

# 'Time for Me' eMarketplace

## Case Study



### The Client

Forward Carers

### The Project

Development of a digital solution to facilitate more effective and efficient management of small grants for carers.

### The Opportunity

Birmingham City Council provides small grants to carers who support a person aged 18 or above, to fund a short break, or something else that helps sustain them in their caring role.

A review of the scheme revealed several issues: the scheme didn't target those most in need, there was no process in place to inform the local authority what the money had been spent on, or any evidence of the impact of the grant on a carer's wellbeing.

To address the identified issues, Birmingham City Council commissioned Forward Carers, a consortium of organisations in Birmingham, to take over the administration of the scheme while providing a range of other support services for carers through Birmingham Carers Hub.

Recognising the potential for a digital offer, Forward Carers enlisted the help of PCG Technology Solutions to develop a solution which would facilitate more effective and efficient management of the grant scheme – and deliver better outcomes for carers.

"Our carer's do an amazing job every day, completely unpaid, and the small grants are a lifeline for many enabling them to get a much deserved break, however across the city there was little knowledge and data on what carers wanted to spend their grants on and what difference it was making to them and their ability to carry on caring."

"In partnership with Birmingham City Council and PCG Technology Solutions we have developed an innovative solution that not only delivers a more effective and efficient way of managing carers grants – but also ensures a better service and better outcomes for carers."

*Simon Fenton, CEO Forward Carers*

### The PCG Approach

**'Time for Me' – the first eMarketplace specifically aimed at carers and their wellbeing needs.**

PCG Technology Solutions developed a simple web-based platform that supported an online application for grants and created a 'Virtual Wallet' that carers could spend via an eMarketplace built specifically for them.

Carers were able to apply online and once their application was validated, they received a notification confirming the award of their budget and a link to their Virtual Wallet. Carers could then spend this budget using the bespoke eMarketplace on a diverse range of activities or support, including day trips, short breaks, leisure activities, complementary therapies, sitting services and home help.

**Consultation with carers and providers enabled us to develop an eMarketplace with well engaged providers delivering the services that carers said they wanted to buy.**

The technology was underpinned with offline support from Birmingham Carer's Hub, and a 'money manager' service from PCG Technology Solutions to hold the funds and administer payments to eMarketplace providers.

## The Result

During the first pilot phase, the 'Time for Me' platform saw 647 carers apply resulting in more than £90,000 of spend on more than 50 different services and activities.

### Key benefits of the solution included:

- Efficient and effective - low cost and low admin solution
- Robust application and validation process to ensure genuine applications and funds directed at those most in need
- Spend restricted to activities and services beneficial to carer's wellbeing – whilst still enabling choice from a diverse market
- Fully audited – Forward Carers and Birmingham City Council both able to access rich reporting on spend
- Outcome measurement – carers able to feedback on impact on wellbeing
- Ability to 'clawback' funds if not spent within a period of time
- Integration with Carers Hub website providing wealth of information, advice and access to other services
- Flexibility to support offline activity, including applications and spend, but still processed within the platform to enable full audit trail
- High levels of engagement and satisfaction from carers and providers



Figure 1: Birmingham Carers Hub eMarketplace Basket

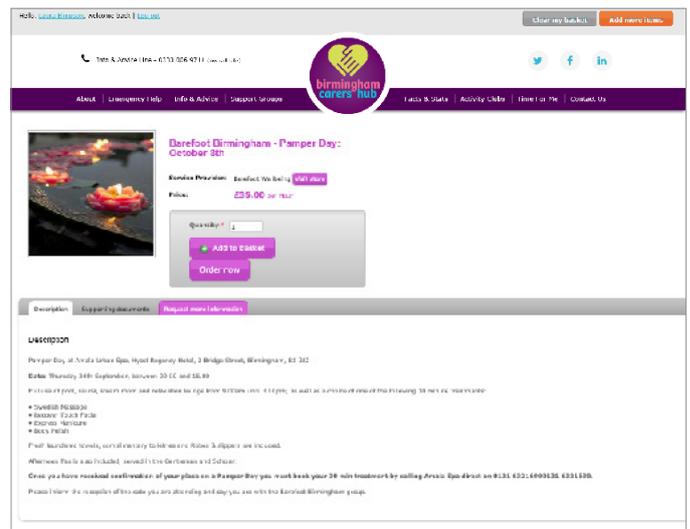


Figure 2: Birmingham Carers Hub eMarketplace Activity Detail

"eMarketplaces can often falter as organisation's have struggled to get the uptake needed for critical mass. This is a great example of an eMarketplace working in practice. This is a result of taking clever technology and focusing on a very specific cohort, using co-development to build a solution so simple that it becomes the new norm. Forward Carers were bold in their vision but it paid off because they knew there was a better way."

David Bowes, Director, PCG Technology Solutions