

**31<sup>st</sup> March 2014****Agenda Item: 8****REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR PROMOTING INDEPENDENCE  
AND PUBLIC PROTECTION****DISABLED PERSONS REGISTRATION CARD****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of the report is to set out proposed changes to the Council's disabled persons' registration card.

**Information and Advice**

2. The disabled persons' registration card was introduced in Nottinghamshire in May 2008. Applications between January 2010 and December 2013 suggest that there are currently 1,788 people who have the card. This figure includes 206 children (190 new applications and 16 renewals) and 1,582 adults (1,009 new applications and 573 renewals).
3. The card is currently free to all applicants, both for initial applications and renewals. The card is valid for six years. The card has space for an emergency number for holders to complete and is available in three designs; standard, dove and giraffe. The range of designs has proved popular with applicants.
4. Eligibility for the card is the same as eligibility for a blue badge, with the addition of people who have a long term indwelling catheter or stoma. This was designed to keep the application process simple, but excludes some people who might benefit from the card.
5. The card is used primarily to allow card holders to provide formal proof that they have a disability. Evidence suggests that this reduces the likelihood of card holders being inappropriately challenged about their use of facilities provided for disabled people. It provides no other benefits or concessions.
6. The administration of the scheme, including the production of the cards, is the responsibility of the Customer Service Centre and it takes about 3 hours a month to undertake the necessary work. On average 18 cards are issued each month. This includes new cards and the renewal of existing cards.

**The CredAbility Access Card**

7. The CredAbility Access card is being developed by Nimbus – The Disability Consultancy Ltd. Nimbus is a social enterprise and was a finalist in the Social Enterprise Award 2013 for innovation. Their innovation was CredAbility, a disability accreditation and recognition

scheme, run by and for disabled people. Nimbus provides training, and awards a CredAbility Verified Access mark, a new quality mark for organisations whose buildings and services are accessible to disabled people. The development of the Access card is part of this work. The card has the potential to extend the benefits of the Council's disabled persons' registration card.

8. Nimbus currently has 40 cards on issue and is in discussion with 5 other Local Authorities with regard to introducing the card in their areas. The card costs £15 and will be valid for three years. Nimbus is currently offering the card in Sheffield at an introductory price of £5.
9. Eligibility for the card is based on The Equality Act 2010, so it will extend eligibility to people not currently eligible for Nottinghamshire's card, for example to Deaf people. The application process may involve getting proof of the impact of a disability from the applicant's GP for some people. Nimbus acknowledges that the applicant would incur a cost if this type of proof is asked for. GPs can charge whatever they like for letters of this kind as it falls outside their NHS work.
10. The Access Card has symbols to show the types of support that the card holder needs. For example:
  - A person whose card displays the WC logo should be permitted access to the nearest toilet facilities without question, including staff facilities.  
Or perhaps,
  - A person whose card displays the +1 symbol will be granted a free personal assistance ticket at ticketed events.
11. Nimbus have confirmed Nottingham Forest will be involved in the scheme, they are also in conversations with The Theatre Royal, and have secured discounts on membership of a gym and a wheelchair basketball club. Other benefits will be secured as the card scheme develops.
12. Terry Gallagher, a service user in support of the change will be attending Committee.

### **Option for change**

13. At present the disabled persons' registration card is a non-statutory service, which takes a small amount of time and money to administer. It is sustainable at its current level, but it is not being actively promoted. If it was to be actively promoted it might cost too much for the Council to continue with in the current financial climate. This means that people who might benefit from the card are not being encouraged to apply for it. The following option is suggested as a way forward.
14. The Council will promote the Access Card through its website and will tell people about it if they ring the Customer Service Centre to enquire about the Council's card. The disabled persons' registration card will not be issued to new applicants, but will be renewed for people who choose not to change to the Access Card. If applicants choose the Council's card, it will be issued for life to reduce the costs of renewal. Children will be expected to apply for a new card when they reach 18 years.

## **Statutory and Policy Implications**

15. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

### **Human Resources Implications**

16. The current administration of the scheme takes about 3 hours a month of a Scale 2 post. If the option for change is accepted, some short term additional time will be required to update the Council's website and to change the scripts at the Customer Service Centre.

### **Financial Implications**

17. The cost of the current scheme for 12 months is around £559. This is based on about 216 applications a year with a cost of £2.59 to produce each card. This includes all staff time, the cost of the card and postage.
18. The proposed option will result in the same annual cost if applications remain at the same rate as now, although they are likely to reduce.

### **Public Sector Equality Duty**

19. The Access Card would allow disabled people to provide formal proof that they have a disability. Evidence suggests that this reduces the likelihood of card holders being inappropriately challenged about their use of facilities provided for disabled people. It supports disabled people as equal members of the community and helps to prevent discrimination against them. It will also allow other businesses signed up to the scheme to promote their accessible services directly to the disabled people that are likely to need them – a unique way of bringing the social model to life.

### **Implications for Service Users**

20. The wider eligibility criteria for the Access Card would enable more people to enjoy its benefits and address some of the specific barriers that disabled people face. However, disabled people will in future be charged for the Access Card, whilst the Council's card is currently free. Existing Council card holders may feel unhappy about this.

### **Human Rights Implications**

21. The Access Card supports Article 8 of the Human Rights Act – the right to respect for private and family life. It enables card holders to prove that they have a disability without having to explain private details of their condition in public and enables service providers to quickly and efficiently work to remove the barriers disabled people face.

## **RECOMMENDATION/S**

- 1) It is recommended that the proposed option for change is adopted in relation to the Council's disabled person's registration card.

**PAUL MCKAY**

**Service Director for Promoting Independence and Public Protection**

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### **Constitutional Comments (LM 18/03/14)**

22. The Adult Social Care and Health Committee has delegated authority within the Constitution to approve the recommendations in the report.

### **Financial Comments (KAS 05/03/14)**

23. The financial implications are contained within paragraphs 17 and 18 of the report.

### **Background Papers and Published Documents**

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

### **Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected**

All