

Equality Impact Assessment (EIA)

Directorate: Adult Wellbeing
Service : Adult social care
Name of Officer/s completing assessment: Mike Fry.
Date of Assessment: 12.11.2013
Name of service/function or policy being assessed: Royal Voluntary Service, Meals On Wheels

<p>1. What are you assessing? Is it a policy, function service?</p>	<p>The Meals on Wheels (MoW) service provides either hot or frozen meals for people in their own homes. This service is delivered by the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS), and is a county wide provision. RVS are currently contracted to provide 100,000 meals a year, and is funded through individual contributions (currently £4.40 per meal) and a payment of £60,000 p.a. from Adult Social Care which currently subsidises the service to end users.</p> <p>Two alternative models of provision to replace the current service are explored in this assessment. Option 1 is for RVS to continue to be the primary home meals provider, using a different financial, product and service design. Option 2 presumes RVS will cease to be the primary provider, and the service will be reshaped to make use of a range of universal and bespoke community resources.</p>
<p>2. Are you making changes to what is already happening? (starting something new, stopping something, changing something?) What is the purpose of the new change?</p>	<p>The proposal is that the current direct funding of MoW cease from 01/04/2014. From this date a full cost recovery model will be introduced.</p> <p><u>Option 1 :</u></p> <p>RVS will reconfigure their services to develop a full cost recovery provision based on the existing service model. This will mean that service users will move from the current charge of £4.40 per meal to £5.40 - £5.50 per meal once the current subsidy has been removed.</p> <p>At the same time that the increase in charges is introduced RVS propose to move to a new model of meal provision using a higher quality product. This new product has been trialled in West Sussex</p>

	<p>where RVS report universal satisfaction with the new product and acceptance of a higher charge for higher quality meals and service.</p> <p>As part of the new service, RVS propose to offer users value added extras as part of the package within the higher fees.</p> <p><u>Option 2:</u></p> <p>RVS will cease to provide a county wide home meals service. In its place a model of provision based on individuals utilising a mixture of universal and bespoke community services will be developed. This fits with the Adult Wellbeing Directorate intent to: “Encourage individuals, communities and organisations do more for themselves and for their local area.”</p>
<p>3.1 Why are you making this change? (what are the drivers – budget, resources, duplication, legislation)</p>	<p>In 2011 the Herefordshire Council made the decision to operate a full cost recovery model for adult social care provision in line with its Fairer Charging policy.</p> <p>Other services have already been transferred to a full cost recovery model. This was delayed for a year in the case of MoW to ensure a smooth transition to the new structure and to allow the Herefordshire Council and RVS time to set up the best possible new provision for the service users, with an improvement to the service while causing minimum disruption to current users. However, RVS now express some concerns that they will not be able to design a financially viable county wide service that meets user needs for a hot meal at a realistic cost. This being the case a viable alternative option needs to be developed</p> <p>Both local and national government policy advocate a move away from traditional service models where service users are presented with a single provider option to one where individuals are given a budget to meet assessed needs, from which they can purchase provision from a range of providers operating in a vibrant market. This proposal supports this policy and gives users a more powerful voice in directly determining local</p>

3.2 Wider contextual issues

services through being given the choice accessing one or several options from a range of possibilities, financially supporting only those which meet their needs and preferences.

It has to be acknowledged that budgetary pressures on the council are a driver in this change as the new funding structure will mean that support with meals may only be subsidised for those with an assessed need for those with support with preparing or eating food, while the subsidy will be removed from those not meeting eligibility conditions under Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) criteria.

In November 2013 the Herefordshire Council decided that Adult Social Care would no longer include meals in its Resource Allocation System (RAS). This means that the council would no longer include an amount for food/meals in any personal budget. However, financial assistance with paying for help with food preparation and/or eating may still be provided.

The older cohort of citizens has aged through a social context that has resulted in individuals now expecting higher standards of food and food preparation than previous generations. Equally, they have experienced the development of a range of meal options that are of high quality while being quick and easy to prepare through the use of the now ubiquitous microwave ovens. A number of supermarkets now offer home delivery of high quality frozen/chilled microwave meals at competitive prices. This now gives individuals access to a wide range of nutritious foods that can be delivered to the door at competitive prices. People with mobility or other health limitations can thus access commercial pre-prepared home meals at reasonable costs, negating, in many cases, the need for traditional home meals services. MoW needs to compete both in quality and price with these options.

