

CABINET
7 September 2010

Consultation to Introduce Fairer Contributions Policy

Introduction

A consultation exercise was carried out from April to July 2010 to gauge people's views on the draft Fairer Contributions policy. The results of this consultation are detailed here to inform Cabinet decision-making.

Informing People

The Fairer Contributions Policy and Easy Read Version along with two forms, one asking people to complete on whether the new policy would have a negative or positive affect on them, and the other had specific questions on the actual policy giving a summary of the policy. This information was also forwarded to specific groups for them comments such as MIND, DAD, GOLD and AGE UK. The letter gave people the choice of replying by letter, telephone, email or web based comments to the web based information on the Darlington Council web site.

As well as giving people the chance to respond directly to us people were given the chance to meet with myself and the Finance Team to obtain their views. The major local newspapers and local Council flyers also featured the consultation prominently.

The Response

In terms of the overall response there has been little from outside the prearranged forums. Most of the Reponses have come about from arranging to meet with service users groups, like Age UK.

The vast majority of views expressed were in response to the proposals that:

- (a) There was a general agreement to increased consistency in how Local Authorities charge, making it fair and equal for all.
- (b) Those that can afford to pay should pay - people should meet the full cost of their care if their savings are over £23000.
- (c) People who are currently not having to contribute could be faced with having to significantly pay more could result in a negative impact.

- (d) People with larger occupational pensions should meet their care costs on a sliding income scale up to the full cost of their care.
- (e) Fairness/Equality versus money saving exercise?
- (f) People having to contribute to both transport and Day Care costs could result in people not being able to pay for the cost of the service.

Many people wanted to know how the proposed policy would impact on their individual charges; and a general discussion ensued on self directed support and personal budgets, expressing concern about how this will impact upon how people will receive services in the future with a perceived outlook on an ever increasing complex care system.

List of other Comments

- (a) Comments have been summarised in to areas of common concern. Individual comments whilst recorded and on record are not contained within this summary report.
- (b) Concerns over whether people have the capacity to organise and arrange activities and transport. Members wanted assurance that people can continue to use the service as they do now.
- (c) Penalise people for being responsible with their cash and working hard all their life.
- (d) Concern that people will reduce their spending on looking after themselves if charges/contributions increase.
- (e) How is someone going to manage a personal budget?
- (f) Those that can afford to pay should pay.
- (g) Concern about the impact on people with disabilities.
- (h) Incentive to spend rather than save for old age.
- (i) Council should contribute to everyone's care.
- (j) Concern that the new policy will create incentives to enter residential care rather than remaining in the community.
- (k) The proposals will cost more for people with high care needs.
- (l) Proposals of a £23k capital limit will impact on people with low income however have moderate capital, e.g. people may be living on basic state retirement pension but

have a nest egg. Savings limit should be higher.

- (m) Will there be choice by having a list of different provision listed with prices to compare.
- (n) People with disabilities pay more for home maintenance, transport such as electric wheelchairs and frequent purchase of a car from savings. People with disabilities need a “level playing field” compared with others.
- (o) Concern that the policy will make people dependant on the council rather than managing for themselves.
- (p) Plea for clarity and support in dealing with a very complex care system.