

REPORT TO: Health Policy & Performance Board
DATE: 18 June 2019
REPORTING OFFICER: Strategic Director, People
PORTFOLIO: Health & Wellbeing
SUBJECT: Respite Provision
WARD(S) All

1.0 PURPOSE OF REPORT

1.1 To report on respite provision with a particular focus on Shared Care Vouchers.

2.0 RECOMMENDATION: That the Board

1) Review the contents of this report; and

2) Note the possible improvements highlighted at 3.16 to 3.18 and advise on the preferred course of action.

3.0 SUPPORTING INFORMATION

Background

3.1 This report has been developed to provide an overview of respite provision, in particular the use of Shared Care Vouchers, following a recent issue experienced by a carer.

3.2 The situation was as follows – a daughter cared for her mother (who had a diagnosis of dementia) but the family were going on a holiday abroad and the mother needed care whilst the family was away. Although the daughter had a Shared Care Voucher (following an earlier assessment that had identified a need for 28 days residential respite), the local care home sector would not agree to offer the respite until within a few days of the holiday departure date. The reason offered by the care home sector is that a bed could be offered to someone in need of a permanent placement and this is preferable from a business perspective.

3.3 The daughter got in touch with the Council on 4th October after experiencing difficulty in securing a respite placement in the chosen home(s) with the vouchers. The holiday departure date was 19th October. In this particular case a respite placement was arranged after involvement from Care Management; a Social Worker made contact with the daughter to provide support and a placement was arranged in St Luke's (which, although a nursing home, had opened a unit to accommodate the

residents of Cartref that had recently closed and therefore they had a vacancy). The daughter accepted this placement despite a home in Runcorn not being her preferred choice.

- 3.4 Given the issue outlined above, the purpose of this report is to generate an improved understanding of the Shared Care Voucher process and to establish whether issues such as this are a common occurrence. This will help to identify where improvements can be made going forward in order to help avoid carers experiencing issues such as the one described above.

Shared Care Voucher process

- 3.5 Shared Care Vouchers were introduced a number of years ago in order to give carers more choice and flexibility around arrangements for much needed respite. The idea behind them was that the carer would be able to choose where their loved one is placed rather than the Council making arrangements on their behalf. Also, by providing the vouchers for the year, the carer can make use of them as and when required.
- 3.6 The need for respite will be identified by Social Workers as part of the assessment process. Depending on the nature of the person's condition, Shared Care Vouchers may be identified as a way of meeting the assessed need and usually up to 4-6 weeks' worth of vouchers will be provided. If vouchers are requested, Care Arrangers will send a letter along with the relevant vouchers to the individual/their carer for use in that financial year.
- 3.7 There are six different vouchers that are issued by Care Arrangers depending on what type of care has been requested. There is a separate letter for Bredon and Adult Placement vouchers.
- 3.8 The voucher numbers will usually start from 1, unless it is a request for more vouchers in the same financial period. The voucher identifies the level of care required (e.g. residential, nursing EMI etc.), the dates the vouchers are valid to and from, the service user's name and CareFirst ID and the carer's name. If there is additional 1:1 support needed on top of the stay this will be written on the vouchers too. A copy of the support plan is also sent out along with the vouchers for the providers' records.

Voucher usage data

- 3.9 Information obtained from CareFirst reveals the following about voucher usage over the last three financial years:
- 2018/19: 23 service users accessed 340 nights of respite (12 service users from 2017/18 accessed respite care again in this year, along with 9 from 2016/17)
 - 2017/18: 38 service users accessed 577 nights of respite (23 service users from 2016/17 accessed respite care again in this year)

- 2016/17: 50 service users accessed 736 nights of respite

This indicates a reduction in usage of the vouchers over the last three years and also demonstrates that a number of the same people are using the vouchers each year. This also reflects the fact that a small core group of carers continue to value the need for respite support organised in this way.

- 3.10 In addition, CareFirst data reveals that service users access an average of just 0.067 nights of respite via Shared Care Vouchers per year. Prices range from £417.14 per week to £600.00 per week dependent on the unit.

Complaints

- 3.11 Customer Care records have been reviewed for any previous complaints in relation to Shared Care Vouchers. Having reviewed all complaints related to assessment and care planning from 2018 to present, there does not appear to be any of a similar nature. However, it may be the case that those who have experienced issues have liaised directly with the Social Work Teams who will likely have resolved the problem without the individual making a formal complaint. Indeed, there is anecdotal evidence from teams to suggest that at least one other person has experienced problems in making use of Shared Care Vouchers to cover a period where the carer was going into hospital for an operation. In this case, an out-of-borough respite placement was arranged.