Governmental intent, both nationally and locally, is to develop a society where individuals are as self-supporting as possible and where the community takes an increasingly active role in supporting vulnerable people.

<p>4. What evidence / sources of information have you used to make your decision? (surveys, employee groups, user groups, statistical data)</p>	<p>Herefordshire Council Research Team, Adult Social Care proposed new charging policy consultation survey report, September 2012.</p> <p>RVS service user data.</p> <p>RVS Impact Assessment report (07/02/2013).</p> <p>RVS, Royal Voluntary Service proposal for Hereford Meals on Wheels December 2013 – March 2014 report</p> <p>Herefordshire Council financial data.</p> <p>Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) guidance.</p>
<p>5. Have you identified who will be affected by your proposal? (users, partners, customers)</p> <p>Are there any gaps in the information you have collected?</p> <p>How many people will be affected?</p> <p>How many users are there of the service currently?</p>	<p><u>Option 1:</u></p> <p><u>RVS Staff:</u> RVS have 17 staff (WTE 8) who contribute to the delivery of MoW. RVS have stated that these jobs would end if the service ceased (RVS Impact Assessment 07/02/13). These job losses, however, are predicated on cessation of the service, not a remodelling of funding streams. It is envisioned that take up of the new improved service from April 2014 will be of a level to sustain current staffing levels</p> <p><u>Volunteers:</u> Approximately 400 volunteers provide 275 hours of input into the service on a weekly basis, though only 167 of these are active on a weekly basis as part of the MoW service. RVS have stated that 80% of these volunteers would no longer be required if the MoW service ceased (RVS Impact Assessment 07/02/13). The loss of these volunteering opportunities is, however, predicated on cessation of the service, not a remodelling of funding streams. The new improved service designed to go live in April 2014 is expected to require the same or greater level of volunteer input as the current service. Of the 167 volunteers, 155 are over the age of 60, 120 are female and the remaining 47 are male.</p> <p><u>Service Users:</u> There are approximately 500</p>

people registered with Meals on Wheels. Of these approximately 200 have been identified as needing assistance with preparation of meals in a social work assessment.

Option 2:

RVS Staff:

Option 2 would reduce the demand for staff time to support a meals service at RVS. This may have the impact of making some of those posts unviable in their present configuration. RVS have suggested that up to 8 WTE posts may be lost if their meals service was to completely cease. However, option 2 still leaves room for RVS to provide a slimmed down service which would allow for the retention of some of these posts.

RVS Volunteers:

The RVS MoW service relies heavily on volunteer input, and reduction or cessation of the service would reduce or remove the need for this volunteer input. Many displaced volunteers may find alternative volunteering opportunities, but some may withdraw from the sector. RVS use 167 volunteers on a weekly basis to deliver the MoW service. Of the 167 volunteers, 155 are over the age of 60, 120 are female and the remaining 47 are male.

Service Users:

This option seeks to make use of and develop universal community resources to provide access to meals through and within the local community. A wider range of options will be available to service users, where home meals will be supplemented by access to meals in community settings, including commercial venues such as pubs, enhancing social opportunities for individuals.

However, there are a number of individuals currently having MoW how live in isolated rural settings where access to public transport is limited. Where these individuals have mobility limitations there will be difficulties in accessing some of the community services.

	<p>RVS, as part of their MoW delivery service undertake wellbeing checks on the people they see. This function can be critical in identifying problems at an early stage, particularly where people have little or no other daily contact with people, to ensure preventative measures are employed through reporting the issues to relevant health and social care agencies. The loss of this function would be of particular detriment to the most vulnerable of service users.</p> <p>Social Care Staff: Option 2 may lead to the reduction of wellbeing monitoring of some vulnerable people. Social care staff will either have to work with reduced levels of monitoring of vulnerable people or they will have to be involved in establishing alternative support systems for some people.</p> <p>Partner Agencies: Option 2 relies on a wider pallet of provision locally drawing on resources from a range of providers. This will require the development of new partnership arrangements with local agencies and businesses.</p> <p>Local Private Sector Businesses: This option would stimulate demand for provision of meals from local businesses, whether retail outlets or businesses that prepare and serve meals. By supporting local business, this option would help to protect or increase paid employment in the county at a time of economic depression and high unemployment. Arguably, there would be a move to greater support for peoples' nutritional needs from people in paid employment rather than the current reliance on volunteers used by RVS.</p>
<p>6. Have you identified that one group of people may be more affected than another (for example, disabled people)</p>	<p>Both of the potential options will impact most heavily on the same group of individuals. Neither option will have any significant positive impact on the constitution of the population of people in either a positive or negative fashion compared to the other option.</p> <p>95% of MoW users are over the age of 70.</p> <p>Approximately 80% of MoW service users have or</p>

