

Notes of RPCAG Focus Meeting  
Friday 14 March  
Direct Payments

Attendees:

Michelle Williams	Manager of Social Services
Jackie Jones	Head of RUILS
Olga Sermon	Parent
Debra Lee	Parent
Mereille Khair	Parent
Funke Laseinde	Parent
Salima Bouriche	Parent
Kate Griffiths	Parent / Trustee Metoo & co
Sylvie Harding	Parent
Barry Woodward	Parent / Vice Chair RPCAG
Paul Leonard	Parent
Kate Thomson	Parent
Joanne Kemp	Parent / Chair RPCAG
Pat leggett	Administrator RPCAG
Jacqui Hindley	Parent

Jackie Jones, Head of RUILS, opened the meeting and agreed to explain what Direct Payments are. Direct Payments legislation was introduced in 1994. It is part of the process of assessment. An Assessment is carried out to identify the needs of the child. When needs are identified e.g. a carer to help for three hours per week, these hours can be converted into cash for the individual. RUILS is there to help families to take on Direct Payments and explain to them how the payments can be used. The payment stays with the parent until the child is 18 then the child can take it on at transition. If the child is unable to manage, the payment will stay with the parent.

There have been a number of pilot schemes carried out around the country and there will be a report on the result of these at the end of April. Direct Payments try to put all funding pots together. There has been a push to get them for Adult Services. In 2012 details will be published as to how they can be used. 100 families have taken part in the trials. Direct Payments have proved to be very flexible. They can be used to employ people, purchase equipment, travel, respite care and social activities. Regular checks are made by the Local Authority into how the payments are being used.

Another service RUILS offer is a personal assistant finder scheme. A personal assistant can be a carer, a sitter or a helper. Direct Payments is a result of people with disabilities wanting to employ their own carers (personal assistants). RUILS supports parents in their efforts to employ people of their own choice and they offer payroll services to help them in their role as an employer. One parent asked if the

'employer' needs to do CRB checks. It appears that individuals do not use the checks. Michelle Williams pointed out that the Local Authority does ask for CRB checks of anyone they employ. JJ said that RUILS do check if the person is 'legal' and they do follow up references. When the assessment is completed the parent is checked to see if they can manage their Direct Payment and when the child is old enough to take over the Direct Payment the child will be checked also.

Jacky Jones said there is a project being carried out between Becky Powell of Aiming High and Karl Burgess Head of Transition. 20 families in Richmond will take part in the project. Details of the project can be found on [www.helensanderson.org.uk](http://www.helensanderson.org.uk) JJ spoke of number of schemes where families were pooling their resources to purchase services. This enabled them to share people or facilities. Six consortiums have already been set up in the area e.g. Stepping on Out in Twickenham. This not only helps you get more for your money it also creates circles of support.

Next, Michelle Williams, Manager of Social Services was asked to explain how assessments work. The assessments are carried out by Social Services in the family home. As a result of the assessment the Local Authority would then organise support for the family with carers, clubs, respite etc. Social Services as a result of the assessment will convert that need into how many hours are needed per week to support the family. This would then be converted into cash e.g. 2hrs x 3 times a week would equal a payment of 6hours x hourly rate. The current rate is £10.03 per hour. Payment is paid directly to the family.

MW explained that the DP could only be used to satisfy the assessment. If the assessment concludes that the family requires help in caring for the child the payment can only be used to pay for a carer. Michelle Williams said that Social Services have to do a thorough assessment and they will also continue to support the family.

Paul Leonard said the process was very helpful but families need to make their needs very clear to the person doing the assessment. MW said that the assessments do not always create a true picture. All the parents felt it would be better if they could keep the same social worker. Unfortunately, this is not possible because of the workload and the staff turnover.

Barry Woodward said a profile report was sent to the parents in advance of the assessment and it was important to complete this before the review. This can be done on a computer. MW said she had seen lots of different ways in which parents detailed their situation and agreed it is very important that the person doing the assessment is given the complete picture. MW said parents were also allowed to have an advocate at an assessment if they felt it would help.

Assessments are currently carried out annually but MW would like them to be carried out every six months. MW also wanted it made clear that the assessment was to assess the needs of the family not the need for Direct Payments. A Letter of

Agreement between the parents and the Local Authority confirms the result of the assessment. Direct Payments are paid by Social Services. DPs cannot be used for anything the Department of Health should supply. It was pointed out that if parents do employ a person they would need to take out Liability Insurance. Social Services monitor how DPs are spent and, as a result of the monitoring, letters are sent out to parents but MW said that parents do not respond. Some of the parents said they have not received letters.

Assessments do not assess for activities. If you feel this is a need you must discuss this with your social worker. It does assess quality of life or whether a break would be beneficial to the family.

Funke Laseinde said she has not had an assessment for four years and could MW tell her why. A social worker visited her but she has not heard anything and does not receive any funding. MW said if parents are not happy with their assessment they can call her department. One parent has been asking for a review for two years but was told there was no money available. JJ said RUILS could work as an intermediary in cases like this and they also offer services to help resolve issues.

JJ would like there to be a DP steering group and forum. Parents were advised to be creative with their payments. Three Wings Trust offer baby-sitting services. The person to contact is Sue Robson. The cost is according to the number of children being looked after.

MW said she would stay behind after the meeting to talk to some of the parents about their individual cases. One of the parents said it was sometimes difficult to find someone who can look after a child with complex needs for just three hours per week. JJ said maybe the hourly rate needs looking at. Social Services can help to create a job description, which might help the selection process.

Us in the Bus are doing sessions with RUILS but needs a group of people with DPs. Sylvie Harding said DP did not work for her. Social Services have been the best and most helpful solution for her giving her support through Crossroads. She felt this has saved her so much time and worry. Many parents felt that the rates of pay meant they couldn't always avail themselves of services that are on offer. SNAPS is a local nanny agency for disabled children but it is expensive. MW said Social Services would pay for Crossroads but not for SNAPS.

Kate Griffiths asked if there was a process for identifying and contacting vulnerable parents. MW said Social Services have a list of parents on register but hopes that voluntary groups like Metoo and RPCAG would speak to parents and advise them to contact Social Services. MW admits she needs a bigger team to get everything up to date but, with the economic climate, an increase in staff is not likely at the moment.

A parent asked what the social worker would be looking for during the assessment. MW said there is an assessment framework but what is most important is looking at the child's needs and the family's needs. The social worker doing the assessment

will have one hour with the parents and ½ hour with the child. Parents must give a complete picture of what their life is truly like.

Jacqui Hindley said she wanted to thank Social Services and Direct Payments for all the help and support she has received and continues to receive, this has helped her and her family so much. She also wanted to say how much she appreciates all that the Borough has to offer.

On this positive note the meeting was brought to a close.

Michelle Williams stayed behind to discuss personal issues with individual parents.

14 March 2011  
Pat Leggett

#### Contact Details

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