

Fair Outcomes Policy for Adult Social Care

Adults and Communities Department



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Contents

Purpose	2
Scope	3
Context	3
Policy statement	4
Principles	5
Information and advice	6
Safeguarding	6
Advocacy and participation support	6
Assessing capacity	7
Equalities	7
Exceptions to the policy	7
Complaints	7

Purpose

This Fair Outcomes Policy describes existing practice in line with Leicestershire County Council’s duties under the Care Act 2014. It is an update and replacement to the *Cost Effective Care Policy* (2015).

The purpose of this policy is to ensure:

- that the tasks of adult social care assessment, care and support planning and review are undertaken in a manner that is always compliant with County Council’s duties under the Care Act 2014;
- fair outcomes and equity in the provision of funded care and support;
- that the County Council’s duties can be achieved in a difficult economic climate whilst maintaining the quality of social care provision;
- sufficient and appropriate regard is given to individual circumstances and personal preference when determining the value of an individual’s personal budget;
- people continue to have choice and control over their personalised care and support;
- that it is explicit that where people choose more expensive care and support options than their personal budget may allow, they will be required to meet the additional costs themselves.

Scope

This policy applies to adults aged 18 and over who use social care services arranged by the County Council and any other adults who may need such services in the future. This policy does not apply to individuals who are funding their own care.

It is inclusive of all client groups including but not limited to older people, working age adults, adults with learning disabilities, physical disabilities, mental health needs and people with a visual or hearing impairment.

The policy also applies to the support that the County Council provides to informal carers. An informal carer is someone that looks after a relative, friend or partner who is ill or disabled, without payment; this applies even if the person doesn't think of themselves as a carer.

The County Council recognises the vital contribution that carers make to society and therefore carers are not currently charged for their eligible support needs. However, in order to make the best use of resources the cost effectiveness of the provision must still be considered.

This policy applies to all new service users and will be applied to existing service users at the time of their next review or assessment.

The County Council will continue to provide care and support for people who have needs which meet the national eligibility framework, as set out in the Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations 2014.

When it is clear to the assessor that the individual's needs are above the national eligibility threshold they will be offered help to find care options to meet their assessed, unmet eligible needs. The Council will then undertake a financial assessment, which may result in the individual being charged for some or all of their care.

Following review or re-assessment, if it is determined that the County Council is not required to meet the individual's needs, the individual will be provided with a written explanation for this determination and Council payments will cease. Individuals who do not satisfy the eligibility criteria requirements will be signposted to locally available universal services.

Context

The County Council is facing an increasing level of demand for social care services; at the same time there is less money available to meet this increasing level of need. The County Council therefore must think carefully about how to use the limited financial resources available so that people's eligible needs can be met.

The County Council has a legal duty to undertake an assessment for any adult with an appearance of need for care and support, which is set out in Section 9 of the Care Act 2014¹. The duty to meet an adult's eligible needs is set out subsequently in Section 18 and 20 of the Act.

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance² published in July 2016 enables the local authority to take into consideration its own finances and budgetary position when deciding how to meet needs.

¹ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>

² <https://www.gov.uk/guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance/first-contact-and-identifying-needs>

Policy statement

This policy aims to set out and formalise existing practice in line with the Council's duties under the Care Act 2014. The Care Act 2014 changed the way in which social care support is arranged and provided. The main focus of the Act is to promote wellbeing; the wellbeing principle underpins the whole of the Act and its associated regulations and guidance. However, the Act does not specify a set approach to determining wellbeing and as such the County Council will consider each person's case on its own merits, based upon what the person wants to achieve and how the County Council's actions will affect their wellbeing. The County Council's starting assumption is that individuals are best-placed to determine the wellbeing outcomes they want for themselves, both within their own homes and as members of their local community.

One of the ways in which individual wellbeing is promoted by the County Council is through the provision of services to meet eligible needs. The Care Act requires councils to allocate resources for the purpose of meeting the individual's unmet eligible needs, (a need that is eligible for social care but where the individual is currently not receiving support for that need), through the provision of a personal budget, and these resources must be allocated in a manner that is timely, transparent, and sufficient.

The County Council will utilise an assessment, support planning and review model to determine in conjunction with the person any unmet needs. In determining how to meet individual needs, the County Council will take into reasonable consideration its own finances and budgetary position and must comply with its related public law duties. This includes the importance of ensuring that the funding available to the County Council is enough to meet the needs of the entire local population. The County Council will consider how to balance that requirement with the duty to meet the eligible needs of an individual in determining how (but not whether) an individual's needs should be met.

The County Council will take decisions on a case-by-case basis that weigh up the total cost of different potential options for meeting needs and include the cost as a relevant factor in deciding between suitable alternative options for meeting needs. This does not necessarily mean choosing the cheapest option; but the one that delivers the outcomes desired for the best value. This may mean that in some cases the County Council sets a personal budget which is lower than the cost of the option that a service user prefers. However, in each case, the County Council will carefully consider the individual's circumstances and their views, wishes and feelings before reaching a decision.

The County Council will not impose an arbitrary ceiling on the value of personal budgets i.e. there is not a limit on the financial cost of care, nor will personal budgets be reduced to meet a defined level of expenditure.

In determining the value of an individual's personal budget, the County Council will consider the circumstances of the individual and have regard for their views, wishes, feelings, and beliefs. Individual preference and circumstances will not in themselves determine the personal budget value as the County Council must balance its commitments and obligation to personalise care with the principle that financial constraints within public services are such that choice in funded care cannot be limitless.

