**Thurrock Direct Payments Engagement Group (DPEG)**

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**9th May 2019 @ 2pm**

**Topic: Community Contact & Peer Support**

**Attendees:**

**Ian Evans, Executive Director, Thurrock Coalition (Facilitator)  
Ian Kennard, Direct Payments Project Manager, Thurrock Council**

**Patrick Long, Thurrock Diversity Network. Direct Payments User  
Michelle Lewington, Direct Payments Officer, Thurrock Council   
Adam McDonald, Direct Payments Officer, Thurrock Council  
Rochina Raymond, Social Work Team, Thurrock Council  
  
Apologies:**

**John Campbell, Direct Payments User  
  
Introductions**

IE welcomed everyone and opened the meeting. Introductions were given. Numbers of attendees appeared lower than usual this month, this could be due to the sporadic inclement weather, affecting individual’s ability to travel

**Matters arising from the previous meeting – April 2019**

* A draft Information & Advice leaflet has been produced, based upon feedback from the previous meetings. It uses the co-produced policy as a basis and is in plain English and straightforward, easy to read language.
* A DVD/Digital version of the information contained in the leaflet will also be produced. DPEG has access to some digital video equipment to enable this to happen.  
  **Action: IE to draft a script for the video and circulate it. Ideally a suite of 90 second videos to be produced by the DPEG collectively.**
* A Training programme/framework will also be developed, based upon the policy, to be undertaken as part of employee/social worker induction. It is hoped that Thurrock Coalition will help to design and deliver the training alongside DPEG attendees, using lived experiences as examples. Training delivery now covers the whole Local Authority at a Corporate level.

**Action: IE and IK to meet with Bill Clayton – Workforce Development**

* Note: There are now just over 500 Direct Payment (DP) Users in Thurrock – Outreach, leafleting and email communication is ongoing as ways of increasing membership of DPEG and building awareness of DP in Thurrock.

**Peer to Peer Support**

The Group addressed the following Questions in turn:

**What is Peer Support?**

Involves individuals, people, friends with a shared experience coming together to discuss lived experience “on the ground” on a particular issue.

Often practical and emotional support is given as equals. Communication is vital and can be given face to face, via the phone, groups, email etc. Meetings or contact can take place on an informal basis with a variety of people, P.A’s and/or professionals with a wide ranging “skill mix.” Feedback and discussions consider and suggest actions and progress.

Visiting community groups and people in places where they already meet and providing leaflets can be an effective way of publicising peer support and sharing the positive results. For example, DPEG can be considered a Peer Support Group, whose meetings have resulted in a co-produced, co-owned policy that is now widely available, as well as increasing knowledge, understanding and awareness of Direct Payments, what they are and how they work locally.

**Who should offer support?**

The following people could be encouraged to be peer to peer supporters:

* Individuals
* P.A.s
* Carers
* Family members
* Appointees/Deputies
* Local Authority Practice Champions

**What areas should Peer Support be given on?**

Experience of:

* Spending issues
* Agencies
* Personal Assistants
* DP Returns
* Resolving Underspends
* Subsistence Payments

Each substantive topic could be dealt with at a specific meeting. Discussions could include:

* What individuals could manage/cope with themselves
* Areas in which they needed slightly more information before proceeding independently.
* Areas in which they needed more information/advice/support and how any issues were resolved.
* Signposting
* Good/Bad experiences

**Coffee Break**

**What training and Support will be required?**

* Help with public speaking and confidence building
* Developing “Speaker Notes” to guide the Peer Support sessions
* Help with understanding personal safety
* A safe place to meet
* Consider principles and agree: vision, skills, goals

**How do we attract Peer Supporters?**

* The DPEG discussed the merits and limitations of social media, in terms of audience engagement, and whether social media promotion actually leads to greater attendance
* Local press now has limited readership and distribution and is costly
* Local Groups and word of mouth publicity were discussed

**Action: DPEG concluded that visiting and speaking to local groups across Thurrock, as part of existing meetings, talking about DP and how to join DPEG would likely be the most effective way of engaging current and potential DP Users – ML, AM, PL, IE, IK all happy to attend outreach and visit local groups to publicise DP.**

**Date of next meeting: 13/6/19 @ 10am to 12 noon, The Beehive.**