
EVALUATION REPORT

SHORT BREAK OPPORTUNITIES SELF- DIRECTED SUPPORT OPTION 1 FOR CARERS.



APRIL 8, 2022

NHS HIGHLAND

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Contents

1 Summary and Background of project	2
1.1 Summary	2
1.2 Background	2
2 Strategic objectives	2
3 The Project	3
3.1 The application Process	3
3.2 Type of Short Break.....	4
4 Summary Of Findings	5
4.1 The scope of the Project.....	5
4.2 Feedback on the scheme Data Analysis.....	6
4.2.1 Application process.....	6
4.2.2 Impact of the scheme on carers	7
4.2.3 Impact of the scheme on staff	8
4.2.4 Meeting Objectives. Carers' feedback.....	9
5 Conclusion.....	10
6 Risks.....	10
7 Recommendations and amendments.....	11
APPENDIX 1	13
APPENDIX 2.....	16



1 Summary and Background of project

1.1 Summary

This report is compiled by the Carers Team at the completion of Carers Short Break Direct Payment SDS Option 1 project to evaluate the outcomes and to identify areas of work and actions that require consideration for implementation in the future revised scheme.

1.2 Background

Additional to recurring budgets, extra funding of £28.5m for Carers in Scotland, was announced by the Cabinet Secretary in March 2021.

The anticipated £1m (a calculation of the Adult Carer component of the Highland allocation) was agreed by NHS Highland Senior Leadership Team to be put at the disposal of carers via a simple Option 1 (Direct Payment) application process.

In early January 2022 £0.24m had been provided in the form of Direct Payments to carers and at this stage it was anticipated that year-end spend would be circa £0.5m. However, working closely with adult social care teams and carer organisations the targeted £1m had been reached by the end of the financial year.

2 Strategic objectives

It has been imperative that we seek to utilise all the monies available to carers to mitigate the impacts of Covid-19 and the weight of their caring role upon them.

The success of the SDS Option 1 application process has been its ability to efficiently provide targeted resources to carers who are understood to need a Short Break, in a streamlined way that is quick and efficient.

The SDS Option 1 application process has encouraged flexibility (up to a predetermined level) to ensure under-spend against the recurring budget is minimised.

Operational adult social care staff and workers within carers projects have been provided with a streamlined direct payment application process to ensure the dispersion of available funds can be expedited. This has been supported by a FAQ sheet that has been regularly revised and updated along with a fact sheet outlining ideas on how the funding can provide short breaks unique to each individual carer (see appendices)

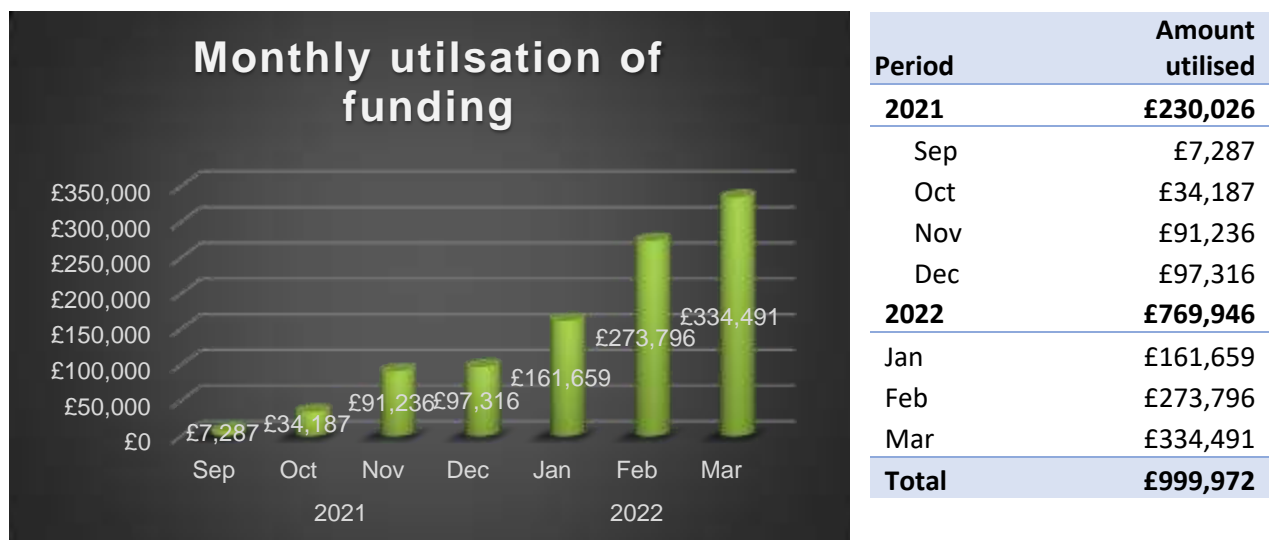
3 The Project

3.1 The application Process

From September 2021 the Carers Team met weekly to consider and process suitable applications.

