

Committee: Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 25 June 2018

Wards: ALL

Subject: Personal Independent Payments Process

Lead member: Councillor Peter McCabe, Chair of the Healthier Communities and Older People overview and scrutiny panel.

Contact officer: Stella Akintan, stella.akintan@merton.gov.uk; 020 8545 3390

Recommendations:

- A. That the Panel agree to continue to scrutinise the operation of Personal Independent Payments process in Merton.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. This report provides an overview of the work of this Panel to address the concerns local organisations faced when supporting residents to apply for the Personal Independent Payment. The Personal Independence Payment (PIP) is a benefit that helps with the extra costs of a long-term health condition or disability for people aged 16 to 64. It's gradually replacing Disability Living Allowance .

Local organisations such as Merton Centre for Independent Living, Adults First and Merton and Lambeth Citizens Advice have highlighted that many disabled and vulnerable residents applying for PIP often experience financial loss, stress and anxiety. The detrimental impact on the health of this group and the fact that it exacerbates health inequalities means that it falls within the remit of this Panel. Therefore this should remain a priority area for scrutiny until the issues are resolved.

- 1.2. The Panel has discussed this issue on two occasions; 06 September 2017, 13 March 2018. A further meeting with the Chair , Vice Chair and local residents was held on 22nd May 2018. The note of the May meeting is attached.

2 DETAILS

- 2.1. This issue was discussed by the Panel in September 2017 and although the Department for Work and Pensions Representatives provided a report to the Panel they were not able to attend the meeting. This meant that the Panel were not able to engage in a full discussion of the issues and concerns.
- 2.2. Colleagues from DWP did attend the Panel on 13 March 2018 meeting to respond to the issues raised by Merton Centre for Independent Living and Citizens Advice Merton and Lambeth. The key issues raised included:
- 2.3. Inaccessible assessment centres - This includes centres which are physically inaccessible, or those located far away from the claimants home. There are no assessment centres located within Merton.

- 2.4. Overbooking of assessment centres - This leads to last minute cancellations or excessively long waits at assessment centres.
- 2.5. Inaccurate Assessments - Many people are wrongly being found ineligible for PIP at assessment stage and are being forced to go to tribunal
- 2.6. Merton and Lambeth Citizens Advice and Adults First, a carers organisation attended the Panel in March to express their concern with the PIP process. They reported that many people found the application form difficult to complete and some aspects of the assessment process were daunting especially for people with mental health problems.

It was agreed to hold a further meeting outside of the Panel with the Independent Assessment Service, who are contracted by DWP to conduct PIP assessments. This meeting took place on the 22nd May and the notes are attached.

3 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

The Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel can select topics for scrutiny review and for other scrutiny work as it sees fit, taking into account views and suggestions from officers, partner organisations and the public.

Cabinet is constitutionally required to receive, consider and respond to scrutiny recommendations within two months of receiving them at a meeting.

- 3.1. Cabinet is not, however, required to agree and implement recommendations from Overview and Scrutiny. Cabinet could agree to implement some, or none, of the recommendations made in the scrutiny review final report.

4 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 4.1. The Panel will be consulted at the meeting

5 TIMETABLE

- 5.1. The Panel will consider important items as they arise as part of their work programme for 2018/19

6 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 6.1. None relating to this covering report

7 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 7.1. None relating to this covering report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the legal and statutory implications of the topic being scrutinised.

8 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. It is a fundamental aim of the scrutiny process to ensure that there is full and equal access to the democratic process through public involvement and engaging with local partners in scrutiny reviews. Furthermore, the outcomes of reviews are intended to benefit all sections of the local community.

9 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

9.1. None relating to this covering report. Scrutiny work involves consideration of the crime and disorder implications of the topic being scrutinised.

10 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

10.1. None relating to this covering report

11 APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE REPORT

12 NOTE

13 BACKGROUND PAPERS

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