

HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL

**CABINET
MONDAY 24 MARCH 2003 AT 2.00 P.M.**

Agenda Item No.

3

ADULT CARE SERVICES ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA

Report of the Director of Adult Care Services

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Executive Member: Jane Pitman

1. Purpose of the Report

To propose revised Eligibility Criteria for Adult Care Services including an appropriate eligibility threshold.

2. Background

In May 2002, the Department of Health issued a new policy guidance called "Fair Access to Care Services". The aim of this guidance is to achieve greater fairness and consistency across the country and improve people's ability to access adult social care help. The guidance sets the framework which all Councils should use when assessing eligibility for care services and requires that common criteria be used for all care groups.

3. Conclusion

Cabinet is invited to approve revised Eligibility Criteria for Adult Care Services (Appendix 1) and agree the eligibility threshold as "substantial risk"

4. Preparation in Hertfordshire

4.1 The Cabinet's Eligibility for Services Panel has been considering the implications of Fair Access to Care Services implementation in four meetings spanning from October 2001 – February 2003. The Panel has considered the implications of guidance and has reviewed the existing Eligibility Criteria and agreed as to how these should be brought in line with the new guidance. In the light of this work revised Eligibility Criteria have been produced. (Appendix 1).

- 4.2 The Panel has also given some consideration to the threshold which should be applied to determining eligibility for services. The framework is banded into four parts and defines when risk to independence or other consequences is either low, moderate, substantial or critical. In the light of the existing policy and looking at how the new definition should be applied, the Panel considered that the threshold of services should be when there is a substantial risk to independence or other consequences if needs are not addressed.
- 4.3 In reaching this decision, the Panel examined information from a sampling exercise conducted to test the useability of the guidance and the likely financial and operational impact of adopting the new criteria if the threshold were set at the substantial level. The sampling exercise indicated that something in the region of an additional 1500 people may now become eligible for care services in any one year. Most of these newly eligible clients are likely to require equipment or minor adaptations with others needing relatively low level home care or other forms of support. The financial implications of this have been incorporated into Adult Care Services' budget for 2003/4 and are explained more fully in the financial implications paragraph below.
- 4.4 Revised guidance has been produced for staff and initial feedback from staff indicates general understanding of and satisfaction of the draft guidance. Some revisions to the guidance were made in response to issues raised by staff and their Health colleagues. This guidance is now ready for implementation. (Appendix 1).
- 4.5 Consultation on the revised criteria and proposed threshold was also undertaken with voluntary organisations representing users and carers in Hertfordshire. Feedback did not suggest any major changes to the guidance or to the proposed threshold level.
- 4.6 Training sessions with staff concerning the application of the new criteria are underway.
- 4.7 A public information leaflet about Fair Access to Care and the new eligibility framework will be prepared for distribution in April. This will replace the five separate care group leaflets which are used at the moment to explain how we make decisions about who qualifies for help.

- 4.8 The Voluntary Sector has been encouraged to continue to provide feedback on how the guidance is operating in practice and towards the end of the year further consultation will be organised to clarify any difficulties that have arisen in relation to the guidance.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 A sampling exercise was conducted to assist the likely financial and operational impact of the new criteria. The indications were that around 1500 additional people may become eligible for services in a year. The sort of services that people who were just crossing the eligibility criteria for the first time would need were equipment, minor adaptations or fairly low level home care or other support. If costs are estimated on average at £500 per person, per annum, this would imply an additional cost to the Department of around £750K per annum for the newly eligible people.
- 5.2 It is harder to measure whether the eligibility criteria change will have an impact on the amount or type of service offered to people already eligible for care. Other service developments such as increases in preventative services, increase in direct payments, improvements in rehabilitation etc will all impact on the nature and volume of services offered to people in the future.
- 5.3 The budget which has been set for Adult Care Services for 2003/4 has sought to address both the likely impact of the eligibility criteria and also the other service developments planned. The 2003/4 ACS budget provides the following additional resources to cater for these demands:
- Equipment budget + £300K
Home Care budget + £800K (including rehabilitative home care pilot)
Home Support + £500K
Voluntary Sector services + £420K.
- 5.4 The application of the new criteria together with the resources to fund new services should result in an increased number of older people in particular being supported at home and assist in delivering one of our local public service agreement targets.

- 5.5 Although budgetary provision has been made and some sampling has been done to estimate the impact, we will be carefully monitoring the impact of the new criteria and of the changes during the coming financial year to ensure that service provision is within the available resources.

Background papers: none