**Carers proposals in response to the Social Care Offer**

**The consultation material on the Social Care Offer was very thin on real content – which made it difficult (and sometimes impossible) to comment, because so much depended on reading between the lines. However, based on our current experiences and concerns, the following would constitute a list of what we hope for / expect from the new Offer – which, if taken seriously, would do much to help carers continue to care.**

1. A real determination to make continuity a key feature of social work practice. A team of consistent and skilled social workers who are more accessible and responsive than at present, and whose working practices minimize the need to ‘tell your story’ more than once.
2. A real reduction in delays in getting assessments and reviews done and in implementing what is decided.
3. Where several people with learning disabilities live together, the allocation of a single social worker for that setting, so that shared packages of support are easier to set up and maintain.
4. That Carers assessments are actively promoted, if the intention is to enhance the ability of Carers to continue caring.
5. Direct payments – far greater clarity about their use, and much more consistent advice from social workers based on this. An effort to make administration of them as easy as possible, and a re-statement of the agreement that money will not be clawed back without prior notification to the Carers, who may be building up a surplus for a particular purpose.
6. Also in respect of direct payments, a continued ability to employ family members where this is the best way to meet the needs of the assessed person. Flexibility has been a key strength in the use of direct payments, in exploring more creative and effective means of meeting needs, and must not be sacrificed because of their misuse by a tiny number of users. The new guidelines and prepayment cards will need fine-tuning to deal with issues raised by Carers in our summary of issues.
7. A restatement that the definition of ‘independence’ used by the Council is not ‘coping on your own’, but achieving more independence through support.
8. A robust challenge to the NHS, as they routinely remove their contributions to support, even when a person’s health needs have not changed.
9. A mechanism, through the Council, but involving service users, for approving independent suppliers of services for people with learning disabilities.
10. An assessment process which is fair, transparent and user-friendly.
11. The avoidance of an over-optimistic presentation of the Social Care Offer and its potential, which Carers know to be unrealistic and misleading.
12. An early identification and discussion with Carers about areas of support which are under consideration to be cut, to seek ways forward that recognize the reality of cuts, but are well-considered and fair, with the minimum of unanticipated consequences.
13. Key principles underpinning the Council’s relationship with Carers :-
* Clarity – jargon-free and easily understandable language
* Communication – genuine and 2 way, based on honesty
* Continuity – of personnel, wherever possible
* Consistency – in social work practice and in the outcomes of assessments and reviews
1. A planned approach by the Council to meeting the huge anticipated growth in demand with steadily reducing resources.

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 (Contact – Mark Feeny 01924 496095)