Alternative respite provision

- 3.12 This issue described at 3.1 was with specific emphasis on the care home sector. However, it is worth noting we do have other respite provision available, including:
- Adult Placement / Shared Lives, although predominantly a day service, do offer some respite provision;
 - Domiciliary care may be able to support the person to stay at home;
 - Direct Payments can be offered to employ a Personal Assistant to support the person at home;
 - Bredon is also available but is mainly for use by adults with learning disabilities.

Practice in other areas

- 3.13 A number of neighbouring authorities were asked about their respite offer:
- Lancashire has a credit card system for respite care. Depending on assessment, payment is made onto the card for the service user to use for respite care. They have to apply each year.
 - Warrington block purchase beds in the community and use for respite stays.
 - Sefton use vouchers (14 a year).
 - Knowsley assess each time for the respite but if on a Direct Payment

will transfer the allocated money to the account so it can be used as required.

Availability in the care home sector

- 3.14 Regarding potential available places for respite within Halton – older people's bed voids over the last six months (October 2018 to March 2019) show that there is an average of 23 beds (3.5%) available per month.
- 3.15 It should be noted that there is no expectation placed upon care homes that they should make a bed available for a future period of respite. It is understandable that, from a business perspective, permanent placements take priority. If they were to agree to a respite placement one month in advance, for example, they would then need to refuse permanent placements for that bed until after the respite period. It is for this reason that care homes will only confirm a respite placement a few days in advance.

Possible areas for improvement

- 3.16 The letter that is sent out with the vouchers (attached at appendix 1) provides some information to say that availability needs to be checked with care homes and that there is no guarantee that there will be vacancies. However, in order to manage people's expectations, there could be further clarity added so that people do not think they will be able to use the vouchers to book a respite stay in a care home weeks/months in advance. The letter could advise people to contact their Social Worker to discuss respite provision for a planned holiday. It could also provide information on other respite options (e.g. Shared Lives) that can be explored.
- 3.17 Shared Care Vouchers may be more useful in cases where an emergency or more immediate stay in a care home is required, given the issues faced by care homes around confirming placements in advance. Carers should be made aware that for future planned holidays, a care home placement may not be the best option; they should be given information on other options that can be booked in advance or if it is a care home placement that is required, there is support available from Care Management in arranging that. It is essential that carers are made aware that they can contact their Social Worker for support with the process rather than becoming distressed trying to make arrangements themselves.
- 3.18 Based on the example provided at the outset of this report, it would appear that Shared Care Vouchers are not fully achieving their intended aim of giving carers more choice and flexibility in making respite care arrangements. It may therefore be necessary to consider whether the Council's respite offer needs to be enhanced and there are a number of options in this respect:

- Alternative respite options such as Shared Lives/PAs/domiciliary care may be more suitable in some cases and may be better placed than care homes to confirm respite bookings in advance;
- Given the inability of care homes to offer respite places more than several days to a week in advance, it may be necessary to block purchase a number care home bed nights for respite provision but there will of course be costs associated with this. Another consideration in relation to block purchasing respite beds is that the type of beds purchased may not suit everyone's respite needs and in certain circumstances it is therefore preferable to arrange appropriate respite provision on a case-by-case basis;
- There may be the potential to explore how the Council's in-house care homes could support the provision of respite placements on a more planned basis.

4.0 POLICY IMPLICATIONS

4.1 In order to ensure consistency and clarity around respite provision in terms of the respite offer that is communicated to carers, it may be necessary to develop a respite policy and procedure for staff, as there isn't one in place currently. A couple of example policies from other areas are available via the links below:

- <https://www.iow.gov.uk/documentlibrary/view/respite-care-for-adults-policy>
- <https://www.haringey.gov.uk/social-care-and-health/carers/respite-care-and-breaks-carers>

5.0 SAFEGUARDING IMPLICATIONS

5.1 In order to ensure that service users are safeguarded it is essential that there is a clear and comprehensive respite offer to allow carers the opportunity to have a break from their caring responsibilities.

6.0 FINANCIAL/RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS

6.1 If it is thought to be necessary to block purchase beds for respite, there will be cost implications.

6.2 Enhanced support from Care Management to assist people to arranging respite for a planned holiday would be useful but this will have an impact on staff time and capacity.

7.0 OTHER IMPLICATIONS

7.1 None identified.

8.0 RISK ANALYSIS

8.1 If improvements are not made to the current process and information surrounding Shared Care Vouchers there is a risk that service users and

their carers will experience further issues, which may result in complaints being made.

9.0 **EQUALITY AND DIVERSITY ISSUES**

9.1 An Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) is not required for this report.

10.0 **LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS UNDER SECTION 100D OF THE LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972**

None.