

Disability Related Expenses Public Consultation Meeting Notes

LEICESTER CITY COUNCIL DISABILITY RELATED EXPENDITURE (DRE) PUBLIC CONSULTATION 2016

NOTES OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

Held at Town Hall, Town Hall Square, Leicester on
1st February 2016, 12.30pm-2.00pm

Introduction

The meeting was attended by 31 members of the public.

Officers attending from the council included: Tracie Rees (Director for Care Services' and Commissioning), Ashraf Osman (Head of Contact and Prevention), Michael Lacey (Financial Operations Manager), Anne Mather (Business Change Manager) and Prashant Patel (Administration Team Leader)

Gujarati and Hindi translation was requested at the meeting and provided by an officer attending the meeting.

The meeting started with the Director explaining what the Disability Related Expenditure consultation was about. This was followed by the Director explaining there were two proposals.

Proposal number one: the council want to change the amount of money they allow if someone has a disability.

Proposal number two: to change which special items should be included by the council to help someone with their disability.

Following this the Director took questions and heard what people thought about proposal number one and proposal number two.

The questions asked and points raised are (in black) and the answers given (in blue).

Points made by attendees

1. Proposed cuts will affect everyone.
2. Some attendees said they were struggling to understand English and needed to know the case by case impact on each individual.
3. The consultation materials should contain actual figures rather than percentages.
4. More clarity is needed.
5. The council's proposals are picking on a vulnerable minority.

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6. The use of 3 languages is causing confusion: please do brief sessions at a time in all 3 languages.
7. A lot of disabled and older people are on fixed incomes. It could therefore be hard for them to pay more.
8. It costs some people £30 to go to a Day Centre. If they have to pay more because DRE is reduced, they will not be able to go and will be sitting at home depressed.
9. This will affect my care – if I cannot afford an extra £10, my PA will have to work less hours. [Ashraf Osman stated that if you can show that you have disability related expenditure that is more than £10, we will allow more.](#)
10. The NHS provides only basic wheelchairs: a lot of individuals have to pay for a more suitable wheelchair, plus maintenance and insurance.
11. You are waiting for a crisis to happen and hit the news.
12. My grandfather has Alzheimer's and his savings will be eaten up paying for his care. He has had 3 social workers and has never been told about the provision of advocacy. [Ashraf Osman asked for details to be provided so that he can investigate this case. Tracie Rees stated that if there are cases where the council is not fulfilling its statutory duty, please inform us.](#)
13. I have a Level 5 diploma in Social Care, and if I had not attended my grandparents' sessions, they would not have understood what they were being told. You leave these people so upset and confused.
14. It should be noted that the NHS is a patient safety service. Suggest Adult Social Care meets with the NHS hierarchy to discuss the implications of this consultation.
15. The time limit that the social worker has with the customer (1 hour to cover the financial assessment, etc.) is not enough. [Ashraf Osman stressed the availability of council-funded advocacy.](#)
16. If budget cuts affect things in place to provide quality of life, there will be more reliance on the NHS. If this affects someone's mental state and prevents them working, it will cost someone else extra money. This domino effect should be taken into account in this consultation.
17. Feel involvement in this meeting is pointless and people are not being taken seriously. These gentlemen are more confused and cannot understand the Hindi translation. They would prefer Punjabi. Need to have documents in

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Gujarati or Hindi. Tracie Rees stated that the council will provide translated documents from now on. Ashraf Osman stressed that there is a help-line available so that people can call for assistance.

18. Should have put the last sentence in the letter (about the help-line) in multiple languages.
19. It is very difficult for some people to prove their expenditure. The council should look at how much individuals are spending on admin, and understand that there is very little resource to help these people with admin. Should look at fixed amounts for specific problems.
20. This is very cloak and dagger: There is not enough openness. We understand that cuts have come down from central government, but need a clearer understanding (of these proposals).
21. Be aware of the knock-on effect when people lose out. Michael Lacey stated that there are a lot of fixed amounts in council policy, and the evidence base comes in for higher amounts to establish whether they can be allowed.
22. If this consultation is going to the Mayor (for the decision), remember this next time you vote.
23. We want actual numbers, not proportions and percentages.
24. The seriousness and complexity of this consultation is obvious today. People filling in the forms (questionnaires) will not be able to express themselves. Similar questions will be asked tomorrow (Belgrave meeting), so figures rather than percentages will help. Some people who attended today are very confused. A Gujarati and Hindi interpreter was available at the Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre meeting on Tuesday 2nd February.
25. The mayor needs to see people's faces.
26. The amount should be inflation-linked – in 20 years' time, £10 will be worth nothing. Tell the people making the decision that it will be like them getting a pay cut.