Uptake was initially slow but as adult social care staff and carer projects became more aware of the availability of funding (through regular email updates and planned webinars) requests increased week on week and by 24th March 2022 the £1m target was reached.

The application process was therefore closed with communication sent out to update staff that the £1m funding for the financial year had been fully utilised. Over 380 carers had benefited from the available funding.



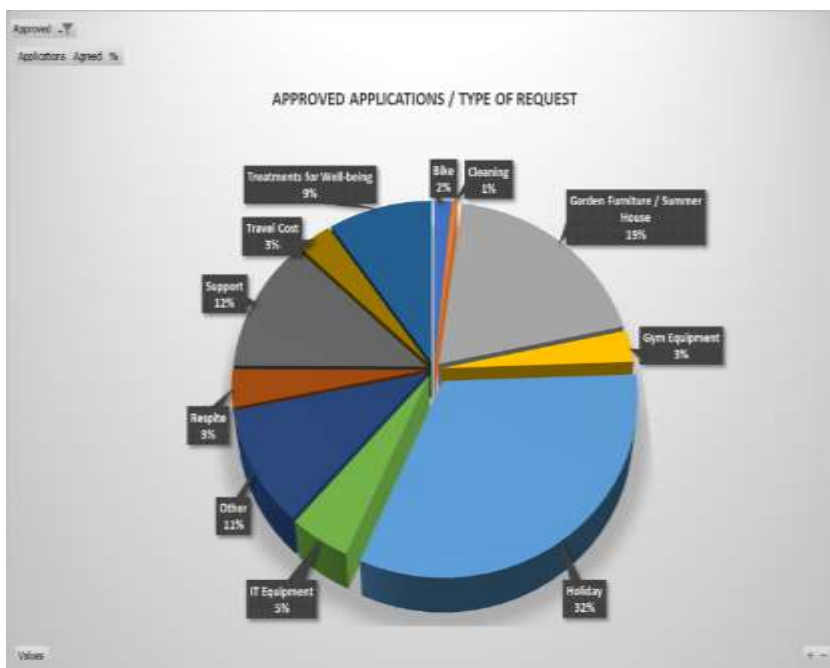
3.2 Type of Short Break

Funding has been used in a variety of ways to provide a short break opportunity to carers.

The project identified that some carers would prefer a short break in the form of traditional respite within a care home and it is hoped that short break opportunities via SDS Option 3 will be available once again but meantime this funding route has enabled Carers to make private arrangements for short breaks within care homes. However, many carers told staff that they wanted to have more creative opportunities available.

Webinar platform was used for broadcasting regular updates on the information illustrating the breakdown of requests helping staff to consider more creative short break options and to work in partnership with carers to develop solutions unique to the individual.

In aspiration of meeting the outcomes of the project, the advantages of some available creative options were promoted to staff aiming to encourage carers to choose family holiday breaks, gym equipment / membership, bikes, etc., as more effective in contributing to their health & wellbeing.



