

**COUNCIL ASSEMBLY
(ORDINARY)**

WEDNESDAY JULY 9 2008

MEMBERS' QUESTION TIME

**8. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM
COUNCILLOR BARRIE HARGROVE**

Could the executive member for health and adult care confirm that Southwark Carers are facing a shortfall in funding of £25,000 from Southwark Council for this current financial year and is he aware that one of the implications of this cut is that Carers in Southwark on the "Fix Yourself a Break" Scheme will now get a maximum of £250 whereas before they received a maximum of £300?

RESPONSE

Southwark received its worst financial settlement from the government in a decade and is being forced to make changes and further efficiencies to services, including social care services, in order to bridge a £35 million funding shortfall.

In February 2008, the executive, having considered a range of options, agreed that a cut of £200,000 should be made from services funded by the carers grant. The £200,000 has been invested in mainstream respite services for service users and their carers.

Senior managers, commissioners and the Carers Strategy Forum worked together to find a method of achieving this cut whilst minimising the effect on carers services. This was done by decommissioning some services and implementing an across the board reduction of 5.3% to funding. This reduced the monies available to the 'Fix Yourself a Break' scheme by £5,628 to £101,577. The 5.3% reduction reduced the funding available to services run by Southwark carers by £25,000.

Southwark Carers Board considered how to handle this reduction and decided to reduce the level of spend on each break for carers from £300 to £250. This covered both the saving, but also allowed more carers to receive a service.

The department is currently reviewing the efficacy of all carers services, and is producing a new carers strategy in the light of the new national strategy released recently by the government. These two work streams will inform the future investment into carers services in Southwark.

Southwark carers core funding has remained the same this year compared to last, and the reduction in funding the organisation faced is due to specific services that are commissioned outside of the core contract.

**11. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM
COUNCILLOR ANDREW PAKES**

How many entitled Southwark residents had not received their renewed disabled Freedom pass when the deadline passed on May 31? On what date was the executive member first made aware that council officers expected to miss the deadline? How many applications for compensation had the council received as of July 1?

RESPONSE

On the May 29 2008, I was informed by officers that there were 200-250 applications which still needed to be completed, and officers were working on these over the weekend. This was still the case on the May 31. It was not until the June 2 that it became apparent that this was not representative of the true situation.

From February-March 2008, it was clear that there would be problems in meeting the original deadline and from this point I requested weekly reports to ensure that I was kept up to speed on the issues.

12. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR MARTIN SEATON

How many Southwark residents were issued with disabled Freedom passes which could only be used in the greater London area? Will all of these have been changed for nationwide passes by July 9? When did the last applicant for a disabled Freedom pass renewal receive their full, nationwide pass?

RESPONSE

We have requested information about the number of London only and national Freedom Passes issued from the Carefirst database, which officers are in the process of collating data.

In some cases the applicant will only be entitled to a London only Freedom Pass and will not need their pass to be upgraded to a nationwide pass. However, it is important to ensure people entitled to nationwide passes have received them, and we are currently still working on these cases.

We are continuing to receive general practitioner reports in support of applications, however response times vary. We will be able to provide a figure at the end of this exercise.

14. QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR ADE LASAKI

Could the executive member outline what action he took on learning of the problems with the distribution of Freedom passes on June 2 onwards?

RESPONSE

On learning about the situation on Monday June 2, I brought this to the attention of chief officers to ensure that additional support and resources were put in place to avoid a repetition of circumstances that had developed at the Walworth Road one stop shop.

I worked with the chief executive to agree that a public apology would be issued the following day on behalf of the council.

I have received continued updates about the status of the applications and asked that a briefing be provided for the executive on Thursday, June 5.

I am working closely with Councillor Tim McNally to ensure that the council continues to address any ongoing issues.

20 QUESTION TO THE EXECUTIVE MEMBER FOR HEALTH AND ADULT CARE FROM COUNCILLOR SUSAN ELAN JONES

Will the executive member for health and adult care provide details of the outcome of the council's consultations on increasing the calculation basis for client contribution levels for social care to 80% of surplus income by 2010-11? Can he provide details of the estimated increase in the average weekly client contributions between 2007-08 and 2010-11? Can he provide the council's estimate of how many individuals are expected to be affected by the removal of the £200 ceiling for weekly contribution levels?

RESPONSE

The council received a low level of response to the consultation from individuals and no responses from client representative groups.

The estimated increase in the average weekly client contributions between 2007-08 and 2010-11 are as follows:

2007-08 - £14.70 per week
2008-09 - £18.69 per week
2009-10 - £20.02 per week
2010-11 - £21.35 per week

In 2007-08 the London average charge per week was £18.67. Southwark was in the third quartile. Assuming that other authorities are not making substantial changes the increase in 2008-09 brings Southwark up to the London average.

There are currently 6 clients out of 813 people who make contributions, who would be affected by removing the £200 ceiling.