

STOCKTON-ON-TEES BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET RECOMMENDATIONS

PROFORMA

Cabinet Meeting25th November 2010

1. Title of Item/Report

EIT Review of Fair Access to Care Services - Report of Health Select Committee

2. Record of the Decision

Consideration was given to the findings of the Health Select Committee's EIT Review of Fair Access to Services. The review examined proposals to amend the Council's eligibility criteria for adult social care services. This included an extensive consultation process, the results of which were included.

The Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) guidance, published in 2002, provided a national framework for local authorities to use when determining eligibility for adult social care based on assessed needs. This guidance outlined how councils should use, review and if appropriate revise their eligibility criteria. Eligibility criteria was divided into four bands of need and the level of need at which care was provided was at the discretion of the relevant local authority. During the period of the review, the Department of Health issued revised eligibility guidance which sought to address issues in the overall framework and included a greater emphasis on prevention and universal services (particularly relevant for those councils looking to raise the eligibility threshold), whilst making it clear that eligibility criteria must be used within the wider personalisation agenda. The four band system remained in place.

In summary, the Committee found that Stockton Council provided social care to those who had needs that were in the Critical, Substantial and Moderate bands. In addition, aids and adaptations ('equipment') were also provided to clients in the Low band. There was a national trend to provide care for people assessed as being in the Substantial and Critical bands only. As of 2007-8, 72% of councils provided care at the Substantial level or above. It was evident that the general pressures on funding and other factors including demography, were having an increasing impact upon the ability of the Council to continue to provide the current range of services, and that the 60% increase in spending between 2002-3 and 2010-11 would become increasingly unsustainable in the future.

The Committee considered the pressures on adult social care, and the results of the consultation, and considered that it would be appropriate to recommend that the eligibility criteria be raised to Substantial and Critical bands only, as this would allow the Council to focus its adult care services on those most in need. It should also be recognised that there was an opportunity to further develop preventative services, in order to ensure that some people will not need social care at all, and to delay the entry into the system of those who will. The Committee also considered that there should be further work undertaken in relation to the provision of equipment in order to ensure the shift to a higher eligibility threshold was properly implemented across all types of service provided. Additional monitoring of the assessment and review process should be considered to ensure consistency and a robust communications plan should be developed prior to implementation of the recommendations.

Due to uncertainty over funding and the variables involved in implementing any change, the Committee felt unable to make precise recommendations about the type of community based services that should be supported. However it was clear to Members that there was a need for this and that a preventative approach should be taken, using the priorities identified during the consultation process where appropriate. It would be important to mitigate the impact of the higher eligibility threshold as far as was possible, and the Committee were of the view that the Council should focus its support on targeted services, including assistive technology (e.g. Telecare). Where appropriate, consideration should also be given to utilising the services of the voluntary and community sector, especially in relation to community based services and to supporting its capacity to provide these. It was clear that many services already existed in the Borough, and that often what was required was better co-ordination and signposting.

In presenting the report to Cabinet, the Chair of the Select Committee referred Cabinet to the legal implications contained within the report and in particular that the Council needs to have due regard to its equality duties, particularly in relation to disability, gender and race, and the actions that should be taken to monitor, and mitigate, the impact of the change.

RESOLVED that:-

1. the Council amend its eligibility criteria for adult social care by removing the Moderate band and providing care to those in Critical and Substantial bands only;

2. the revised policy be implemented for all assessments and re-assessments that take place following 1 April 2011;
3. specific work be undertaken to ensure a consistent approach to the provision of aids and adaptations in line with the revised eligibility criteria that will take effect from 1 April 2011;
4. a communications plan be developed in order to clearly communicate the revised policy and its implications to clients, staff and stakeholders including Members, and that the information provided to clients should continue to include reference to the availability of advocacy and other methods of support when undergoing assessments;
5. further consideration be given to the additional operational and resource requirements of undertaking the assessment/re-assessment process during the initial 12 months operation of the revised policy;
6. subject to the availability of resources, investment should take place in targeted community services, using a preventative approach and the emerging priorities outlined in the report where possible, and that particular consideration should be given to investment in further assistive technology (for example Telecare);
7. the wider corporate support initiatives to the voluntary and community sector be endorsed, and as part of this, consideration be given to enabling this sector to focus on preventative, community services for Adults, on a sustainable basis where possible, utilising the range of programmes that have been developed e.g. the Voluntary and Community Sector Investment Fund;
8. advice and information services be further developed to enable signposting to community services, and that such services should be up to date and accessible, include effective promotion of community services that already exist, and be linked to the work being undertaken as part of the implementation of the EIT Review of Advice and Information, and the Personalisation implementation programme;
9. the impact of the revised policy should be monitored through the implementation of the Action Plan from the Equality Impact Assessment;
10. to ensure that data quality is maintained, a process should be put in place to monitor the information held in relation to clients' eligibility bandings and to keep this under review, and progress be reported to the Health Select Committee as part of the established monitoring procedures.

3. Reasons for the Decision

As part of the Council's EIT Programme, and as part of the agreed scrutiny work programme for 2009-10 and 2010-11, the Committee has undertaken a review of the Council's eligibility criteria for adult social care and the attached report outlines the results of the review.

4. Alternative Options Considered and Rejected

None

5. Declared (Cabinet Member) Conflicts of Interest

None

6. Details of any Dispensations

Not applicable

7. Date and Time by which Call In must be executed

By no later than midnight on Friday 3 December 2010.

Proper Officer
29 November 2010