

Report to: Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Date of meeting: 24 May 2019

By: Director of Adult Social Care and Health

Title: Consultation on Adult Social Care and Health savings proposals for Working Age Adults and subsidy of Meals in the Community

Purpose: To seek Lead Member approval to consult on Adult Social Care and Health savings proposals.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Lead Member is recommended to agree that the Council consults for a 10 week period:

- i) On a proposal to withdraw the subsidy from the meals in the community service; and**
 - ii) On a proposed change in approach to supporting Working Age Adults**
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1 Background

1.1 Meals in the community:

1.1.1 The meals in the community service enables people to have hot, chilled or frozen meals delivered to their home on a daily or weekly basis. The service is currently provided by a range of providers contracted through a framework agreement.

1.1.2 At February 2019, around 750 people received a subsidy of £4.10 per meal on a full cost of between £4 and £8 per meal. In addition, two lunch clubs (28 clients) in the county receive the subsidy.

1.1.3 The proposal would mean that people would pay the full cost of their meal if they wanted to carry on using this service. It is important to note that the proposal is not to close services, rather to stop offering the subsidy which is not means tested. The Council budgeted to spend nearly £500,000 on the subsidy last year.

1.1.4 In line with the Care Act, information about services to all residents would continue to be offered and people will be supported to access services if they are eligible to receive support from Adult Social Care and Health. Under the Care Act the Council is not required to pay for, or subsidise, meals. However, it is possible that a small group of people may be eligible for additional support with their meals due to their disability or because they are particularly vulnerable.

1.1.5 Nearly half of the clients who receive a subsidy are aged 85 years plus. Women are more likely to use the service (nearly two thirds of clients are female). Nearly three quarters of clients have a physical support need. A full Equality Impact Assessment would be completed, alongside the consultation process, and to be considered as part of the final Member decision making process.

1.1.6 In 2014, a consultation was undertaken when the Council considered removing the meals subsidy. At that point it was agreed to retain the subsidy while work was undertaken to move from a single contracted provider to a number of approved providers. The meals are now provided by four organisations. Discussions are ongoing with the providers about what the proposals might mean for them. Work will continue with the providers during the consultation to ensure people can take part and have their questions answered.

1.1.7 The consultation will help the Council understand issues including whether people would want to continue using meals in the community if the subsidy was withdrawn; how people would be affected by the proposal; and whether a small group of people may be eligible for additional support.

1.1.8 The consultation will be available on our consultation hub website, which will be promoted to partners, providers, health and social care staff and residents. We will therefore write to everyone receiving the subsidy to let them know about the consultation and invite them to take part.

1.1.9 It is proposed that the consultation would run from 28th May to 6th August 2019.

2 Background

2.1 Working Age Adults:

2.1.1 The budgeted spend on this area of care was nearly £50m in 2018/19. Should the proposals which it is recommended the Council consult on be enacted the spend would be reduced by £247,000 in 2019/20 and a further £248,000 in 2020/21 on support for Working Age Adults, which represents a 1% reduction over two years.

2.1.2 The Council currently supports over 2,500 Working Age Adults receiving long-term support. In East Sussex, the proportion of working age adults who are offered long-term support is greater, and therefore spend is higher on providing that support, than similar local authorities. We also have a comparatively high number of working age adults, as a proportion of our population, who are receiving their support in a residential or nursing care setting.

2.1.3 To identify the causes of this, an audit of 50 cases was undertaken. This work focussed on key assessment documents, reviews and support plans, alongside other case information, as required. The audit identified a number of practice areas where improvements can be made. This relates to existing ways of working and improving the quality and consistency of our assessment and support plans.

2.1.4 The audit found that support plans can sometimes focus too much on services available and not on an individual's support needs. This can undermine work to personalise support and take a much broader approach to how this is delivered, beyond existing council funded services. It also indicated that people's changing needs should be more keenly taken in to account when reviewing long term care packages.

2.1.5 The proposal is to change our approach to supporting Working Age Adults by reducing the reliance on residential care and providing community based alternatives, and by also finding alternatives to funded care services for clients with lower levels of need. The average spend on Working Age Adults is significantly higher in East Sussex than in other south east councils. The intention is to deliver an overall level of support which is fair, reflects need and achieves a level of spend comparable to other councils. If the new approach was agreed any decisions to change care arrangements would be dependent on individual reviews that take account of a client's specific circumstances. Some clients could however have their support reduced or removed.

2.1.6 The consultation will focus on understanding the causes and issues that might impact on the need to establish new ways of working and achieving better and more cost effective outcomes for clients. For example,

- do more people live in residential and nursing care because people can't access sufficient community services?
- do more people receive long term support because there is not enough focus on short term care that supports people to be more independent?

- can more use be made of short term care to help people to become more independent and use less long term support?
- can ways be found to meet people's needs more cost effectively, so that spend is more in line with other local authorities?

2.1.7 The feedback received through the consultation process will be presented alongside an Equalities Impact Assessment, to inform Member decisions about the savings proposals.

2.1.8 The proposed consultation will focus on understanding the strategic challenges we face in addressing the comparatively high spend in this area, ensuring that if a decision is made to proceed with the savings this work is undertaken in an effective way.

2.1.9 Undertaking this consultation will be challenging given the high volume of clients, many of whom may not have close relatives to offer support. Careful thought will therefore be given to the way in which information is shared. In addition, details will be available on our consultation hub website, which will be promoted to partners, providers, health and social care staff and residents. Our priority will be to ensure that clients and their families can have their say.

2.1.10 It is proposed that the consultation period would run from 4th June to 13th August 2019.

3 Conclusion and reasons for recommendations

3.1 Lead Member is recommended to agree that the Council enters into a 10 week consultation on the proposal to remove the subsidy from meals provided by the Meals in the Community Service and to consult on a proposal to change the approach to supporting Working Age Adults.

3.2 Feedback from the consultation and an Equalities Impact Assessment will then be considered as part of the decision making process on the proposals.

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BACKGROUND DOCUMENTS

None

LOCAL MEMBERS

All Members