

COMMITTEE: RACE ADVISORY FORUM

DATE: 4TH APRIL 2005

SUBJECT: NEW CARERS POLICY-EQUALITY IMPACT ASSESSMENT

REPORT BY: HOUSING & SOCIAL SERVICES DEPARTMENT

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IMPLICATIONS:

LEGAL	COMMUNITY SAFETY
EQUALITIES ✓	ENVIRONMENT
FINANCIAL	CONSULTATIONS
STAFFING	OTHER
WARDS AFFECTED:	ALL

PURPOSE

1. To advise forum members of the new Carers Policy and to inform on the recent equality impact assessment action plan and recommendations. Request feedback on implications of the new policy on race.

RECOMMENDATION(S)

2. That the Race Advisory Forum endorses the Carers Policy outlined below and the equality impact assessment recommendations and Action Plan.

BACKGROUND

3. **The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004** received Royal Assent in July 2004 and will be implemented as from April 2005 and builds upon previous legislation in relation to Carers since 1995. Main implications of the Act -

4. There is now a duty on Local Authorities to inform carers of their right to an assessment, rather than the carer needing to take the initiative. This has been practise for sometime within Housing and Social Services, however it will mean that Social Workers will need to be more diligent in following up carers who do not happen to be present at an assessment.
5. There is now a duty on Local Authorities to consider the wishes of carers concerning employment, training, education or leisure activities and to take these into account when providing services. The assessment documentation will need to be modified to ensure this information is captured and social work teams will need information on their new responsibilities. In the first instance this information can be passed to Service and Team Managers. Training on this new procedure took place October, 2004
6. There is now an expectation of cooperation between Social Services Departments and other statutory bodies such as Local Education Authorities (LEAs) Housing Departments and NHS organisations, with these organisations being given the duty to give 'due consideration' to requests to become involved in planning services for carers or to provide assistance to individual carers. This underlines the importance of the Luton multi-agency strategy group, currently chaired by the Primary Care Trust (tPCT) and a report on this Act will go to the next meeting of that group.
7. The Department of Health will be consulting on whether to issue new guidance on this Act in the light of previous guidance on carers' issues. However this Act does introduce new provisions, particularly in the arena of multi-agency working which is currently not covered by guidance and therefore new guidance would be welcome.

REPORT

8. The aim of the Carers Policy is to recognise and support the work done by informal carers. The objectives to identify, assess and support carers in areas of need eg a break from caring, to pursue employment, training, education or leisure pursuits.
9. The Carers Policy has been through an initial equalities impact onsideration and the following issues were highlighted with regard to racial equality.
 1. Identify hidden carers from the Asian community – **positive impact** – during 2004 funding was made available from the Carers Grant to

enable groups to hold events in culturally appropriate venues (luncheon clubs) to enable them to celebrate the contribution made by carers known to them and to identify carers within their respective communities. Events were held in

- Sikh Gudwaras x 2 targeting different groups within the Sikh community
 - CYCD Bengali Luncheon Club x 2 events one for men and one for women
 - Pakistani/Kashmiri – funding towards Carers Special Day arranged by Khidmat at Dallow Community Learning Centre
 - Hindu – Carers event covering health and carers issues.
 - Information regarding services has been made available in Asian languages to support carers events.
 - Work continuing to allow culturally appropriate services to be set up to meet the needs of and identify carers from the Asian communities.
2. Identify hidden carers from the African & Caribbean Community – **Positive impact** - Carers Support Group funded to enable carers to be identified and obtain support. Group meeting monthly.
- Advocacy Service within the African and Caribbean Community allows carers to be supported by people from their own ethnic background to request support and services - **Positive impact**
3. Support Hidden Carers – **Positive impact** 'Give us a Break' Carers Breaks Grant funded through Voluntary Action Luton allows carers to access a break from caring without contacting the Housing and Social Services. A lot of carers from Minority Ethnic Communities are hesitant to contact the department and this scheme has enabled people to receive a break. The target of 5% for Black and Ethnic minority communities has been exceeded at every panel meeting and is increasing year on year. The give us a break scheme has also allowed people with HIV/Aids to access services through The Lodge.
4. Services to enable carers to have a break (by direct payment or commissioned from agency) – **positive impact** – carers from minority ethnic communities have taken up this service because it enables them to employ a person of their choice and usually someone from their own culture, who has an understanding to meet their cultural/religious needs.

5. The possibility of a **negative Impact** on community members within the Chinese, Eastern European and other minority communities within Luton that are not 'obvious' within the take up and access to services based on the Luton demographic Profile has been recognised. There are also issues that have been identified within the Asylum Seeker communities that are not being addressed. These areas have been acknowledged as requiring further consideration and will be included within the Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan.
6. The Lesbian, Gay, Bi Sexual & Transperson (LGBT) Group have recently considered the policy in terms of the impact on members within these communities. Within the policy there is an opportunity to commission services from same sex carers, which can be purchased through the Direct Payment Scheme. There is advice and information made available on the policy through services and centres that LGBT people would frequent or use. This is considered as having a **positive impact** on members of LGBT Communities.
7. The policy has not yet been to the Disability and Access Forum, although this is scheduled for 7th April, 2005. However, the impact on members of the community who have a disability is considered to be a **positive Impact** because of the benefits to disabled carers that can now be obtained. Feedback from the Disability and Access Group will be incorporated into the Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan.
8. The Womens Forum have yet to consider the policy. No dates have been set for this group to meet. However, in considering the policy and its implications for female carers, it is considered by Officers, that the policy will have a **Positive Impact** on female carers. From the data and research material available, the majority of carers are female and traditionally, have been expected to take on this role. The new carers policy will ensure that female carers will be able to pursue alternative activities and needs along with their carer responsibilities.
9. Service users and carers are to be invited to attend a focus group to consider the carer policy and practise.

PROPOSAL/OPTION

10. To continue to seek advice on the Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan through consultation through the Councils Equality Fora. There will also be consultation with service user groups before the new policy is finally implemented. The policy will be implemented with effect from 1st April, 2005. There will be a 6 month review of the outcome of the Equality Impact Assessment.

APPENDIX

Appendix A - Carers Policy

Appendix B - Carers Improvement Plan

Appendix C - Equality Impact Assessment Action Plan

Appendix D - Equality Impact Assessment Status Plan

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

LOCAL GOVERNMENT ACT 1972, SECTION 100D

The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 gave Carers who provide substantial and regular care for someone who is eligible for community care services or for a disabled child the right to *request* a carer's assessment. It also gave Local Authorities the duty to take carers' needs into account when providing services to the user.

The Carers' Strategy (1999) sets out a national framework for multi-agency support to carers, including information and advice, practical help such as breaks and healthcare. The Carers' Grant accompanied the strategy.

The Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 gave carers the right to request an assessment even if the person for whom they care refused an assessment. Carers can receive services in their own right, including by direct payments.