

28th October 2013

Agenda Item: 8

REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR JOINT COMMISSIONING, QUALITY AND BUSINESS CHANGE

POST TO UNDERTAKE PERSONAL BUDGET STATEMENTS IN ADULT CARE FINANCIAL SERVICES

Purpose of the Report

1. To seek approval to use some current underspend on Adult Care Financial Services (ACFS) staffing budget to fund a temporary 1 fte Finance Assistance post in ACFS for six months to complete manual Personal Budget statements for service users receiving community based services.

Information and Advice

2. The Fairer Contributions Policy was introduced in October 2010 to allow charging for service users transferring from traditional services to a Personal Budget. Service users are offered a financial assessment to determine the maximum amount they can afford to contribute towards their Personal Budget. If a service user has over £23,250 in savings or does not want to provide financial information, they are required to pay the full cost of their support.
3. Services users are invoiced for their support every four weeks in arrears. Invoices charge for the support planned for the service user, not for the support actually received. ACFS began producing Personal Budget statements in November 2012. These compare the charges made for planned support to the actual cost of the support provided, and reduce charges as necessary. A statement will show a credit if a service user has been invoiced for more than the hours or services received. For service users who pay a contribution towards their personal budget, but not the full cost, the service user will only receive a credit note if, over the period covered by the Personal Budget statement (6 months), the total cost of their support is less than the total amount of their contribution.
4. Following a report by the Team Manager (ACFS) in July 2012, temporary extra resources were agreed to enable the completion of manual Personal Budget statements. Funding was approved for 4 fte NJE Grade 3 posts for a period of three months, with 1 fte post remaining up until April 2013. In April 2013, approval was given to fund 2 fte NJE Grade 3 posts for a further six months whilst ACFS looked to develop an electronic solution for Personal Budget statements.
5. The Senior Leadership Team agreed funding in June 2013 for ACFS to work with Abacus E-Solutions on an automated system for the statements. The work on this is progressing but

has been delayed due to the priority which was required to be given to the implementation of the BEDs system.

6. The layout and content of the Personal Budget statement is currently being piloted with service users. Feedback is being sought and a final specification will be sent to Abacus E-Solutions to be designed by their developers. They have guaranteed that this will be completed in two phases. Phase one will involve extracting data from the Home Care Management System (HCMS), Business Management System (BMS) and Frameworki to populate the necessary data fields in Abacus required for the statements. It is envisaged that this will take eight weeks. Phase two will be the final testing by the Council and Abacus E-Solutions which will take approximately four weeks to complete.
7. It is anticipated therefore that another six months in total will be needed to finalise the development, testing and implementation of an automated system capable of completing the statements.

Other Options Considered

8. People who pay an assessed charge towards the cost of their service (1,740 service users) - The original intention was to issue Personal Budget statements on a quarterly basis for this group of service users as well. However, as there is only a small proportion of accounts requiring a reduction in charges and the majority of credit adjustments are for £30 or less, it was agreed by the Senior Leadership Team in April 2013 to change to six monthly statements for this group. As a result, the existing team members are able to absorb the work of producing statements for this group.
9. People who pay the full cost of their service (950 service users) – Statements are sent out on a quarterly basis for this group as approximately 85% of these service users will receive a credit. The last statement period (three months) saw an average credit of £180. If the Council were to undertake statements on a six monthly basis for this group as well, the estimated average credit would be £360. This would make it harder for service users to keep track of their Personal Budget account and the Authority could be criticised for ‘withholding’ service users’ money for up to six months at a time. In addition, the level of income being collected would be overstated for this six month period, leading to problems with accurate budget monitoring and forecasting.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

10. The manual completion of a Personal Budget statement is a complex process, taking approximately 45 minutes per statement. An experienced, confident worker can complete approximately 60 Personal Budget statements a week.
11. In order to continue to send out quarterly statements to those people who pay the full cost of their support, and to undertake the six monthly statements for those people who pay an assessed charge towards their service, 229 Personal Budget statements need to be completed every week, requiring an additional 2 fte posts to work on them at all times.
12. The Charging Team have absorbed some of this into their existing work and are currently undertaking the six monthly statements for those on an assessed charge. To undertake the

statements for those paying the full cost of their support, however, requires an additional 1 fte NJE Grade 3 post.

13. There is capacity to absorb the cost of this through a 1 fte Grade 5 vacancy which has arisen in the Visiting Team.

Statutory and Policy Implications

14. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and vulnerable adults, service users, sustainability and the environment and ways of working and where such implications are material they are described below. Appropriate consultation has been undertaken and advice sought on these issues as required.

Financial Implications

15. This report proposes an extension of 1 fte Finance Assistant NJE Grade 3, scp 14-18 (£19,861.80-£21,728.41) post for a period of six months at a cost of £9,930.90. It is possible to absorb this temporary cost through the 1 fte NJE Grade 5 vacancy within the ACFS Visiting Team.
16. Account has been taken of the current financial pressures in the Department, however the production of Personal Budget Statements should be seen as an investment to save.

Human Resources Implications

17. In order to complete the work outlined in the report it is proposed the following post be extended on a temporary basis for a period of six months:

- 1 fte Finance Assistant post, NJE Grade 3, scp 14-18 (£19,861.80-£21,728.41).

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

18. The Personal Budgets statements are in line with Department of Health Fairer Contributions and Fairer Charging Guidance.

Implications for Service Users

19. In accordance with the Council's policy, service users are sent a Personal Budget statement so that they can see what they have been charged for their Personal Budget against what services they actually received. The Personal Budget statements have to be carried out to ensure that service users are not overcharged and that appropriate adjustments to charges are made where necessary. Personal Budget statements make the service users aware of the costs of their services, in line with Personalisation.

Ways of Working Implications

20. The above post is already established on a temporary basis and therefore is already accommodated within existing office resources.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) It is recommended that the Adult Social Care and Health Committee approve the use of the current staffing budget underspend to fund 1 fte Finance Assistant post, NJE Grade 3, scp 14-18 (£19,861.80-£21,728.41) on a temporary basis for six months. To be recruited through Key Personnel recruitment agency as this will allow the current trained agency temp to continue the statements work until an electronic solution is implemented.

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Constitutional Comments (KK 11/10/13)

21. The proposal in this report is within the remit of the Adult Social Care and Health Committee.

Financial Comments (CLK 17/10/13)

22. The financial implications of this report are detailed in paragraphs 15 and 16.

Background Papers and Published Documents

Except for previously published documents, which will be available elsewhere, the documents listed here will be available for inspection in accordance with Section 100D of the Local Government Act 1972.

None

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All

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