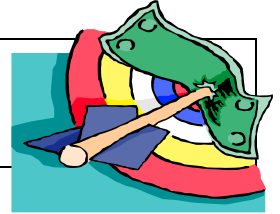


## Direct Payments Project Update

### April / May 2007



### Direct Payments Forum



A variety of perspectives on direct payments was heard at the Direct Payments Forum on 17 April 2007. Val Johnstone and John McKenna gave the views of direct payments users, highlighting increased flexibility and control among the reasons for using direct payments. The key message Val brought from all members of the Direct Payments Consultants Group was that 'once you have used direct payments there is no going back'. John explained how he is now purchasing

services such as gardening and a cleaner, rather than asking an attendant carer to do these tasks. This has been of benefit for both John and his wife in the management of their household.

Kerry Sutton from Victorian Person Centred Services described both the benefits and issues of direct payments for their service.

The evaluation framework and the feedback from the various stakeholders including direct payments users, service providers, plan facilitators and the Department of Human Services on the Direct Payments Project and the action learning approach used was outlined Liz Dimitriadis from LDC Group.

Les Scaife (pictured) is the Chair of the West Lancs Peer Support Group in England and he presented the model of peer support developed in West Lancashire to support direct payments users. Volunteers provide initial information and support to direct payments users, who, unlike in the Direct Payments Project, are also able to employ workers. Other supports provided free of charge by the Peer Support Group include a payroll service and an online personal assistant register, which enables direct payments users to view information about people interested in working as a

personal attendant and is a place for direct payments users to advertise for personal assistants.

## **Disability Services Statewide Forum**

A Disability Services Statewide Forum to be held from 9.30am – 1.30pm on Thursday 31 May will bring together service providers, industry peak bodies, advocacy organisations, local government and stakeholders from the Victorian disability sector.

The forum will include:

- An introduction to the new Minister for Community Services and an overview of Disability Services priorities
- The role of the Office of the Senior Practitioner
- New directions in Housing and Support

The keynote speaker is The Hon Gavin Jennings, MLC, Minister for Community Services and Aboriginal Affairs. The forum, which will include a light lunch, will be held in the Melbourne Convention Centre, Bellarine Room, Level 5, Corner Spencer and Flinders Street, Melbourne. To RSVP and for further information contact Kirsty Allen on 9096 2973 or email [Kirsty.Allan@dhs.vic.gov.au](mailto:Kirsty.Allan@dhs.vic.gov.au) by 22 May 2007, advising of any dietary or support requirements.

## **Action learning facilitation**



Action learning involves cycles of planning, acting, observing and replanning. The direct payments consultants group (DPCG) has a facilitator to support the group through the process of action learning and to fulfil the group's responsibilities in the project. Judy Buckingham and more recently Jacques Boulet (pictured) both from Borderlands are the action learning facilitators. One of the keys to the success of action learning is ensuring that everyone has an opportunity to contribute. Small group discussions are a regular feature of the workshops.

Borderlands has also played a key role in guiding members of the project management team through the action learning process and supporting the development of the relationship between the DPCG and the project management team.

### **Budget tracking tool developed for direct payments users**

Dean Richards, direct payments consultant, has developed a tool, which enables direct payments users to keep track of funding. Dean developed the excel spreadsheet when he was on HomeFirst and wanted to keep track of the hours of service he has used. After starting on direct payments Dean adapted the tool to keep track of his funding when purchasing attendant care services and other purchases such as medical supplies and equipment. The spreadsheets enable direct payments users using attendant care or similar services to keep on top of the budget by taking into consideration the costs of services provided which have not yet been invoiced or paid for. Dean estimates that it takes approximately a half an hour per week to keep the Direct Payments Tracking Spreadsheet updated with approximately 8 or 9 carers providing services. To assist others to use the tool Dean has developed a manual, which explains how to use the tool.

