

This report may be of interest to: Neighbourhood Services and Policy and Resources Committees

PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE: CARERS SPECIAL GRANT

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1. **Purpose**

- 1.1 To advise the scope and purpose of the Carers Special Grant
- 1.2 To advise that the Council is required at the initial stage to prepare a 3-Year plan for Milton Keynes (ending March 2002) in consultation with other agencies, particularly Health, and provide it to the Department of Health by 29 October 1999.
- 1.3 To report on the process to start to identify the carers who are in greatest need of a break, and to report on the initial negotiations with social care providers for high quality short break services.
- 1.4 To invite the Assembly to endorse the work undertaken so far and to comment on the way forward for the remainder of the period of the grant.

2. **Summary**

- 2.1 The Government has allocated nearly £60,000 (£58,892) to Milton Keynes this year to fund innovative and flexible short break services for eligible carers so they can have a break from their caring role, leaving them refreshed and better able to cope with their caring responsibilities.. The Council is estimating that the Government will allocate £147,230 in 2000/2001 and a further £206,122 in 2001/2002.

3. **Recommendations**

- 3.1 To note the report.

4. **Background**

- 4.1 There is an urgent need to stimulate provision of a wider variety of short break services (respite care) at different times of the week and at the weekend. The Council will be planning a wider range of new services with its partners so that carers can have a choice about the types of short breaks they have.
- 4.2 The Secretary of State has given the grants to local authorities so that they can take the lead in helping carers take short breaks, alongside health authorities. The Carers Special Grant was intended to enhance the provision of community care services to allow carers to take a break from caring, by stimulating greater diversity and flexibility of provision, to provide services which are more responsive to the needs of carers.
- 4.3 The first year of receipt of the grant will require local authorities to involve and consult carers and their organisations on the appropriateness of current provision and the possibility of greater diversity.
- 4.4 The entire grant must be spent on additional community care services (including planning and administration costs up to 25% of the total grant) for carers of:
- (a) adults assessed as needing community care services;
 - (b) adults who are at home; and
 - (c) adults who receive substantial amounts of care on a regular basis from informal carers.
- 4.5 The grant is to enable such carers to take a break from caring. The Council has a duty to define what “substantial and regular” care is, and will do so in consultation with carers and their organisations.
- 4.6 The services should support carers in their role, relieve carers stress and enable them to continue to provide care. Services should also aim to promote carers social inclusion and maintain their physical and mental health.
- 4.7 The Government requires the Council to provide a three year action plan by 29 October 1999 which will detail how the Council plans to spend the grant money, how it plans to involve carers and their organisations in developing and implementing the programme and to say how the Council will diversify and improve short break services. Key words in the guidance are diversity, flexibility, responsiveness and involvement. The Council will have to show the Government what has actually changed for carers in Milton Keynes as a result of using the grant money.
- 4.8 The White Paper *Modernising Social Services* set out the Government’s commitment to carers, along with the launch of the National Strategy for Carers “Caring for Carers” in February 1999. In these documents the Government pledged £140 million pounds nationally over the next three years to help carers take a break, to be used by local authorities in a targeted way. This is called the Carers Special Grant.

5. **Issues and Choices**

- 5.1 Milton Keynes Council is committed to helping people to live in their own homes for as long as they wanted to and to minimise admissions into long term care. The Council continues to maintain a policy of making available support to members of the community so they can, if they wish, remain independent and in their own home for as long they wish.
- 5.2 The support that carers provide is a key factor in maintaining people's ability to live in the community, and it is often estimated that "informal" (unpaid) carers provide around 95% of care in the community as a whole. It is essential that carers are properly supported in their role so they can continue to care. The Government has said that the first focus of the new legislation that allows authorities to address carers needs should be on helping carers to take a break.
- 5.3 Officers have been in initial discussions with providers about the sorts of short break services that they could provide, given money for that purpose. Officers have also been discussing plans for schemes in Years 2 and 3 that link short breaks for carers with adult education and leisure opportunities. They will also be discussing opportunities for "pooling" resources with neighbouring authorities so that maximum benefit can be made from specialist services.

Examples of organisations that could be involved in providing short break services soon include Crossroads, Age Concern, NSF (National Schizophrenia Fellowship), Headway, the Council's Homecare service, and St Giles Resource Centre. Additionally, although the grant is provided to carers of adults, this can include young carers if their parent has been assessed as needing community care services, and officers remain in contact with the Young Carers Development Worker, based at MK Carers Project.

More details of the proposed action plan and planned short break services will be tabled at the meeting.

6. **Implications**

6.1 Environmental

None.

6.2 Equalities

The Council intends to commission short break services which will reach out to carers who are in the most need of support to continue in their caring role, to maintain their physical and mental health, and to promote their social inclusion.

6.3 Financial

There is a requirement that most of the Carers Special Grant is spent on additional short break services. As the grant must also fund only additional services it will not contribute to the cost of providing existing services. However, the cost of preparing and administering the strategy and plan may be supported with no more than 25% of the grant.

6.4 Legal

None.

6.5 Staff and Accommodation

There will be a need to provide staff and accommodation to prepare and administer a carers short break strategy and plan. The cost will be met from the Carers Special Grant as defined previously.

7. **Conclusions**

7.1 The Milton Keynes Community Care Plan states the Council's commitment to recognising and supporting carers. The Council is also committed to supporting adults to remain in their homes. Carers are a vital source of support to adults who have a disability, are ill or who are older. Carers often suffer stress and adverse effects on their physical or mental health and social inclusion. One way of supporting carers is by providing high quality short break services, allowing carers a chance to refresh themselves. As such the Carers Special Grant is an opportunity to work with our partners to provide new, flexible, responsive short break services.

Background Papers: Department of Health Local Authority Circular LAC(99)13 - Promoting Independence; Partnership, Prevention and Carers Grants - Conditions and Allocations 1999/2000

Department of Health Annex to Local Authority Circular LAC(99)13 - Promoting Independence: Carers Special Grant 1999/2000 Guidance

Caring About Carers - A National Strategy for Carers