

Community Care Services: Eligibility Criteria Consultation

Public Meeting 17th January 2007

Question/issue: Who will support people to access direct services? Will you be offering information and advice and possibly advocacy support for people, and guidance for staff?

Response: Yes, we will. We are looking into how we might best provide the kind of support people will need to access services themselves.

Question/issue: When do you get categorised into the various levels of need – it should be after rehabilitation not at first contact?

Response: People will be categorised when their needs are being assessed. We are very keen to encourage people to become independent so the assessment will have a preventative element to it to make sure people's developing needs are taken into account.

Question/issue: You need to have some accessible consultation documents for people with learning disabilities.

Response: We will be working with people with learning disabilities in an accessible way to capture their views on our proposed changes. We did not think it would be helpful or practical to translate our consultation document as it stands into an easy to read version. We have produced our consultation document on tape for people who want or need an audio version of the information.

Question/issue: There isn't enough time to consider your proposals!

Response: We felt that a three month consultation period was sufficient to capture people's views and that there was little to gain by extending it very much further.

Question/issue: What happens after the consultation?

Response: We are recording people's views as the consultation proceeds and posting the results on our website. Once the consultation period has come to an end we will produce a report for the Council's Executive Committee. The Executive will consider the results of the consultation and then decide on a course of action.

Question/issue: We at Kingston Association for the Blind work in partnership with the Sensory Impairment Team. Many people with a sensory impairment have 'Low' to 'Moderate' needs so what will happen to these people? If they do not receive any support their lives will eventually be in crisis and they will end up needing residential care!

Response: We are committed to developing a prevention strategy to stop this kind of situation developing. We do not want people's lives to go into crisis so we will be working hard to prevent this.

Question/issue: What about costings? How much will you save by not providing your services to people with 'Low' or 'Moderate' needs?

Response: In a nearby local authority they estimated they would save around £250, 000 but in reality they saved much less because social workers bumped up people's needs to make sure they received a service. It's therefore difficult to arrive at accurate estimates of savings. But the main point of our proposals is to better target our resources on those that need them most rather than make savings as such.

Question/issue: If you are not doing this for financial reasons, why are you doing this?

Response: As I said, our proposals seek to make sure that those with the greatest needs receive our services. This seems a fair approach. We will also be developing a prevention strategy which will include helping people to use other community services that they can access directly themselves without coming through us.

Question/issue: What are the benefits to your proposals?

Response: We feel we have a duty to target the resources we have on those that need our help the most. We also know that some people prefer not to come to us for help. Rather they prefer to use voluntary and other community organisation for help. We need to achieve a balance of services to suit different people.

Question/issue: If someone has 'Low' or 'Moderate' care needs then they would not get a service - is that right?

Response: Yes, that's right. A community care assessment carried out by a care manager/social worker would decide what level of needs the person has.

It should be said that it's the person's needs rather than the person as such that gets categorised. A person may have several needs, some of which may be 'Low' while others may be 'Substantial' or 'Critical'.

If our proposals are agreed then a person's 'Low' needs would not receive a service whereas their 'Substantial' or 'Critical' needs would. However, we may still provide for a person's 'Moderate' needs if this prevented them developing 'Substantial' or 'Critical' needs. Also, we would signpost or direct someone to other sources of support and help to meet their 'Low' or 'Moderate' needs rather than just turn them away.

Question/issue: In your presentation you mentioned a local government association report describing the funding problems of some local authorities - is the Government looking at doing something about this?

Response: We believe the Treasury and the Department of Health are looking into the financial and service pressures being faced by local authorities up and down the country.

Question/issue: How many people with learning disabilities are in the different categories of need now?

Response: Because up to now we have not categorised people's needs into 'Low', 'Moderate' etc we do not have that information available. From experience we would estimate that the needs of most people with learning disabilities would fall within the 'Substantial' or 'Critical' categories. But remember we may still provide for 'Moderate' needs if by so doing we would prevent a person's needs becoming 'Substantial' or 'Critical'.

Question/issue: How many people are not having their 'Substantive' needs met now?

Response: We can't answer this question because we have not been categorising people's needs in this way up to now.

