

Adult Social Care Charging Impact Assessment

11th December 2018

Health Scrutiny Panel

Joanne Starkie & David Jones

Charging in Adult Social Care

- Means-tested charging for community-based adult social care services started in October 2017
- Prior to this, Tower Hamlets was one of two local authorities in England who provided community-based support for free
- Our charging policy was agreed on the premise that only those who can afford to pay will do so
- A commitment was made to assess the impact of this in order to:
 - Identify if there has been a change in the use of social care services; and to
 - Assess whether the administration of the policy has been fair and equitable

How the impact assessment was carried out

The following activity was carried out:

1. Collating performance information and quantitative data.
2. Collating feedback and case studies from users, carers, staff and providers. Around 50 service users and carers attended meetings to discuss the impact of charging, and feedback was collected in a variety of other ways.
3. Carrying out an analysis of our charging policy compared to other local authorities, looking at discretionary areas in particular. Results show that no single approach is taken by other local authorities.

The period being looked at was 1st October 2017 to 30th June 2018.

Since then, a survey to service users and carers sent out by Real has been completed by around 70 people.

The process and report was overseen by a Stakeholder Reference Group. This was made up of Council officers, adult social care service providers, and two carers.

Findings – who is being charged

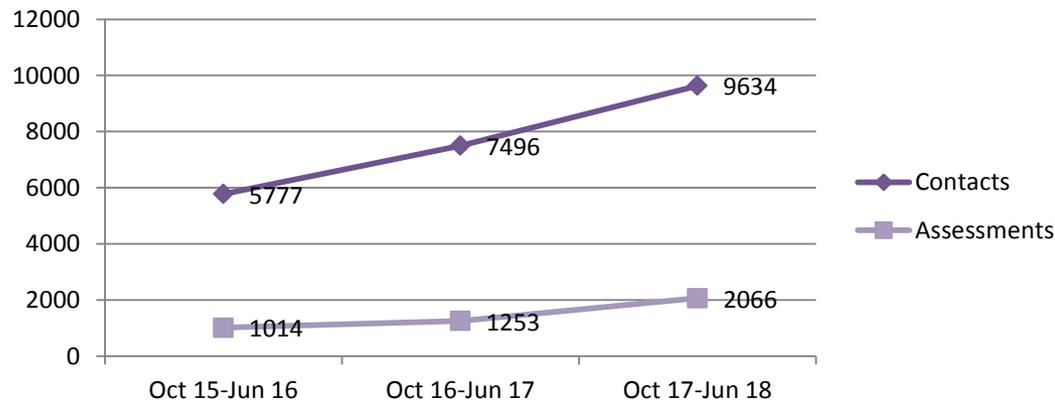
- **1154** people were being charged an amount of money as of 30th June 2018 (43% of people in community based services)
- **240** of this group had not yet filled in a Financial Assessment form and were being invoiced for the maximum amount as a result (i.e. full cost of care up to a maximum of £250 per week)
- Older people and people of a White ethnic background are more likely to be paying the full cost of care up to the maximum amount. People with a learning disability and people of an Asian ethnic background are less likely to be paying cost and have a lower average weekly charge compared to other groups.

Findings – how much is being charged

- **£54** per week is the average weekly amount being paid
- **656** of people are being charged up to 25% of the total cost of their care package
- **129** people have been assessed as paying the full charge, of which 48 have been assessed as hitting the £250 per week maximum amount
- **947** people have been assessed as having to pay no charge

Findings – impact on demand

- No clear evidence that fewer people are coming forward for help



- 47 care packages have been stopped due to charging
- There is a system in place to safeguard adults who want to end or reduce their support due to charging, if doing so would put them at significant risk of harm
- Issues are discussed at a Charging Waiver Panel. Two appeals were reviewed by the Panel over the period in question.

Findings – impact on people’s finances

- Policy based on premise that only those who can afford to pay will do so
- Feedback from the impact assessment and Real’s survey is clear that some people disagree with the principle of charging
- Three possible scenarios where people can be charged an incorrect amount:
 - Not completing a Financial Declaration Form: 240 people not done this and have been contacted and supported.
 - Filling in a Financial Declaration Form incorrectly: 748 people have asked for a reassessment. DRE identified as a key issue.
 - Not being charged based on actual use of services if communication breaks down.

Findings – impact on wellbeing

- Overall, there is no clear evidence that charging has had a cross-cutting and negative impact on wellbeing. **62%** of all service users getting community-based support rated their quality of life as good in February 2018, compared to 59 the year before.
- In focus groups, some people felt that charging had caused anxiety and distress. This has since been echoed in Real's survey.
- A strong and consistent message is that communication is a critical issue, and when charging was first introduced, it was not good enough. Improvements have subsequently been made, but it remains a key area.
- People have expressed difficulty in filling in paperwork and the Financial Declaration form. Processes are in place to help people with this. Direct debits can help avoid debt (21% pay this way).

Findings – impact on carers

- Charging may be resulting in an increased burden on unpaid carers
- Feedback is that we may want to review our current approach to respite, to minimise the risk of unpaid care breaking down
- The impact on adult social care users will also have an impact on unpaid carers

Findings – impact on satisfaction with social care

- **59%** of service users in community-based services said they were extremely or very happy with their care and support, compared to 62% the year before
- **5** of the 45 complaints received in adult social care related to charging
- Strong feedback that people's experience of charging is linked to the quality of care received: Some service users and carers say they now expect – and will push for – better quality support because they are paying for the service

Recommendations – already in train

1. Improving information and communication on charging
 - Guidance has been updated and new information published
 - Easy read guidance is being finalised
 - Workshops have been held

2. Ensuring our systems always capture the actual care received
 - Electronic Homecare Monitoring
 - Prepaid cards
 - Upgraded social care database

3. Ensuring we have an accurate record of people who are exempt from charging – e.g. Section 117

Recommendations – being looked at:

Nine areas are now being focused on between now and April 2019:

1. Strengthening communication
2. Strengthening how we help people to maximise their income
3. Future approach to respite and replacement care
4. Future approach to Disability Related Expenditure
5. Future approach to direct payments
6. Future approach to impact assessments
7. Preventing debt and encouraging direct debits
8. Developing an Appeals Policy
9. Agreeing how and when to check back with people who end services due to charging

Recommendations – being looked at:

- The Stakeholder Reference Group met on 9th November and have drawn up a draft action plan based on the nine recommendations

Next Steps

- The Stakeholder Reference Group will meet again in early 2019 finalise the action plan
- This will then be agreed by CLT in March 2019, so that actions can be put into place with effect from April 2019.