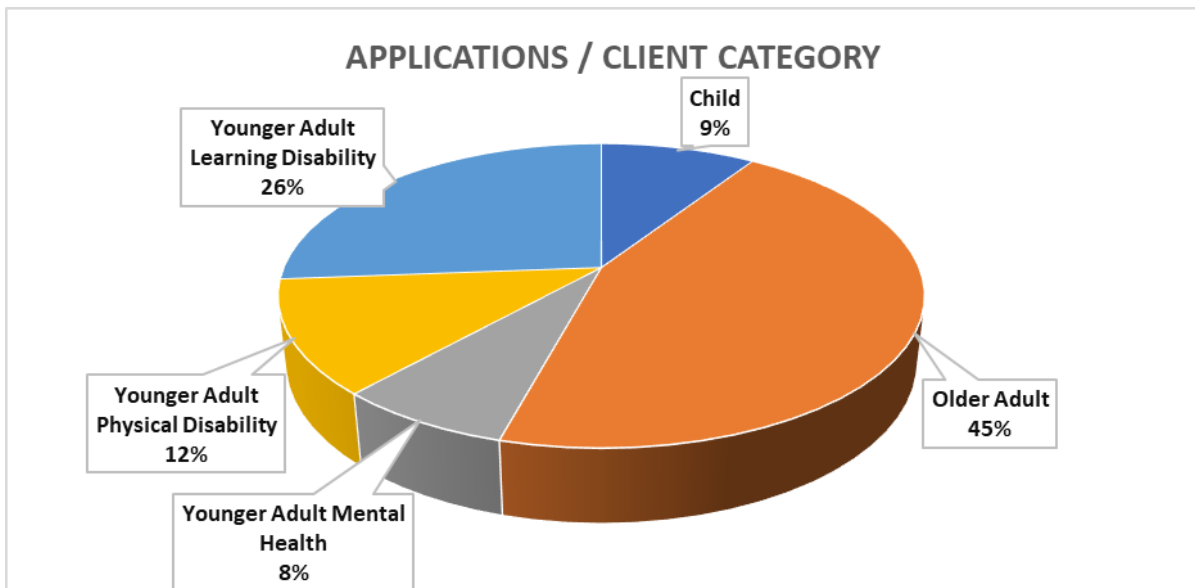
Type of Request	Approved	%
Bike	15,953	2%
Garden Furniture / Summer House	249,312	19%
Gym Equipment	25,913	3%
Holiday	303,371	32%
IT Equipment	23,648	5%
Other	105,571	10%
Respite	43,926	3%
Support	152,765	12%
Travel Cost	26,182	3%
Treatments for Wellbeing	52,161	9%
Total	999,972	100%

4 Summary Of Findings

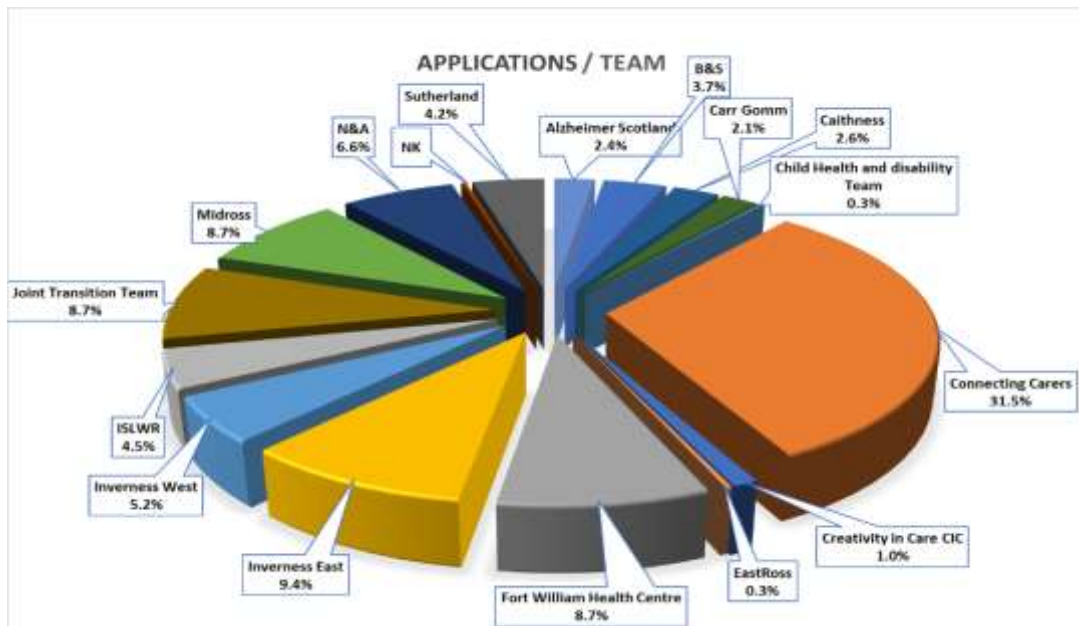
4.1 The scope of the Project

Extra funding provided opportunities to work in partnership with carers and develop a creative flexible short break scheme, while other resources, including traditional respite and day care has been limited or not available. The Project has been welcomed across North Highland.

The chart below demonstrates the scope of the project displaying the breakdown in the variety of all client categories received funding as a one-off payment.



Weekly analysis of the progress in use of funding enabled targeted support to areas where uptake was initially low.



