

# **CARERS** look after family, partners or friends in need of help because they are ill, frail or have a disability. The care they provide is unpaid.

## **POLICY BRIEFING**

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### **Carers Grant Guidance Year 6 2004/2005**

**Carers England**

**March 2004**

This year's Grant (i.e. 2004/5) for local authorities in England totals £125 million, an increase of £25 million. There are a number of changes to the conditions, most importantly the removal of ring-fencing. This briefing sets out those changes and provides background information to the Grant.

#### **Purpose of the Grant**

The Carers Grant forms part of the Government's National Strategy for Carers, 'Caring about Carers', published in 1999. It is designed to stimulate diversity and flexibility of services provision that enable carers to take a break from caring, and to help provide carers' services, "to support them in their caring role".

#### **Changes to the conditions**

##### **End to ring-fencing**

In previous years, the Grant has been paid under Section 93 of the Local Government Act 2000, which requires a determination from the Secretary of State setting out the purpose of the Grant. From 2004/5 the Grant will be paid under Section 31 of the Local Government Act 2003, which does not require a determination, allows the Grant to be paid to local authorities without conditions attached.

This means that there is no restriction on how the Grant should be allocated. There are no limits and targets as to how the money should be spent, authorities are able to carry money forward into the next financial year and authorities no longer need to demonstrate additionality – i.e. that the increase in their Carers Grant allocation (the new money) goes on NEW breaks services or on carers' services.

The 2003/4 Grant removed ring-fencing for three star authorities, but this is the first time that restrictions have been lifted from ALL local authorities.

The Carers Grant is one of several grants, which though remaining targeted, have had their ring-fencing removed as part of an overall Government strategy

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**CARERS UK**

to give councils flexibility in use of their resources. Though there are no conditions attached to how the money is spent, the purpose of the grant is clearly explained and the Government argues that carers' services should be assured through monitoring councils' performance. The Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) Delivery and Improvement Statement will monitor the provision of services to carers and collect data on breaks and services to carers.

In addition, the Department of Health state that work is under way to develop a measure to assess the impact on carers of support provided at local level and the Department of Health are in discussion with the Social Care Institute of Excellence to develop a good practice page on their carers website [www.carers.gov.uk](http://www.carers.gov.uk).

### **Carers' services**

The other major change to the Grant is an extension of the carers' services covered by the Grant. In addition to breaks services, the new Guidance provides that:

- \* Local authorities should look at wider ways of supporting carers' well-being than just breaks services. Examples given in the Guidance include funding courses to support carers to move on to new learning and/or work or volunteering opportunities.
- \* Councils should consider using some of the money allocated for carers' services to employ a carers' development worker. This role would be to develop carers' services locally and to work across health and social care boundaries, for example by developing links with the NHS through a pooled budget arrangement. The Guidance stresses that the creation and recruitment of such a post should be done in consultation with local stakeholders.

### **Other changes**

Payment of the Grant will be made quarterly, previously payments were monthly. Three star rated authorities will continue to receive the Grant in one annual payment in April.

### **Carers UK's concerns**

Carers report one of the benefits of the Grant as being its ring-fencing and the fact that the conditions were tightly drawn. Local carers' groups felt this helped to protect the Grant from disappearing into other social services budgets. Carers UK is concerned that local authorities may now spend less on carers' breaks and services than before.

Carers UK welcome the emphasis on widening the ways in which carers' well-being is supported, in particular recognition that many carers may desire access to opportunities for learning and work. However, it is essential that these services are not provided at the expense of breaks services. Carers UK still hears from many carers who are unable to access breaks through current schemes, and it is essential that the increase in Carers Grant money this year is used to increase the number of breaks for carers.

