

CABINET– 24 JANUARY 2017

Carers' Strategy and Carers' Personal Budgets

Report by Director for Adult Services

Introduction

1. Oxfordshire County Council recognises the crucial role that carers play in the lives of those they care for, and wants to enable carers in Oxfordshire to have the information, advice and support they need and to have a life of their own alongside their caring roles, and this is reflected in Priority 2: Protection for Vulnerable People in the Corporate Plan 2016-2020¹
2. Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group are committed to working together to raise the quality and improve the value of health and social care services for both service users and for carers. Oxfordshire County Council takes the lead for most of the contracted services for carers, with Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group leading work to ensure that carers' health needs are supported across the NHS.
3. As a consequence of ongoing financial pressures, savings against carers' services totalling £660,000 were agreed by Oxfordshire County Council in February 2016. This included a suggestion that savings could be made by introducing charging for carers' services.
4. Some of the savings required by the council were achieved through the reprocurement of the Carers Oxfordshire service (implemented in April 2016). It was found following investigation that the introduction of charging for carers' services was not viable and would not produce the savings required. Proposals for releasing funding by redesigning carers' personal budgets were developed, and these proposals were the subject of a public consultation, alongside the refreshed and updated version of the Oxfordshire Carers' Strategy.

¹ **Priority 2: Protection for vulnerable people:** We will safeguard vulnerable children and adults, and meet their eligible care needs, through:

- Stopping abuse and neglect, and giving children in our care a good start in life.
- Backing evidence-based early interventions which prevent more challenging problems arising in the future.
- Helping and empowering troubled families, including supporting them to move off benefits and into work.
- Supporting people with significant needs (including older people with substantial care needs), and meeting the eligible care needs of people with physical disabilities, learning disabilities, or mental health problems.
- Offering information and advice so people can look after themselves.

• **Supporting informal carers.**

<https://www.oxfordshire.gov.uk/cms/sites/default/files/folders/documents/aboutyourcouncil/localgovernment/CorporatePlan.pdf>

The consultation

5. The consultation² on these two elements - the **Oxfordshire Carers' Strategy** and **options for carers' personal budgets** - ran from 22nd August until 28th November 2016.
6. The **Oxfordshire Carers' Strategy** describes how Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group will support carers of all ages in the period 2017 - 2020, setting out how we are responding to our duties and responsibilities to carers as stated in national policy and legislation, whilst ensuring that the financial resources we have available to support carers in Oxfordshire are used effectively and efficiently.
7. Currently, **carers' personal budgets** are 'one off' payments of £200, £400 or £600, dependent on the level of the carer's eligible needs, that an adult carer may receive as an outcome of a carers' assessment. Carers' personal budgets are funded by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group.
8. Three options were proposed in the consultation:
 - (a) **Option 1:** Introduce a single personal budget payment of £300 for eligible carers, jointly and equally funded by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group (i.e. £150 from each organisation) and set at the eligibility level for the current £200 payment.
 - (b) **Option 2:** Introduce two (instead of the current three) levels of personal budget payment: i) £200, funded by Oxfordshire County Council and set at the same eligibility level as the current £200 payment; ii) £500, jointly and equally funded by Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group and Oxfordshire County Council (i.e. £250 from each organisation) and set at the eligibility level for the current £400 payment.
 - (c) **Option 3:** Stop providing personal budgets to carers who have eligible needs following a carers' assessment. Instead, use the available budget to: i) establish a 'contingency fund' of £100,000 to meet eligible carers' specific needs which cannot be met by the 'core' carers' services; ii) reinvest additional savings into services that are particularly valued by carers.
9. Oxfordshire County Council's preferred option as stated in the consultation documents was option 3; the funding released by this option would be used to continue to fund the Dementia Support Service, and to provide some additional resource to meet other pressures within adult social care.

² Supporting documentation for the consultation can be found at:
<https://consultations.oxfordshire.gov.uk/consult/ti/Carers/consultationHome>

10. Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group did not identify a preferred option in the consultation documents but did design a question in the consultation inviting respondents to identify priorities for carers.
11. A total of 51 questionnaire responses were received (25 via the online portal; 26 paper questionnaires and 6 responses in other written forms) and feedback was also gathered during three consultation workshops for carers, a workshop for service providers and a workshop at the Caring Matters Conference held at the Kassam Stadium on 25th November 2016.
12. Despite the low numbers taking part in the consultation, there were some very detailed and full responses provided. The full consultation report is contained in Annex 1.

Key themes from the consultation responses: Carers' Strategy

13. Responses to the consultation suggest that the three priorities in the Oxfordshire Carers' Strategy are broadly right, although concerns were expressed at the ability of services to deliver against them, and the difficulty for outcomes for carers to be identified and measured.
14. A key message was 'one size doesn't fit all', which applied to how people access information and guidance and how they want to be supported. The consultation responses suggest that there is recognition of the support that Oxfordshire County Council and the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group have offered to carers over the years, but respondents say that carers do not feel as valued as they used to.
15. Daytime support services, respite services and information and advice are the 'top three' things identified by carers as being the most important to them in their caring role.

