

Wiltshire Council

Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee
16 December 2010

Funding for Carers Breaks in Wiltshire

Executive summary

This paper outlines the situation with regards to the allocation of funding for carers' breaks in Wiltshire by Wiltshire Council for the periods 2009/2010 and 2010/2011.

Proposal:

That the Committee:

1. Notes the funding and resources allocated to carers breaks by Wiltshire Council.

Reason for proposal

The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee requested that Adult Care Services provide a report detailing the resources allocated to carers' breaks in Wiltshire.

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Funding for Carers Breaks in Wiltshire

Purpose of the report

1. The purpose of this report is to provide information to committee members with regards to funding that is allocated to carers' breaks in Wiltshire by Wiltshire Council.

Background

2. In Wiltshire, a carer is someone who provides unpaid support to a family member, partner, friend or neighbour. This could be because they are ill, frail, disabled or have mental health or substance misuse problems. The national census, 2001, identified that 39,886 people in Wiltshire look after someone on an unpaid basis and Carers UK, a national carers' organisation, has estimated that the value of unpaid care provided by carers in Wiltshire is £511 million per year. It should also be noted that this is likely to be an underestimate as many people do not recognise themselves as carers; that with an increasing older population this figure will increase in the future; and that health and social care would be unable to meet this cost if carers did not continue in their roles.
3. Since 1995 when the Carers (Recognition & Services) Act was introduced, carers' rights and entitlements, as well as the provision of services and support for carers, have been an increasing priority both nationally and locally. In 1999, local authorities were provided with a Carers Grant to ensure an increase in the level of support that they provided to carers. This has continued, although in recent years has not been ring-fenced and for all local authorities is due to run until March 2011. The breaks provided by Wiltshire Council with this, and other funding is detailed under Main Considerations.

Main Considerations for Members

4. To note the provision of resources for carers breaks in Wiltshire as provided by Wiltshire Council.
5. As noted, Wiltshire Council receives funding through the Carers Grant on an annual basis and in addition to this, funding is also identified through other services and funding streams. This funding is spent on a range of activities and support services to ensure that carers are supported in their caring role, and this includes the provision of carers' breaks.
6. In total for 2009/2010, Wiltshire Council spent £729,841 on breaks for carers in their own right, which includes adult carers of adults and young carers. For 2010/2011 Wiltshire Council's planned spend for carers' breaks is £776,469, although the full year forecast based upon the spend for the first six months of the year is £852,926. Breaks for parent carers are provided indirectly through short breaks being given to the child or young person - details can be found in point 10.

7. The breaks funded by Wiltshire Council in both 2009/2010 and 2010/2011 are provided through a variety of methods and organisations and include:

- Timeout activities – provided by the four carers support organisations, these include leisure, social and health and wellbeing activities.
- Carers' Direct Payments – provided by Wiltshire Council and accessed through a Carers' Assessment, these are sums of money provided to carers so that they can buy their own break.
- Young Carers Breaks – provided by Youth Action Wiltshire, these include a range of activities for young carers
- Sitting Service – provided by a range of organisations, including Alzheimer's Support and Alzheimer's Society, this support allows carers to have some time away from the caring role.

8. In 2009/2010, through funding provided by Wiltshire Council:

- Over 1342 timeout breaks were provided for adult carers
- 4200 hours of sitting service were provided by the Alzheimer's organisations to give carers of people with dementia a break from their caring role
- 480 adult carers received direct payments to pay for their own breaks

9. Evidence has been gathered from carers who access breaks provided by Wiltshire Council that they make a significant difference to them, in their ability to continue caring, to look after themselves and to ensure that they can partake in activities, which many non-carers would take for granted such as making health appointments and meeting with friends and family. 480 carers received direct payments in their own right in 2009/2010 to take breaks from their caring role. When asked how the payment had helped them in addition to giving them a break, the responses were as follows (please note carers could give a number of answers):

- To look after my own health and wellbeing – 72%
- To have a social life with friends and family – 51%
- To stay in / return to employment – 10%
- In other ways (such as attending health appointments, training courses and undertaking daily tasks such as shopping and decorating) – 24%

Some of the other responses about how carers used their direct payment and the difference it made included:

- "To feel more able to cope with the demands of looking after a totally dependent person, which has given a more relaxed relationship"
- "Help attending Dr appointments / bank and other appointments for myself"
- "To be able to leave the house, to shop or just walk"
- "I could not cope now caring for my husband at home without carer so I do really appreciate the money. Another very important factor is that xxx is much more settled and content at home than spending respite in a care home"

- “It means for 2 hours a week I can stop worrying and as I do that day and night the 2 hours mean a lot to me.”
- “this is my lifeline for retaining my sanity and is appreciated beyond measure”

10. It should be noted that the breaks listed above are those which are provided directly to carers in their own right. However, an effective way to support many carers to take a break is to provide a service directly to the person that they are looking after. Calculating the costs of these services which benefit carers is incredibly complex, given that the service is being provided to, (and therefore recorded against), the person being cared for. Examples include:

- Providing day care opportunities and short breaks for the cared for person, allowing the carer a break.
- Providing services that allow the person being looked after to stay in a residential home for a period from a few days to a few weeks to allow the carer to have a break or when the carer is unable to provide care for example if they have an operation or become unwell.
- Providing direct payments and local offer payments for children, young people and families, which in turn provide parent carers with breaks from the caring role. In 2009/2010 these direct payments totalled £138,000 and for 2010/2011 the planned spend is £498,000.

Conclusion

11. It is concluded that Wiltshire Council has and continues to provide funding for a wide range of carers' breaks to ensure that carers are supported to continue in their caring role, if they choose to do so.

Report Author

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Background papers

None