**Warwickshire County Council**

**SEND Social Care Resource Allocation System Consultation**

Introduction

Warwickshire County Council are planning to develop a local Special Educational Needs and Disability (SEND) Social Care Resource Allocation System (RAS) and would like to hear your views on a proposed model similar model to the already in place in Adult Social Care and Support Services. The consultation process on the proposed model runs from **Monday 20 April 2015 until Sunday 17 May 2015** and replaces the one held earlier in the year. This is because the responses received in the earlier consultation revealed that the regulations covering Direct Payments for children and young people’s social care were the Community Care, Services for Carers and Children's Services (Direct Payments) (England) Regulations 2009 rather than the Special Education Needs (Personal Budgets) Regulations 2014 which govern any direct payments for education. This has meant that the consultation on the proposed RAS needs to be conducted for a second time.

**All of the feedback received from the first consultation will be used together with the responses from this consultation in developing the final policy and documents for the RAS. If you feel that comments you made previously are still valid please go straight to question 7 and add any additional comments you wish to make. Following collation and analysis of the consultation responses and pending approval by Cabinet we anticipate a RAS policy being introduced later this year.**

What we have changed as a result of the last consultation?

A number of issues were raised by respondents in the previous consultation, these fall into 4 emerging themes;

You told us that you had the following concerns:

* that the hourly amount was insufficient
* that the size of the support packages identified by the tool would not be honoured
* that the process was complicated and difficult for parents to understand
* that the process did not reflect need in key areas accurately

In response to your concerns we have reconsidered the Resource Allocation System and addressed these concerns, where applicable in the following ways;

**We have:**

* Set the Direct Payment hourly rate at £14.50/hr, this reflects the position that although the average hourly cost on the new Framework of short break providers was £13.59 the cost per hour for the provider currently providing the majority of short breaks is £14.45
* Changed the consultation questions to gain a greater depth of understanding.

**We will:**

* Develop tools which provide an indicative amount of financial provision following assessment, with the final decision being made at a council Quality Assurance Panel to ensure consistency of decision making. Parents, children and young people will be able to challenge decisions of the panel using either the panel dispute process or the existing complaints process.
* If the RAS is agreed review the tools 12 months after the introduction to see if they can be simplified. The tools we are proposing are used in other parts of the country, but we anticipate that familiarisation through use will reassure service users that the process is less complicated than it looks,
* Develop and deliver with parents a training package for the IDS Social Care Teams to support Social Care staff to be aware of potential issues in completing the forms.
* Monitor quality and comprehensiveness of completion of the RAS via the Quality Assurance Panel, if issues are raised that specific issues or needs are not being picked sufficiently they will be identified at the Panel.

**Why your responses are important**

**The Council recognises that identifying the right level of resource to support families is essential, devising a system that is transparent and fair is a complex task and requires the involvement of as many service users as possible to ensure the chosen process is fit for purpose and meets people’s needs. We fully appreciate the complexity of the process and understand that this proposed change may concern you in terms of you feeling that particular aspects of care may not be addressed. Your comments will enable us to understand your concerns in more detail and to consider how these may be addressed before the process is implemented. Similarly your comments of the experience of using the tools are important in terms of - do the tools accurately assess your needs, do they result in a package similar to the one you may already have?**

Proposed Resource Allocation System

The Resource Allocation System (RAS) that Warwickshire wish to consult upon has been developed from work undertaken by Newcastle City Council amongst others and has been tested with a small number of families in Warwickshire. We believe this will provide a better and more sensitive basis for allocating funding than the current Matrix of Need which is less progressive in allocating resources and contains reference to services no longer available.

The RAS will be used to allocate funding for day opportunities and support only, access to overnight respite will be subject to a separate Social Work assessment if required.

The full consultation paperwork comprises 8 documents which come together to form the full RAS. The papers are available on the Warwickshire Local Offer website ([www.warwickshire.gov.uk/SEND](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cawel3%5CDesktop%5CRAS%20Consultation%5Cwww.warwickshire.gov.uk%5CSEND)) and Ask Warwickshire website ([www.warwickshire.gov.uk/ask](file:///C%3A%5CUsers%5Cawel3%5CDesktop%5CRAS%20Consultation%5Cwww.warwickshire.gov.uk%5Cask));

* Policy Document
* Appendix 1: Support available from Warwickshire County Council for Under 7’s
* Appendix 2: Resource Allocation Questionnaire, Key Stage 2 (aged 7 – 11)
* Appendix 3: Resource Allocation Questionnaire, Key Stage 3+ (aged 12 – 18)
* Appendix 4: WCC RAS Table
* Appendix 5: Support Services for Personal Budgets
* Appendix 6: WCC Framework of Providers

How the RAS works

An age appropriate questionnaire (Appendix 1 – 3) is completed by the family and worker following an assessment of need carried out to establish whether the child or young person meets the threshold for services by Warwickshire County Council. The questionnaire has been designed to help families and young people participate in decision making about their support and to deliver a clear funding process which is fair to all families. Families and young people will have copies of the questionnaire so the scoring is transparent.

