

MEALS AT HOME SERVICE**REPORT OF THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF HEALTH, HOUSING AND ADULT SERVICES AND EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF CITY SERVICES****1. PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To provide Members of Health and Wellbeing Scrutiny Committee with an update on the Meals At Home service.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The purpose of providing Meals at Home is one way to meet the assessed nutritional needs of service users and help them maintain a healthy diet. These needs can be met in a variety of ways, and increasingly people are finding alternate solutions that best suit their personal circumstances.

The Meals At Home service provided by the Council was to deliver hot meals at lunchtime. The service was delivered by City Services having transferred from Health, Housing and Adults service in 2006.

- 2.2 The service was provided through a Service Level Agreement between City Services and HHAS. In those cases where people choose to have their nutritional needs met by Meals at Home Services, these are offered by a range of providers in communities across Sunderland. Individual customers have not usually received the service every day of the week as they made other arrangements on certain days according to their circumstances. In order for the Council's service to be financially viable within the terms of the agreement that was in place the service needed to deliver 300 meals per day. The cost of running the service became uneconomic as fewer people were using the service. The charge to the customer has been unchanged for some time at £2.60, to cover the cost of the food content which in itself is not a social care need, while the cost of the service to the council rose to £5.79.
- 2.3 The previous customer base fell to approximately 100 meals per day. This was due to customers' needs changing and preferences changing with many newly assessed customers using community based providers. Also the fact that people with a Direct Payment are legally required to buy the service from external providers.
- 2.4 The key aims for social care are to support people to live independently in the community, and in doing so ensure services are personalised to

individuals in a way that gives them maximum choice and control in how their services are delivered.

3 POLICY CONTEXT

- 3.1 The implementation of personalised services means that people who have eligible social care needs receive a personal budget which they can take as a Direct Payment, or as a budget which the Council can manage on their behalf but which can be spent to meet their outcomes in the way that they want. This approach increases the choice and control for people over the support they receive.
- 3.2 By 2013, it is expected that all people with eligible social care need to be directing their own support through a personal budget with the majority taking their budget as a Direct Payment. The laws relating to local authorities and 'trading' mean people cannot buy services direct from the council using their direct payments; therefore over the next few years people would be unable to buy the in-house service.
- 3.3 Where a person is assessed as needing support to maintain a healthy diet a sum of money, in line with their level of need, is included in their Personal Budget. A financial assessment is carried out and where people have the means to contribute to the cost of their care they do so for part or all of the cost. They are supported to design a plan to meet that need, and this includes being signposted to service providers in their local community. A range of providers exist including the establishment of meals at home services from Beckwiths – the community interest company which provides the catering in the city's first three Extra Care Schemes. The prices of services, including meals at home services, vary across the city.
- 3.4 This approach is also flexible enough to enable the individual to change the pattern of the meals they eat as and when they wish to do so, for example going out with family and friends, getting help to cook for themselves or having food delivered.

4. CURRENT SITUATION – PROCESS OF REVIEW

- 4.1 As part of the requirement to review the needs of customers HHAS has completed a process of reviewing the individual needs of the customers of the Meals At Home service. All customers were informed of the intention via a letter to review their nutritional needs and how these could be met.
- 4.2 The process was as follows:
 - All customers were reviewed to provide an up to date picture of their circumstances and needs

- If their needs had changed and they needed less support, this was confirmed with them and they were advised where they can access the support they needed
 - If they were assessed as eligible for support they were allocated a personal budget, and advised as to the amount and helped to develop a support plan to achieve the outcomes they need.
 - A support plan has been put in place to help the customer organise their support, and they have received a financial assessment determining how much they can afford to contribute towards the personal budget
- 4.3 Reviews were undertaken on an area basis and were concluded on the 30th September 2010.
- 4.4 There is no change to the eligibility criteria for support, and therefore if a customer is reassessed as still having an eligible need in relation to accessing a healthy diet they will be supported to help decide how to best meet that need, which may include use of their personal budget and own resources.

5. CURRENT SITUATION – OUTCOMES OF REVIEWS

- 5.1 The process described in section 4 had clear implications for the viability of City Services' Meals At Home service. Additionally, in order to break even City Services needed a guaranteed customer base of 300 individuals per day wanting to use their personal budget (at a cost of £5.79 per meal) to buy meals from the Council. The level of demand for the service was, as previously stated, 100 meals per day.
- 5.2 Following the reviews of individual needs:
- 171 People were signposted to a range of alternative services that would provide access to food to meet any nutritional needs identified – many of these individuals were supported to set up alternative arrangements
 - A small number of people (28) are independently preparing their meals or are being supported by their family
 - 14 people have had their nutritional needs built into their existing care package
- 5.3 The exercise has been quite complex. There have been a small number of cases where the transition has not been as smooth as we would have hoped and we have worked to resolve these on a case by case basis. In these cases follow ups have been initiated and continue to be monitored to ensure arrangements are satisfactory.
- 5.4 Reviews of all individuals continue to take place to ensure people's needs continue to be met; this will be an ongoing process, with any action being carried out on an individual basis if required.

6. RECOMMENDATION

6.1 It is recommended that Members receive this report for information