Key themes from the consultation responses: carers' personal budgets

16. Most respondents to the consultation agreed with the recommendation not to charge for carers' services, although two people said that charging for services would be acceptable to them.
17. Many people reported that the award of a personal budget helps carers to feel valued. There were comments that a personal budget gives a carer 'freedom of choice to spend on what you want, not just what is on offer' and 'personal budgets can be a life-saver and should not be abolished'.
18. A small number of responses were not in favour of carers' personal budgets, feeling that the cared for person's budget should be sufficient to allow the carer a break.
19. There were a number of comments that personal budgets should be available for as many carers as possible, and also that carers with the greatest needs should be targeted.

20. Options 1 and 2 were the preferred options for carers; some people preferred the flat rate budget of option 1, while others felt that the tiered approach of option 2 was fairer.
21. Option 3 was the least preferred option. Concerns were expressed about the proposed use of the released funds to support the Dementia Support Service, as carers are supporting people with a wide range of conditions and disabilities - 'meeting the needs of all carers is important, not a specific few'.

Response to the consultation

Oxfordshire Carers' Strategy

22. The strategy will be reviewed in light of comments received in the consultation and amendments will be made if appropriate.

Carers' personal budgets

23. The outcome of the consultation did not produce a single clear 'preferred option' from the people who responded. However, it is clear that the least preferred option was option 3, which did not retain a carers' personal budget.
24. As a result of the consultation, a further alternative option for carers' personal budgets has been explored and developed:

A 'targeted' **carers' personal budget payment of £300, jointly and equally funded by Oxfordshire County Council and Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group** and payable to all carers who have the highest needs and meet the current eligibility threshold of £600. The split of funding reflects how the top levels of current personal budgets are constructed between health and social care funding. This option also allows enough council funding to be released for the Dementia Support Service (this was part of the council's preferred option in the consultation)

25. The table below sets out this option:
£300, jointly funded (assuming 13% increase in carers assessed each year, with 42% being eligible³)

	No. of assessments & reviews	No. of eligible carers	Total costs	OCC costs	OCCG costs
Year 1 2017/18	2,808	1,179	£353,700	£176,850	£176,850
Year 2 2018/19	3,173	1,333	£399,900	£199,950	£199,950
Year 3 2019/20	3,586	1,506	£451,800	£225,900	£225,900

Over the three year period, the estimated cost of this option for each organisation is **£602,700**.

³ 629 carers reviewed or assessed 1st April - 30th Sept 16 received a personal budget of £600, which is 42% of the total number of assessments/reviews completed during that period. Taking into account that 60% of the total number of assessments/reviews is completed in the first 6 months of the year, it is estimated that 1,048 carers will receive a personal budget of £600 in 2016/17.

26. Alongside this, Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group is also proposing to fund an enhanced information and advice offer for all carers via direct electronic referral by a GP⁴. It is anticipated that this would cost £200,000 per annum and is proposed to be delivered by an extension to the current Oxfordshire County Council contract with Carers Oxfordshire.
27. The revised carers' personal budget option and the enhanced information and advice offer were approved by the Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group Executive at their meeting in December 2016.
28. The revised carers' personal budget payment and enhanced information and advice offer will enable us to:
 - (a) Continue to provide personal budgets for those carers with the highest level of need;
 - (b) Continue to support the Dementia Support Service, a vital service for many carers;
 - (c) Increase access to advice, information and support to carers by direct referral from GPs.

Financial and Staff Implications

29. Based on the estimated costs, it is estimated that a total of **£1,758,705** would be released from the Oxfordshire County Council budget in 2017/18, 2018/19 and 2019/20⁵.
30. £400,000 would be used to fund the council's contribution to the Dementia Support Service from 2019/20, when it was otherwise planned to have ceased. The remaining balance would be used to support services that provide support to carers and to help manage other Adult Social Care pressures.
31. There are no staff implications arising from these proposals.

Equalities Implications

32. The Service and Community Impact Assessment for this proposal is included as Annex 3.

⁴ Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group is considering implementing a similar system of carers' 'prescription', as is used in Surrey: <https://fs4.formsite.com/surreygp/form30/index.html>

⁵ The total Oxfordshire County Council budget for carers' personal budgets is £787,135, so £2,361,405 over three years

RECOMMENDATION

33. **The Cabinet is RECOMMENDED to approve the revised carers' personal budget payment and to welcome the intention of Oxfordshire Clinical Commissioning Group to fund an enhanced information and advice offer via direct GP referral.**

KATE TERRONI

Director for Adult Services

Contact Officer: Benedict Leigh

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