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Questions raised:

1. Questioned whether our stated average of £7.50 DRE-related expenditure is correct.
2. Can we have case studies and scenarios to help us understand the difference it will make for individuals? Agreed that Michael Lacey will provide these.
3. Who gets £20 a week? Michael Lacey explained that this is not given to an individual, but comes off what they contribute. 47% of service users will be unaffected: these will include those who either pay the full cost themselves now or make no contribution at all. For people in between these 2 points on the spectrum, it is more complex.
4. For those people currently allowed £20, what will they be expected to pay out of the £7.50? Gas and electric have gone up, so how can they be expected to pay less? Michael Lacey explained that if people can show they are paying more than £7.50, they will receive more than £7.50.
5. I am worried about the idea of having to prove it. Some costs – e.g. transport – vary over time. Michael Lacey explained that as part of the Financial Assessment, the assessor will examine this and the Support Plan.
6. Is all money being stopped? What is it payable on? Michael Lacey explained that there are 107 named benefits, but this is about DRE.
7. The most confusing part of the consultation process is the impact on an individual basis. Please elaborate more on Person A receiving x amount and the impact of the proposals. Ashraf Osman stated that we will prepare 3 or 4 examples and put these on the consultation website.
8. Is it all about the government reducing the money it gives to the council? Tracie Rees responded that yes, we are having to look at all our expenditure.
9. Have the Conservatives ring-fenced the Adult Social Care budget? Tracie Rees stated that they have not.
10. Expenditure varies week by week: are we meant to prove it to you every week? Ashraf Osman stated that we do need to verify this, so yes we would need adequate proof. He stressed again that £10 is the minimum amount and more will be allowed if an individual shows that their expenses for disability are greater.
11. If the budget is tight, could people be told that they cannot have an amount over £10? Ashraf Osman said no, we will meet that expenditure.

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12. What happens if we get a lower assessment and have to pay the £10?

Michael Lacey stated that the DRE element is not what an individual pays, but what the council allows.

13. What is the maximum amount before people have to start paying at the moment? Michael Lacey stated that the applicable amount varies depending on a person's circumstances. Anyone on Income Support is unlikely to be affected by the consultation proposals.

14. How do we know if our items are provided by the NHS or not? (Was not answered, as several people were asking questions at the same time.)

15. Because of the cost to them, people are now declining to accept alarms and some care, and it is putting them at risk. It is also passing the cost on to another service such as the NHS. Will a risk assessment be done in these cases? Ashraf Osman stated that people may be putting themselves at risk, but they will be assessed to see if their primary need is health-related or social care related. He has known people to decline packages. He stressed that if a person lacks capacity, the council will provide an advocate.

16. If the City Mayor signs this off, do you think it is the right thing to do? People are struggling at the moment – why hurt them even more? Even if nothing changes, costs are going up anyway, so everything is getting worse for these people. Don't make it worse, leave it as it is. Tracie Rees stated that the City Mayor and his Executive would consider the decision.

17. Have you looked at how much the council spends on financial assessments? How did you get the £7.50 figure? It is a very low average. Michael Lacey stated that it is an average calculated across all cases.

18. Someone must have said that £20 was reasonable 16 years ago. How can this have gone down to £7.50? Disability can be very varied, so question how useful an average figure is.

19. If everyone paid their £10, how much money would it save the council? We want to know facts and figures. Why are you not better prepared for this meeting?

20. If people are unhappy (about the proposals), will the Mayor change his decision? Those present think not.

21. Is anything stopping you from telling each individual how much they would have to pay? Ashraf Osman stated this would not be done until the decision

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had been made. Michael Lacey stated that each individual would then have a financial assessment.

22. How can people give an opinion on the proposals if they do not know how they will affect them individually? They will not realise the importance of responding to the consultation. Ashraf Osman stated that the council will take this on board to see if it should do so.

Meeting ended at 2.00pm