

# Meals on Wheels

## Service User Outcomes Briefing

### **Background**

In February 2019, the Cabinet took a decision to restructure Contract Services to address the deficit in the service and have a more secure financial footing going forward. One element of this, was a recommendation that the Welfare Meals (meals on wheels) service be reviewed, and options be considered.

Everybody who was at the time in receipt of a welfare meal received a personalised review of their needs and was given support to ensure a seamless transition to alternative arrangements. Those who were eligible for support with food preparation and help around meals received it and as anticipated, there was a small cohort who needed to receive a higher level of support than was already provided through meals on wheels.

### **Summary of service**

Meals on wheels or 'welfare meals' was typically one hot meal and a dessert per day, delivered to an individual at their home. It was a non-means-tested, non-statutory service provided to vulnerable adults. It was commissioned internally by Adult Social Care (ASC) from Contract Services, which is part of the Children and Culture directorate.

### **Drivers for change**

#### **Promoting independence, choice and control**

The meals on wheels offer was inadequately aligned with the principles set out in the Care Act to promote independence, choice and control. The Care Act moved away from the paternalistic assumption of a 'doing for' approach and considered to make better use of an individual's capacity, resources, and support network.

#### **High costs and unsustainable losses**

The service was subsidised by Adult Social Care by £330,000 per year in 2018-19 and the production of meals was run at an annual deficit of £157,000 in Contract Services, including some accumulated deficit, meaning a cost to the council of £503,000 in 2018-19. This translated into a typical subsidy of approximately £6.50 per meal.

#### **Cheaper and wider choice with alternatives**

Research demonstrated there was a wide range of alternative meal options available to residents in the borough. Examples of these were set out in a leaflet as an aid to staff undertaking this review. The options included local cafes and food outlets, a wide range of lunch clubs, food purchased from supermarkets including options such as ready meals, delivering of food options including hot and frozen meals. If residents who did not have a fridge and/or a microwave and these appliances

required to enable them to live more independently, and they could not afford to purchase these appliances, requests for financial support were considered.

All individuals in receipt of meals on wheels had a face to face meeting for an individual personal care and support review to discuss the changes and were given support in making plans for alternative provisions. New person-centred plans for the transition to alternative arrangements were put in place. Support was provided based upon eligible needs in line with the legislation, guidance and Council policy.

Follow-up checks were made to ensure that the new arrangements were working.

The outcomes for those who were reviewed were as follows:

Category	Number
Family / Spouse / Friend to support	29
Able to manage independently	29
Local café / restaurant	2
Lunch club	2
Alternative sourced (e.g., Wiltshire Farm Foods)	31
Mixed model	1
One off domestic appliance	1
Support with meals commissioned	15
Support within existing care and support amended	36
Change of circumstances – placement	6
Change of circumstances – moved out of borough	1
Change of circumstances – passed away	7

A recommendation was made arising from this project, which included further development of the information being included on the Council website in relation to the options available around food, nutrition and support with meals. This has been completed and can be viewed via the [Tower Hamlets Connect Portal](#). This includes:

- What is healthy eating?
- Food choices
- Preparing health meals
- Shopping for food
- Paying safely online
- Supermarket home deliveries
- Meal deliveries
- Money and resources
- Managing weight
- Community food provision