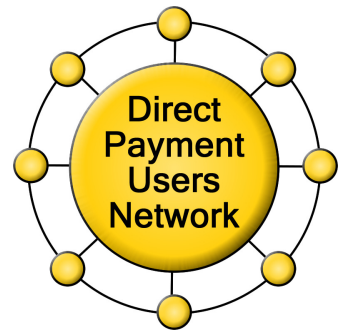


Annual General Meeting 2nd June 2008

Ivan Peck House, 1 Russell Way, Chelmsford



This is the first Annual Report from the Directors of Direct Payments Users Network Community Interest Company.

The report is covering the period of April 2007 to March 2008.

For ourselves we can't believe that 15 months ago DPUN didn't have a bank account and now we are Community Interest Company in our own right.

The work of DPUN is snowballing and snowballing every month i.e. the network has arranged:

Meetings

For Essex DP's Users

- 6 Bi-Monthly Main Meetings
- 3 Committee Meetings
- 4 Quarterly Newsletters

For Essex Personal Budgets Users

- 1 Newsletter
- 1 Main Meeting. (We are working towards giving Personal Budget users the support of DPUN so that assistance will still be available if you move to a personal budget. WE WILL STILL BE HERE FOR YOU)

For Southend DP's Users

- 1 Newsletter
- 1 Main Meeting
- 3 more meetings have been arranged over the next 6 months.

Also the Directors and Staff had meetings with:

- Essex County Council Officers (4)
- Southend Borough Council Officer (3)
- Thurrock Officer (2)
- West Sussex Council Officer (1)

- Essex Coalition of Disabled People Officers regarding their Southend tender for DP's Services in the Southend on Sea Borough.

We have had success in Southend with starting up a Users Group there, and have 3 more meetings booked over the next 6 months.

We are also in partnership with ECDP regarding The User Led Organisations in Cambridgeshire and the support they require.

Money

We are grateful for Department of Health and Essex Coalition of Disabled People allowing us to keep the under spend from 2004 to 2007, as this money was the life line for us in DPUN because we would have gone under in 2007/2008 without this funding.

Also we had two small grants, one was from Lottery Awards for All to improve take ups in Direct Payments for under represented groups, and another small grant was from CSIP (Care Services Improvement Partnership) to increase DPs in Southend and Thurrock. As ECDP has got a contract to run Direct Payments Support Services in Southend, they asked us to form a DPUN in Southend too. The above small grants made more work for us but we felt the work was important. Unfortunately, we have not been successful in progressing the work in Thurrock to date.

With the grant from Awards for All we tried to get Black and Ethnic Minorities (BEM communities) involved in DPUN. Despite very hard work by Trainee Social Workers and us, trying to spread our DPUN information across BME communities, using churches and Doctors surgeries, putting our DPUN leaflets in different languages, up to now we are not showing a big difference in our membership numbers. However, we are hopeful that the leaflets will assist us in getting the message over that DPUN is for every Direct Payment User, or people interested in using direct payments

We would like to thanks Essex County Council for funding our newsletter for five issues.

Especial thanks for Carol who made greeting cards and sold them on behalf of DPUN. Also we are grateful for members sharing taxis together to come to meetings; this is saving us a lot of money.

Staff and Volunteers

As The Co Chairs of DPUN Dee and Bob are doing up to 50 hours per week voluntary work for DPUN. Dee and Bob have resigned from the ECDP Board (as we needed more time at DPUN), and to be a really independent body to monitor Essex PASS, DPSS & ILA Essex. All of us have been on a steep learning curve understanding how to manage a company.

Sandra is a fabulous Coordinator for us: without her being in the office 2 days per week, DPUN would close down. Thank you Sandra, for working so very hard for DPUN. You are doing the jobs of 2 people in just 18hours a week. We were very sad when Clare our admin assistant had to leave us last summer because of family commitments, but Clare is still able to help us out sometimes, like typing up the minutes that are on a Dictaphone, from home. We feel that we (Bob and Dee) work very well together, and assist each other with all of our projects. If one of us is unsure about anything, we always consult, and include Sandra in this. It is fair to say that we get things done by working as a team.

Activities

We have assisted with about 12 Social Workers Training Sessions on DP's including Mental Health Workers. We would like to thank all DPUN Committee Members who have assisted us with these training sessions and making £50 per session for DPUN.

The Directors attended the Council Quarterly Monitoring Meetings on Essex PASS, DPSS & ILA Essex.

Dee is now taking A Partners in Policy making course which she attends one weekend a month for 8 months.

Dee also now regularly attends and has presented at North East Stronger Together (NEST) this is an organisation that is for users of mental health services we have been approached to advise the Haven charity

She has also presented at the Ling trust in Colchester. A group for people with primarily learning disabilities.

All of the above are hopefully to reach out to people who don't always know how they could use DPUN.

Dee and Bob have been travelling around and giving talks about DPUN especially Dee. People and Councils don't believe us when we said we are getting up to 40 people at our DPUN Meetings as they have tried in their areas like Fulham and Cambridgeshire without any luck with their user group meetings, as no users turn up for their meetings. In Essex DPUN is very successful, we need trade mark on what we do!

Dee has also been making a little bit of money for us by completing access audits which means she checks out buildings and advises on accessibility matters

We have also been approached by Leeds to give advice and help with their own users group.

Dee has also been interviewed to assist with a series of articles on the uptake of direct payments for elderly people.

One of the things we really want is for everybody to have access to us, we know there are a lot of people in isolated rural areas who feel alone, or maybe their impairment is such that they feel happier using a computer. That is why we are developing a website along with trying to reach underrepresented groups or people in rural area. Bob has been the driving force behind the website and also on the buying of new technical equipment that we were given funding for by the lottery

We will continue with funding bids, we desperately need extra help in the office and would love to be able to give all DP users a full time telephone advice line.

We continue working in the same office as the Liberation Partnership (a support organisation for people using the new personal/individual/budgets)

DPUN works in partnership with them on certain aspects of work as we do with ECDP and ILA

But we always say, and really mean, that we are an independent peer support group who will always work for the benefit of all DP users. You are the people who mean so much to us; we want to see that you get the support you are entitled to.

