

CONSULTATION PROCESS AND RESULTS

The Council undertook a consultation exercise, lasting 8 weeks, running from Wednesday 23 September until midnight on Wednesday 18 November 2015.

Consultation Publicity

Consultation questionnaires were developed which detailed:

- The reasons why changes were being proposed;
- Who would be affected by the proposals?
- The proposals (including explanation of the current arrangements);
- How individuals could participate in the consultation(s);
- How individuals could access further information about the consultation(s).

The consultation questionnaire was sent to the 729 self-funders who receive non-residential care services arranged by the Council.

The consultation was publicised on the “Have Your Say” page of the Council’s website where it was possible to access the consultation documents. An Easy Read version of the questionnaire was made available and a public meeting was held at County Hall on 4 November 2015.

In addition, a Members’ News in Brief item was circulated and press releases were produced by the Communications Unit.

The consultation documents included a contact telephone number and email address should people have any further queries or need any assistance in completing the consultation questionnaires.

Responders

A total of 246 questionnaires (33.7%) were completed and returned to the Council of which:

- 47% were carers or family members of adult social care service users;
- 28% were adult social care service users;
- 11% were members of the public;
- 9% were Leicestershire County Council employees.

170 questionnaire respondents answered the question “Do you have a long-standing illness, disability or infirmity?” of which:

- 54% stated “Yes”
- 46% stated “No”

In addition, 8 people attended the public meeting and 10 people phoned through their response. These responses have been amalgamated with the questionnaire responses.

Consultation responses

55% of respondents strongly disagreed with the principle of the Council charging self-funders an arrangement fee to recover the costs it incurs in arranging their care. The reasons for this were:

- Current charging system is not flexible or transparent and is calculated on commissioned hours which makes no adjustment for cancelled or missed visits. This system means that self-funders are already paying more than the cost of their care service.
- People who have saved all their lives are again being penalised.
- Self-funders would receive no additional service for the fee; they already pay a lot for care services.

19% of respondents thought that the amount of the proposed fee was about right. The reasons for this were:

- If charges have to be made this amount seems reasonable as long as there is no reduction in service provided
- This appears broadly comparable with admin fees charged for other financial transactions and would be less than fees charged by a solicitor for undertaking the same activity.
- There is very likely to be a saving for self-funders who pay for this service as a result of the bulk buying power that the County Council has.

64% of respondents thought that the amount of the proposed fee was much too high. The reasons for this were:

- Self-funders should not be penalised because they have savings. People who haven't saved anything get the service for free.
- We shouldn't be charged for this at all.
- If I have to pay I wish to pay for the actual service I am provided with, not an average.
- It should be a one-off charge not an annual fee.

21% of respondents thought that the arrangement fee would represent good value for money for self-funders. The reasons for this were:

- It is helpful to know there is a good support service available.
- The link with the Council gives the client the peace of mind that they are being looked after by agencies.
- I like the back up and authority to tackle any misunderstandings or bad service.

63% of respondents thought that the arrangement fee would not represent good value for money for self-funders. The reasons for this were:

- We don't have enough contact from the Council to justify this fee.
- Having worked and saved hard all my life I am now being discriminated against for being disabled.
- The charging system is not accurate and we do not get reductions for cancelled or missed care.

The questionnaire asked how introducing the arrangement fee would affect respondents. Responses included:

- I would have to consider costs and work out our cheapest option without compromising care.
- We would be paying even more for care that we can't manage without.
- Unfair use of savings which will diminish rapidly given other expenses.

If the arrangement fee was introduced 44% of self-funders said that they would continue to have care and support arranged by the Council. 36% said that they would make alternative arrangements directly with their providers.

Respondents were asked what alternative suggestions that they thought the Council should consider instead of charging self-funders an arrangement fee.

- Increase the council tax.
- Increase the cost of care so that the pain is spread over more people.
- Improve the charging system so that it is more efficient and more accurate.

Extra Care Services

Several responders commented that some users of Extra Care Services do not receive social care services and only receive Extra Care support services. As the Council is not involved in arranging social care services for these people the responders felt that it would be unfair to have to pay the arrangement fee.