direct payments, which you think could also help other people. Maybe you know about certain specialist organisations, or specialist holiday companies?



We recently received a great suggestion that we would like to pass on. Wendy Dennis receives money on direct payments partly to pay someone to go shopping for her. She has now suggested that instead of this, she orders her shopping online, and receives direct payment money to pay for the cost of delivery. The cost of this is at least half of what she had been receiving, and also gives her back the freedom of choice and to see what's available.

This is a fabulous suggestion. If you think you could benefit from this, or something similar, please contact us.

If you have any other suggestions you would like to share, contact the team on 020 8545 3632.

## Direct Payment Forum

The Direct Payment Forum is held at 1pm in the All Saints Day Centre, All Saints Road, South Wimbledon, every two months.

Future Forum dates:  
Monday 1 June 2009  
Monday 3 August 2009  
Monday 5 October 2009

If you would like to attend, contact Tina Rosenow on 020 8545 3632.

The minutes of all previous forums are available at [www.merton.gov.uk/directpaymentsforum](http://www.merton.gov.uk/directpaymentsforum)

## Tamil Translation Services

Merton Translation Service run surgeries twice monthly, on the first and third Thursday of every month, from 10am to 2pm. If you speak Tamil and would prefer to speak to a member of the Direct Payment Team or Financial Assessment Team through a translator, please let us know so we can arrange this for you. Contact us on 020 8545 3632.

## Your shout!

Each issue we try to bring you an interview or story from a direct payment user.

This issue we have interviewed a mother from Mitcham, who did not want to be named, who cares for a child with disabilities. We wanted to find out what direct payments mean to her and her child....

**Q: How did you find out about direct payments?**

A: The Children with Disabilities Team at Social Services felt that this was a way of providing my child with more suitable input to his individual needs, because they didn't feel group activity was right for him. One to one was far more beneficial to him.

**Q: How easy was it to set up direct payments?**

A: It was very easy to set up direct payments. The support officer came out and explained how it would work. I opened up a bank account and everything just fell into place. My main concern was the monitoring forms and whether I was filling them in properly, but I was able to ring the finance officers and talk through the process. I must admit that I have done this on several occasions, but they are so helpful that I don't

feel embarrassed any more.

**Q: How much has having direct payments helped your son?**

A: He really enjoys the weekly outing with just one person and he enjoys the consistency of seeing the same person every week. It is very helpful with his anxiety levels and also very helpful to talk to someone he trusts.

**Q: What would you say to other parents of children with disabilities who don't know much about direct payments?**

A: It is well worth investigating the option of direct payments, as it may be more suitable to their child's needs. Also the fact that you are employing somebody helps it to go even smoother.

If you would like to appear in the 'Your Shout' section of the newsletter, please contact Amy Bannister on 8545 3610.

## Customer Service Excellence

The Direct Payment Team are delighted to announce we have been successfully accredited with the Customer Service Excellence Award. This is awarded from Government to recognise excellent customer service. We are the first team within Merton Council and the first Direct Payment Team in the country to receive it.



The award was the culmination of 18 months hard work by the team and you, the Direct Payment Users. We hope you have seen the improvements implemented in our service as part of the accreditation process.

We would like to take this opportunity to thank you all for your input and suggestions on improving our service to you.

Please keep them coming!

## Joint effort in volunteering

The Financial Assessment Team and Direct Payment Team recently undertook a volunteering exercise at Lonesome Primary School in Mitcham.

The team transformed a section of the school's gardens, making it a brighter environment for the children to play in.



From left to right: Amy Bannister, Krishna Dave, Ruth Bayley, Fosi Paopao, Karen Chedick, Diane Spicer, Lorraine Taylor, Tina Rosenow, David Moghal and Kiri Balasingam.

## Contacting the Direct Payment Team

### By Telephone

Duty: 8545 3632  
Support team: 8545 3928 or 3109 or 3925  
Finance team: 8545 3415 or 3609

In writing

Direct Payment Team  
3<sup>rd</sup> Floor  
Merton Civic Centre  
London Road  
Morden  
SM4 1BR

You can also visit us at the civic centre, but please call ahead to make an appointment.

### Home Visit

You can arrange for a support or finance officer to see you at home to help with any direct payment issues you may have. Please phone the duty number above to arrange an appointment.

### Email and Internet

You can email us anytime on:  
[directpaymentsduty@merton.gov.uk](mailto:directpaymentsduty@merton.gov.uk)

You will also be able to find a lot of information on our website:

[www.merton.gov.uk/directpayments](http://www.merton.gov.uk/directpayments)

## Next Edition....

Look out for the 4<sup>th</sup> edition of the Direct Payments Newsletter in September. In the next issue, you'll find...

- Information on Personal Budgets, including where Merton is in providing Personal Budgets, and how this may effect you
- Your shout- an article with a direct payment user
- The Centre for Independent Living

Have you won an award, taken up an interesting hobby, or maybe you've found an inventive way of using your direct payments. Whatever it is – you could feature in the next 'Your Shout'. Remember we also want to hear from you if you have any suggestions for us.

Contact Amy Bannister on 020 8545 3610 or [amy.bannister@merton.gov.uk](mailto:amy.bannister@merton.gov.uk)

# Self Directed Support Open Forum

The first of a series of open forums for people to practice using the self directed support tools.

A chance to network with other people who are part of Phase One of the Self Directed Support Project in Merton.

**Monday 20 July 2009**  
**10.30am-1.30pm**

All Saints Day Centre, All Saints Road,  
Wimbledon

Please contact All Saints 020 8542 9587 or [geoff.gregory@merton.gov.uk](mailto:geoff.gregory@merton.gov.uk) if you have any transport or support requirements for this event