

CABINET 16<sup>TH</sup> MARCH 2005.

**REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL SERVICES**

**ENHANCING STAFFING IN LEARNING DISABILITY CENTRES TO SUPPORT THE MODERNISATION OF DAY OPPORTUNITIES**

**1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To ask Cabinet to approve the setting up of a Support and Training Team to enhance staffing in Day Services for people with a learning disability.
- 1.2 To approve the ending of pocket-money payments to people with a learning disability who attend Social Education Centres and the use of this money to fund the Support and Training Team.

**2.0 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 For some time Dudley Social Services Directorate has been working on the modernisation of Day Services for people with a learning disability. We have followed guidance in the White Paper 'Valuing People' and in the Joint Review of Dudley Social Services in 2002. The aim has been to improve the range of opportunities available to people who attend day centres.
- 2.2 There has been significant progress since 2002. In particular, the Pulse Team (previously known as the Community Development Team) has been established, and along with opportunities developed within Centres, has developed a number of new community based initiatives. The Service now provides successful community opportunities for around 150 people per day.
- 2.3 The staff teams in the Centres have been stretched to deliver a more varied programme of activities. Recently this has been compounded by difficulties in recruiting staff to the Service and it has been necessary to reduce the range of activities on some days.
- 2.4 A Support and Training Team could provide staff cover where needed e.g. for annual leave or mandatory training etc, thus enabling the Centres to maintain a reliable and consistent service. Funding would, however, have to be identified to establish this Team.
- 2.5 Historically, people with a learning disability who attend Centres have been paid "pocket money", sometimes also called "wages" or "attendance allowance". This originated from the days when the Adult Training Centres (ATCs), as they were then known, undertook light industrial outwork supplied by local industry. The outwork jobs provided the ATC with a small income, which was passed on to service users in the form of token wages for the work they had carried out.

- 2.6 The current rate of 60p for each day's attendance has remained unchanged for at least the last decade.
- 2.7 Since the 1980's, outwork has ceased to be the main function of the day centres. Instead, they focus on increasing people's independence and opportunities, including real work placements.
- 2.8 The payment of this 60p per day to each service user costs the service £54,480 per year (227 service day x 400 service users x 60p per day). In addition, the administration of these payments – which includes weekly calculation and distribution of individual payments - is time consuming. The total administration costs amount to almost £10,000 per year.
- 2.9 Consequently, the total costs involved in paying each service user 60p per day for receiving a service, amounts to £64,000.
- 2.10 Most West Midlands Councils ceased the payment of pocket money or other forms of 'wages' or 'attendance allowance' some time ago. Only two out of ten neighbouring Councils still make these payments. Indeed, under Fairer Charging for social care services, service users such as older people are generally charged for day services, according to their ability to pay. Paying people with a learning disability to attend a service is therefore arguably unfair as well as out-dated.

### **3.0 Consultation with Parents/Carers and Service Users**

- 3.1 A consultation has taken place between November 2004 and January 2005 with parents/carers and with service users.
- 3.2 We consulted on a proposal to end pocket-money payments and to use the money instead to develop a travel-training scheme.
- 3.3 Travel training involves employing a team of workers, known as Travel Trainers, to work with service users in a dedicated way to develop independent travel skills on public transport, thus reducing reliance on bus or coach transport provided by the Council and increasing independence.
- 3.4 We received 13 letters from parents and carers in response to the proposal to cease pocket money payments to people with a learning disability who use day services. We also received one telephone call from a parent and one letter from a provider. One parent supported the cessation of pocket money; the other letters were all opposed. Less than 5% of parents/carers have responded to the consultation process.
- 3.5 Parents and carers made the following points:
- It was acknowledged that the amount of money is very small, but the payment of pocket money gives service users a sense of personal worth – like a wage packet at the end of the week.
  - Some parents suggested that the £3 per week should be increased.

- Parents feel very strongly that the money should be retained within the Learning Disability service, even if it is no longer spent on pocket money.
- There was very little support for travel training, which we had put forward as an alternative use for the money. Some parents agreed that it could benefit a small number of service users, but most said that the scheme would not work for the majority of people.

3.6 Parents brought forward a number of alternative suggestions for use of the money:

- Additional staff at the centres
- Holidays and short breaks for service users
- The money to be allocated to each centre and parents / carers to decide how it would be spent
- The money to be used on a new service or project, which clearly benefits service users directly, but not travel training.
- Each centre to be provided with a new mini bus or people carrier to give service users better access to community activities.

3.7 The consultation with service users took place in small groups in centres across the borough. Meetings were facilitated by staff from Langstone Society in partnership with Dudley User Forum. 213 people were consulted, more than half the number who attend centres, and of these two-thirds were opposed to the proposal to end pocket-money.

3.8 The results of the consultation are attached as Appendix A.

3.9 If any person is asked if they'd like less money per week it is a natural reaction to resist. Many people do perceive the payments as 'wages' even though they receive payment for attendance rather than 'work'. It appeared that of those who were not bothered about losing their wages had ready access to other sources of disposable income.

