

Report to: Kennet & North Wiltshire Committee of  
Wiltshire PPI Forum.  
Date: 16/11/06.  
Agenda Item: 5.  
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**Concerns about the New Eligibility Criteria for Transport to Day/Drop-in-Centres:  
A Carer's Perspective.**

**1. Background:**

Closure of day care centres will result in approximately 220 people with learning difficulties (almost half the users) not being eligible to use day care centres under tighter criteria. Those not eligible will have drop-in centres available to them but this is still all under development. There are now new eligibility criteria regarding transport to day care/drop in centres.

**2. Aim:**

This report aims to put forward the concerns of parent carers as expressed to the Kennet Carers Association in terms of relation to the new eligibility criteria regarding transport to day care/drop-in centres as outlined by Wiltshire county council (20/01/06). These parent carers believe the group most affected are the vulnerable adults who have the appearance of having no physical disability/difficulty.

**3. Report:**

**3.1.** “Service users **will fund their own** transport **if** receiving mobility element of Disability Living Allowance, (or contribute towards the cost of transport if this benefit doesn't cover the cost)”. (Bold font is authors own)

**Concerns:** The group mentioned above tend to have a middle rate Disability Living Allowance and the lowest Mobility Allowance. The lowest rate mobility component is £16.50 a week. The parent carers see this as insufficient to provide the transport needed on a weekly basis and would like to know how much they will have to contribute. The parent carers take on board that free bus passes are given to disabled persons however, the concerns about independent travel will be referred to in the below section.

**3.2.** “**Travel** to services **independently if** they are able to do so, including transport by universally available means”. (Bold font authors own)

**Concerns:** The “if they are able to do so” aspect. The parent carers would like to know who assesses this and will the assessment take place in relation to the service users performance within the day care centre, or will they be taken onto public transport to see how they cope? The view of the parent carers is that the mentioned group are highly vulnerable young adults and independent travel is unsuitable for many reasons. For example, if a young adult has a speech problem/learning difficulties and could become highly distressed while asking for a ticket in a busy queue, some of the males may come

across in the wrong way when they are just trying to be friendly, likewise females trying to be friendly could be taken advantage of, vulnerable adults could be easily led astray and would get off at wrong stops if suggested to them (this has happened already and caused great distress to the family and the young adult, the police were called- out to help look for the vulnerable adult). Young adults could suffer orientation problems if the bus was to go a different route, lack of communication skills could cause distress for the young adults and the transport staff , and finally many of the young adults have a vague concept of money and may not realise they have to pay. A further problem is the rural location and a lack of good transport facilities here in the first place. The parent carers mention that perhaps in a busier location with direct buses, transport to day services may be possible however, within Kennet long walks to bus stops are often the case (there is concern over the safety of the young adult), and several buses are often needed to get to a location which could be very distressing for a young adult with learning difficulties. The parent carers understand a “buddy system” may be taking place whereby a buddy will come to take the service user to the day/drop in centre. However, again with the rural location the “buddy” will need travel to meet the service user, travel with them to the centre, then travel back to get them and take them home. The “buddy” is assumed to be having training for this role. The carers are concerned that with all the focus on the health services debt this will not be something that will take –off and be financially possible.

**3.3.** If 3.2 is not possible, i.e. “be taken to services by service providers and carers where this is possible”.

**Concerns:** There is a case at present whereby a vulnerable adult would benefit from going to a day care centre and the transport bus actually goes past the house and there is space on the bus, however at the day care centre there is not enough staff for one to stay at the centre and another to come and help with the picking up of an extra service user. The parent carers do not see the proposal of service providers supplying transport as being successful due to the current lack of staffing, and cannot see this improving with the possibility of redundancies. Parent carers are also very apprehensive by the suggestion that they should help with the transport. The main point to come from my talks with the carers is that the day services provide respite for the carers and the transport is part of that respite. Many of the carers do not own cars. Those who do have said they have to drop other siblings at school, get to work or get food shopping, and if they have to provide transport for their cared for, this is taking away more of the precious respite time that they need. The carers also mentioned if they knew their cared for was on public transport, then they would be very concerned that their child would actually get to where they were supposed to go, and get there safely. Again, this is not the purpose of respite for the carer. Parent carers have advised that they believe that the proposition that carers could provide transport is unpractical and inconsiderate.

**3.4. “Only in exceptional circumstances will a commissioned service be used”.**  
(Bold font authors own)

**Concerns:** Carers relating to the Kennet Carers Association would like to know what constitutes “an exceptional circumstance”. From their point of view none of the services are commissioned without an exceptional need in the first place.

#### **4. Summary.**

**4.1.** Firstly, Kennet parent carers believe that the £16.50 mobility allowance is insufficient for transport and they would like to know how much will they have to contribute towards transport costs and who assesses this?

**4.2.** Secondly, the young adults are considered unable to safely travel independently on public transport but the carers would like to know who assesses this and how.

**4.3.** Thirdly, carers are concerned that the service providers cannot supply all the needed support at present and they cannot see this situation improving with the current debt problems and thus service providers supplying transport is not realistic.

**4.4.** Finally, carers feel if they provide transport it is taking away their much needed respite.

#### **5. Recommendations.**

**5.1.** More thought needs to be given to integrating vulnerable adults into the community.

**5.2.** Effective communication with the carers is essential as it is they who understand the needs and abilities of their cared for; and for example carers associated with Kennet Carers Association would be more than willing to discuss this. They are aware that a consultation period is occurring, but many of these parent carers have seen no evidence of this.

**5.3.** That this Committee brings to the attention of Wiltshire County Council the concerns expressed in this report, with a request that they are properly dealt with.

**5.4.** That subject to the availability of suitable resources, members consider engaging as a “stakeholder” with Wiltshire County Council to ensure satisfactory provision of daycare and related services for those with learning difficulties, and also for older people.

**END.**