

# **ADULT AND PUBLIC HEALTH SERVICES PORTFOLIO DECISION RECORD**

25 July 2011

The meeting commenced at 10.00 am in the Civic Centre, Hartlepool

**Present:**

Councillor: Gerard Hall, Adult Services and Public Health Portfolio Holder

Officers: Geraldine Martin, Head of Service  
Neil Harrison, Head of Service  
Maggie Heaps, Learning and Skills Manager  
Angela Armstrong, Principal Democratic Services Officer

## **6. Adult Education Fees – Academic Year 2011-2012** (*Director of Child and Adult Services*)

### **Type of decision**

Key Decision – Test (ii) applies.

### **Purpose of report**

To consider the level of adult education fees for the academic year 1 August 2011 to 31 July 2012.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The report set out the current fee levels for Adult Education courses funded through the Skills Funding Agency and other sources in 2010/2011 and looked at options for fee levels. Recommendations were made regarding the level of adult education fees for the academic year August 2011 to July 2012. The Learning and Skills Manager outlined the changes to the Skills Funding Agency (SFA) national policy on the collection of fees and who will be supported for remission of fees. From 2011, only learners who were on active work related benefits, ie Job Seekers Allowance (JSA) or Employment Support Allowance (ESA) will be eligible for SFA fee remission. It was noted that during 2011-12, 983 learners were on fee remission and of those, 26% (256) were for reasons other than JSA or ESA and these will be the learners that would be affected by the SFA new eligibility rules.

A number of options were proposed and detailed in the report which were required to satisfy the reduced eligibility of fee remission and the need to collect sufficient fee income. The options covered:

- Vocational and First Steps courses
- Personal and Community Development Learning
- Courses which currently attract no fee
- Administration Charge
- Fee Remission

A discussion ensued on the implications of the changes to the fee remission policy on potential learners as well as the financial implications to the local authority. The Portfolio Holder was astounded as the changes would have a significant impact on Hartlepool as a deprived community through the reduction in subsidies for courses and may even discourage people from engaging in education. In comparison to other local authorities in the region, Hartlepool vocational courses generally cost less although they were more expensive for leisure courses compared to Redcar and Stockton.

In response to a question from the Portfolio Holder, the Learning and Skills Manager confirmed that the community and voluntary sector can set their own fees for the provision of training and were often funded through European funding streams. However, some of the courses ran by the community and voluntary sector were not accredited courses. The Portfolio Holder sought clarification on income generation through providing courses for employers and local businesses. The Learning and Skills Manager confirmed that local authority courses were being promoted to employers and local businesses such as food hygiene with a view to achieving full cost provision.

The Learning and Skills Manager confirmed that the Adult Education Service had relocated into the old Connexions Building in Tower Street and was able to utilise a number of classrooms within that building, reducing the need to rent space elsewhere.

The Portfolio Holder acknowledged that the national benefits system was in need of reform and simplification. However, people needed to be aware that there were two components to the Employment Support Allowance (ESA) with only one providing support for dental treatments etc. The importance of clarifying this when people applied for financial support to undertake education was highlighted. The Portfolio Holder was disappointed that people in receipt of income support were not now eligible for financial support as a result of these changes at a time when people should be encouraged into employment through undertaking vocational or non vocational courses.

The Learning and Skills Manager confirmed that the introduction of the changes would be monitored very closely in the first year to ascertain

whether it was sustainable. The Portfolio Holder requested a report at the end of the year to identify the number of people who had enrolled and what impact these changes had on people seeking to engage in education, particularly the changes outlined in decision (iv) below.

## **Decision**

The following were approved:

- (i) Vocational and First Steps Learning courses £105 for a 60 hour course and £35 for a 20 hour course;
- (ii) PCDL courses £ 150 for a 60 hour course and £ 50 for a 20 hour course;
- (iii) No course fees should be charged to students entitled under the SFA guidance on remitted fees (except for a one-off administration charge);
- (iv) The fee remission policy should change to reflect the new SFA eligibility guidance for PCDL type courses. For Vocational and first steps there will be a transition year where those learners who were now not eligible for fee remission be charged 50% of the full fee rate. Courses which were developed to widen participation or in response to specific government initiatives e.g. students with a disability, Asylum seekers and Refugees, Family learning or community regeneration activities would continue to be given full fee remission. The full policy was attached at **Appendix 1**
- (v) The administration charge should remain at current levels i.e. £10 for vocational and First Steps courses and £ 15 for PCDL courses.
- (vi) Courses which were not supported through SFA funding or other income streams be delivered at the Full Cost rate and that the courses operated by the local authority be publicised widely across the local business community.
- (vii) That a further report be submitted to the Portfolio Holder towards the end of the calendar year identifying whether the FSA changes had any affect on the number of people undertaking vocational and non vocational courses.

