

FAO: Patricia Birchley, BCC Cabinet Member for Adults and Family Wellbeing

XX March 2015

Dear Patricia,

Adults and Family Wellbeing Consultations: Sheltered Housing & Charging Policy

The Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee have considered the two recent Adults and Family Wellbeing public consultations on sheltered housing and the charging policy. As part of this we held a briefing session with some of your officers on 5th March where some of the committee members were able to clarify the proposals. This briefing was well received and I would like to thank Susie Yapp, Steve Goldensmith and Andrew Foster for this.

I would like to make you aware of the committee views regarding each consultation, and some additional information we would like to receive to provide reassurance on the proposals and their impact.

Sheltered Accommodation

It was not clear from the consultation and briefing materials provided what scale of savings would be delivered by the sheltered accommodation changes. Steven Goldensmith advised us that based on the reduction in workers this would likely be in the region of 50% of the current spend. I would be grateful if you could confirm precisely what these proposed changes are likely to save per annum.

We were advised that the consultation ends on the 31st March, and by the end of May you expect to make a clear statement on the way forward so this can be implemented in September.

The committee would like to hear what the housing association's feedback to the proposals has been, noting that whilst we were informed some seemed to be readying themselves for the changes, others had been very quiet. We would like to know who has provided comments on the proposed changes and what these comments have been.

Whilst the committee did not have any significant concerns on the proposals, they would like to consider it further once they have seen the results of the consultation exercise and the feedback from the housing providers. Can I request this happens before you make a final decision on the way forward at the end of May.



Charging Policy

The main concern members had with these charging proposals was the risk that in applying or increasing charges, residents may reduce their use of the services, which could result in undesirable outcomes where their needs are no longer met and their condition deteriorates. This could result in an increased need for more expensive health or social care interventions at a later stage. Whilst noting the principles and that in many cases the majority of service users would not have to pay the service charges, there was evidently an area of uncertainty as to how many service users may stop using the services in response to the cost increases.

Meals are not means tested and everyone pays for these, and it was these cost increases particularly that members felt could result in the most vulnerable residents cutting back on their service use. Whilst other services are means tested, the level of uptake of services such as transport and day care, should also be monitored.

We understand there will be monitoring reports produced on the impact of these charging increases, which we would expect to clearly state the current level of uptake (client numbers and level of use). The committee would like to request a copy of the monitoring framework, and to receive quarterly updates on this during 2015/16.

Another area of concern for members was that the cost being charged for the services should represent good value to the resident receiving it. Some of the services provided speak for themselves, but there are some members who would like more detail on what the level/specification of the service provided entails. These are:

- Transport – Is the service safe, reliable and timely. Does it cater for all accessibility needs?
- Proposed Social Care Package fee of £250. What resource goes into producing this package? Does this seek full or partial cost recovery, or seek a profit?

Whilst the means testing thresholds are set by government and are well established, the committee is less clear on the measure that assesses that “service users are never left with insufficient means to afford everyday living costs after any financial contribution”. Your officers have indicated this is a commonly applied measure. I would be grateful if you could signpost us to evidence to this effect, and provide some clarification as to the income support level used (over or under 25yrs rate) and what qualifies as ‘everyday living costs’? How is rent/mortgage, utility costs, council tax, other debts taken into account?

I would be grateful if you could confirm the timescales for providing the above information requested. I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours sincerely



Angela Macpherson, County Councillor
Chairman, Health and Adult Social Care Select Committee



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