

Nottinghamshire County Council

Cabinet Committee – Payments to Independent Sector Care Homes 19th September 2006

Informal Discussion Notes

In attendance:

Councillor Mick Storey – chair
Councillor Dick Anthony
Councillor Steve Carroll

Non voting members:

Councillor Richard Butler
Councillor Steve Carr

Officers:

Malcolm Dillon – Adult Social Care and Health Department
David Waller – Adult Social Care and Health Department
Faye Booker – Adult Social Care and Health Department
Marion Chapman – Adult Social Care and Health Department
Julie Cope – Chief Executive's Department

Keith Dobb - Nottinghamshire Care Association
Alan Pearce - Nottinghamshire Care Association

Councillor Joan Taylor was unable to attend.

Councillor Storey opened the introductory meeting of the Cabinet Committee for Payments to Independent Sector Care Homes. Councillor Storey apologised for the way the paperwork had been sent out but explained that this was a new way of working and the meeting would run anyway to set the scene.

The Chairman asked Malcolm Dillon to introduce the report. Mr Dillon explained that the focus of the cabinet committee involved payments for people in independent sector residential and nursing care who were financially supported by the Local Authority. The Local Authority did not have responsibility for funding those people who had the assets to be 'self-funders', nor for people fully funded by the NHS for continuing health care.

He said that during consultation on budget setting for the financial year 2006-07, there had been comments from the Nottinghamshire Care Association and other

providers saying that the proposed fee increases were too low and drew comparisons with payment levels elsewhere. Mr Dillon drew members' attention to Appendix 5 which compared rates paid in Nottinghamshire with those in nearby Authorities, with many Authorities paying higher rates for residential care and, to a lesser extent, nursing care. He also pointed to section 3.1.1 in the main report, which indicated the very significant cost impact involved in variations in the individual rates.

Mr Dillon described some other significant elements of the report. The Government expects Local Authorities to increase their proportion of people helped to live at home, compared to living in care homes. Nottinghamshire has relatively high numbers of people placed, with relatively high expenditure on care home places, but low individual payments. The Authority has been investing in more home care, direct payments and extra care; the relative proportion of expenditure on older people is below average for comparators. The 'market' is currently relatively healthy, with occupancy over 90%, but variations around the county. He mentioned the approach to 'a Fair Price for Care' taken in some Authorities, where local circumstances were significant, and the move to quality payments in some Authorities, which would be more feasible when the Commission for Social Care Inspection initiated its new process for grading care homes.

Councillor Storey asked if anyone wished to make any comments or ask questions.

Questions:

Councillor Carr declared a personal interest as his mother is in a residential home in Nottinghamshire but is funded by Derbyshire.

Councillor Carroll asked what would be the impact of raising the fees? e.g. to the Lincolnshire level on the authorities' good preventative work.

Mr Dillon said that if a funding increase of that level were to be agreed, it would impact on other priorities of the department and cabinet, for example, home care, direct payments supporting carers and preventative services.

Councillor Carr said that in his experience, Derbyshire did not pay quality payments. Mr Dobb and Mr Pearce said that in their experience, Derbyshire now did pay the quality payment for most places. Faye Booker said such payments nationally are often for NVQ achievement and higher staffing levels.

Councillor Butler asked about the risks of 90% occupancy. Mr Dillon replied that there are currently several hundred vacancies but some closures, or an increase in placements could reduce this quite quickly. Faye Booker pointed out the variations around the county, particularly the higher occupancy in Rushcliffe, and the need to stimulate greater provision for older people with mental health needs.

Councillor Storey agreed with comments from Mr Waller about the need to try to plan for a longer term changes, in a context of uncertainty.

Faye Booker mentioned the City review where they are proposing a “Local Price For Care”. There are no recommendations yet, but Mr Dobb said he had been involved in this work and had been very pleased with the way it has progressed.

Councillor Storey thanked people for attending.

The meeting closed at 3.35pm.