

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda Item no. 7

TO: Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel

DATE: 4 September 2012

SUPPORT FOR LIVING AT HOME SERVICES

Purpose

The Chair of the Social Care Scrutiny and Performance Panel has asked for a response to the following statement issued by the United Kingdom Home Care Association (UKHCA) in July 2012:

“The impact of local authority commissioning on homecare services may be placing local citizens at risk of rushed, undignified or unsafe care according to a new report from the United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA), the national professional association for homecare providers.

The report, ‘Care is not a commodity’, presents the findings of a national survey of over 700 homecare providers covering over 90% of the UK’s councils. It presents a worrying picture of the impact that commissioning practices are having on people who use homecare, and the organisations that provide those services, in communities across the country:

- The dignity and safety of local citizens may be compromised as a result of short homecare visits being commissioned by councils.*
- The provision of community-based homecare is at risk of becoming unsustainable, with the associated risks for people who use care and the homecare workforce. This is because of continued downward-pressure on the prices paid for care, where lowest price has overtaken quality of service in commissioning decisions.*
- The pay, terms and conditions of homecare workers, who are part of your local community, may be affected by unilateral control of fee rates by councils and changes to contract terms, which have an impact on what should be positive and constructive relationships between councils and their local providers.*

As an elected representative with an interest in the social care provided to your community, we believe that you will take the wellbeing of your local citizens seriously. We are sure that you will wish to reassure yourself that your council is undertaking effective consultation with care providers and that the real cost of providing care is properly reflected in the council’s contracts.

Findings in recent judicial reviews into the social care services and the Government’s recent Care and Support White Paper have highlighted the importance of commissioning for quality and outcomes rather than prioritising the lowest unit cost.

We hope you find our report helpful in highlighting the impact that commissioning has on people’s experience of homecare and that these are taken into account in the council’s approach, in order that high quality sustainable, care can be provided for everyone who needs it – today and in years to come.”

Response

The July 2012 Scrutiny and Performance Committee received an update on the development of a new contractual framework for Support to Living at Home Services (SLHS). This new framework is based upon an outcomes based service specification whereby the individual service user will normally choose the provider to deliver their personalised services. Fee levels will no longer be established by the Council but will be determined by market price.

Contract award was based primarily on an evaluation of the quality of care that each agency will provide and 39 were accepted on the new contract framework. Each one has submitted their market prices to the Council as part of the process. Prices range from x to y which is very similar in range to the range of fees previously established by the Council.

Individuals will be arranging their own care and support services via agencies selected from the Council's contract framework, from individual personal assistants, or perhaps via other arrangements including family, neighbours or local community services. This will mean that they have more control over the services they receive and minimise the risks of the impact of the kind of commissioning practices described in the above UKHCA statement.

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