

Community Care Services: Eligibility Criteria Consultation

Public Meeting 15th January 2007

Question/issue: I assume assessments will still need to take place to determine people's eligibility for services?

Response: Yes, people will continue to be assessed but services may not necessarily be provided. Also, there will be direct access to certain services, for example, items of daily living equipment such as grab rails.

Question/issue: I suppose the Council will not know how much they will save until the new approach is tried out?

Response: Yes, but our proposals are more about targeting services on those people that need them most rather than just saving money as such.

Question/issue: How will you determine people's eligibility for services – tick boxes, practice guidance for staff and so on?

Response: People will be assessed in the usual way but we will need to incorporate a preventative element to our assessments to make sure people's developing needs are taken into account.

Question/issue: Mobility training for people with visual impairments is a preventative service, so will this continue?

Response: Yes, that's right.

Question/issue: What about people with non-visible, variable, needs or disabilities such as mental health needs - how will you respond to them?

Response: We had a similar question in another meeting about people with Multiple Sclerosis! We will need to consider this carefully. In relation to people with mental health needs, we only support people with 'substantial' or 'critical' needs now so there would be no change in our approach here.

Question/issue: What about Kingston Primary Care Trust's lack of money. Are they likely to withdraw their funding for social care services?

Response: We can't really answer that question at this time but we will certainly pass your concerns on to them.

Question/issue: The fact that you currently provide services to all levels of need is good, so why are you planning to change this?

Response: As previously noted, we need to target our resources. Also, there are some disadvantages to providing our services to everyone. At the moment, for example, there is a greater take up of our Day Care services by women than men. Direct access services may provide more fairness and balance in the use of services.

Men may be put off by the need to be assessed for Council services. If they know they can go directly to services they may feel more inclined to use them.

Question/issue: Is this part of a bigger change to your services. Are you planning to introduce call centres instead of offering direct access to social workers?

Response: No, we want to improve access to services not limit it.

Question/issue: If people are not eligible for your services you will need to increase your information and advice services.

Response: Yes, we will need to develop our 'signposting' services to put people in touch with sources of help. We will not be saying to people who don't meet our criteria 'sorry we can't help you' but we will actively try and connect them with organisations that may be able to help them. We are looking into how we might deliver good information services as we speak.

Question/issue: What is the Council's strategy for supporting voluntary organisations to offer preventative services if its decided to only provide services to people with 'substantial' and 'critical' needs?

Response: We will need to work in partnership with local voluntary organisations to develop their capacity to offer preventative services.

Question/issue: A prevention strategy needs resources! Where will these resources come from?

Response: How and where we spend our resources is a political decision. The Council will need to decide on these issues.

Question/issue: Is there any information from other local authorities on the savings to be made by limiting services to people with 'substantial' and 'critical' needs?

Response: A nearby local authority estimated that it would save around £250, 000 but in practice the saving was much less because social workers overstated people's needs to make sure they qualified for a service. We will need to develop ways to stop this happening if we decide to change our eligibility criteria.

Question/issue: There are big resource issues for voluntary organisations if they are to provide direct access services. Also, they will need to develop the expertise to offer these services.

Response: We will need to work with local voluntary organisations to develop their capacity and knowledge base. However, we need to remember that voluntary organisations are often very innovative and creative.

Question/issue: Your proposals could result in a big burden on the voluntary sector! They may not even want to take on more preventative responsibilities. It may be that you end up not saving any money! There are also many changes happening in the Kingston Primary Care Trust. These are worrying times for people. It may not be the best time to introduce these changes!

Response: We will need to work co-operatively with our voluntary sector colleagues on these issues. Yes, there are many changes happening but given our available resources we cannot delay in making decisions on how best to provide for people in the greatest need.

Question/issue: Could you not put people on 'low' and 'moderate' needs on a waiting list?

Response: We don't have a waiting list now so we don't want to introduce one now as a way of managing our resources.

Question/issue: How will you save money when you have certain fixed costs, for example Day Care services?

Response: Our proposals are about the better targeting of our services rather than saving money as such but, to answer your question, we may not end up saving money but may get a better take up of services if direct access services are provided. People may feel more comfortable approaching a voluntary organisation for a service rather than undergo an assessment for a Council service. Assessments may act as a barrier for some people. Also, there would be no charge to the individual for a direct access service. We charge for our services which can be another deterrent for some people.

Question/issue: Are you planning to make any changes to your charging policy as well as your eligibility criteria?

Response: No, we don't have any plans to change our charging policy.

Question/issue: The Sensory Impairment Team do a lot of good work at the Royal Eye Unit in Kingston - are there any plans to change this?

Response: No, we have no plans to change this arrangement. However, we will need to think about how the preventative services offered by the Sensory Impairment Team fit in with any new service criteria we introduce.

Question/issue: Won't you end up spending more money doing crisis work if you don't provide a service to people with 'low' and 'moderate' needs?

Response: This is a risk that we will need to take into account. Our plan is to avoid crisis work by developing a prevention strategy. Also, we may still provide services to people with 'low' or 'moderate' needs if this will prevent people's needs becoming 'substantial' or 'critical'.

Question/issue: If you take out 'low' and 'moderate' needs wont it make it harder for people to know what services are available? Also, some people may not be very good at referring themselves for help and support!

Response: We will need to make sure we have good information services so that people can find out what services are available to help. This will involve working closely with our voluntary sector partners.

Question/issue: Can you blur categories, for example, 'moderate' needs with 'substantial' needs to enable people to get a service?

Response: The Government's Fair Access to Care Services guidance does allow us to provide services to people whose needs would deteriorate if they were not provided with help, so yes we can provide services on a preventative basis.

Question/issue: What about people with learning disabilities – many of these people's needs are 'low' or 'moderate' but would soon become 'substantial' or 'critical' if they were not to be provided with support. I know we don't want to encourage people to become dependent on services, and some people would like to be able to access services directly themselves without coming through the Council, but your proposals worry me. Also, who would support the carers of people with 'low' and 'moderate' needs?

Response: As previously mentioned, we will provide service to people on a preventative basis if this means it will avoid their situation getting worse. We will also need to consider carers' support needs carefully and the impact any new service criteria may have on their well being. We don't want to increase the burden on carers or store up problems for them and us in the future.

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