**Thurrock Direct Payments Engagement Group**

**17th November 2017 – 1pm to 3pm**

**The Beehive, West Street, Grays RM17 6XP**

**Attendees:**

Patrick Long, Yash Gupta, Fausto Covino, Roberta Covino, Jill Bacon, Anita Vickers

**Facilitated by:** Ian Evans (Thurrock Coalition) & Ian Kennard (Thurrock Council)

Ian K welcomed everyone to the meeting and everyone introduced themselves.

Ian K. delivered a presentation (attached) on how people can use Direct Payments and repeated the suggested purpose of the Thurrock Direct Payments Engagement Group:

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| **Suggested purpose of the Direct Payments Engagement Group** |
| * To regularly engage with Direct Payment Users. * To address key concerns and issues that impact Direct Payment Users and the Authority. * To identify gaps in applied practice or in the marketplace as a whole that relate to the use of Direct Payments. * To highlight external pressures or issues to Direct Payment users. * Identify themes to be explored that would improve the Direct Payment experience. |

As the presentation progressed, discussions took place around:

Attendance, numbers and ideas for promoting the meetings

It was highlighted that only a small number of people attended, and that despite all DP users in Thurrock receiving an invitation, many people may feel apathy and not want to take part. The fact that some DP users may also be too unwell to attend was also discussed. It was agreed that:

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| **Work should be done to promote the group with Social Workers and to get every Social Worker/Support Planner to promote the Group via any routine contact with individuals (letter/phone/email/home visits)**  **One attendee reported not receiving any help or guidance from her Social Worker re: DP and indicated that the invitation to attend DPEG was the first letter of help that they had received.**  **Any guide should cover:**   * **Who** * **What** * **Why** * **Where** * **When**   **Of Direct Payments** |

Spending Direct Payments

The issue around how to spend DP was raised by attendees as a topic of importance. The scope of DP and reasoning for what DP can and cannot be used for was raised, there has been confusion about this until now and it was agreed that:

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| **Producing a standardised Guidance and Forms for individuals to use would be helpful** |

Barriers in the Council

* Some lack of awareness of the flexibility of DP
* Too focussed upon cost, rather than outcomes
* Need to find common ground with individuals
* Individuals reported feeling like the paperwork was handed to them and then left to try and understand it themselves
* Attendees felt that more than a conversation at an initial visit about DP is required
* There are more providers available than people are told or advised about
* Attendees felt that there is a lack of reviews, and delays with assessments. People felt undervalued when “Banked”
* In terms of Micro-enterprises – it would be good to get the word out to all individuals and families and carers who could benefit from such services.
* It’s important to have a conversation and to challenge generic care assessments, and to avoid unreasonable restrictions on usage.
* Think outside the box to enable people. Example: Travel Training to attend darts sessions at working men’s club – effective and more cost-effective than paying for day care. If people can lead good lives then funding a taxi in situations, where, for example using public transport would cause distress, discomfort, anxiety etc. (non-exhaustive list) should be permitted.

Individuals as Employers and Direct Payments

The following issues were discussed by the group:

* Care Quality Commission regulation
* Self-employed carers
* Pension, National Insurance, redundancy considerations, National Living Wage, National Minimum Wage
* Attendees took the view that it is a very complex area and can often seem like a lot to take on, particularly in considering the “Risks vs. Rewards”
* If people suggest respite as a requirement in their care plan, it is **very important to be as specific as possible as to the type of respite needed**

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| **Council produced Guidance should cover all of the issues relating to Individuals as Employers and Direct Payments (above)** |

Equipment and Direct Payments

This relates to the maintenance and upkeep of equipment – importantly, it does not have to be Occupational Therapy (O.T.) issued equipment.

**The Lived Experience Scenarios**

**Scenario 1 – Josephine**

**Group ideas, views and thoughts**

* £324 per week – approximately 20 hours per week
* Personal Care support is likely – carers to help maintain her personal appearance
* Transport solutions? To access shopping, family, friends, events
* Must feel valued
* Importance of confidence building
* Importance of socialising and social inclusion
* Support with housework – how long does it take her, can she carry it out repeatedly, is it exhausting. Consider pain, tiredness, effect upon daily living on subsequent days
* Important to balance her independence (and maintaining it) with identifying the support Josephine needs to carry out tasks that are important to her overall well-being. (Encourage and Enable).
* Suggest a review after 1 month
* Call if needs change
* Review after 6 months

**Additional information that would be useful**

Ask Josephine:

* What would you like to do?
* Where would you like to go?
* When?
* Who else would you like to be involved (in activities) and (in care/support) – two separate issues
* Are you able to use a mobility scooter or similar?
* Would you be interested in employability training/re-training/education opportunities?
* Would you like to access something externally?

**Scenario 1 – Nigel**

**Group ideas, views and thoughts**

* £203 per week
* People should have choices
* “No” should not be the default response – it sets the relationship up to falter.
* Always go for Specific Outcomes
* Avoid inappropriate services
* Explore more about his interest in music – genre, expertise etc – get specific!
* Build Confidence
* Reduce Social Isolation
* Support for daughter – (specific!) respite ideas, consider holidays

**Additional information that would be useful**

Ask Nigel:

* What would you like to do?
* What do you play? What kind of instrument and music?
* Do you go to church or similar? Could this be a way to access music?
* Would transport be helpful? If so, how?
* Use open questions and “funnel down” to closed questions – get specific!
* Where would you like to go?
* When?
* Who else would you like to be involved (in activities) and (in care/support) – two separate issues
* Have you considered accessing/going along to community groups
* Local Groups
* Find out more about Daughter’s responsibilities

In terms of skills, knowledge, experience and understanding of Social Work staff individuals should be able to say the following after each interaction with a Social Worker:

The 6 Outcomes are as follows:

* I feel I have choice and am in control of the services I receive and they meet my needs
* I feel I have been listened to and understood and am in control of the assessment process
* I feel confident that social care staff know what they are doing. Social care policies are clear and understood by everyone
* I feel all information about me is shared appropriately and with my knowledge
* I understand what is available to me both in my community and from health and social care
* I feel recognised as an individual, able to make decisions for myself and my own contribution to society

**What happens Next?**

* Attendees will be kept up to date by email/their preferred contact method stated on the Group sign in sheet.

**Suggestions:**

* Shared Experience – User led discussions with Care Professionals about what a good life is for you?
* Development of useful FAQ’s and materials?
* Joint drop in clinics with Direct Payment Users and Care Professionals

**Date of the next meeting:** 25/1/18 at 1pm to 3pm @ The Beehive, West Street, Grays RM17 6XP.

**Themes of the next meetings:**

* **What is Out There?: 25th of January 2018 from: 1:00 pm to 3:00pm at the Beehive Resource Centre, West Street, Grays, Essex RM17 6XP.**
* **Direct Payment Financial Pressures: 20th of February 2018 from:   
  1:00 pm to 3:00pm at the Beehive Resource Centre, West Street, Grays, Essex RM17 6XP.**
* **What Type Of Support Do You Require?: 27th of February 2018 from: 1:00 pm to 3:00pm at the Beehive Resource Centre, West Street, Grays, Essex RM17 6XP.**