Question/issue: How many people have informal care?

Response: We cannot provide accurate information on the numbers of people in the borough receiving the help of an informal carer. We do know that nearly all services users we support get some help from a family member or friend.

Question/issue: How will these changes affect people's independence, inclusion and choice?

Response: We believe that providing people with the choice of community voluntary services that they can directly access themselves will help improve people's inclusion and independence. In any event, we will need to monitor any changes we introduce to make sure they are working as intended and people are properly supported in a way that suits them.

Question/issue: A lot of people do not like coming to social services for help because they are suspicious of local authorities and they do not like being asked a lot of intrusive questions about their care needs!

Response: Yes, that's true.

Question/issue: But some services are better provided by local authorities, for example, the provision of bath seats and other specialist items of equipment where you need the input of a professional person!

Response: Yes.

Question/issue: How many families will need to provide services if local authority services are taken away?

Response: There's no absolute answer to that question! But our plan is to develop a prevention strategy to support people who are not eligible for our services.

Question/issue: Will the local authority respect carers' choice not to provide services?

Response: Yes, of course.

Question/issue: How many people are at breaking point?

Response: We do not know!

Question/issue: How much money do you expect to save?

Response: We are not sure but we need to target our limited resources fairly. We need a mechanism for doing this which is the Government's Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) guidance.

Question/issue: The FACS language is impossible to understand! Social workers will need training to understand the guidance!

Response: The FACS language is the Government's language not ours. Yes, social workers will need training and guidance to support them to use the FACS categories.

Question/issue: It will be very sad if you stop providing services to all categories of need. Kingston has a proud reputation of providing good services.

Response: Yes, we need to preserve our good reputation.

Question/issue: You talk about preventative services but where are they? There's a gap already! You need to develop these before making any changes!

Response: Age Concern provides an extensive range of services now but yes we do need to develop voluntary services further.

Question/issue: What preventative services are there for people with Multiple Sclerosis now?

Response: We need to identify and record what's available now for the benefit of staff and residents. This is a job of work we have started to look into.

Question/issue: If you do stop providing services to support people with 'Low' and 'Moderate' needs you can't assume that local BME groups have extended family networks that will provide the informal care to plug the gaps!

Response: No, we cannot make that assumption. We need to work with local organisations to see how best we can support people. This will be part of our prevention strategy.

Question/issue: We need more time and discussion on these proposals. Can we comment on the draft report that goes to Councillors?

Response: The draft report will be put on our website.

Question/issue: The FACS language and the language in your paper is difficult! You need to reach the voices that are least heard. You should have asked service users to help you write your paper.

The principles of independence, choice and control are so important to people's lives. You need to meet people's needs as they see them. Categorisation of their needs is not helpful.

Response: FACS is a Government requirement. We have to use it. Yes, we need to involve service users in identifying their needs but we also need to target our resources in a fair way.

Question/issue: Let us (service users) write to the Government to make our suggestions.

Response: People have every right to write to the Government if they want to.

Question/issue: For future meetings it would be helpful to get people's feedback on a flipchart about future opportunities and possibilities for service development rather than just look at the FACS categories. To simply talk about these is far too narrow.

Its important to spell out what the implications are if you decide to no longer support 'Low' and 'Moderate' needs. What would a prevention strategy look like and what are the options!

Response: Thank you for your suggestions.

Question/issue: If you stop providing services to people with 'Low' and 'Moderate' needs then what happens to carers' welfare benefits – will they loose them?

Response: As far as we know, the receipt of welfare benefits is not dependent on the receipt of social services. We will check this to make sure.

Question/issue: You say that as part of your prevention strategy you will need to tell people what other services are available. How will this 'signposting' work?

Response: We are currently looking at how we provide information now. There is a huge amount of information available but not always in the right place or in the right way for people to access easily. Certainly there is too much information available for social workers to keep in their heads. We are looking at developing some kind of information data base or directory that everyone can access. This could be available on the web and also at information points around the borough. This would be a better way of keeping and sharing information than simply relying on leaflets as we mainly do now.

Question/issue: I think you need to have a prevention strategy in place now before you disenfranchise people!

Response: Thank you for your suggestion.

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