

Performance Indicator Recovery Plan

Performance Indicator Description: Direct Payments	
<u>Year end target</u> To achieve a target of 17% (North West Average) by the end of December 2014. Comparator Group performance = 14%	<u>Current performance</u> Lancashire's reported performance = 12.4% at the end of December 2013 (Q3)
Why is this indicator under-performing?	
<p>Direct Payments are payments made by Council's directly to individuals who have been assessed as having 'eligible needs' for certain social care services. Direct Payments are one way in which people can direct their own support by purchasing assistance or services that the council would otherwise provide.</p> <p>Performance is reported as the number of users and carers receiving direct-payments in the year to 31st March as a percentage of users receiving community-based services (aged 18 or over) and carers (caring for someone aged 18 or over) receiving carer specific services in the year to 31st March.</p> <p>The Personalisation agenda states that all customers eligible for domiciliary support should be given a personal budget to plan their support. Individuals can decide to manage their personal budget in different ways. The budget can be managed by the council, managed by a third party as an Individual Service Fund (ISF) or taken as a Direct Payment, or a combination of these options. Where the budget is managed or taken as an ISF all legal and contractual responsibilities remain with the Council. With Direct Payments the legal and contractual responsibilities transfer to the individual who decides how their eligible needs are met, either by employing people, often known as Personal Assistants, or by commissioning services for themselves. Individuals receiving Direct Payments can get support in fulfilling these responsibilities through the Direct Payments Support Services which has been commissioned by Lancashire County Council (LCC).</p> <p>While the number of people taking up Direct Payments continues to increase there has not been a significant shift in performance. From consultation with service users, the main barrier was found to be that the systems for delivering Direct Payments were too bureaucratic, slow and complicated. The consultation also found that some people had not been offered or given information on Direct Payments and those that had did not want to take on the legal responsibility of being an employer. It has been recognised that, in the past, some staff lacked knowledge and confidence in relation to Direct Payments and that the emphasis had been on the employment of Personal Assistants, rather than buying support from an agency, which made the process even more complex and therefore less attractive.</p>	

Improving the offer which gives increased choice and control to customers could result in an unprecedented growth in Direct Payments impacting upon the budget for service provision.

Action to be taken

A project was established in February 2012 to accelerate the increase in take up of Direct Payments and the project objectives were:

- **Develop Public information on direct payments.**
There are now 4 fact sheets available on Direct Payments which are available on LCC's website.
- **Revise Policy, Procedures & Guidance**
The Direct Payments policy, procedures and guidance has been revised to bring them up to date with the current legislation and statutory guidance issued by the Department of Health.
- **Financial Governance – prepaid cards**
Further work was required to improve and speed up the delivery of Direct Payments to improve the customer experience. To achieve this LCC has piloted and implemented a prepaid card as the standard offer for Direct Payments. The prepaid card will enable a lighter touch approach which is less intrusive for the customer but at the same time will provide adequate safeguards to ensure any misuse of public funds are addressed quickly. The Financial Governance Framework has now been signed off and the prepaid card is now the standard offer to all new customers.
- **Direct Payments Training**
An Advanced Practitioner has been appointed to improve social workers, knowledge, confidence and practice in relation to Direct Payments. Learning circles have been delivered across the County and staff can seek support with individual cases from the Advanced Practitioner.
- **Direct Payments Support Services**
LCC has contracted a third party organisation (Salvere) to provide the Direct Payments Support Service which includes an advice and information service for people to ensure they understand their legal and contractual responsibilities. Where a person decides to employ staff directly the person will be supported throughout the set up process by an Independent Living Advisor, this will include support with recruitment, contracts, obtaining DBS checks and references etc. The organisation also offers support to existing Direct Payments recipients should they encounter any difficulties or need any additional information and advice.

LCC also has a contract with a Centre for Independent Living to provide a payroll service. The payroll service acts as the payroll agent on the employers behalf, producing wage slips, completing Her Majesty Revenue & Customs (HMRC) paperwork, dealing with HMRC correspondence submitting information and making payments to HMRC in the required timescales etc.

Further actions within the project are:

Mandatory Direct Payments training is being delivered throughout February and March 2014. Direct Payments learning circles will continue to be delivered by the Direct Payments Advanced Practitioner until September 2014. The learning circles will focus on specific topics that will improve staff practice and performance.

Individual targets have been introduced for staff members from February 2014 to set up one Direct Payment, per month per worker to ensure that that Direct Payments becomes the standard offer. This will be monitored on a monthly basis and action will be taken to offer staff further support provided by their Advanced Practitioner and / or through attending relevant Learning Circles.

Monitoring of the Direct Payments Support Services contract to ensure that the provider can accommodate the increase in direct payment support requirements.