

Board of the People Scrutiny Committee

Comments to Lead Member on the 2019/20 Adult Social Care Budget Proposals



Background

The People Scrutiny Committee held a Scrutiny Board meeting on 19 September 2019, open to all Members of the Committee, to examine the proposals relating to the 2019/20 Adult Social Care budget and to make comments to Lead Member for Adult Social Care and Health.

The Board examined the impact of the proposals and considered any potential mitigation, as well as how the proposals would be implemented. The comments below represent a summary of this wider discussion.

The Board also expressed thanks to the officers who have contributed to the very detailed and thorough reports which provided Members with a good understanding of the proposed savings and their impacts.

Agenda Item 4 – Meals in the Community Subsidies

The Board recognised that, taking account of feedback from the public consultation, the Meals in the Community subsidy would remain in place for the most vulnerable clients, who would be identified following an assessment. This number had been estimated at up to 150 clients based on the consultation responses, but the actual figure would be determined following a case by case assessment of the needs of each individual. The Board received confirmation that there would not be additional assessment costs and instead clients who received the subsidy would be prioritised within existing assessment resources. The Board was also informed that no target had been set for the number of allowed cases.

Whilst the Board was supportive of this approach, they retained a concern about clients whose condition at the time of assessment meant the subsidy was withdrawn but whose condition subsequently deteriorated. The Board was informed that if a client's condition deteriorated, they could contact Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC) and be re-assessed where appropriate. The Board noted how an information leaflet about HSCC is provided to clients at the time of a decision about their assessment, and GP practices and community organisations are now well aware that HSCC is the referral point for all potential re-assessments.

In cases where it is determined that the subsidy is withdrawn, all Members of the Board considered it vital that information is provided to clients and their carers about what action they could take if their condition deteriorates over time. For example, Members agreed that clear and understandable information about the referral route to Health and Social Care Connect (HSCC) should be readily available.

The Board Members accepted that there was not sufficient resource to conduct face to face assessments for all affected clients and felt that assessments over the telephone would be appropriate in some cases, particularly as the meals in the community subsidy was a universal service and 39% of consultation respondents had said they would be willing to pay the full cost of the meals themselves. The Board Members, however, did not feel a telephone assessment should take place where the client was known to have dementia or any other significant cognitive impairments. The Board was assured that the ASC

department has robust safeguards in place around digital assessments and will always conduct face-to-face assessments where appropriate.

All Members of the Board recommended that social workers ensure clients have sufficient cognitive awareness prior to conducting a telephone assessment.

The Board noted that the two lunch clubs in receipt of a subsidy were outliers receiving it for historical reasons and that there were many lunch clubs in the county that did not receive a subsidy and continued to operate successfully. The Board accepted the rationale that the removal of the subsidy would ensure fairness and equity in the sector but stressed the importance of assisting the lunch clubs with finding additional income sources given the vital role they play in reducing loneliness, particularly in rural areas.

Most Members of the Board accepted the recommendations of the report in light of the challenging financial position of the Council and the extent of the mitigating actions put in place by the ASC Department. Cllr Field accepted that the mitigation outlined was reasonable if the recommendations were agreed but did not support the proposals in principle.

Agenda Item 5 – Changes in approach to supporting Working Age Adults

The Board accepted that the percentage of working age adults in East Sussex in residential or nursing care was higher in East Sussex than other local authorities. The Board supported the concept of improving the independence of working age adults currently in residential care by working towards moving them into community-based care settings such as extra care housing and supported accommodation and on into the private rented sector, where appropriate.

The Board recognised that there were bottlenecks in the throughput of working age adults from residential care to supported accommodation and into the private rental sector that would delay moving clients out of residential care. The Board agreed that there was a need for the County Council to work with district and borough councils to increase capacity in the supported accommodation sector and support the development of the private rental sector.

The Board noted that the approach to prioritising groups of clients based on their main support need, the cost of their care package, the area of the county they live in or the type of support they get, as the most effective approach to enable the Council to understand need and commission services for working age adults within a particular area.

The majority of the Board were supportive overall of the aims of the proposed review processes described in the report. In particular, the Board noted that this presented an opportunity to see what steps could safely be taken to provide more opportunities to improve the independence of individuals and modernise the service. Cllr Field accepted that the mitigation outlined was reasonable if the recommendations were agreed but did not support the proposals in principle.

Cllr Angharad Davies
Chair of the Scrutiny Board

Scrutiny Board Members

Cllr Bob Bowdler (substituting for Cllr Roy Galley)
Cllr Angharad Davies (Chair)
Cllr Kathryn Field
Cllr Tom Liddiard
Cllr Jim Sheppard