

11 July 2016

Agenda Item:8

**REPORT OF THE SERVICE DIRECTOR FOR STRATEGIC COMMISSIONING,
ACCESS AND SAFEGUARDING**

**NOTTINGHAMSHIRE FIRST CONTACT SCHEME - REVISED PROPOSAL TO
CEASE THE SCHEME**

Purpose of the Report

1. The report seeks approval to cease the First Contact Scheme when the current Service Level Agreement ends on 30th September 2016. This is further to consultation, a detailed review of the scheme and the development of a range of alternative services.

Information and Advice

2. The First Contact scheme has been in operation since 2005 and was originally devised as a tool for identifying and meeting the needs of older people at the earliest opportunity and in helping to prevent the need for more costly interventions and support. The scheme is delivered via a multi-agency checklist, aiming to enable older people to access a range of preventative services through a single gateway.
3. The multi-agency checklist asks questions about the need for services and support in relation to 10 domains including falls, warmth, home repairs, fire safety and home security. 'Pathway' agencies have delivered specific services in response to the identified needs upon receiving a referral through the First Contact process.
4. The scheme is currently supported by five Co-ordinator posts hosted by Our Centre, Bassetlaw Action Centre, Rushcliffe CVS (Community and Voluntary Service), Mansfield CVS and Newark and Sherwood District Council. Newark and Sherwood District Council processes the system in-house. The scheme is supported by the Council's Customer Service Centre and through ICT resources to centrally process the completed checklists.
5. The scheme currently costs around £136,000 per year in external contract costs plus internal costs incurred in respect of commissioning and Customer Service Centre input. In 2016-17, the budgeted Adult Social Care, Health & Public Protection (ASCH&PP) contribution to these costs is £36,430 with a further contribution of £50,859 from the Public Health Grant.
6. The current Service Level Agreement (SLA) with co-ordinator providers runs to 30 September 2016.
7. In June 2015 this Committee considered a proposal to cease the First Contact Co-ordinator role but maintaining a First Contact checklist that would be processed and

triaged through the Customer Service Centre (CSC). At the meeting, Members approved the recommendation to consult with providers and partner agencies on the proposal to cease the Co-ordinator role.

8. The consultation exercise that followed sought the views of service users, partner organisations and voluntary and community sector organisations on the proposed new model for First Contact. The consultation ran from 22 July to 14 August 2015 and subsequently the findings from the consultation were distributed to key partner agencies and through established older people's forums, carer organisations, district authorities and organisations delivering the service pathways.
9. At this time, work was to undertaken to review and streamline the First Contact service pathways. This raised a number of issues as follows:
 - Some of the information and sources were out of date and some services were no longer offered or available, or only available in some parts of the County, with variations in services offered by districts such as for warmth and falls prevention
 - The current referral and signposting arrangements delivered by the Co-ordinators is available through the CSC where the referrals are processed
 - The scheme is labour intensive, with a large number of referrals made by paper and some referrals still received by fax
 - The monitoring information collated by the Co-ordinators is not used effectively to inform service delivery, to update existing services and identify new services and partners.
10. Analysis of the First Contact monitoring information for August 2015 shows that the number of completed checklists for six districts was 154. Over half of the referrals from these were in relation to three areas of service: Pension Credit; Nottinghamshire Fire & Rescue; and Community Transport. The monitoring data showed that referrals to some services such as accommodation services, falls prevention and keeping warm are very low and feedback from the Mansfield Falls Prevention Team indicated that the referrals that are received are inappropriate for the restricted eligibility service available and they experience wasted time trying to follow up First Contact referrals who do not respond.
11. A review of the checklist has identified that:
 - a) There is currently no longer a service offer available in relation to questions asked regarding:
 - Accommodation
 - Groups and clubs
 - Police
 - Repairs
 - Transport.
 - b) There is a more restricted service offer than originally available, leading to increased likelihood of inappropriate referrals regarding:
 - Adaptations

- Falls
- Fire
- Warmth.