## **7. Review of Stroke Services** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information only.

## **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder for Adult and Public Health Services of the findings of a review of services for people who have had a stroke and their carers.

## **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The report provided information on a review conducted throughout 2010 by the Care Quality Commission, which focussed on care from the point where people prepared to leave hospital, to the ongoing care and support in their homes. Health and adult social care, as well as other relevant services, were reviewed during this period.

The Portfolio Holder recognised that early intervention was the key to achieving the best outcome when someone had suffered a stroke and sought clarification on whether there were any improvements that could be made in this area. The Head of Service indicated funding had been secured to develop the reablement provision in conjunction with the Primary Care Trust and it had been suggested that stroke services should be included within this. Local indicators had identified that the local authority scored highly on the management of transferring stroke victims to home, the commissioning of services and the signposting and personalisation of care. The Head of Service confirmed that all suspected stroke victims were directed to the Emergency Assessment Unit within the University Hospital of Hartlepool in the first instance. The Portfolio Holder was informed that a recent survey undertaken of people accessing stroke services, had resulted in 94% of people being very impressed with the stroke service provided in Hartlepool.

However, the Portfolio Holder was encouraged to note that although there were three areas that scored lower than average within the Quality Markers set out in the National Stroke Strategy, there were plans in place to implement improvements in these areas.

## **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder noted the contents of the report and the arrangements as indicated.

## **8. The National Personal Budget Survey** *(Director of Child and Adult Services)*

### **Type of decision**

For information only.

### **Purpose of report**

To inform the Portfolio Holder of the main findings of the Personal Budgets Outcomes Evaluation (POET) Survey.

### **Issue(s) for consideration by Portfolio Holder**

The POET Survey was completed in early 2011 across ten local authority demonstrator sites. In total 1,114 personal budget holders and 950 carers completed the questionnaires. Nearly half of the personal budget holders were over 65 years old. The aim of the survey was to find out about the outcomes and experiences of people using personal budgets and their carers, in order to identify the positives to build on and the improvements that needed to happen.

The POET survey indicated that the majority of people see themselves benefiting significantly through having a personal budget and that this applied to all groups of personal budget holders although there remained some differences between groups.

There was a big difference across councils suggesting that some were achieving greater progress in offering choice and control to people and in improving people's chosen outcomes.

The survey evaluation noted that these positive benefits were being achieved despite processes and restrictions that people find frustrating and stressful and which were likely to add to the costs of the process. This picture seemed to vary significantly across councils. People taking their personal budgets as a Direct Payment were achieving better outcomes than those with a council managed budget, including older people. The summary evaluation noted that where people are using a council-managed personal budget there was clearly work to be done to make sure these offer real choice and control and improve outcomes.

Hartlepool Borough Council (HBC) did not take part in the National POET survey earlier this year as it clashed with the Personal Social Services (PSS) Survey. However, the POET Survey was currently taking place in Hartlepool, in partnership with In Control and Lancaster University. The findings of both the National POET Survey and the local POET survey will

be used to improve our delivery of personal budgets to people and ensure the best results and optimum outcomes for people who were personal budget recipients and their carers.

The findings of the local POET Survey will be reported to the Portfolio Holder when they were made available later in 2011.

The Head of Service confirmed that Hartlepool's provision of personal social services out performed other local authorities within the region and the Portfolio Holder was pleased to note that good progress was being made with the personalisation agenda across the town.

### **Decision**

The Portfolio Holder noted the report and would receive further information regarding the local survey when this was made available.

The meeting concluded at 11.03 am

**P J DEVLIN**

**CHIEF SOLICITOR**

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