

The Highland Council
Education Children and Adult Services Committee
26 October 2016

Agenda Item	16
Report No	ECAS 72/16

Self Directed Support

Report by Director of Care and Learning Service

Summary

This report provides an update on Self Directed Support, including the development of brokerage services for children and young people, and makes recommendations on this, the possibility of introducing charges, and a change to the SDS decision making process for in high cost cases.

1. Background

- 1.1 There have been a number of committee reports the subject of self directed support, the last one being in March 2016 in which members were asked to agree a further period of consultation and options appraisal regarding the provision of a brokerage service for children and young people and their parent/carers.
- 1.2 A report in January 2016 also set out a number of changes to the Resource Allocation System (RAS) and to the provision of residential respite services in order to free up funding to enable more families to access a Direct Payment.

2. Brokerage services

- 2.1 A recently published report by Self Directed Support Scotland looked at the view of service users on their experience of the four options through Self Directed Support (SDS). This report can be read by following the link below.
<http://www.sdsscotland.org.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/09/FINAL-SDS-User-Experience-Survey.pdf>
- 2.2 One of the conclusions was that, in relation to accessing advice and support, users can find it difficult to navigate among the various organisations who can provide support in the assessment and arrangement process, and that those who access independent advice and support organisations find them very useful.
- 2.3 This would support the development of brokerage services, as previously endorsed at Committee. There are a number of organisations offering this service in Highland, and indications that choice will grow over time.
- 2.4 Since the previous report, further consideration has been given to the value of community brokerage.

- 2.5 The principles underpinning the model of community brokerage include:
- Supporting people who need help to decide for themselves what help they want and how they should be supported.
 - Recognising personal support comes from a range of sources which includes family support, access to information, support from people with similar experiences, natural community support and sometimes the use of services.
 - Developing community networks, helping people to be included and helping them get natural support from friends and others.
 - Using existing community resources as much as possible and not reinventing the wheel.
 - Recognising the value of new technology such as alarms to help people be as independent as possible.
 - Understanding the value of relationships where people both contribute and receive from community life.
- 2.6 More work is required to develop a detailed proposal, but current thinking is that there may be a hub and spoke model, with a central post to provide co-ordination and a variety of delivery models in each Area. It is recommended that this work continues and a specific proposal is brought to a future committee meeting.

3. Charging for Services

- 3.1 An internal audit report on SDS processes which was produced in March 2016, included an action to consider charging for services as follows: “the option to charge for services should be fully investigated by management to assess the implications of charging and the effect that this would have on the SDS budget.”
- 3.2 There are currently no charges for social care services for children by Highland Council, and charging is not common practice in other local authorities. Past experience has shown that the costs of administering charges can outweigh the financial gain, and that it can also be a barrier to the engagement of families in need. To introduce charges for services provided through SDS would impact on a discrete group of children - i.e. those with assessed complex health needs or disability.
- 3.3 Families using a brokerage service will normally have to pay for this from the support package agreed. The recommendation to members is that other charges direct to Highland Council are not introduced at this time.

4. Collection of unspent monies

- 4.1 Where parents/carers or young people don't use the full amount allocated for their support package through Direct Payments, this is monitored by the SDS team on a quarterly basis and during this process excess funds in individuals accounts are identified and clawed back. Since April this year £6,729 has been reclaimed for services to children and young people.

5. Approval of Direct Payment packages

- 5.1 In Highland, in most situations, the upper limit of the RAS calculated support package is £21,000. This is higher than in some other local authorities, but regardless of this, there are still some scenarios where it is essential to provide services which can support a child/young person to remain with their family at home. It has recently been agreed that this level of expenditure should have an additional level of approval, and not sit with the SDS Panel which approves other packages. It is proposed that the appropriate Area Care and Learning Manager should review and approve all such packages.
- 5.2 Demand continues to rise for Self-Directed Support and for Direct Payments as an alternative to council services. This continues to present a challenge in cost pressures. Work is underway to produce more detailed guidance on eligibility, enabling managers to apply consistent principles to decisions on packages.

6. Implications

- 6.1 The **resource** implications regarding development of a brokerage service will be addressed in a future report. Recommendation 1 addresses a potential area of income generation but does not favour introduction of charges. Details are given in paragraph 4.1 on the collection of unspent monies. Paragraph 5 sets out actions being taken to manage costs within current budget.
- 6.2 There are no **legal, equality, risk, climate change/carbon clever, rural or Gaelic** implications arising from this report.

7. Recommendations:

- 7.1 Committee is requested to consider and agree the following recommendations:
1. That charges are not introduced for families accessing Self Directed Support, respite or other directly provided services from Highland Council.
 2. That further work is carried out to develop a Community brokerage proposal to be brought to a future committee meeting.
 3. To endorse the arrangement that high cost packages over the Resource Allocation System limit require the approval of the Care and Learning Manager.

Designation: Director of Care and Learning

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