

BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE COMMUNITY MEALS SERVICE – DRAFT – APPENDIX A

IMPROVEMENT PLAN (1.10.01 to 30.9.06)

Following the presentation of the Best Value Review of the Community Meals Service to Cabinet on 24 September the following were agreed: -

- 1 The development of an improvement plan, which ensures the delivery of an improved service to all clients, including hard to reach groups.**
- 2 The preparation of a service specification that meets the agreed outcomes (quality, choice and cost).**
- 3 The reassessment of all clients who have been previously assessed as requiring a meal to ascertain whether it would be appropriate for them to receive:
 - a) a hot meal**
 - b) a frozen meal that can be reheated within the home.****
- 4 Competitive tenders for the service be invited, in accordance with the Council's Purchasing Protocols and Service Specification, working in partnership with the chosen contractor.**

IMPROVEMENT PLAN

ACTION	By when	By who	Monitoring	Cost/ Resources
1. The development of an improvement plan, which ensures the delivery of an improved service to all clients, including hard to reach groups.				
a) Consult with and explore ways in which the service to Ethnic minority groups/ hard to reach groups can be provided in order to ensure that they are not excluded from the meals service.	End of March 2002	Team for Older People	Feedback to Head of service and Head of Contracts. Reflect needs in tender document Consistency of service throughout the County	One staff for five days - within existing budget
b) Set up focus groups for meal tasting. These will need to include Ethnic minority groups and other hard to reach groups.	June 2002	Team for Older People	Reflect findings in tender award	Two staff for three days – within existing budget. This is part of the normal tender process

<p>2. The preparation of a service specification that meets the agreed outcomes (quality, choice and cost).</p>				
<p>Improve quality and choice of meals</p>	<p>September 2002</p>	<p>Contracts Division</p>	<p>100% of meals will meet ABSSC (Advisory Body of Social Services Caterers) Standard.</p> <p>Reflected in the specification for meals in the tender document and will be part of the selection criteria.</p> <p>Meal tasting</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>
<p>Improve quality and consistency of delivery service</p>	<p>September 2002</p>	<p>Contracts Division</p>	<p>Reflected in the specification for meals in the tender document and will be part of the selection criteria.</p>	<p>Within existing resources</p>
<p>Be clear about the cost of delivering an improved meals service before proceeding</p>	<p>April 2002</p>	<p>Contracts / Finance</p>	<p>Feedback to Cabinet.</p> <p>Target within budget</p> <p>Benchmarking with other Authorities</p>	<p>N/a</p>

<p>3. The reassessment of all clients who have been previously assessed as requiring a meal to ascertain whether it would be appropriate for them to receive:</p> <p>a) a hot meal b) a frozen meal that can be reheated within the home.</p>				
<p>Re-assess all existing Clients to establish:</p> <p>i) whether they can re-heat a meal from frozen</p> <p>ii) need to have a hot meal delivered</p> <p>iii) if they meet the criteria for receiving a meal</p>	<p>April 2002</p>	<p>Team for Older People</p>	<p>Appointment and briefing of staff to carry out this exercise.</p> <p>Data to be reflected in tender documents</p>	<p>Two staff for six months – within existing budgets. This will require pulling staff out of existing duties to carry this out.</p>
<p>System that continually re-assesses Clients</p>	<p>Ongoing</p>	<p>Team for Older People</p>	<p>The Re-assessment process</p>	<p>Within existing budgets - this will be part of ongoing review process</p>

4. Competitive tenders for the service be invited, in accordance with the Council's Purchasing Protocols and Service Specification, working in partnership with the chosen contractor.				
Contract to be advertised	January 2002	Contracts Division	Feedback to Head of Service/ Head of Contracts, keeping to agreed timetable	Part of the service offered by Contracts within existing budgets
Specification/ Schedule of requirements reflecting the outcomes of 1,2 and 3 above	March 2002	Contracts Division	Feedback to Head of Contracts	Part of the service offered by Contracts within existing budgets
Contract awarded	1 June 2002	Contracts Division	Feedback to Head of Contracts	Within existing resources
Contract start	September 2002	Contracts Division	Feedback to Head of Contracts	Within existing resources

