

Disability Related Expenses Public Consultation Meeting Notes

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

NOTES OF PUBLIC CONSULTATION MEETING

Held at Belgrave Neighbourhood Centre, Rothley Street, Leicester on
2nd February 2016, 6.00pm-7.30pm

Introduction

The meeting was attended by 23 members of the public. One Interpreter was also present to translate into Gujarati and Hindi for service users who requested it.

Officers attending from the council included: Ruth Lake, Director of Adult Social Care and Safeguarding, Stuart McAvoy (Accountant), Yasmin Mataria-Jenkins (Business Change Manager) and Prashant Patel (Administration Team Leader)

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.

Disability related expenditure and what it was and how it was worked out was also explained.

Following this the Director took questions and heard what people thought about proposal number one and proposal number two. The notes below consists of the questions asked (in black) and the answers given (in blue), and key points made by attendees.

Issues raised, Questions and answers

Q1. One attendee asked if they could ask questions on behalf of someone they looked after who was a service user?

Director responded – yes, they could ask questions on service user’s behalf

Director explained the disability related expenditure and financial assessment process

Q2. One service user said they still didn’t understand who would be affected, what category?

Director responded – Everybody who receives a service from the council may be affected. However, if the Disability Related Expenditure changes are agreed

Disability Related Expenses Public Consultation Meeting Notes

everybody will have a full financial assessment. People who don't have enough income will not pay.

Q3. One service user asked if disability related expenditure was means tested?

Director responded – that financial contributions, for which disability related expenditure is a part, are means tested and different people pay different amounts.

Director then explained Proposal number two: to change which special items should be included by the council to help someone with their disability. Examples of items was given

Q4. One service user is the disability related expenditure amount per month or per week?

Director responded – the amount is per week

Q5. One service user asked when the Mayor makes his decision will the response come back to us?

Director responded – the City Mayor will publish the decision and tell everyone before it is finalised.

Q6. One service user said the £10 per week was still confusing e.g. I get a one hour service which costs £12.50 per hour so how does that work?

Director responded – we are not talking about what people pay for individual service, but about costs for disability related expenditure and what we think people should keep to meet those costs.

Q7. Service user asked how is the average of £7.50 worked out?

Stuart McAvoy (Accountant) answered and stated that some people have high costs and some people don't have any costs at all. The costs were based on a sample of real service users we provide a service for. For all those who had costs of less than £20 per week an average was worked out, which was £7.50.

Director stressed that if people's expenses were over £10 standard costs people can tell us and we will take it into account.

Q8. Service user asked about taxi costs – if people use taxis do they have to advise you every week of the costs?

Director responded and said that the council recognise that travel costs vary and therefore, when carrying out the financial assessment the council will use typical costs to work out the travel costs.

Q9. One service user asked what if expenses are more than what we have?

Disability Related Expenses Public Consultation Meeting Notes

Director responded and said that before we look at cost of service we look at how much you need to live on. The government has set a level everyone needs to live on and the council add an extra 25% on top of what the government says you need plus the disability related expenditure. We only charge on what is left over.

Q10. One service user said it was very complicated.

Director stated that we couldn't talk about individual queries tonight but we can put up examples on the website.

Nearly half of the people won't see any changes but some will pay a little more.

Q11. One service user asked that some letters said they would not be affected and got a letter B, and some had a letter with A on it. What is the difference?

Letter A has been sent to people who may be affected by the proposed changes and Letter B was sent to people who may not be affected by the proposed changes.

Q12. One service user asked that they were not sure what benefits this was related to.

Director responded and said that it wasn't related to a specific benefit but was an allowance made within our financial assessment

Q13. Service user went on to ask if this was related to direct payments?

Director responded and said it doesn't matter what service you get or whether you have a direct payment, the financial assessment is the same.

Q14. One service user asked how direct payments worked?

Director responded and stated that we were not talking about direct payments but simply a direct payment is cash payment to arrange your own services. If you don't have a direct payment you can have services arranged for you.

This consultation is not about changing direct payments

Q15. One service user said they had received letter A, how do I know how I am affected or not?

Director responded and said at this stage we do not know the details. If the decision is made to change the disability related expenditure we will tell everybody what it means for them individually..

Director stated that she did appreciate it's a worrying time.

Q16. One service user said people are worried after receiving the letter. You talk about financial implications but what about someone who get worse every quarter?

Disability Related Expenses Public Consultation Meeting Notes

Director responded – we recognise people change over time, this is based on ability to pay not what service you need.

Q17. The same service user went on to ask if my wife gets a full package, will she get anything further than that?

Director responded and said we are not talking about individual packages but that services were provided based on need, not ability to pay.

One service user went on to state that people who are currently depressed will fall into deeper depression. The letters need to be much clearer.

Director responded and said the meetings were arranged to explain the proposed ideas to people so that questions could be asked.

Q18. I know someone who is not getting direct payments or receiving any adult social services.

Director advised that the person should contact adult social care to get an assessment.

Director asked if there were any further questions?

Q19. One service user said he still didn't understand?

Director said she would try and explain by using an example with simple numbers:

Mrs Smith receives £150 per week in benefits/income.

According to the Government Mrs Smith needs at least £100 to live on. We allow 25% more than what the government says people need to live on, which gives £125. The council currently allow her an extra £20 to meet the cost of her disability. This gives a total of £145 (£125+ £20). The council would currently not charge Mrs Smith if it meant she had less than £145 a week.

If Mrs Smith had income of £150 per week this would mean she could pay £5 per week towards her care.

If the proposed change was implemented and the disability related expenditure went to £10 per week then the council would not charge Mrs Smith if it meant she had less than £135 a week. Because she has income of £150, her charge would be £15 a week.

However, if Mrs Smith shows us that her disability costs more because of extra heating, food and someone to help keep the garden tidy and costs total £25.00, then she wouldn't have to pay any money towards her care.

The disability related expenditure costs depends on individual circumstances so if you have extra costs you need to tell us.

Disability Related Expenses Public Consultation Meeting Notes

Q21. One service user asked if someone living in a care home would be affected.

Director said no, the disability related expenditure is for people who live at home, not in care homes.

Q20. Service user asked what is the aim of this proposal, is it to improve services or save money?

Director responded and said it was because:

1. The policy was old and needed refreshing
2. We need to help more people but have less resources
3. We are paying expenses for items people are already getting free from the NHS
4. We have public money and we have to spend it fairly

Q21. One service user said some people have to provide their own wheelchairs, their insurance and costs.

Director responded and said we expect the NHS to provide what people need.

Director said everybody has received a questionnaire and there is a helpline. You can also complete the questionnaire on the council website and call the helpline to complete the form.

We can make sure that there is someone who speaks your preferred language to help you.

The consultation is running for three months to 12 April 2016 and it is not compulsory to complete the questionnaire.

We will tell people what the City Mayor's decision is.

The report to the City Mayor will include comments people have made. The report will be published on the council website.

Director also made clear that we ask for views but we can't do what everyone says but we do take it into account.

Q22. One service user asked if the meeting was just a formality?

Director responded and said that this was a genuine consultation meeting and we will take views into consideration.

Director closed the meeting and said she hoped people used the questionnaire to tell us their views.

Meeting ended at 7.15pm