4.2 Feedback on the scheme Data Analysis.

In the final stages of the project a survey was conducted to analyse feedback from carers and staff, to assist with evaluation of the outcomes and impact of the scheme on carer’s health and wellbeing,

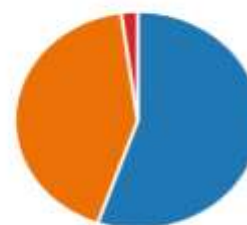
The overall rating score of the project by the staff participating in it was very high, as illustrated in the results of the Survey.

4.2.1 Application process.

100% respondents considered experience of using the scheme as positive due to streamlined effective simple application process and flexibility of approach.

3. How easy / difficult application process

Extremely easy	26
Easy	20
Difficult	0
Other	1



“The application itself and speed with which applications are processed allows me to provide a quick and effective responses and solutions to carers needs. A very welcome change from long and drawn-out assessment processes which can take months. One of the most satisfying parts of the job as results are so fast and tangible. I don’t know what I will do when the scheme ends!”

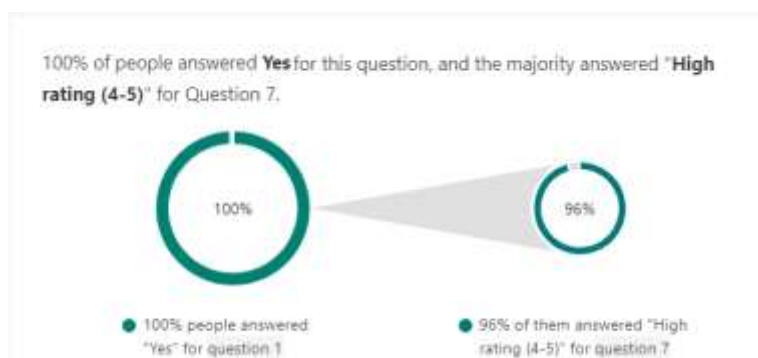
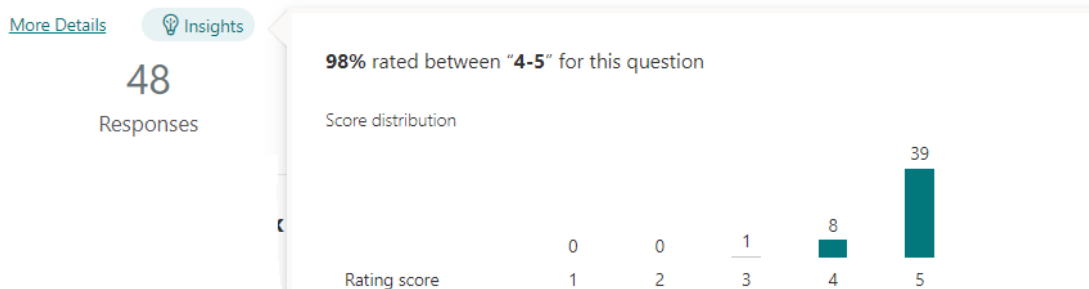
“...having such a quick easy application process meant this could be done quickly without impacting on other workloads or getting bogged down in paperwork...”

“All that received the award were thankful and able to use the monies as they see fit to meet their needs. They were all impressed with how quickly applications were looked at and that the panel had such an open mind to the requests”.

4.2.2 Impact of the scheme on carers

96% of staff graded as high (4-5) positive impact made by the scheme to the carer they represented

7. Rate if any positive impact has been made using the scheme to the carer you represent



Some of the comments from the survey listed below, representing staff's overall positive response to the scheme, gave the opportunity to work with carers to ascertain 'bespoke' short breaks unique to the individual and has been a very positive working experience:

"The carers trust & self-esteem has been hugely boosted by feeling recognised and valued and they are so appreciative that a positive thing is being done, especially for them".

"Carers have been extremely grateful for the recognition of the difficulties of their role over the past year and for the ease at which this funding was received to be a direct benefit to them".

"It has helped to build trust again with NHS services that we are trying our best to support when services are lacking".

"As a social worker, I have found the fund very positive. It has allowed to work with carers in a supportive manner to come up with ideas together regarding how the carer will be best supported using the fund. The fund has provided more flexibility which has been received very well. I feel that I can support carers in a more person-centred way due to the fund being able to be used flexibly to suit individual outcomes. The feedback from carers has been very positive about the fund. I also found it beneficial that I could apply to the fund for carers in a quick and relatively easy way".

