

Community Care Services: Eligibility Criteria Consultation

Public Meeting 6 February 2007

Question/issue: Where are the councillors? They should be here.

Response: We do have one councillor here with us and we have had councillors attend most meetings.

Question/issue: I'm disgusted that the Liberal Democrats are not here!

Question/issue: Why has Kingston provided for all 4 levels of need up to now?

Response: Kingston has provided for all four levels of need since the Government's Fair Access to Care Services was first introduced.

Question/issue: So Kingston is lagging behind other local authorities then!?

Response: That depends on your point of view. One can answer that question either way.

Question/issue: There is a poor voluntary sector here in Kingston. It is underdeveloped for younger people so I'm worried about direct access services and their ability to provide preventative services.

Response: We need to develop a prevention strategy. This will help us identify gaps in provision. Targeting our resources on those that need them most gives us an opportunity to be more focused on our priorities and will help us develop preventative services in an effective and strategic way.

Question/issue: MENCAP has asked local authorities to out-source services but it takes time to build the capacity to deliver. You need time and money to grow that resource and to develop choice.

Response: Yes but the voluntary sector has the capability to deliver preventative services with the right support.

Question/issue: A recent Social Care Institute for Excellence/Commission for Social Care Inspection report says that local authorities are failing young disabled people. I'm very worried that our family will be moving from excellent Children's Services to not so excellent Adult Services. Also, you have nothing about carers in your strategy. I need to work and care. There is no way that I will consider residential care for my disabled child.

Response: Yes, transition issues are national ones. We are committed here to improving services and making the move from Children's Services to Adult Services work well. We do not want people to have to choose residential services but are concerned to develop good quality community services. And yes, we do need to consider carers' issues with the Carers' Partnership Board.

Question/issue: We need an accessible document for people with learning disabilities.

Response: We are asking the learning disability services Parliament to help us explore the issues raised in our consultation document. .

Question/issue: You need to consult with people with learning disabilities to make sure you get richer consultation experience.

Question/issue: You need to commission people to do the consultation with people with non-verbal communication. You need a longer consultation process and to involve a professional company to help you.

Response: Some people have told us that the consultation period is long enough. There are different opinions on this.

Response: What savings are you likely to make?

Response: We have done some work on this and we estimate that we may save around £100,000 every year on a budget of £40 million. It's difficult to predict with any certainty. In practice other local authorities have found that they save less than they expected because social workers tend to bump up people's needs to make sure they qualify for a service. If we do go ahead with our proposed changes we will need to introduce guidance for staff and training sessions to make sure any new criteria are consistently and properly applied.

Question/issue: If you introduce new eligibility criteria, does this mean that services can't be taken away from current service users?

Response: Yes, our legal advice is that we cannot apply any new criteria retrospectively.

Question/issue: So the situation is not equal for new users!

Response: Yes, possibly, but it's not our intention to be unfair to existing users by possibly taking their services away.

Question/issue: What happens to those who would not get a service in the new world?

Response: Our intention is that they become a 'protected' person.

Question/issue: In Children and Family Services you have the Disabled Children's Act and the Carers' Act so mothers are offered support around the clock. When you go to Adult Services you get less of a service. There is a gender issue here - most carers are women. Women will have to give up work! They won't do it!

Response: The Council have given us more money for transition services. Any changes we introduce should not affect children with 'Substantial' and 'Critical' needs. The legislation you mention also affects Adult Services so we would comply with it too. Carers are very important. Local authorities could not cope without carers so they need to support them. The issues you raise are ones that society and the State need to answer.

Question/issue: You have money issues, OK. Social workers adjust needs so that people get services. So, where is the saving going to come, particularly if you will be supporting outside agencies to offer preventative services?

Response: Yes but we expect to make savings over time and we will be better able to target our resources.

Question/issue: The costs to carers is enormous. 60% have health needs themselves! Then you spend more money on supporting carers. It's not right to rely/use up carers health to save money.

Question/issue: What about Kingston Primary Care Trust - who is going to pick up the pieces?

Question/issue: How many people are in the 'Low' and 'Moderate' categories?

Response: It looks like about half of the people but due to social workers' tendency to up rate people's needs it's difficult to say. We will need to write some guidance for social workers to avoid this and also introduce training sessions.

Question/issue: A prevention guide sounds exciting; it could be creative and promote choice.

Response: Yes, we need to focus on prevention. What it means and so on.

Question/issue: But providing for people with 'Low' and 'Moderate' needs is preventative! Stopping services for people with these needs means they become 'Substantial' and 'Critical'!

Response: Yes but there is still many people that don't access our services now so they are not benefiting from any preventative support! Direct access services may help prevention!

Question/issue: People will need help to take up signposting! You will need a support mechanism for this. This needs to be set up before you withdraw things. You need to talk to people and see what would be useful in a Prevention Strategy.

Question/issue: What is going on elsewhere? You need a model.

Response: We have done some research but our consultation will help us decide the best way forward.

Response: That's a cop out! You need an evidence based approach.

Question/issue: You need an extension to the consultation so people can see a draft of your report.

Response: We will ask the councillors if we can extend the consultation period.

Question/issue: I am concerned that some politicians don't have a clue about disability issues.

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