Contract management	On - going	Team for Older People/ Contractor/ Contract Division	Customer surveys Regular meetings will all relevant parties at quarterly/ six monthly intervals	Team For Older People – within existing budget. Contracts Division - Part of the service offered within existing budgets
---------------------	------------	--	--	---

Proposed actions

1. Hard to reach groups

As far as can ascertain the service is not used to any great extent by Clients from an Ethnic minority background. Further work is required to find out why this is so. It is suggested that this be discussed with those who attend the Indian luncheon club and the Afro-Caribbean at the Multicultural Centre in Aylesbury. Following discussions with the Asian development worker, other known groups that can be contacted include Aylesbury Vale Council for Racial Equality and the Aylesbury Women's project.

Buckinghamshire has a number of rural areas and the new contract will address consistency of service throughout the County.

The service will need to reflect any findings from the survey, with specific food and delivery requirements addressed within the tender document.

Focus groups will need to be identified which will help in the tender award and on-going performance monitoring of the contract. This will give the opportunity to continually improve the contract by ensuring dialogue between the contractor and us. The focus groups will need to include those from different ethnic backgrounds and those most vulnerable Clients.

2. Prepare a service specification

Clear standards need to be set by which performance can be measured. Outcomes need to be agreed upon for quality, choice and cost which is consistent across the Authority. The quality of the meal is considered poor overall. This reflects not just upon the meal but also on the delivery method, presentation of the actual meal and packaging of the product. It is proposed that in future, all meals meet the ABSSC (Advisory Body of Social Services Caterers) standard. The standard specifies meal and portion sizes and minimum nutrients per meal. Currently only some of our meals meet this standard.

With regard to delivery method, if the meals are regenerated en route they will be consistently hot and the presentation will be improved. Where Clients are assessed as being able to use a steamer to heat frozen meals this should be offered. This would give the Client flexibility, in both, choice of meal and in the time they eat, and in addition, increasing their independence.

Currently the packaging is plain giving little indication of content. This will be addressed in the tender documents.

The cost will need to be affordable and within existing budgets and take account of benchmark data from elsewhere and the relationship with the Client contribution.

3. Re-assessment of Clients

It is essential that all existing Clients are re-assessed to determine if they should receive a hot or frozen meal. It may be the case that some Clients do not actually meet the criteria for receiving a meal. For contractors to put together a competitive bid for this contract they will need to know the location, frequency of service and type of meal required, (it is accepted that the Client base is subject to change). The resources required to do this is estimated at 2 persons for up to 6 months. The Team for Older People recognise that this has to be done and their management team are meeting on 15 November to take this forward.

Supplying frozen meals will reduce costs to the Council but can only be supplied where the Client is assessed as being able to prepare it. The ability to steam a frozen meal is similar to making a hot drink. Contractors can supply Steamers/ freezers. Frozen meals increase the choice to the Client, as they will be able to hold a variety in the freezer and at the same time choose when they eat. The initial re-assessment will improve the service because it will identify those Clients who would benefit from receiving frozen meals. However the programme of re-assessing needs to be continuous to ensure that all Clients receive the appropriate service that meets their needs. Resources need to be found and allocated to this.

4. Seeking competitive tenders

Following discussions with other local authorities and advertising for expressions of interest we are satisfied that we have spoken with all of the contractors in this market place. It is anticipated to let a 5-year contract as from 1 October 2002 allowing a lead in time of 3 months from award of contract.

A tender document will be sent to the market place taking into account the findings from 1,2 and 3 above. We know the market is well developed and there is sufficient competition to improve the service, with particular reference to those areas mentioned in 2. Prepare a service specification.