4.2.3 Impact of the scheme on staff

The scheme had a profound positive effect on staff representing carers in many ways:

- contributed to their health & wellbeing.
- boosted self-esteem and motivation.
- empowered with much needed means to support carers in circumstances when no other provision is available,
- enabled to re-establish trust in the NHS & rebuild connections with carers,
- provided with the opportunity to explore more creative and sustainable break options for carer.

Below are some of many powerful expressions of the effect that accessing funding has had on member of staff as a worker.

“One of the most rewarding experiences I have had in a long time. Being able to tell carers that have been struggling alone for the past two years that their application had been successful...their reaction will stay with me for a long time”.

“It has been the most wonderful rewarding position to be in to tell the people I support their application has been successful... it has been so valuable especially in the last two years when I have struggled to find the much-needed support to signpost to without having to jump umpteen hurdles to get anywhere. This for me has been job satisfaction at its best”

“...It has been amazing as a social worker who often have to give less than positive news to see the emotion for carers to say, 'thank you' for all you do and that we recognise what you do every day for your loved one”.

- “...helped to reduce my level of negative feelings and sense of helplessness as a worker that I was able to do something.
- increased my understanding of individual family circumstance during my contact with 25-30 families (some of them were very open to express their struggles / financial difficulties).
- provided me with a sense of achievement and made me feel good.
- promoted the Team as we have listened and recognised individual families.
- made me rethink of SW ethics and basic needs.
- rethink about fairness and equality issues when I assessed the amount of funding to request for individual family”.

“I feel more positive and energised. More able to carry out my duties”.

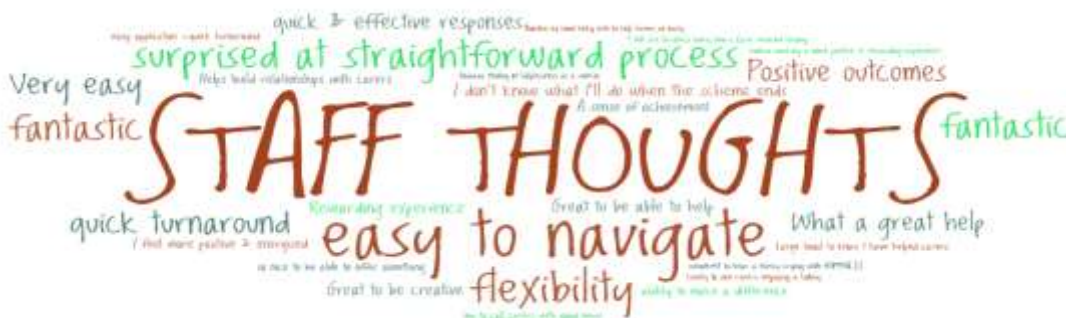
“The reward of being able to help someone and to know we have been able to make a difference. Having someone cry with happiness rather than tears of distress and knowing that their life will improve in some way, if only for a short time”.

“Helps build relationships with carers who feel more supported in their role”

“Has assisted me to make contact with some unpaid carers that have not wanted to see us during Covid”.

“It was a positive (and very unusual) experience to have the resources to help quickly with a practical matter”.

“Giving carers the funds to use to either buy in support themselves or having the funds to enable them to have that 'time out' without all the red tape and bureaucracy has not only helped them but as a worker it has helped me by being able to offer them help when all other forms of respite and day care have been non-existent for the past 2 years. *Saying there is no support all the time has a massive impact on our mental health as workers. It also gives the carers a degree of control about how/when/what respite they have*”.



4.2.4 Meeting Objectives. Carers’ feedback.

Carers provided feedback through the staff members, care link workers & social workers, assisting in the application process, on their experience of the project.

The scheme enabled carers to communicate exactly what they need to continue in their role and enabled quick and effective response.

Here are some of Carers’ comments voiced by their social worker or care link worker:

“The scheme has had an overwhelming impact. It feels like the cavalry is coming and an enormous weight has been lifted. Much less stress and a positive outlook for the future”.

“Carers felt valued”

“The scheme provided much need rest and respite to the Carers & gave them something positive to plan and look forward to”.

“It has given the Carer ... a break from caring and enable her to craft, which is her self-care; The Carer said it was a huge positive impact on her mental health ... and it really made her feel valued as a Carer and visible”.

“Carers were able to stay in accommodation close to their son in hospital for the final weeks of his life”.

“The carer involved was exhausted and this funding allowed ... the main carer to have a 2 night break away creatively to utilise funding to help to improve their physical/mental health, family harmony, have control, support their resilience and help carers to have time to think about their own needs”



Carers' feedback will be collated and developed into short video clips.