How the questionnaire fits with the Social Care assessment

The RAS questionnaire is part of the information gathering stage of the Social Care need assessment. Following the initial establishment of need the RAS questionnaire will normally only be completed once a year alongside an annual review.

The questionnaire adds to the assessment by scoring the answers to questions and using the total result to work out how much money should be provided. This will be taken into account when the Social Worker or Family Support Worker evaluates what band of support best describes the young person’s needs. The RAS questionnaire is authorised by a Practice Lead within Children’s Social Care as part of the assessment.

When assessing support needs the young person’s wider circumstances including family and community support should be taken in to account and any funding will build on these resources.

The questionnaire captures a snapshot of support needs at the present moment in time and should relate to the young person’s present circumstances. There will be some examples which do not fit the circumstances of the young person well. These will be addressed on a case by case basis by the Quality Assurance Panel (see below).

How the points are scored

Each statement has a set of points. Some point scores are higher than others because some questions have a bigger impact on the young person and family. For example questions around safety and health have bigger scores with a larger total of points than for other outcomes.

Where there is some overlap between bands and the question could be answered in either band the higher band should be selected; it is easier to reduce support later on rather than deal with the consequences of providing too little support.

**There is no expectation that a young person will score in every question, or that every question will be appropriate for every young person.** If it is clear that a statement does not relate to an individual they will score zero. An example of this would be when a young person will be at an extremely low risk of bullying because they have a complex learning disability and have a constant level of adult supervision everywhere they go. The questionnaire is balanced so that children with complex needs will score highly in other parts of the questionnaire.

How points help the council make an indicative offer

Once points have been allocated, then the total points will be calculated against a table of funding bands which rise step by step as the points increase. This funding table is shown in Appendix 4 which has been updated and simplified since the last consultation. We have based the funding amounts on comparisons with what funding has been appropriate in the past for young people with similar levels of need. This calculation will be taken into account when an indicative allocation is offered to the family to plan with.

How fair allocation of resources will be assured

A Quality Assurance Panel chaired by the Operations Manager for SEND Social Care will consider all completed RAS questionnaires which will be anonymised. Because the information will be anonymous we intend to open the panel up to representatives from parent organisations in order to make the resource allocation system as transparent as possible. The Quality Assurance Panel will agree the amount of resource to be allocated and the worker will communicate this to the family. Families will be able to use the dispute process (detailed in the policy document) in the event they disagree with the panel decision or our normal complaints procedure.

How you can get involved in this consultation

Your views are important to us in developing Warwickshire’s RAS. In order to put forward your comments you will need to read the main Policy document together with either Appendix 1, 2 or 3 (Resource Allocation Questionnaire) depending on the age of your child or young person.

The consultation has been structured so that you have the opportunity to read through the RAS process (see supporting papers Appendix 1-4) as if you were completing it yourself and then respond to a number of questions relating to your experience of using it. Unfortunately it is not possible to complete the tools online.

**Please note that use of the tool is currently restricted to this consultation process the purpose of which is to obtain your views on a proposed model. In the event of a RAS being introduced families will complete the tool together with a Social Worker or Family Support Worker to assess actual need.**

 If you would like a hard copy of all of the documents please contact Jessica Elliott (jessicaelliott@warwickshire.gov.uk Tel 01926 742810)

The other documents have been provided to help you understand more about the process.

* Appendix 4 shows the conversion of points into pounds/number of hours potentially available in a care package per 4 week period,
* Appendix 5 gives details of the support services available;
* Appendix 6 contains the details of services available for purchase either by the Council or Service Users via their Personal Budgets.

If you wish to respond without reading the RAS please put any comments you wish to make at Q4) and/or Q7) below.

**RAS Consultation Questions**

Q1) Have you read through the RAS process which includes the policy document and appendices 1 - 7?

Yes (go to Q2) or No (go to Q4) (Please circle which applies)

Q2)a) Does your suggested allocation of money meet your needs?

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Applicable | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Please use the box below to give reasons for your answer

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|  |

Q2)b) Does your suggested allocation of money match that of your current care plan (if applicable)

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Applicable | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
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Please use the box below to give reasons for your answer

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Q3)a) Is the RAS easy to use in terms of format, content and layout?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Applicable | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|  |  |  |  |  |

 Please use the box below to add any comments about ease of use

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Q4) Please tell us why you did not use the RAS questionnaire? (if applicable)

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Q5) Do you think the RAS process provides a fair allocation of resources?

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| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 |
| Not Applicable | Strongly Disagree | Disagree | Agree | Strongly Agree |
|  |  |  |  |  |

Please use the box below to add any comments about allocation of resources

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Q6 Please tell us if you think anything is missing from the RAS or if an area of need is missing.

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Q7 Are there any other comments you wish to make?

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