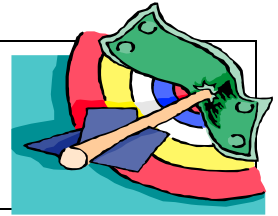


Direct Payments Project Update January 2007



The Direct Payments Project is a project of Disability Services in partnership with the Southern Metropolitan Region (SMR) and an active group of people with a disability, their family members and support people, known as the Direct Payments Consultants Group (DPCG).

Service Providers visit DPCG Workshop

Representatives from four service providers attended the last DPCG workshop of 2006. Kerry Sutton, Victorian Person Centred Services (VPCS) outlined the draft action plan, which had been prepared by the service providers at a workshop. Kerry highlighted the overarching goal of the service providers: to be the preferred service providers of direct payments users. The priority goals of the action plan are to:

1. Develop collaborative models of service provision.
2. Develop a template contract, which accommodates individual requirements.
3. Develop and implement a communication strategy to ensure direct payments is understood within the organisation.
4. Ensure people experience a smooth transition to direct payments user.
5. Develop preferred provider status with direct payments users.



Mike Jarrett and Sam Armytage, DPCG with Kerry Sutton, VPCS who is explaining the service provider direct payments action plan.

Santo Pezzamenti from Moira, David Glazebrook from IMPACT, Mick Williams from EW Tipping Foundation and Kerry discussed the action plan with the DPCG in groups.

Service providers will be conducting a survey with the direct payments users in preparation for their next workshop on 1 February. The survey will inform priority goal 1, the development of collaborative models of service provision, which together with priority goal 2 will form the basis of the next service provider workshop on 1 February 2007.

DPCG Action Plan

At their fourteenth workshop for 2006 the DPCG developed an action plan for 2007. Some of the priority pieces of work identified were the development of a website for direct payments users and an options paper to look at direct payments users employing staff. Members of the DPCG will be invited to nominate for particular working groups to progress some of the work of the action plan.

Facilitators

Facilitators participated in a forum on 14 November 2006 to share their views and experiences of being a part of the direct payments project. Facilitators come from a number of different backgrounds including being a HomeFirst coordinator, Futures for Young Adults transition officer and *Support & Choice* facilitator. Some of the views expressed at the forum included:

- Direct payments users knew more about direct payments than facilitators.
- Having broad goals meant that people have more choice in how they achieve their goals.
- Some direct payments users did not need facilitators.
- Some people may want to view curriculum vitae to help them choose a facilitator.
- More discussion is needed on the role of facilitators in relation to reviews.

Further workshops with facilitators are planned for 2007.

Sieg (Siegfried) Draws, Direct Payments Consultant and User



Sieg is the principal carer for his wife, Mardi, who has Motor Neurone Disease (MND/ALS/Lou Gehrig's Disease). Sieg and Mardi agreed to participate in the direct payments project when they were having difficulties meeting Mardi's high support needs with one service provider. Since starting on direct payments, Sieg sees that there are other advantages to

being a direct payments user. Apart from being able to purchase services from more than one provider, Sieg's view is that having control of the funding will change the provider's perspective on "who is my client" and will, in time, result in service providers paying closer attention to client needs. Being a part of the direct payments project, Sieg realises that he and Mardi are not alone and that their experiences are shared. Sieg appreciates being able to contribute to the project using his experience in service company management and as a carer. He feels confident that the DPCG can make a significant contribution to improving the standard of services to people with a disability.

Evaluation update

LDC Group has conducted interviews with all but one direct payments user to date. Interviews will be conducted with direct payments users again towards the end of the trial (June 2007) with most participants having had at least 6 months experience of direct payments.

In November LDC Group held a workshop with facilitators supporting people trialing direct payments to get their views on direct payments. The workshop covered facilitator's learnings, benefits and constraints of direct payments, the nature of the support provided by the facilitators and the role of facilitators in direct payments. Those facilitators who were not able to attend the workshop are invited to contribute to the discussion by completing a question sheet which has been sent out by email by 23 January 2007 and forwarding to Liz Dimitriadis by email: liz@ldc.net.au.

Service providers have been invited to participate in a survey by LDC Group on their experience of the direct payments trial to date. Service providers are encouraged to provide a single survey response where possible with staff who have been involved in the direct payments project or who have had contact with direct payments users collaborating on the survey questions. The survey is to be completed by 24 January 2007. For more information on this or any other aspect of the evaluation, please contact Liz Dimitriadis on liz@ldc.net.au or Tel: 9509 6972.