	<p>have had a social work assessment: this would indicate that the majority of MoW service users have some additional limitation as a consequence of health/care needs. However, only about 40% of current MoW service users have a social work assessment detailing the need for support for individuals via MoW.</p> <p>Those people who meet critical or substantial FACS eligibility criteria following a social work assessment may be able to get financial assistance with the purchase of assistance preparing food where this is done by the individual herself/himself or eating meals through a personal budget, though not with the cost of the food.</p> <p>A number of the MoW recipients live alone and are socially isolated, the MoW delivery volunteer being the only social contact that the person has each day. These are some of the most vulnerable of Social Care service users. For these individuals the loss of daily human face to face contact may have significant practical and/or psychological consequences.</p> <p>Adult Social Care staff: The change to a full cost recovery model may prompt requests for additional social work assessments/reviews. A request has been made for a social work practitioner to be nominated as a liaison point for RVS/Adult Social Care Commissioning to help manage any demand for additional social work activity and identify possible mitigating actions that may be taken to minimise any difficulties for social work teams. This would also mitigate any difficulties service users might have in accessing social care assessments/reviews where the need for this has been generated by this proposed change.</p>
<p>7. Have you consulted with the people that will be affected? (what did they tell you? How did you consult with them?)</p>	<p>All service users of a social care provision delivered in the home, including MoW, were surveyed between May and August 2012 when the Herefordshire Council proposed a full cost recovery model for social care provision in the county. (see Fair Charging report)</p> <p>There have been on-going discussions with RVS about the proposed changes to funding of MoW.</p>

	<p>RVS have been actively included in discussions on future modelling of the MoW service, and are of the opinion that the proposed changes to funding are manageable without significant detriment to MoW, as the proposed model already operates successfully in other areas of the county. The proposed change fits with RVS's business model for the forthcoming years and would be implemented with the support and agreement of RVS.</p>
<p>8. Have you identified any potential positive impacts?</p>	<p><u>Option 1:</u></p> <p>RVS have identified that there is likely to be a cost increase to service users as a consequence of changed funding arrangements. However, they are in the process of reviewing their product, and believe that the quality of meals will be improved as a consequence of higher service user expectation with increase user costs.</p> <p>The full cost recovery model will bring funding of home meals in line with other social care provision. By withdrawing a subsidy of MoW, the council will be developing a level playing field allowing other potential providers of a similar service to compete on a financially equal basis, potentially opening the way to greater competition and choice, which is believed to deliver improved provision for the end users.</p> <p>The full cost recovery model and improved meal specification will allow RVS to offer to provide food for luncheon clubs run by small local organisations, particularly in rural areas, without the facilities to produce their own meals. This potentially allow for a development of local luncheon clubs in more remote areas of the county.</p> <p><u>Option 2:</u></p> <p>By moving from a largely volunteer based provision to a greater use of local universal resources this option will support and stimulate economic activity in the county, helping to protect local employment at a time of economic difficulty.</p>

	<p>Encouraging the use of local community resources will also support integration of vulnerable people into the local community and enhance social opportunities for service users.</p>
<p>9. Have you identified any negative impacts?</p>	<p><u>Option 1:</u></p> <p>There will be some current service users who will face a 23% increase in meal costs without being eligible for any support in meeting the additional amount from Social Care. Some of these individuals may seek alternative suppliers or opt not to have support with meals provision.</p> <p><u>Option2:</u></p> <p>While this option will support paid employment in the county, there will be a corresponding decrease in the need for volunteer opportunities in the MoW service. However, this may be mitigated by the policy intent, both national and local, to stimulate community support of vulnerable people which will stimulate the development of volunteering opportunities in other areas of activity.</p> <p>MoW provides daily human contact for some of the most vulnerable citizens living in the community. Should these people be unable or unwilling to access alternative community options their social contact could be significantly reduced, potentially leading to psychological and/or practical problems.</p>