

Managing customer expectations about temporary care packages

A guide for managers and practitioners in Adult Social Care & Support

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1. Staff guidance

This guidance has been produced to assist staff in managing the expectations of social care customers who have been allocated a short-term, temporary package of care – perhaps in response to a crisis or emergency need – with a provider who is not on the Council’s framework list of providers.

2. When might you need it?

As a Social Care Practitioner, you may find yourself in a situation where a customer has a pressing need for care and support, but the range of care packages available from framework providers at that time is limited.

Consequently, you may have to use a non-framework provider and allocate a higher-cost package than normal to ensure the customer receives the care and support they need without delay.

This is not an uncommon scenario, and it is typical practice for a temporary package to be put in place for a period of around 6 weeks.

Clearly, it is not sustainable or cost-efficient to keep the customer on a higher-cost package longer than is necessary, so arrangements must be put in place for them to be transferred to a best-value package from a framework provider (that meets the agreements in their Care and Support Plan) at the earliest opportunity.

3. Possible issues

- Customers may perceive this to be a “downgrading” of their package, and therefore contest the transfer;
- Customers may become attached to their temporary caregiver, causing disappointment when the package ends;
- They may complain to the local authority that their needs are no longer being met;
- They may lobby for their original package to be continued;
- They may complain to the Local Government Ombudsman.

4. What can you do to manage expectations?

It is important to manage the expectations of customers (and their families and associates, when appropriate) from the outset to reduce the risk of these issues arising.

So if a temporary care package is allocated, make sure they understand that it is a temporary arrangement.

Talk to them about how the provider will change once a permanent package is in place, and that the personal caregivers they get to know in the first few weeks are likely to change too.

Also, the level of care may change. If the temporary package provides a higher level of care and support than agreed in the customer's Support Plan, the permanent package may be perceived as a downgrade when that extra provision stops.

It is important to reinforce the customer's ownership of their Care and Support Plan, so they understand and recognise the level of support they are agreeing to. Anything received in addition to their Care and Support Plan must be positioned as a short-term "extra", rather than a permanent feature of their care.

5. The Direct Payment option

If customers are concerned about the change in their provider and wish to stay with the non-framework provider, they can do so via the Direct Payments system. However, if their Direct Payment amount does not cover the full cost of the non-framework package, the customer will need to fund any difference.

6. Record keeping

Every discussion with the customer in relation to a temporary care package must be recorded on CareFirst.

When you allocate the package, include an "observation" within CareFirst to describe why it has been necessary to allocate a temporary package, the expected duration of that package and how the customer has been informed.

Use the letter template (see appendix) to confirm arrangements with the customer, including as much information as possible. For example:

- State the details of the temporary care package: start date, provider name, type of care, and any other key information;
- Adapt the text to make it specific to the individual customer case;
- Include your contact details so any queries can be sent straight to you;
- Save a copy of the letter to the customer's Electronic Social Care Record (ESCR) as evidence;
- Record and respond to any return correspondence from the customer;
- Save any further such correspondence to the ESCR.

7. Appendix 1: Letter Template



People Group

Team name

Address

Postcode

Tel:

Fax:

www.warwickshire.gov.uk

****Customer details****

Date

Dear *****

Following the assessment of your care and support needs on [date], please accept this letter as confirmation of your temporary support package, as detailed below:

Start date:	
Provider:	
Care and support to be provided:	
Further details:	

Although this provider does have a contract with Warwickshire County Council and is fully checked by the Care Quality Commission, it is not on our 'framework' list of first-choice providers. (These are providers we currently contract for services).

Therefore, please note that we will be looking to replace this package with long-term arrangements for your care, as soon as a suitable framework provider has been matched to your Care and Support Plan. This may involve a change to the agency and, subsequently, the carers who will provide your support.

We will not leave you without care and support and we will let you know prior to any changes being made of the process when another provider is found. If you wish to continue with the current agency, you will be able to do so via Direct Payments. However, the Direct Payment may not cover the full cost of this agency and you may be required to fund any difference.

Please let me know if you are interested in a Direct Payment and I can give you more information about it.

If you have any queries, please do not hesitate to contact me on xxxxx-xxxxxx.

Yours sincerely,

[Allocated practitioner name and contact details]