

DISABILITY ACT

MEET THE DIRECTOR

Meeting Report

9 June 2009

This report is a summary of the major issues that were discussed at the last quarterly *Meet the Director* meeting which was held on 9 June 2009.

The meeting was attended by 23 parents and guardians of people with disability who are clients of Disability ACT client accommodation service.

Forum Discussion – Expenditure Arrangements in Group Homes

KATE STARICK, Ag DIRECTOR and
ANNE PROCTOR, PARENT

Ms Starick introduced Ms Dupe and Ms Millagan who had attended as representative of the Office for the Public Trustee.

Ms Proctor explained that the suggestion for this Forum discussion came about from seeking information about types of expenditure methods practiced in other Group Homes in comparison to some changes to bank withdrawal of money methods in place at her daughter's home.

A number of examples of arrangements in place at Group homes were discussed.

Example 1

Each person contributes a specific amount into a house account for rent, utilities etc. All accounts are managed by parents/ guardians. 2 parents are required as signatories. The account is reconciled monthly with a report going to each person's financial manager. Food

and personal spending money is provided on a fortnightly basis to the group home.

This option takes some organisation to set up the account and signatories and ongoing management of account and reports.

Example 2

Each person has direct debits in place for rent and food account. Each person accesses own post office account for day-to-day personal expenses.

For large communal items, discussions are held by financial managers and joint purchases are made.

Example 3

A long standing arrangement was explained; each person had an account with the same financial institution meaning transfers between accounts were free or low cost. A number of joint sub accounts / funds for rent, food, utilities, etc were set up with predetermined transfers and direct debits. Auditors look over the accounts annually.

The group discussed different bank options and withdrawal / direct debit processes. The discussions moved towards decision making on expenditure / maintenance decisions of the Groups of financial managers raised a number of options. The consensus was to have another Forum discussion at a future meeting about Group decision making options. The consensus was that the Office for the Public Trustee would be invited to participate in this discussion.

Conversation Session on Strategic Priorities

FIONA MCINTOSH, POLICY IMPLEMENTER

General comments about priorities:

- Priorities should reflect government's accountability to deliver on actions
- Some priorities are too 'high level' and not achievable for people with profound disabilities.

Priority 3 -engagement in community

Socialising and participation in community activities (eg. going to the football, going to a club, going out for dinner, participating in sailability, using the black mountain swing etc) is important in achieving quality of life and has been achieved for some residents. Clients who are socially isolated otherwise can become severely depressed. However participation in community activities has been difficult to sustain over time as the person's participation is often reliant on having a support person help them participate and adequate transport. Natural voluntary supports and friendships are important but can be difficult to sustain where the person does not have enough skill or willingness to sustain a commitment. Arrangements that aren't sustained can be detrimental to the person who has hopes of continuing friendships. Sometimes students who are undertaking disability related studies can be a valuable source of voluntary support as part of their study accreditation and potential opportunities should be explored further with schools and universities.

In relation to paid staff it was felt that often staff don't have enough time to undertake house chores and grocery shopping – it was particularly felt that less time should be spent at the weekend by staff on household chores and grocery shopping and more on meaningful activity for residents.

It was suggested that participation in community activities could be better coordinated across group homes, where clients with similar interests are matched together for joint activities. For example, one group asking if another group home would like to participate in an activity. It was felt however this should be coordinated for small groups of people, not a larger group which could be marginalised within a community setting.

It is important to recognise, value and promote the innovative activities that happen in group houses.

Priority 6 – quality service system

Need to train staff in dietary requirements and mechanism to monitor suitability / quality of food choices.

Food choices should match the dietary choices and needs of the residents and supported by general advice from a dietician. Currently it is primarily based on the staff member's personal preferences and advice is limited to individuals.

Service quality and accountability should be measured by the implementation of a person's Individual Plan.

Companion Card Details

The group requested details on registration of interest for the ACT Companion Card. Information and forms can be sourced at <http://www.dhcs.act.gov.au/companioncard>

Future Meeting Topics

Ideas or comments should be forwarded to andrew.whale@act.gov.au.

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Ag Director, Disability ACT