

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda item no.9

TO: Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel
DATE: 17 September 2013

Introduction of Assisted Transport Policy

Purpose

This is to provide an update on the progress with the consultation on the introduction of an Assisted Transport Policy.

Assisted Transport

A revised transport policy has been drafted which will mean that service users will pay for their own transport costs, in line with the implementation of Personal Budgets for social care. Cabinet in June 2013 agreed to enter in to a consultation with service users and family carers as a basis for finalising the new policy prior to implementation.

The policy is based on the view that transport costs are an everyday expense for service users which should be met through their own personal resources (including welfare benefits), so the council should not continue to subsidise transport and will apply a full cost recovery model. Prior to this policy those who were deemed to need transport received this for a minimal charge and the cost was subsidised by the council whatever the person's personal circumstances.

The proposal for the future is that transport will only be funded by the Council as part of a Personal Budget following an assessment of the persons' needs and an agreement as to how these needs will be met. Those people who are eligible for a personal budget from the Council can use it to fund transport to achieve support plan outcomes; for example for people with dementia to attend day care, or people with learning disabilities to attend day services. The policy will be applied to everyone who is eligible to receive a community based service, irrespective of whether the service is provided by the Council or external providers.

There are 260 existing services users who receive support with transport. Those who continue to be eligible to receive support will use transport provided via the Council's contract arrangements with taxi and minibus providers, or via community based transport options, such as those currently being developed with Community Associations.

Progress With Consultation

A communication and consultation plan has been developed to ensure clear and consistent messages are delivered for all those affected by the changes in a timely manner enabling them to understand the proposals and share their views. This will include all those service users who are currently using their personal budgets or have transport arranged for them through the Adult Social Care and Inclusion services.

Those affected by the changes will be able to share their views on the policy proposals through a variety of mediums, including by phone, letter, email, the councils website and face to face consultation meetings.

Feedback from the consultation will be used to form the final policy proposals for recommendation back to Cabinet. A report will be produced sharing the outcome of the consultation and shared with all stakeholders.

Key messages include:

- Transport costs are an everyday expense for everyone and should be met through personal resources;
- Mobility related welfare benefits will be considered to contribute to the cost of transport services;
- The policy seeks to maximise the use of public and community transport; and
- There will be exceptions for some service users and the policy will make clear where these may apply.

Conclusion

One early outcome of the consultation process has been to clarify that these changes may not need to be considered as implementation of a new policy as such. Instead it may be seen as ensuring that everyone is treated equally in the way that Benefits Based Charges and the process of Personalisation are implemented. Some people have continued to receive support for transport, whilst others who have more recently started attending a day service have been charged the full amount. The process of reviewing the current transport service users will ensure that everyone is supported in the same way in the future.

The outcome of the consultation will be reported to the Council Cabinet in October 2013.

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