12. Concurrent with the First Contact review process, the Council has invested £1.136m per annum in new early intervention services to promote independence and support to maintain self-management. These services, known as Connect services, are targeting older people and people at risk of deteriorating health and independence as a result of age, mobility, disability, long term health condition or bereavement. Their aim is to identify people who have lived independently but are now at risk of escalating need and to provide information, advice, signposting or short term help to support people to identify solutions for continued self-management. They incorporate and build on the role of Community Outreach Advisors to: enable people to manage their health more effectively; address issues of inappropriate home environment; develop networks of social contact and informal support; and address money and benefits issues.
13. The contracts for the Connect service have been awarded to: Metropolitan Housing Trust for South Nottinghamshire; Age UK Notts for Mid Notts; and Nottingham Community Housing Association for Bassetlaw. The services commenced in January 2016 and approximately 850 referrals were made to these services by a variety of individuals, voluntary sector organisations, emergency services and statutory organisations in the first four months of operation with referral rates increasing over this period.
14. The Council has also invested in the Notts Help Yourself online directory which provides access and signposting to a range of resources to enable self-service and supported self-service through voluntary sector organisations, libraries and other community provision. People contacting the Council's CSC are also offered information and advice about services in their area, and this includes information about services covered through the First Contact checklist. In addition, and where appropriate, CSC staff will make a referral to one of the Connect services, for example where an individual requires additional support or encouragement to resolve more complex issues or to access local services that might be beneficial. In these circumstances, the new Connect services offer the most effective solution by providing a tailored response to their specific needs and in ways that work for them. The Connect services are being promoted amongst a broad range of organisations, including those that currently complete First Contact checklists, and referrals are already coming in from these sources.
15. Given the limitations of the First Contact scheme and given the new Connect services that are now available, it is proposed that the First Contact scheme is not extended once the SLA comes to an end in September 2016.
16. The Council will continue to develop prevention approaches and pathways with partners and promote these amongst frontline workers across the County in order that they can offer the best information, advice and guidance to people with whom they have contact.
17. The proposal to cease the First Contact scheme has been discussed with the four district and borough councils who have contributed financially to First Contact in 2015-16. All four concurred with the rationale for the proposal. Newark & Sherwood District Council, which has funded its own vulnerable adult version of the scheme, had also made the decision to end that scheme at the end of March 2016. Two authorities have expressed

an interest in continuing to work with the Council around reviewing and developing a shared understanding of prevention options and pathways in order that needs are addressed most effectively and that unmet need is identified.

18. This position is also supported by colleagues within Public Health, who have confirmed their support to cease this service given the alternative services that are now in place.

Other Options Considered

19. An option originally considered was to retain a more digitalised checklist without the use of funded co-ordinators. However it is recognised that this would be a duplication of the function that is already being undertaken by staff at the CSC when signposting and advising people about preventative interventions. Also, the promotion of the Connect services amongst agencies known to complete First Contact checklists is likely to result in more appropriate and timely information, advice, referrals and support, and ultimately better outcomes for individuals.

Reason/s for Recommendation/s

20. Further work to consult on and review the arrangements for a First Contact scheme has identified that:
 - a) for those who would have completed a First Contact checklist themselves, the opportunity to identify and access a range of services is now more readily available such as through Notts Help Yourself
 - b) the enhanced role that the CSC is playing in diverting people at the first point of contact, together with the availability of the enhanced offer of the new Connect early intervention support service, means that the First Contact scheme is no longer required.

Statutory and Policy Implications

21. This report has been compiled after consideration of implications in respect of crime and disorder, finance, human resources, human rights, the NHS Constitution (public health services), the public sector equality duty, safeguarding of children and adults at risk, 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

22. If the service is ceased at the end of September 2016 when the SLA expires, there will be an in-year saving to the Council of £36,144, with a full year saving of £72,289 per annum thereafter.

Human Resources Implications

23. Staff working within the Co-ordinator provider organisation would be affected as a result of the Council confirming that agreements would not be extended beyond 30 September 2016. The organisations that provide the Co-ordinator role are aware of the proposal to cease the service.

Public Sector Equality Duty implications

24. This change will disproportionately impact older people. However the commissioning of the Notts Help Yourself website, a more pro-active Customer Service Centre response to support early resolution of people's needs through signposting to community based options, and commissioned early intervention support services will all result in a more personalised and effective identification of need for a range of preventative interventions which include but are over and above those achieved through the First Contact scheme.

RECOMMENDATION/S

- 1) That approval is given to cease the First Contact Scheme when the current Service Level Agreement ends on 30th September 2016.

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Constitutional Comments (SMG 24/06/16)

25. The proposals outlined in this report fall within the remit of this Committee.
26. The Employment Procedure Rules provide that the report to Committee include the required advice and HR comments and that the recognised trade unions be consulted on all proposed changes to staffing structures (and any views given should be fully considered prior to a decision being made).

Financial Comments (KAS 24/06/16)

27. The financial implications are contained within paragraph 22 of the report.

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.

Proposed revision of the First Contact Scheme – report to Adult Social Care and Health Committee on 1 June 2015

Consultation responses

Electoral Division(s) and Member(s) Affected

All.

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