

## APPENDIX SIX

### **BUDGET OPTION: REVIEW OF SUPPORT FOR CARERS**

#### **1.0 OUTLINE OF PROPOSAL**

- 1.1 In the process of conducting a community care assessment, a carer for an individual may be identified. The department has a duty to consider the needs of the carer as part of the overall assessment and the carer has the right to ask for a separate assessment of their own needs.
- 1.2 As part of the current assessment process, a carer's assessment generates (through the Resource Allocation System) a carer's budget, a sum of money based on the nature and extent of the impact of the carer role on that individual. This can be paid as a Direct Payment to carers to support them in their carer role. The average annual Direct Payment to carers in Wirral is currently £1,730.
- 1.2 The proposal is to review the current process and consider the efficacy of three alternative options:
  - The cessation of personal budgets for carers with support for carers being commissioned by the department.
  - The introduction of an annual grant to carers.
  - The introduction of a payment to carers based on a banding system that reflects the impact of the carer role on the individual
- 1.3 The NHS has also been given additional funding to support Carers and NHS Wirral has recently commissioned the Wirral Information Resource for Equality and Diversity Carers Support Service to offer short breaks for Carers. Carers are now able to access these services through GPs rather than through Adult Social Services.

#### **2.0 RATIONALE FOR PROPOSAL**

- 2.1 There are a number of issues about the current process for generating a personal budget for carers:
  - Providing carers with a budget does not help create the range of support services that carers require to sustain them in their carer role.
  - There is confusion about what should be in the individual and the carer budgets.
  - The cost of providing support to carers in this way has contributed to significant budget pressures.
- 2.2 It is anticipated that through a review of the current process and implementation of one of the above options that savings of £250,000 can be generated in a full year.

#### **3.0 ACCESSIBILITY OF PROPOSAL**

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- 3.1 The option in relation to a review of support for carers was published alongside a series of other options from the Chief Executive on November 9<sup>th</sup> 2012. These options were published following an extensive period of consultation during September and October 2012, which focussed on broad principles of policy to gather initial views on how options should be developed.
- 3.2 Residents, staff and stakeholders were provided with a range of information detailing the background, level of savings, potential impact and methods of mitigating any potential negative impact for this and all other options. This information included:

Questionnaire: Split into three sections, the questionnaire provided a one paragraph summary of each option and provided the opportunity for respondents to select one of three choices indicating their opinion on the option.

Summary Paper: Three summary papers (one per 'theme') were produced and were available online, at Council buildings and at consultation events. These papers provided a summary of each option, including the level of savings involved and some background information.

Option Paper: For each of the published options, a detailed option paper was available. This paper provided information regarding the background to the option, the potential impact if the option was implemented, proposed methods to mitigate that impact and also the potential savings associated with the option.

- 3.3 The Questionnaire was the primary research tool used in this consultation, and as such it was essential that the document was designed in a way to ensure robust, clear and actionable results. It was also vital to the success of the project to ensure that the questionnaire was produced in a fashion that was accessible, clear and neutral. To ensure that this was the case, Council officers took a number of steps to ensure the questionnaire was externally validated as an effective research and consultation tool.
- 3.4 A draft version of the questionnaire was analysed by an external agency through the Market Research Society. The final draft of the questionnaire was also presented to the members of the Children in Care Council and a group of people with learning disabilities at a Council Day Centre who made further suggestions as to the design and wording of the document.
- 3.5 Further work was also done to ensure accessibility including publishing an interactive Easy Read version, and developing three individual videos, which were used at consultation events, on the Council website and also played through the network of 30 LCD screens in One Stop Shops and Libraries. These videos were designed to more fully explain the context of the options and also provide guidance for how to complete the questionnaire document.

