

**PRIMARY & COMMUNITY CARE DIRECTORATE
Elderly & Community Care Unit**

Room D.2.18
Castle Buildings
Stormont Estate
BELFAST
BT4 3SQ



Department of

**Health, Social Services
and Public Safety**

An Roinn

**Sláinte, Seirbhísí Sóisialta
agus Sábháilteachta Poiblí**

www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Tel: 028 90522013
Fax: 028 90522500
e-mail:
ray.martin@dhsspsni.gov.uk

Your ref:

Our ref:

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Chief Executives, HSS Community Trusts
Chief Executives, HSS Boards

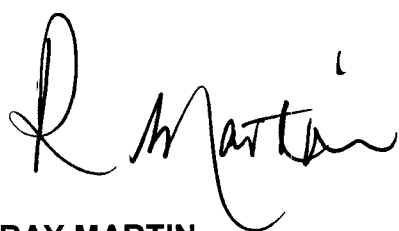
26 September 2006

ALLOCATION OF DIRECT PAYMENTS DEVELOPMENT FUND

1. Over the past three years significant progress has been made in extending the benefits of Direct Payments to an increasing number of social care clients who want to take advantage of the choice and independence they can offer. The Direct Payments Review, followed by the roll out of an extensive programme of training and awareness for HPSS staff, has seen a six-fold increase in the amount of care delivered through Direct Payments across Northern Ireland. Much of the credit for the pioneering work that has underpinned this increase is down to the Direct Payments Development Group to which you renewed your commitment last year, and to the efforts of individual managers and professionals on the ground.
2. The Minister, in his recent wide ranging speech on the Health and Personal Social Services, re-affirmed the Government's commitment to Direct Payments as a key component of the reform programme to ensure that people have maximum opportunities to live independent lives at home. Pro rata, Northern Ireland still has fewer Direct Payment cases than other parts of the United Kingdom. Unfortunately, the recent SSI inspection of Carers and Direct Payments has come to the conclusion that some managers and professional staff are still not actively promoting Direct Payments as a service delivery option. As the internal training and awareness programme is completed this year, the Department will expect to see a renewed effort to expand access for people who could benefit from the flexibility offered by Direct Payments.



3. In particular, there is a need to move beyond the 'low hanging fruit' by increasingly extending Direct Payments to other client groups such as older people and people with learning disabilities. The next stage of the development programme will see our limited dedicated resources brought to bear on enhancing the community infrastructure that already exists to support vulnerable people through the necessary administrative arrangements surrounding Direct Payments. Until now, the Direct Payments Development budget has been held centrally by the Department, with priorities for its expenditure established and monitored by the Development Group. On completion of the internal training and awareness programme, the remaining funds for 2006/07 (£140,000) and the recurrent amount of £250,000 will be allocated to the HPSS.
4. You will be aware that a fledgling infrastructure is already in place within the voluntary sector, supporting new applicants for Direct Payments and existing users. The Department therefore fully expects that the resources allocated will be used in a coherent way across the HPSS to expand the existing infrastructure across the region. The aim will be to ensure that users, carers and personal assistants receive the training and support they need to maximise the opportunities for people to access Direct Payments. The Direct Payment Development Group, which includes representatives of users, carers and the voluntary sector, should therefore continue to play a pivotal role in establishing priorities for action and ensuring their delivery.
5. Although no new formal target has been set for Direct Payments, the Department is firmly convinced that a total of 1,000 cases is achievable within the next three years. A formal monitoring system is now in place and you will receive regular updates on a league table basis. If expected progress is not maintained, it may then be necessary to revisit the issue of a formal performance target.
6. If you have any queries about the content of this circular please contact your Development Group representative or alternatively Stuart Baxter at the Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety on 028 9052 0682 or by email at: stuart.baxter@dhsspsni.gov.uk.
7. This circular is also available on the Department's website at <http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk/index/hss/ec-community-care/directpayments-about.htm> .



RAY MARTIN
Elderly & Community Care