

DIRECT PAYMENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This report proposes to increase the rates for direct payments to the level paid by Adult Social Services. The additional cost, estimated to be £20,000 will be met from the Carers Grant.

1. Background

- 1.1 The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 extended direct payments to people with parental responsibility for a disabled child or a disabled young person aged 16 or 17.
- 1.2 Payments are made in lieu of direct service provision by the Council. Care packages are arranged by parents/carers directly. Care Packages may include providing respite for parents because of the complex and enduring needs of their children, as a result of their disability. The payments facilitate choice for parents in how to access support and respite, to enable them to continue caring for their child at home; it is cost effective to the Department to provide support in this way. The Direct Payments provide essential support to families; which can prevent children becoming looked after and promotes positive outcomes for children.
- 1.3 There are 105 parent carers on the Direct Payment Scheme, the average cost being £2471. If provision were provided by agencies via the Council, costs would amount to over £2,900 per child per year. Direct payments represent excellent value for money. It enables more care to be provided to more children and their families. The Government recognise this and are currently supporting increased direct payment take-up via a series of regional events.
- 1.4 Parents and Carers should be paid the same rates whether from a Children's Service or Adult Service. This helps a smooth transition for young people and their families into adult provision. Since the introduction of the scheme there has been no increase in payments to reflect inflation in Children's Services. However the Council has increased the rates paid by Adult Services by 3.6% from April 2007 and 2.5% from April 2008.
- 1.5 It is proposed that direct payments are increased by 6.1% to match the current levels set by the Council in relation to Adult Social Services. The rates would increase as follows:

	From	To
Weekday	£7.82	£8.30
Weekend	£11.73	£12.45
Sleepover	£38.05	£40.40
Waking nights	£69.63	£73.94

2.0 Financial and Staffing Implications

The existing budgetary provision for direct payments is £308,700. Increasing rates as authorised will increase overall costs by £20,000. This sum can be met from within the increase in Carers Grant.

3.0 Anti-poverty Implications

The families who currently receive Direct Payments require sufficient payments to be made in line with inflation to ensure they are able to purchase the care their children need.

4.0 Social Inclusion Implications

The Direct payment scheme enables children with a disability to remain within their family in the community, with appropriate support to meet the young person and carers needs. The scheme also offers young people, with a disability aged 16 years or above, more opportunities to choose what they want to do and balances this alongside the needs of their family. It enables them to decide who will provide their care. It will be necessary to ensure that young people, are supported to take up Direct Payments in their own right.

5 Equal Opportunities Implications

5.1 The Scheme provides for more individualised and flexible care arrangements.

5.2 Parents and young people receiving a Direct Payment will require a full assessment of the needs of the child and their needs as carers. In line with the principles of Fair Access the Department will aim to deliver an equitable response regardless of the method of organising the provision.

6 Human Rights Implications

The Direct Payments Scheme improves our compliance with Human Rights legislation, with particular reference to:

- Article 8 'respect for private and family life';
- Article 14 'the right not to be discriminated against on any ground in relation to another convention right' (i.e. Article 8)

7 Local Agenda 21 Implications

None directly applicable.

8 Community Safety Implications

There are no community safety implications associated with this report.

9 Planning Implications

There are no planning implications associated with this report.

10 Local Member Support Implications

Users of the Direct Payments Scheme live in all Wards of the Borough.

11 Background Papers

Community Care, Services for Carers and Children Services (Direct Payments) Regulations April 2003

Community Care, Services for Carers and Children Services (Direct Payments) Guidance September 2003)

Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 & The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004. Combined Draft Policy Guidance

Council for Disabled Children" / National Children `s Bureau - Direct Experience : A guide for councils on the implementation of Direct Payments in children `s services. 2004

RECOMMENDATIONS

That

- (1) direct payments be increased in line with rates set by the Council for carers of adults, backdated to 1st April 2008; and
- (2) in future, increases to the rates of Direct Payments are applied consistently by the Council to both Children and Adult service users.

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