5 Conclusion.

The evaluation of the project has identified that carers health and wellbeing outcomes have been met in creative ways that are unique to the individual. The overall rating score of the project by the staff participating in it was very high, as illustrated in the results of the survey, which was conducted on the final stages of the project to analyse feedback from carers and staff and assist with evaluation of the application procedures, outcomes, and impact of the scheme on carer's health and wellbeing.

Feedback on the process have been assessed and paperwork amended accordingly.

Carers' encouraging comments on easy and quick process, which has been evidenced by their referrers, manifest gratitude, demonstrates how even small sums of money have gone a long way.

The "amazing scheme" is particularly appreciated in challenging post-Covid circumstances when staff are working to stretched capacity and alternative support is limited or non-existent.

Over the last six months 400 applications were processed, more 380 carers have been supported all over the Highlands.

The Project has enabled staff to think more creatively to assist carers to receive a short break unique to the individual.

Commitment of carer link workers, adult social care staff and staff from the carers projects are commended for their participation in the project.

6 Risks

1. Exceptionally high number of funding requests submitted in March 2022 up to a maximum of 124 applications, amounted in significant increase in Carers Team's workload, consequently adding extra pressure to the application process.

2. Predominantly at the end of the Project, become apparent noticeable rise in number of applications with requests for the maximum allowable amount.
3. In some cases, funding application consisted of items from a 'shopping list' not essentially contributing to the carer's health & wellbeing.

All the above would suggest that a tightening of the initial flexible criteria for funding is required.

7 Recommendations and amendments

1. To ensure the funding is available throughout the financial year and to allow spread of the applications evenly, money will be released on a quarterly basis:
 - April - June
 - July - Sept
 - October - December
 - January - March 2023Requests will be assessed on a fortnightly basis.
2. To enable more carers to benefit from the scheme only new funding requests will be considered. Carers received funding in 2021/22 will be able to re-apply 12 months after their initial application.
3. While maximum allowable amount per application will remain the same, £4,582.08, to allow as many carers as possible benefit from the scheme, staff applying for funding are encouraged not to claim maximum amount but focus on creative options contributing to the carer's health & wellbeing.
4. To assist carers and staff with costing popular expensive short break options by developing list of average prices for recommended middle range items, like summer house eBike, holiday, etc.
5. To revisit Guidance to underline the need that applications: reflect the most effective and efficient ways of meeting the needs of carers; recommend resources proportionate to the weight of the caring role; and are based on professional discretion in conversation with carers.
6. New Application form has been developed to accomplish this revision with additional checkbox to ascertain (verify) first / second submission.
7. To reduce waste in the processing and enable quick effective response to numerous enquiries, funding requests will only be accepted if

- completed on the new application form '**Request for Carers Direct Payment 2022/23**'
 - all fields of the form filled in correctly and in full,
 - with detailed explanation on how funding will be spent.
8. Remains mandatory requirement for the Applications to be completed by adult social care staff and carer link workers to ensure meeting the health and well-being outcomes outlined by the scheme and enable to signpost carers to alternative services, receiving support in other ways, hence, application completed by carers will require to be supported by a professional.
9. Regular webinars will be set up to support staff participating in the Project.
10. Funding requests and all the enquiries, relating to the application process should be communicated via generic mailbox nhs.unpaidcarers@nhs.scot.



APENDIX 1

Information for staff applying for a Direct Payment (SDS Option1) for short breaks for carers

Background

Since the beginning of the pandemic unpaid carers have felt the impact of providing more care. This has been accentuated by the closure of many short break options, including traditional respite services and regular day care provision. NHS Highland want to support unpaid carers to have the opportunity for regular short breaks away from their caring responsibilities and have developed a streamlined direct payment application process to ensure the dispersion of available funds can be expedited.

Applications for funding will be considered on a case-by-case basis and where agreed will be provided as a self-directed support Option 1 'one off' funding payment.

Time limited fund

Funding is currently available until the end of March 2022. To ensure this funding is maximised to support as many carers in need as possible this will be provided as a direct payment. The direct payment application form should be completed by either the NHH Integrated Team worker or carer link worker in conjunction with the unpaid carer and should outline the cost and the proposed format of the short break.

What is a short break?

A short break can be *anything* that enables a carer to have time away from their caring responsibilities. Short break opportunities should promote the health and wellbeing of carers and allow them to continue in their caring role if they wish to do so by making a positive difference to their life.