The identification and management of risk within the context of adult social services requires a balanced approach between what is seen as acceptable and recognising that the concept of risk will vary from person to person. There may be occasions when the County Council's usual positive approach to risk must be balanced with its duty to have proper arrangements in place to protect individuals who are potentially at risk of abuse or exploitation.

Principles

The Fair Outcomes Policy has been created to establish how the limited resources available to the Department are to be targeted at providing care that meets statutory responsibilities, that is cost effective and provides good value for money.

Our fundamental principle is wellbeing. Wellbeing is about ‘how we are doing’ as individuals and communities. It includes life satisfaction, and a sense of meaning or purpose. It also means that people have their needs met through the fulfilment of heritage, culture and lifelong learning. This is achieved through services and opportunities that help to improve their quality of life and that of all citizens in Leicestershire.

In addition, wellbeing is clearly defined in the Care Act 2014 Statutory Guidance. This is the definition that Leicestershire County Council uses to describe the concept of wellbeing in respect of adults who require social care and support. Wellbeing is a broad concept and is described by the guidance as relating to the following areas in particular:

- personal dignity (including treatment of the individual with respect) physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- protection from abuse and neglect
- control by the individual over day-to-day life (including over care and support provided and the way it is provided)
- participation in work, education, training or recreation
- social and economic wellbeing
- domestic, family and personal
- suitability of living accommodation
- the individual’s contribution to society

Leicestershire County Council operates a programme of services and opportunities for specific groups and communities who may be at risk and need higher levels of support both now and in the future. This focuses on supporting individuals and communities to improve their wellbeing, achieve their aspirations and become more resilient and in this way prevent and reduce the need to access other key services in the future.

These services may be time limited and the opportunities and services offered may change over time. They will also be linked to specific national or local strategies or agendas and will identify the outcomes they are expected to achieve.

Through promoting and enhancing wellbeing we bring communities together to share in cultural activities, connect through learning, understand local cultures and heritage, and inspire individuals and groups across the county to achieve their potential.

When the County Council supports people to think about their care and support there will always be three steps:

1. First LCC will ask **what the person can do for themselves**. It is important for everyone to be as independent as possible. The more people can do for themselves, the more control they have.
2. Then LCC will ask **what role their family, friends and the local community can play in supporting them**. This helps to make sure that people are part of the community.
3. Then, if needed, LCC will think about **paid support** and services. LCC wants to make sure paid support is used when it is really needed.

People will always be able to choose to have additional support or support from more expensive services than those identified by the County Council. They can choose to pay for additional or more costly support if they wish, which is known as a 'top up'.

The County Council will ask people utilising services to think about having their Personal Budget as a Direct Payment. This is because it gives them more choice and control over their care and support.

Information and advice

Information and advice are fundamental to promoting wellbeing and enabling people to take control of and make well-informed decisions about their care and support and can also help to prevent and delay people's need for care and support. Information and advice will be available and offered to people in need of care and support irrespective of whether they have been assessed as having unmet eligible needs.

The County Council will make available to all individuals information and advice on care and support and carers through a variety of channels and formats. This includes, but is not exclusive to, face to face, telephone, online and printed media.

Safeguarding

Where the County Council has reasonable cause to suspect that a person that has a need for care and support (regardless of whether or not the County Council is meeting those needs) is experiencing, or is at risk of, abuse or neglect and as a result of those needs is unable to protect themselves against abuse or neglect or risk of it, the County Council must make whatever enquiries it considers necessary to decide what further action, if any, should be taken.

Where the adult has care and support needs the County Council will continue to carry out a needs assessment and determine whether they have eligible needs, and if so, how these will be met. The assessment for care and support will run parallel to the safeguarding enquiry. The aim will be that the enquiry will not disrupt the assessment process or prevent the County Council from meeting unmet eligible needs.

Advocacy and participation support

The County Council must always be confident that the individual is able, or is fully supported, to be involved as far as possible in the assessment process. The County Council will make any reasonable adjustments to the assessment process required to enable an individual to be fully involved. An appropriate person or independent advocate will be engaged if the individual still has substantial difficulty in any of the following areas:

- Understanding relevant information
- Retaining information
- Using or weighing the information as part of engaging
- Communicating views, wishes and feelings

Assessing capacity

It must be assumed that an individual has capacity unless it has been established that they lack capacity to make a particular decision. The Council will establish in the first instance that the individual has capacity to consent to an assessment, they will then assess to whether the individual is able to understand the potential options or outcomes that arise from the assessment process. This process will adhere to the Mental Capacity Act (MCA) 2005.

If following a mental capacity assessment, it is evident that the person lacks capacity then a best interests decision will be made by the person with the appropriate legal standing. This decision will also adhere to the Fair Outcomes Policy principles.

Equalities

The County Council will always give due consideration to people's rights as set out in the Human Rights Act 1998, such as those set out in Article 8 which gives a right to respect for private and family life.

The County Council ensures that working practices and policies comply with its duties as set out in the Equality Act 2010.

Exceptions to the policy

The County Council will always give reasonable consideration in circumstances where there is a compelling reason for a higher cost care package to be provided. For example, if there are cultural needs that require more specialist provision, or if a specially trained worker is required.

A discretionary exceptions process is in place, whereby senior managers will consider the circumstances of individual cases and provide advice and oversight regarding care packages.

Complaints

People will be informed of their right to request a review of the decision that the County Council makes about the amount of their Personal Budget. They can choose to submit further information that will be considered by the decision-maker.

They will also be informed of their right to complain using the County Council's adult social care complaints procedure and that an advocate can be provided to support them with this.

People can also contact the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman for an independent review of their complaint if they are not satisfied with the Council's response to it.