DIRECT PAYMENTS
ADULT SOCIAL CARE

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

WHAT IS A DIRECT PAYMENT?

Direct payments are a way of giving customers more control, flexibility and choice over how they receive their care services.

Direct payments can be used to purchase the care services needed as identified in the customer's Care and Support Plan. For example, by employing a personal assistant or care agency to provide care and support.

Direct payments cannot be used for:

- Long-term residential or nursing care
- Care or equipment provided by the Health Authority
- Participating in or promoting illegal activities
- Heating or accommodation costs such as rent or mortgage
- Alcohol and tobacco products
- Gambling.

WHAT IS A MERTON MANAGED ACCOUNT? (MMA)

A Merton Managed Account (MMA) is a chargeable service offered by Merton Council to adult social care customers who would like the benefits of a direct payment but do not feel confident managing the financial processes on their own.

The MMA Officer helps customers manage all the necessary financial processes associated with a direct payment. For example, paying personal assistants and care agency invoices together with purchasing and renewing employer's liability insurance.

An ongoing managed account is our complete Merton Managed Account service. Our MMA Officer will undertake all of the financial processes relating to the customer's direct payment. Charge of £231.80 per year.

A one-off set-up service will assist customers with the initial set-up of regular payments to service providers. One-off charge of £23.40

HOW CAN YOU ACCESS DIRECT PAYMENTS?

Before a customer can receive a direct payment, they must undergo an assessment by the Local Authority via the assigned Adult Social Care Team to determine whether they are eligible for the service

Eligibility might be based on factors such as capacity to manage a direct payment yourself, adequate support networks to help manage the direct payment on your behalf, specific care needs, etc

SUPPORT PLANNING

The support planning process is where the individual, or their representative, works with a social worker or care coordinator to create a care and support plan

This is done using a person-centred as well as strength-based approach, taking into account the individual's goals, preferences, and desired outcomes

A Financial Assessment must also be carried out via the Financial Assessment Team before a direct payment can proceed to calculate the customer's assessed charge which is their contribution towards their care.

DIRECT PAYMENT FUNDING

The local authority will calculate the individual's personal budget based on their care needs and the outcome of the assessment carried out by their allocated social worker

The personal budget is the amount allocated by the local authority to fund the individual's care and support

Therefore, it is imperative that the direct payment monies are used to fund care as set out in the care and support plan and not for any other purpose.

DIRECT PAYMENT AGREEMENT

Once the personal budget has been determined, the individual will enter into a direct payments agreement with the local authority.

This agreement outlines the terms, conditions, and responsibilities regarding the use of direct payments.

The assigned Direct Payment Officer will send the agreement and all other relevant DP documentation to the customer to read through, sign and return. The documents can be sent and returned electronically or via post as a hard copy.

However, if a customer needs assistance with understanding the documents, then the DP officer will provide support via home visit, telephone call or arranging for the customer to see them at the Civic Centre.

OTHER DIRECT PAYMENT DOCUMENTS

We will also provide you with information such as a care agency list, insurance providers list, informative website links, etc. There are also other documents that a customer will need to sign before the direct payment can be set up. They are as follows:

Prepaid Client Cardholder Agreement – This enables a prepaid card to be ordered on the customer's behalf

Purchase Amend Form – To indicate the customer's understanding of the funding that has been agreed and the breakdown of hours

MMA Agreement – Only applicable if your direct payment is to be Merton Managed

MANAGING THE DIRECT PAYMENT FUNDS

The individual receiving direct payments or their representative is responsible for managing the funds

Options for managing the money, such as hiring and paying care providers directly, through a payroll service or via an agency would have already been discussed and agreed beforehand.

It is the individual's responsibility to ensure that the direct payment funds are used to pay for the care as set out in the care and support plan.

Any expenditure that falls outside of the care plan will be identified via the prepaid card statement by a Monitoring Officer who will contact the customer to discuss further.

MONITOR AND REVIEW

The ongoing monitoring and review of the direct payments arrangement is both important and necessary.

Regular reviews will be conducted by the local authority via the Direct Payments Monitoring Officers to ensure funds are used appropriately and to assess any changes in care needs

Monitoring officers will contact customers to discuss any activity found on the prepaid card statement that is not in line with the care and support plan

CURRENT PRIORITIES

Increasing numbers of customers who are accessing the Direct Payment service. One way will be by commissioning a new PA database which will enable customers to source their own PAs easily and from a reliable source. This is currently in progress.

Making the Direct payment agreement easier to navigate and understand by creating a summarised 'Plain English' version covering the important points and information that customers need to know

Providing training for ASC Staff on direct payments via an induction programme for new SWs and a periodic training programme to keep staff up to date on DP legislation and procedures

MERTON DIRECT PAYMENT TEAM

Elaine Greenwood – Direct Payments Manager

Karen Chedick– Senior Direct Payment Officer (& Recouping of Funds)

Pauline McLean – Direct Payment Officer (Sign-Up)

Joycelyn King – Direct Payment Officer (Sign Up)

Vannya Vassileva – Merton Managed Account Officer

Rasheedat Mohammed – Quality Compliance Support Officer (Monitoring)

Matilda Brobbey – Team Administrator

directpaymentsduty@merton.gov.uk

Tel: 0208 545 3415

ANY QUESTIONS?

Thank you for your listening