Short breaks can include:

Given the above, what constitutes a short break should really be described by the individual carer themselves in conversation with a trusted professional. Short Break Scotland have an excellent website offering suggestions of what a short break can include, and they can be contacted on **01383 622462** or by visiting their website **sharedcarescotland.org.uk**. However, this information is only for guidance, ultimately it is for carers and workers to have a 'good conversation' around what type of short break may assist the carer.

SDS Ethos

The Self-directed support principles of choice, control and flexibility are the basis for direct payment applications in the following ways.



- Carers are identified as requiring support in their own right
- Carers are valued and supported
- Carers have a life out with their caring responsibilities
- Carers can direct resource, so it meets their outcomes in the most effective and efficient way possible

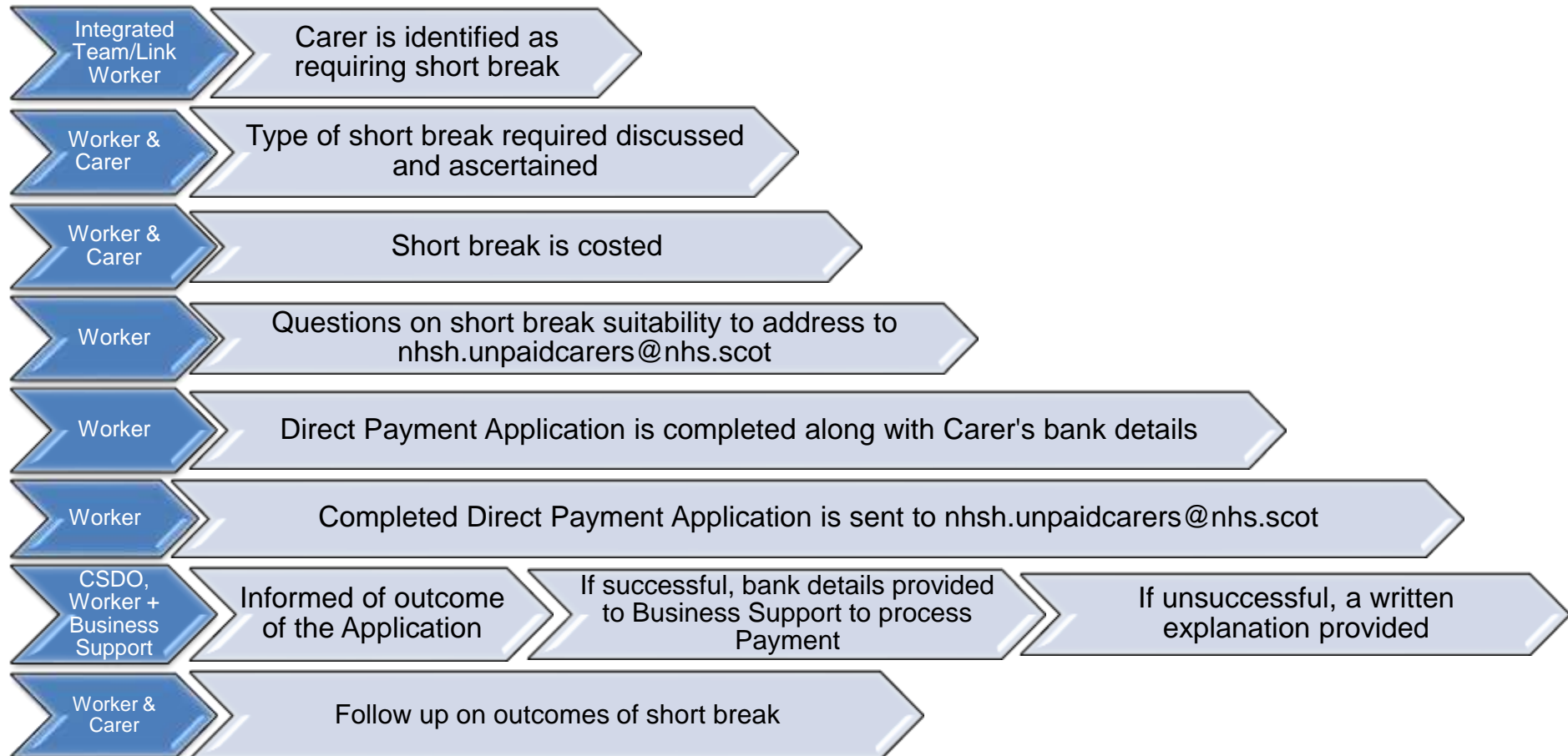
Process

To assist carer link workers and NHH Integrated Team staff exploring funding for carers we have developed a simple flowchart to ensure the process is easily understandable (see below).