### **Sarasi Perera, Direct Payments Consultant**



Sarasi migrated to Australia from Sri Lanka 15 years ago. Married with two daughters, she works as a family day carer which gives her daughter Samali, aged 11 years, who has autism (pervasive developmental disorder) plenty of opportunities to mix with other children. A few years ago Sarasi received funding from *Support & Choice* and had been encouraged to develop her own plan by her facilitator, which gave her a sense of control. Direct payments are an efficient way for Sarasi to manage her daughter's funding. Prior to starting direct payments Sarasi was already shopping around for the best value products and services for her daughter. Going through a middle person to arrange the purchase and payment had just complicated things. Attending the DPCG workshops has given Sarasi the opportunity to be part of

something and see first hand inside the disability service system. She thinks work will need to be done to ensure that direct payments are accessible to all people from a culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) background. The information may need to be simplified and translations will be necessary. Some people may be reluctant to 'get involved with the system' but Sarasi thinks that direct payments may in fact be easier for people from a CALD background because they would be able to manage the funding in the way that best suits their needs.

## **Evaluation Update**

LDC Group has been working with each of the stakeholder groups, including the direct payments users and consultants, the facilitators and service providers and the Department of Human Services to develop recommendations for the evaluation of the Direct Payments Project. Final interviews with direct payments users and consultants about their experiences of participating in the Direct Payments Project and of using direct payments are also underway. If you have additional feedback about the recommendations or the evaluation, please contact Liz Dimitriadis on 9509 6972 or by email: [liz@ldc.net.au](mailto:liz@ldc.net.au).

## **Community Care Worker Human Resources Kit**

The Minister for Community Services, Gavin Jennings, recently launched a kit that aims to help organisations delivering community care services streamline, refine and add value to their existing selection and recruitment processes.

The Community Care Worker Human Resources Kit will help organisations attract more people to community care work including more men and young people. The kit was initiated because of feedback from service providers that they are finding it increasingly difficult to recruit workers to undertake community care.

Development of the kit was funded by the Home and Community Care (HACC) program, which is jointly funded by the Commonwealth and state governments. The program supports frail

older people, younger people with disabilities and their carers to remain in their own homes.

More information about the kit can be found on the HACC website: [www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/publications/ccw.htm](http://www.health.vic.gov.au/hacc/publications/ccw.htm)

### **Service Provider Workshop**

At the service provider workshop on 19 April, service providers shared information about their services with the aim of identifying areas where they could collaborate. The idea of a personal assistant register which had previously been raised by the Direct Payments Consultants, and which Les Scaife described at the Direct Payments Forum, inspired the service providers to think about the role of the internet in matching people who need additional services with agencies who have staff available. Santo Pezzimenti, Moira Care and Maryanne Webbe, Impact Leisure Association presented the idea to the DPCG at their workshop on Saturday 21 April. Further work on this will be undertaken at the next service provider workshop on 10 May 2007.

### **Facilitator Workshop**

The facilitators have considered their possible role in direct payments including:

- talking to potential direct payments users about how it works, its advantages and disadvantages
- including direct payments option in the funding plan submitted to the region for approval
- providing support and advice to people when implementing their plan as a direct payments user
- using information from a financial review to inform a review of a plan.

The facilitators also identified the range of supports available to direct payments users including Intake and Response, Advocacy, Consumer Affairs Victoria and Disability Online.

## **Direct Payments Consultants Group Workshop**

Les Scaife, Chair, West Lancs Peer Support Group attended the DPCG workshop on 21 April 2007. Les has been impressed by the way direct payments are developing in Victoria, taking a step-by-step approach. The key, he says, is to continue taking the steps. Les' presentation at the DPCG workshop lead to discussion and debate about the potential role of volunteers in direct payments in Victoria.

The DPCG also spent time discussing recommendations for the evaluation, which will be the focus of the final workshop on Saturday 12 May 2007, the eighteenth workshop since the project commenced in January 2006. The achievements of the DPCG will be highlighted in the next edition of Direct Payments Project Update.