

BRIEFING NOTE

Agenda Item no. 6

TO: Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel

DATE: 7 October 2013

Introduction of Assisted Transport Policy

Purpose

This is to report on the outcome of 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.

Outcome of Consultation

A consultation exercise was undertaken to seek the views of those in receipt of assisted transport regarding proposals to include transport as part of the assessment and support planning process when awarding customers a personal budget.

A range of communication and engagement methods was used to find out people's views regarding the proposals regarding assisted transport. Letters were sent to around 260 people who use services and may be directly affected by the introduction of the proposed approach. The letters invited comments through a variety of channels which included a series of 6 open meetings, where 12 people attended, to hear about the proposals and make comments.

The open meetings were held in areas across the Borough, one in each of the 6 area partnership areas, in community locations. The meeting times were varied across the locations and the same presentation was delivered by members of the Directorate Management Team. Feedback was sought and recorded from each meeting; the notes are a matter of public record and are shown on the Councils website. A further 8 telephone enquiries were received from those who are in receipt of services or their carers. Staff were also consulted on the changes and their views used to shape practice.

A summary of the key themes emerging from the consultation is as follows:

- People felt it was important that where transport was to be arranged privately the council should have a role in ensuring that people get the best deal from local providers, making sure that the price does not increase for example when they realised they are purchasing directly;
- The provision of payment for mileage where an individual appoints a Personal Assistant should also be taken into account through this process, and people should not be advantaged or disadvantaged through this arrangement;
- Consideration needs to be given to the associated costs of transport with attendance at college; any arrangement for transport must include this group of people as well and must be an equitable process;
- Concerns over what would happen when people do not attend day centres and how this would be taken into account were also expressed;
- Some day centres provide transport within the cost of the day centre place and others operate on the basis that the transport must be arranged and paid for separately. This should be made clear at the point at which an individual is choosing which centre to attend;
- Some carers who have a mobility car also work and the day centres do not open early enough for them to drive their family member to the day service;
- Some people expressed concerned about the quality of the transport provision, and were seeking reassurance that the council continues to ensure the quality of the provision available;
- One day centre works with Ring and Ride and this may be a model for other day centres;
- Escorts are needed for some people with dementia or learning disability and it is essential that a consistent approach is taken;
- Some older carers find it difficult to take people to and from day centres;
- The current system for billing requires attention. There are occasions when invoices are delayed so that one is sent to cover a long period, and this makes it difficult to check its accuracy and difficult to pay for. Families are keeping their own records and

making regular payments to ensure they do not run up huge bills. This needs to be addressed in the new system;

- An understanding of the back office process and roles and responsibilities for staff is key to the successful implementation of the proposed approach, staff were keen to be involved in all phases of the design of the management processes.

One 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.

A further outcome of the consultation is to recognise that there will continue to be some people in exceptional circumstances who will continue to need to have their transport arranged by the Council.

Conclusion

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

That Cabinet agrees that:

- transport needs will be considered as part of the assessment and support planning process when awarding a personal budget and the personal budget will be used to pay for the costs of transport;
- benefits with a mobility component should be used to contribute to the costs of transport where people are in receipt of them; and
- the Council will continue to support people with their transport where there are exceptional circumstances.

Background Papers

Report to Cabinet (June 2013)

Report to Social Care and Inclusion Scrutiny and Performance Panel (September 2013)

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