### **How is the money to be spent?**

The removal of ring-fencing means that there are no conditions attached to Year 6 of the Carers Grant, though the policy intentions remain similar to those of 2003/4 Guidance. Local authorities are **encouraged** to use the money to:

- \* develop pragmatic, outcome-focused approaches to the carer's assessment, which is integrated with the Single Assessment Process by April 2004;
- \* to focus on the needs of carers to prevent loss of independence, i.e. in line with Fair Access to Care Standards. These are standards which set eligibility criteria for services;
- \* provide breaks for carers who provide regular and substantial care to a 'relevant adult' who lives at home and has been assessed under the NHS and Community Care Act 1990;
- \* provide breaks services for disabled children and their families under Part 3 of the Children Act 1989;
- \* support children and young people (under 18) who have caring responsibilities in having a break from caring; or
- \* fund voluntary organisations to provide breaks directly on the basis of their own assessments;
- \* fund administration relating to the carers' plan and consultation with carers.

In addition to these services the Government intends for authorities to continue to respond imaginatively to requests for diversity in service provision for carers.

### **Consultation with Carers**

Early versions of the Grant conditions specified that the plan for services had to be developed in consultation with carers. Guidance accompanying the Grant Order states that "councils are encouraged to agree a plan with stakeholders (carers) to ensure that the Grant is spent on locally agreed priorities." In addition, 2004/5 Carers Grant Guidance states that "recruitment of a carers development worker should be done in consultation with local stakeholders."

### **Voucher schemes**

Councils can fund the infrastructure relating to voucher schemes through the Grant, as these costs are essential to the provision of flexible breaks services. Guidance on voucher schemes can be found at [www.carers.gov.uk](http://www.carers.gov.uk).

## **How many more years of the Grant?**

In Summer 2002, the Secretary of State for Health announced that the Grant would be continuing for a further two years, ending in March 2006, and was scheduled to rise to £185 million for 2005/6. The Government reviews all grants every autumn, but to date there is no indication that the Grant will continue after 2006.

A detailed breakdown of local spending allocations is provided in Annex B of Local Authority Social Service Letter (2003)8. A copy of the letter is available, under 'What's New' on the Government's carers' website: [www.carers.gov.uk](http://www.carers.gov.uk).

## **What can you do?**

- \* With the removal of ring-fencing it is especially important that you find out how your local council intends to develop their plans for this year. In particular, ascertain whether there is additional spending on Carers Grant services equivalent to the increase in budget (a 25% increase across England).
- \* As branches and carers workers, you know whether carers have been consulted effectively for years 1 to 5 and how accurately the services reflected the needs of carers in your area. Make sure that your local council provides sufficient resources for carers to be involved effectively in consultation. In particular, make sure that carers are consulted over the any new developments, including the recruitment of a Carers' Development Worker.
- \* Monitor the extent to which the Grant is being used to set up voucher schemes.
- \* Contact the Chair of your local Social Services Committee, lead councillor for social services and/or your local Councillor to give them your views.
- \* Publicise any difficulties relating to short term breaks.
- \* Write to the Secretary of State for Health stressing the importance of breaks for carers, and calling for the Grant to be extended beyond March 2006.

## **Further information**

The Guidance and conditions for the Grant can be found at the Government's carers' website, along with Local Authority Social Service Letter (2003) 8 and a Question and Answer guide to ring-fencing: [www.carers.gov.uk/whatsnew](http://www.carers.gov.uk/whatsnew). Guidance is also available from the Stationery Office, telephone: 0870 600 5522.

For general information about carers' issue visit Carers UK's website; [www.carersonline.org.uk](http://www.carersonline.org.uk).

## **Carers Grant Research**

- \* *Give us a Break*, research undertaken by Carers UK (then Carers National Association) into the experience of Year 1 of the Grant is available from Carers UK. For more information visit [www.carersonline.org.uk](http://www.carersonline.org.uk).
- \* *More Breaks for Carers?*, research undertaken by the Kings Fund into Year 2 of the Grant is available at: [www.kingsfund.org.uk](http://www.kingsfund.org.uk).

## **Training for Professionals:**

Carers UK provide both in-house and training courses that incorporate these issues. For detailed information about courses and booking visit our website [www.carersonline.org.uk](http://www.carersonline.org.uk). Alternatively, contact Chris Hockley on: 020 7566 7632 or e-mail: [training@ukcarers.org](mailto:training@ukcarers.org).

**Become an Associate Member of Carers UK** for as little as £35 per year and ensure that you keep in touch with the latest developments and information on carers and caring. For further information ring: 020 7566 7602

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