3.10 People with a learning disability living at home can receive the following benefits:

- Income support £44.05 under 25, £55.65 over 25
- Severe Disablement Allowance £44.80 with age related additions
  - Higher £15.55
  - Middle £10.00
  - Lower £5.00
- Disability Living Allowance- Care Component
  - Higher £58.80
  - Middle £39.35
  - Lower £15.55

- Mobility component of DLA
  - Higher £41.05
  - Lower £15.55

- 3.11 Typically, therefore, an adult with a learning disability aged over 25 with parents could receive income support, severe disablement allowance and disability living allowance totalling about £140 per week. The maximum entitlement to benefits could reach approximately £210 per week.
- 3.12 People could give many examples of what they spent their centre payments on, as shown in Appendix A. Many people say the money is saved as a *contribution* to the things mentioned rather than being the sole source. The relative value of the £3.00 is incidental.
- 3.13 There was little interest in travel training. This appears to be because transport arranged by Social Services is seen as 'safe' and free of charge. A modernised day service for people with a learning disability would be less reliant on local authority transport and would encourage people to become more independent by enabling them to use public transport.
- 3.14 Although many people wanted to keep their money, some were resigned to losing it personally but wanted it to remain for the use of their centre. Many people struggled to understand the amount of money that the centre could have at its' disposal. However their comments and ideas can be seen as a source of ideas that people have, to improve their centre. These ideas are summarised in Appendix A.
- 3.15 In summary, the following messages emerged from the consultation process:
- A relatively small number of parents responded, of whom the majority were opposed to ceasing the 60 pence per day payment to service users. Two-thirds of the service users who were consulted (one-third of the total) were opposed to ending the payments.
  - Additional staffing was the favoured option put forward by parents as an alternative use for the money. This was also one of the options put forward by service users.
  - Parents and service users wanted the money to be used for the benefit of the centres.
- 3.16 The outcome of the consultation process has been considered very carefully. It is judged that the system of paying one group of service users to receive a service when many others have to pay for services is unfair and is not compatible with modern 21<sup>st</sup> century services for people with a learning disability. To retain the monies from current pocket-money payments within Learning Disability Services would, however, seem fair and reasonable.

## 4.0 PROPOSALS

- 4.1 The Director of Social Services recommends that pocket-money payments should cease with effect from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2005.

- 4.2 It is proposed in the light of the feedback from the consultation process that the budget for pocket money will be used instead to set up a small Support and Training Team in order to:
- Provide a new way of entering the service with a training dimension for new staff in the team
  - Enhance staffing to provide flexible cover for staff short falls
  - Provide additional capacity to extend the range of activities, which can be accessed by people with a learning disability in the community.
- 4.3 The money would be allocated pro rata to each Centre to employ an additional Support Worker who together would operate as the Support and Training Team.
- 4.4 The Support and Training Team would also provide a bank of staff, which could be drawn on to fill vacancies as they arise. It would be combined with a trainee scheme for new staff. By amalgamating the need for a supply of flexible, peripatetic workers, available to fill staff gaps at extremely short notice, with a planned training programme, this team could prove an ideal opportunity to foster recruitment to the Service and to improve career opportunities to promote retention.
- 4.5 In this way we would ensure that the full amount of resources, which is spent on pocket money would continue to be used within the Service for the benefit of people with a learning disability.

## **5.0 FINANCE**

- 5.1 The budget for pocket money would fund 5.5 Support Workers @ 30 hours. In addition, the Directorate would contribute £5,000 from growth monies for 2005-06 or Learning Disability Services to establish the team.
- 5.2 The £10,000 which is currently spent on administering the pocket-money payments will be an efficiency saving enabling admin staff in the centres to focus on administrative tasks to support the activities provided by the centres.

## **6.0 LAW**

- 6.1 The provision of day centres is permitted by legislation such as the Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 and the Council may do anything incidental thereto under section 111 of the Local Government Act 1972.

## **7.0 EQUAL OPPORTUNITIES**

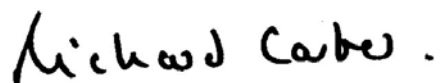
- 7.1 The content of this report is consistent with the Equal Opportunities policy of the Council.

## **8.0 RECOMMENDATIONS**

8.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet approve the proposals in part 4 of this report.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Linda Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop at the beginning of the word "Linda".

**Linda Sanders**  
**Director of Social Services**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Richard Carter". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large loop at the beginning of the word "Richard".

**Social Services Key Contact**

**Richard Carter**  
**Assistant Director – Learning Disability and Mental Health**  
**01384 815804**

**CONSULTATION WITH SERVICE USERS NOVEMBER 2004 TO JANUARY 2005**

**What people say they use payment from the centres for**

Save for holidays

Everyday items:

- Videos
- Magazines / Newspapers
- Clothes
- Computer games
- Sweets / drinks / chocolate
- Puzzles & books
- CD/DVDs
- Flowers
- Things for my bike
- Birthday/Christmas presents
- Toiletries

Activities:

- Going to the pub
- Meals out
- Birthdays
- Football matches

Give to charity

**Ideas for alternative ways of spending money**

Purchases for centre:

- Equipment for drama, cooking
- CD/DVD player
- Jukebox
- Tables, cupboards
- Minibus
- Computer games
- Vending machine
- Things for the bungalow at Lower Gornal
- Hockey equipment
- Crafts / art equipment
- Musical instruments
- Books

- New carpet
- More things in centre shop

More outings:

- Horse riding
- Swimming
- Archery
- Gardening
- Bowling team to enter competitions
- Swimming gala
- Holidays
- Computer work
- Drama
- Photography
- Trips by train
- Dancing
- Yoga / Keep fit
- Bike riding
- More work opportunities

Increased payments for work placements

Improve car parking at the centre

Make the building look nice and be safe & put handrail by front door

New unit for special care, also sensory room, motorised wheelchair, pay for alterations to building

More staff so we can do more things / More staff training in life skills

Travel passes / more transport

Donate to Tsunami appeal