Timescale

Direct payment funding will be available until 31st March 2022 or until the funding is exhausted. We want to ensure as many carers as possible benefit from the opportunity to utilise this funding. Any request for support will be to support the carers to meet their identified outcomes by providing **a regular break from caring**. Therefore, we will consider any support which is less than or equal to the equivalent of six weeks traditional respite for the cared for person in a nursing home (**6x £763.68= £4582.08**) to fall into the category of providing a regular break from caring.

Flowchart



APPENDIX 2

FAQ for staff applying for a Direct Payment (SDS Option1) for short breaks for carers

<p>What can the funding be used for?</p>	<p>Resources can be used to meet an identified need for support that cannot be met through support to the cared-for person or through accessing services that are available generally (universally). The identification of need will be determined in conversation with the carer by the local Integrated Team Workers or local Carer Link Worker.</p> <p>Resources made available will be to provide the carer with support for their caring role. Short breaks are one of many forms of support that can enable a carer to realise their personal outcomes, and we recognise that a break from caring can be any form of support that enables a carer to have time away from their normal caring responsibilities.</p>
<p>Is there a ceiling on the amount of resource that I can apply for a carer?</p>	<p>For the operation of this initiative, any level of support provided will be deemed to be support to provide a regular break from caring as opposed to permanently reducing the caring role. Any support to a carer to have a short break from their caring responsibilities which is less than or equal to the equivalent of six weeks of traditional respite for the cared for person in a nursing home will be considered to be a regular break. (6x£763.68= £4582.08)</p>
<p>How long does it take to process a request?</p>	<p>Requests will be reviewed on a Thursday, please ensure applications have been emailed to carers generic mail box by 5pm on a Wednesday to allow time for processing. So long as applications outline clear, realistic requests and the carers bank details have been provided (on page 2 of application form, ensure that the account number has <u>8</u> digits) it is anticipated that requests will be agreed and sent to business support for processing. This can take up to 5 days.</p> <p>Where applications outline requests which fall out with the description above these may need further information or may need to be escalated for a decision</p>
<p>How long is the resource available for?</p>	<p>Requests will be considered until 31st March 2022 or until the resource is exhausted.</p> <p>All applications received by a Wednesday at 5pm will be considered on a Thursday and then sent to Business Support staff for processing the following Tuesday.</p>
<p>Is an adult carer support plan</p>	<p>Where possible we would encourage the completion of an ACSP but appreciate that given current</p>

<p>required to apply for this funding?</p>	<p>extraordinary demands professionals may not have the capacity to complete plans in a timely manner. Where the carer urgently needs a break, we will accept applications which clearly outline the need for a short break. We encourage adult social care workers and carer link workers to work together where possible to ensure carer details are collated and there are no duplications of requests.</p>
<p>Can a carer access holiday accommodation on their own without the person they care for?</p>	<p>Yes, this is possible, but replacement care is likely to be required for the person they care for, and this should be factored into the application</p>
<p>Can this funding be used in an emergency situation where the caring role has broken down</p>	<p>Where a carer is no longer willing or able to care, any service is therefore for the cared for person and it is support provided under section 12 of the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968</p>
<p>Why does the worker have to follow up with the carer once the application has been processed?</p>	<p>We would want to ensure that, as much as possible, the carer's anticipated outcomes are met, and that they feel better able to continue in their caring role. This is just good practice.</p>
<p>Are Connecting Carers making applications? If so, are the local Integrated Teams informed of applications and outcomes?</p>	<p>Yes, Connecting Carers link workers will be completing applications with carers, and as good practice we would expect them to be liaising with appropriate Integrated Teams, and vice versa.</p>
<p>If carer lacks capacity, can I assume the usual rules around POA/Financial Guardian/Intervention Orders would apply?</p>	<p>Yes</p>
<p>Do Carers need to be in receipt of Carers Allowance to apply for</p>	<p>Carers do not need to be in receipt of Carers Allowance to apply for this resource.</p>



this resource?	
Is it possible for a family member to be paid to provide replacement care?	Yes, however this will then be processed as a traditional direct payment to ensure due process.
Can Young Carers apply for this fund	As Young Carers are funded by Highland Council funding for a short break via this route isn't possible. We are however in discuss with Highland Council to ensure they are offering a similar approach to Young Carers