



Dec 2010

Eligibility for social care set to change!

Be part of the consultation process and have your say now!

What is involved? These changes affect people in West Sussex who are eligible to receive adult social care services – help at home, day care, advice and support, help with disabilities, help with long term ill health, residential care, home adaptations and physical aids.

At present eligibility is based on people having social care needs that fall into three out of four categories or levels of need – Critical, Substantial, Moderate or Low. WSCC propose to change eligibility so that in future only people with Critical and Substantial needs are eligible for social care services. The aim is to save money and the likely impact is that a significant number of people who currently receive services will lose them.

What can LINK participants do next? We would hope that you will actively take part in discussions with WSCC during the consultation period on what is clearly a very important issue for, potentially, all of us. The first step is to visit the council's webpage 'Changes to adults' social care': www.westsussex.gov.uk/adultcarechange where you can download the consultation information and complete an online questionnaire. Alternatively, you can request a paper copy by calling 01243 642555.

The 10 week consultation period began on the 25th November and is due to end on the 3rd February 2011 - over Christmas and the New Year - and is shorter than the normal minimum of 12 weeks given to important changes in policy of this sort. The West Sussex LINK has acted quickly on your behalf about this and following representations from Vicki King, the Chair of West Sussex LINK Stewardship Group, and others, WSCC have agreed to consider an extension if the period proves to be inadequate.

Cost effective solution? LINK Manager*, David Liley, says, "Reductions in public spending may be inevitable but we should be convinced that they are being made in a cost effective way and are not hitting the most vulnerable people in society. It is important that local people and the local health community use this consultation period to question if this is the best way to use social care resources for the future.

WSCC have not provided any options in this consultation so it does, at present, look more like an announcement with a period for comment. Local people, service users, carers and the local health and social care professional community need to be given opportunities to debate the issues and ask important questions! We need to be reassured that WSCC takes action to ensure a full debate of the issues and options."

* David Liley is the newly appointed West Sussex Regional Manager for Help & Care, the host organisation for the West Sussex LINK. He has extensive senior professional experience in the health and social care sector.

“Mum gets a couple hours home care a week, and attends a day centre one day – why is this important to me?”

When services are lost the first pressure will be on carers and family and friends. Carers are likely to absorb the lost support and the worry caused by these changes.

These changes are not just about saving money on a balance sheet — they will have a real impact on real people. Service users and their carers will want to know what WSCC will do about tracking the impact of these changes and taking corrective action to support people if that becomes necessary.

The people least able and least inclined to speak up for themselves are those most likely to suffer in this exercise - those who do not cope well with officials, assessments and paperwork; those who cannot articulate their own needs or are very frail or confused; those whose friends and family cannot offer more help, and last but not least, those couples who are carers for each other.

So what might the impact of the proposed changes be?

David says, “If we think about eligibility as being the front door to social care services this change will reduce the size of the front door so less people can get in. A similar exercise in Poole, Dorset, recently led to 300 people losing their services and many more facing increased charges for services. The population of West Sussex is 753,000 - that is 5.5 times larger than Poole. So can we anticipate that something like 1650 people in West Sussex will lose their social care services in the proposed changes? We can be sure that the changes will not just apply to new people requesting social care assistance — all existing service users will have their services re-assessed according to the new criteria.”

“People need to know the anticipated impact of the proposed changes in much more detail,” continues David, “as they have in Poole, Dorset, and other authorities where this decision has been made.”

For more on Poole’s changes, please click on link below:

<http://www.boroughofpoole.com/go.php?structureID=U4640524f74b47&ref=S4C2DBD8B788FF>

What plans have WSCC made to monitor, track and research the future impact of the proposed changes?

What alternatives are there are to the proposed changes—and what the costs would be?

Can we avoid shunting costs and demand from social care to the NHS, carers and the voluntary and community sector?



Have your say

This is how to get in touch if you want to contact the West Sussex LINK

Please advise us also if your contact details change or if you no longer wish to be a LINK participant.



telephone 0300 111 0102

Calls to 03 numbers are charged at no more than UK geographic rates (as for 01 and 02 numbers) and will be included as part of any inclusive minutes. Calls from mobiles may be higher.



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To visit the LINK website go to www.makesachange.org.uk and select ‘West Sussex’.