

## Generic County Carers Forum 23 November 2006

### Questions not on sheet sent out

1) Carers Worker, East Devon: Where is the money coming from for the Carers Link centralisation? What proportion of Carers Grant does it contain?

Response: **Geoff King** – Current Carers Link monies will be maintained. Additional monies will come from internal re-organisation of current spend from Carers Grant.

2) Carers Worker, Mid-Devon: Have seen no publicity for the new complaints procedure introduced in September this year. There is supposed to be a complaints manager in the new system. Is this a manager for each individual area, or one over-all complaints manager?

Response: **Geoff King** – The first port of call for a local problem will be the local team manager. If it is not resolved, then it has to go to Stage One process and after this, Stage Two with County Councillors involved. There is one complaints manager at County Hall who oversees the whole process.

**Wendy Price (Adult & Community Services, Assistant Director, Teignbridge):** It is vital we address any problems and resolve them as soon as possible with dialogue between us. We can meet with people, talk on the telephone, write to people, whatever way suits best.

**Carer** – Is there a joint complaints system between Health & Social Services?

**Wendy Price:** - there are 2 complaints processes but where there are joint teams, there is one team dealing with the complaint. However, monitoring of the process will still be done separately by Health & Social Services. It is hoped this will become one monitoring system in the future.

3) Carer: Regarding free bus passes for Carers. These are available only if the cared-for person receives high level DLA. If a person does not receive the high level, this does not make caring any easier.

**Response from David Johnstone:** He will follow this up with the bus companies and the Council's Transport policy.

4) Carer: Why does East Devon not provide the free bus pass?

**Response from David Johnstone:** The policy for transport and bus passes is a District Council matter and DCC have no influence on it. This has to be taken up with the District Council. Free transport was a government decision, but no money came with the decision so District Councils have had difficulty in funding the service. It is being funded via District Council Tax.

5) Carers queried lack of public transport in rural areas.

**Response from David Johnstone:** Transport is a major problem in Devon. The Rural Project information will be useful and we need to work together to explore different options. County Council needs to lobby government about the costs of rural transport being more expensive. Government is urban focussed. DCC receives less money than urban councils and some other county councils. If we received the county council 'average' we would receive

an extra £35 million per year. Carers as a group are very powerful, more so than a county council. Carers will be heard by MPs and government and will have more influence than a county council in terms of 'moral authority'. I would encourage Carers to lobby government.

**Rosemary Whitehurst (Carers Link, Teignbridge) reminded Carers that Friday December 8 is 'Carers Rights' Day and an opportunity in most areas to lobby their MPs.**

### **Questions from Sheet sent out**

**Additional Response to Q1 (Geoff King):** In the short term there will not be any changes to the local Carers Links. During the course of 12 months from April 07, work will be done to look at how we can support local work and centralise the same tasks that are now carried out by each Carers Link. These tasks can be carried out by the central hub to be created at Westbank Health Living Centre, Exminster.

**Wendy Price:** In localities where there are existing services for 'Take a Break' schemes there will be very little change, but having a central point for the scheme will enable better equity for this service across Devon.

**Carers Worker, Mid-Devon:** Why is there no response to Questions 5, 12 and 14 on the sheet?

**Response from David Johnstone:** Questions 12 and 14 – we are still obtaining factual information. When received, it will be distributed. Question 5 – Whatever an individual's need is and if there any changes to their circumstances, we have to respond to the changes by re-assessing the needs of the cared-for and those of their carer. Part of the process we engage in today is part of the knowledge we gain as a Statutory Authority.

**Carer response to Q5:** The most important thing for me is that someone knows my cared-for and the preparations in hand, before the carer becomes too old. Please keep this in mind.

**Carer response to Q14:** Carer agreed staff should be trained before they start the work. Also commented care staff are badly paid which makes them turn up for work when they are ill due to lack of sick pay, which is not good for the people they are caring for.

**Response from David Johnstone:** Local Authority has an obligation to train their staff. We recognise that the partnership we have with the independent sector must take account of training. It is a joint responsibility and we will be looking at this in the next year.

**Carer response to Q12:** Carer felt removal of fee capping is discriminatory as some families pay a lot more than others, so some families will not use the service.

**Response from David Johnstone:** This is about balancing demand against resources we have available. Very few people have been affected by this, but it does mean we are able to generate more income which can be put back into services. He agreed families will need support in finding alternative

respite and said it is the Local Authority's job to promote different types of flexible services that give value for money.

**Carer comment:** doesn't having a policy of constant change cost the Local Authority money anyway?

**Response from David Johnstone:** It is not a policy, it is a result of government agendas and Local Authority staff would welcome a period of stability. Evolution drives change as well as policy agendas eg people live longer therefore there is more demand for Older Carers services.

**Carer query on Q6 (South Devon):** There is a problem obtaining domiciliary care in South Hams, it is being used by the Local Authority. Where does this leave the Carer on Direct Payments?

**Response from Wendy Price:** The difficulty in rural areas is acknowledged and is a challenge for the future. We will be buying services from outside providers and will be working with these providers to ensure high standards are met. We are looking to improve our specialist services and will be expecting providers to train their staff and provide the high standards we expect. Contracts are continually monitored and we wish to hear from Carers and families should they experience any problems in order to address these quickly.

**Carer response:** Carers still feel they will lose services if they complain to the Local Authority. Independent sector staff are badly paid, therefore they are not of a high quality.

**Carer response to Q7's response:** Carer has written to her MP and to the Prime Minister via 'Yours' magazine who are mounting a campaign against the loss of various benefits eg Carers Allowance, because of age. Carer would like to see Devon County Council support this campaign.

**Various Carer responses to Q7:**

- a) The whole system for Carers benefits needs to be reformed.
- b) Carers who cannot work due to caring responsibilities are expected to live at a subsistence level during the time they spend caring.
- c) Carer would like to see a separate organisation within government working on reform of Carers benefits.
- d) There are many added expenses when caring which continue after Carers reach pension age and lose Carers Allowance.

### **Carer Comment**

Carer (South Devon): Regarding the £200 flexible breaks grant. Carer was involved in a panel to decide who would receive the grant. Carer thought the criteria should have been much simpler ie they should have been a member of Carers Link, nothing else, and should be allowed to spend the money on whatever they wished.

Other comments were that criteria was different in different areas. Criteria was needed in areas where demand exceeded supply. This was a pilot scheme and lessons will be learned from evaluation.

**Response from Geoff King:** There was an increase of £62,000 on Carers Grant for 2005/06, and after discussion with Carer Chairs, it was agreed we

would use this for a flexible breaks grant pilot scheme. There will be an evaluation of the scheme and Carers' concerns will be acknowledged in that. This is public money, therefore there has to be some way of showing how it has been spent.