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### 4.0 CONSULTATION PROCESS

- 4.1 An extensive programme of public consultation was completed in relation to all options which were published in November 2012. This programme included over 100 community events at locations such as libraries, supermarkets, cinemas, community centres and children's centres.
- 4.2 Extensive online promotion of the consultation was also completed, with emails being sent to over 13,000 residents, and the consultation also featured prominently on the Council's website which receives in excess of 1,000 hits per day.
- 4.3 Organisations from the Voluntary, Community and Faith sectors were also actively encouraged to take part in this consultation process including organisations such as Voluntary Community Action Wirral, Wirral WIRED and others. Organisations such as Wirral Mencap and the Agencies for Carers' Executive (ACE) also submitted responses to this budget option and others.
- 4.4 In addition to the public consultation completed in relation to this option, the proposal was also discussed at a series of meetings in Council day centres and residential and respite centres, as well as in meetings of specialist Carers' groups such as the Carers' Development Committee and the Carers' Association.

### 5.0 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

- 5.1 In terms of the public consultation feedback, the response to this option demonstrated relatively strong approval from people answering the questionnaire, as is demonstrated by the table below.

Answer Options	Response Percent	Response Count
I support this under the circumstances	39.0%	1853
I accept this if it is absolutely necessary	37.6%	1787
I find this completely unacceptable	23.4%	1115

- 5.2 At a series of meetings scheduled to discuss this and other options people were provided with a detailed presentation related to the budget options involved. This provided people with the rationale for proposing the options, the potential impact of the option and proposed efforts to mitigate this impact. These meetings are listed below:

Group / Centre	Date
Carers Association	28.11.12
Carers Development Committee	30.11.12
Highcroft	14.12.12
Eastham Day Centre	7.1.13

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Heswall Day Centre	10.1.13
Highcroft	14.1.13
Moreton Day Centre	17.1.13
Enabling Fulfilling Lives Group	18.1.13
Beaconsfield	29.1.13
Fernleigh	30.1.13
Sylvandale	4.2.13
Girtrell Court	7.2.13

- 5.3 People were then given the opportunity to ask questions of Council officers and also to have those questions fed into the consultation process; either through completing a questionnaire or by having their comments noted at the meeting, or with any Council officer they worked with at any convenient time.
- 5.4 Feedback received from these meetings make it clear that carers would be concerned at any potential reduction in the support, financial or otherwise, which they receive. However, it is also made clear that carers would be accepting of the option if they were assured that the person being cared for was receiving adequate support.
- 5.5 Further feedback centred on the market of services and support available for carers. People highlighted that they believed carers were not aware of the range of services available to them in addition to Council support and, if Council support was reduced, were concerned that carers would not be in a position to access other support as they were unaware of how and where to access it.
- 5.6 The preferred option from carers, according to the feedback received through the consultation, was the implementation of an annual grant which they believed would reduce current administration costs. Carers further suggested that they believed the current system to be overly bureaucratic and that further savings could be made to streamline the process, while at the same time improving the service provided to carers from the Department.

### **6.0 POTENTIAL IMPACT IDENTIFIED**

- 6.1 This proposal may result in a reduction in the number of carers directly supported by the Department.

### **7.0 PROPOSED MITIGATION**

- 7.1 It is important that due regard is shown to the concerns highlighted throughout this consultation process from carers. It is proposed that, should this option be considered and recommended by Cabinet and approved at Council that the following factors should be taken into account in the implementation of the option.

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- 7.2 Every effort should be made to ensure that carers are made aware of and supported to access, the range of support available to them through organisations such as the NHS and the VCF sector. These services should be actively promoted to carers and the Department should work with Carers to ensure they are able to access services which provide them with adequate support in their caring role.
- 7.3 For everyone currently receiving a carer's budget, a review would be required before any changes were made to their current support arrangements to ensure that the point made above has been adequately addressed.
- 7.4 Full consideration should be given to the option which involves an annual carer's grant, and priority should be given to improving the assessment process for carers.

### **8.0 SUMMARY**

- 8.1 The rationale for this proposal is outlined within this report, in that to both improve the suitability of the support provided to carers, and to make financial savings, it is necessary to review the current system of financial support.
- 8.2 While concerned at the potential impact of reduced support from the Council, carers made a number of suggestions for how this option could be implemented with minimum impact on their ability to continue to provide care.
- 8.3 Therefore it is felt appropriate that the decision could be taken to conduct a full review of Carers Support, with a view to implementing one of the identified options, provided that due regard is shown to address the concerns and suggestions received by Carers during this consultation process.