**Thurrock Direct Payments Engagement Group**

**30th November 2018 – 2pm to 4pm**

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

**Attendees:**

Patrick Long, Michelle Lewington, Adam Macdonald, Sandra Mazina, Huseyin Hurbas. Marie-Line Bannis

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

Stephanie Vallis - (Thurrock Coalition – Minutes)

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

**Update on the Direct Payments Policy**

Ian K delivered a presentation on the update of the Direct Payment Policy.

Ian K went through the purpose of the group:

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| **Purpose of the Direct Payments Engagement Group** |
| * To regularly engage with Direct Payment Stakeholders. * 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. |

IK – The DMT (Directorate Management Team) were very pleased with the new policy and want to express thanks to everyone involved in the process. The Policy has been signed off and is now in everyday practice.

The new policy is available online at Thurrock Coalition website [**http://www.thurrockcoalition.co.uk**/](http://www.thurrockcoalition.co.uk/).

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| **ACTION Ian Evans to put the new Policy on the Thurrock Coalition Website** |

PL – Asked how more people can become engaged with Direct Payments and the Engagement Group, and if we can make it easier for service users to understand as lots of people are still unaware that Direct Payments are available or where to access the information.

IK – Many people are involved in the process. They have contacted every Direct Payment user and the information is available at the Thurrock Coalition website. We’ll be contacting all Direct Payment users again to let them know about the developments and to invite them to join the Group. It’s also about training the Social Care workforce to provide a consistent message about the availability of Direct Payments.

**Further Views and Feedback on the Direct Payments Policy**

The group filled in feedback sheets on what they thought went well and what they thought did not go so well, the views were:

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| **The direct Payment Policy workshops** |
| What went well:   * Variety of debates to allow more flexibility for people to attend. * Mix of attendees. * Chance to have an input and make a difference. * Helped to understand. * Freedom to talk. * Info about the policy. * Asking questions. * Learning about rights. * Advice/ support / questions.   Not so well:   * Not well attended by service users and practitioners. * Drive for engagement. * Employing a relative still a grey area. * DP rate to elaborate and give examples i.e.: PA, neighbour, friends. * Prior to reviewing the policy, a survey was posted online but did not get any response. On reflection, practitioners could have prevented this. * Important to involve social work staff. * Can we add higher rate for more complex cases? * Could add on policy (page 15) examples of choosing to employ a person yourself e.g. PA’s. * More service users to participate in the DP engagement group. |

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| **The Direct Payment Policy** |
| What went well:   * Final version available to all not just social work staff. * Easy read version.   Not so well:   * Can we add higher rate for more complex cases? * Could add on to policy (page 15) examples of choosing to employ a person yourself e.g. PA’s. |

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| **Thinking about the DP Policy** |
| What would you like to see more of, and how can we improve the way we do things?   * Feedback questionnaire to be sent out by DP team every 3/6/12 months when Service Users are completing their return form. * An information leaflet to be made up informing people on who can qualify for DP and what services are available and have the Thurrock Coalition website address on. * A bigger drive to engage more people. * Employ a member of staff to do outreach work to inform people at groups and clubs that they already attend. * Have a drop in service available for people with a mix of professionals and service users. |

**Next steps and discussion**

The group highlighted the fact again that were low numbers of Practitioners attending the meetings as well as Direct Payment users today. The group also discussed that the Direct Payment Policy Survey was sent to many and also placed online, but out of the large number of people that attended the group only one person did so, this then lead to the decision that having a leaflet/ flyer being made up would be very beneficial for Practitioners and users containing important information such as:

* Who qualifies
* Which support is available
* Thurrock Coalition Website

Would be beneficial to make the leaflet into Easyread and maybe a read aloud version. The leaflets can be given out with monthly Returns, handed out by practitioners, placed in library’s and GP surgery’s.

A monthly newsletter could be available in a cd version for visually impaired people. Adam Macdonald suggested this could involve shared experiences from Direct Payment Users and Practitioners.

The possibility of outreach work and maybe a drop in centre being held in different areas was discussed, these could be run by Direct Payment users alongside professionals. These could be held in groups and clubs already taking place or a drop-in could be held in a local community hub, it is also very important to try and engage more families and carers who support people using or who could benefit from using Direct Payments. It could be useful to break down the Policy in to small parts to make it easier for people to understand. The sessions Ian Evans suggested those running the groups/drop-in sessions would benefit from training in:

* Public speaking
* Direct Payments / Policy
* Interviewing experience
* More involvement from LAC’s
* GDPR

The group asked If there was possible funding for this to all go ahead and Ian Kennard said that he will look into this but for the time being we can work with what is already available.

**What happens Next?**

* Ian Kennard is looking into funding for the project and will make a start on the leaflet/flyer which they hope to be ready by February
* Attendees will be kept up to date by email/their preferred contact method stated on the Group sign in sheet.
* Meetings to be held monthly.

**Date of the next meeting:** 10/1/19 at 2pm to 4pm @ The Beehive, West Street, Grays RM17 6XP