

Consultation summary: Meals subsidy

We are proposing to stop paying a subsidy for meals in the community.

Meals services enable people to have hot, chilled or frozen meals delivered to their home on a daily or weekly basis. We have a good range of service providers in East Sussex, which allow people to access high quality, nutritious food.

At the moment, the subsidy is £4.10 per meal and it is not means tested. The full cost of a meal is between £4 and £8. Our proposal would mean that people would need to pay the full cost of their meals if they wanted to carry on receiving them.

We think it is reasonable to ask people to pay for their meals given the budget pressures we face. Most other local authorities have already moved away from subsidising this sort of service.

In line with the Care Act, we would continue to offer information about meals services and help people to access services if they were eligible to receive support from us. It's also possible that a small group of people may need additional support with their meals due to a disability or because they are particularly vulnerable.

Stopping the subsidy could see savings of £483,000. Whatever decision is made about the subsidy, we would still need to find a way of saving this amount of money.

Members will make a decision in September about what happens next.

Please be assured that no changes would be made before October 2019.

How to take part

The detailed consultation information explains the background to the proposal, how the subsidy works, who is using the service, and how we think they might be affected. You can fill in the survey online or in hard copy, but you can also send us a letter or email – whatever works for you. If you need this information in another format or you need help to take part please contact us.

- Visit the website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk/mealsubsidy
- Email us your feedback: consultationASC@eastsussex.gov.uk
- Post us your feedback: ASC Meals Subsidy Consultation, North A Floor, County Hall, St Anne's Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE
- You can also call us between 9am-12pm Mon-Thurs on: 01273 481 242

The consultation will close on 6 August 2019.

Consultation information: Meals subsidy

Budget for 2019/20

- **We need to make savings of £730,000 in Adult Social Care in 2019/20.**

The Council faces considerable ongoing financial challenges and the choices between saving and spending are difficult. We have already saved over £130 million in this decade.

On 5 February members agreed the budget and plan for 2019/20, which will see the Council make savings of £5.1 million. The savings required for Adult Social Care were reduced by one-off funding from central Government. However, we still need to make savings of £730,000 overall.

Why are we consulting?

- **We think it is reasonable to ask people to pay the full cost of their meal. If the proposal went ahead, we would still meet our Care Act duties.**

Under the Care Act, we are required to provide information about services and ensure people who are eligible for support from us can manage and maintain their nutrition. We are not required to pay for people's meals.

Many other local authorities have already moved away from subsidising meals services. Given our budget pressures, we think it is reasonable to ask people to pay the full cost of their meal. There are also other options for getting food delivered, such as supermarket deliveries.

We budgeted to spend nearly £500,000 on the subsidy for meals in the community last year.

About the subsidy

- **The full cost of a meal is between £4 and £8. People receive a subsidy of £4.10 per meal and access to the subsidy is not means tested.**

The full cost of a meal will depend on the sort of meal you are getting delivered. People who have a meal that costs less than the subsidy amount of £4.10 don't currently pay anything towards the cost of their service. Everyone else pays the difference after the subsidy has been applied. For example, someone who has meals

that cost £5.50 pays £1.40 towards the cost of each meal, while someone who has meals that cost £8 pays £3.90 towards the cost of each meal.

A few lunch clubs are also supported through the subsidy. We will be working with them during the consultation to ensure their attendees can share their views.

About the providers

- **There are a good range of service providers in East Sussex. Most people receive their meals from one of four providers.**

We currently have a contract with one provider and an approved list of providers from which people can purchase subsidised meals. The providers that most people use for their subsidised meals are:

- License to Freeze
- Mother Theresa's Meals
- Oakhouse Foods
- Wiltshire Farm Foods

If the proposal went ahead, the contract would end and we would no longer have a list of approved providers. We hope that providers would consider joining our Support with Confidence (SWC) scheme instead. Support with Confidence is a directory of vetted and approved care and service providers which offer services locally.

We would continue to offer information about services to all residents and help people to access services if they were eligible to receive support from us.

Who receives the subsidy?

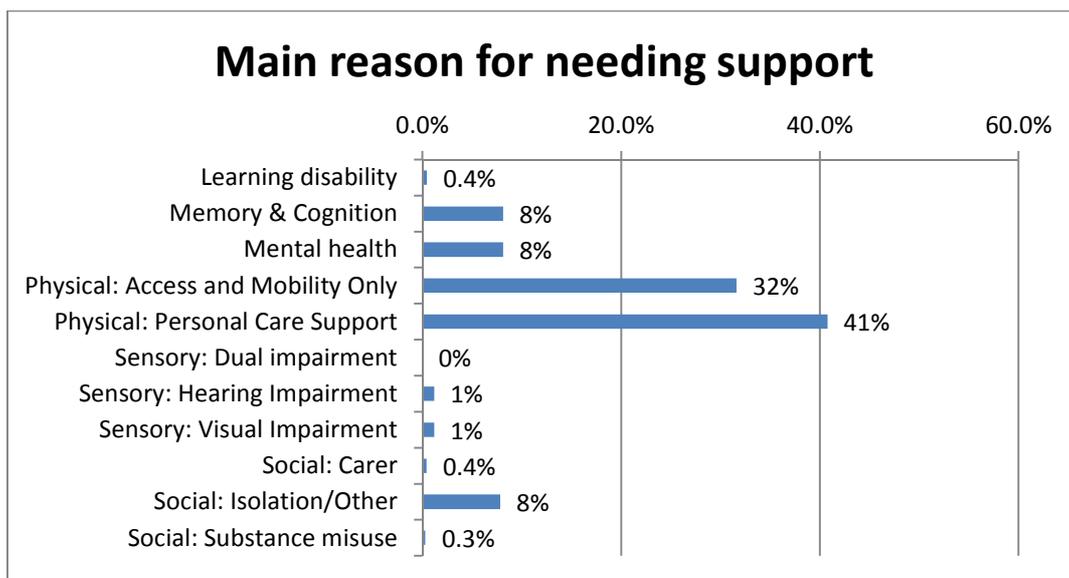
- **The majority of people have 7 meals a week and three quarters also receive another service. Most are older people and nearly half are aged 85 and over.**

We know that around 750 people are currently receiving the subsidy:

- Over half of the subsidised meals are delivered by our contracted provider.
- Over three quarters of people getting the subsidy receive 7 meals a week.
- Eastbourne has the most people receiving the subsidy (around a quarter), followed by High Weald, and Lewes & Havens, which both have around 15%.

- Over three quarters also receive another service from us, with the most common being telecare (three quarters) and then home care (nearly half).

We know that more women than men receive a subsidy (around two thirds are women). Most people who receive the subsidy are older people, with 40% aged 65 to 84 and nearly half aged 85 plus. The main reason for needing support from us is most likely to be due to a physical need relating to personal care (over 40%) or an access or mobility need relating to personal care (nearly a third). Personal care covers things like dressing, eating, and washing.



How would people be affected?

- **We know the impact for most people would be financial. The level of impact would depend on how many meals people are having delivered.**

When we previously consulted on stopping the subsidy in 2014, a lot of people felt that they would be forced to stop using meals services as they wouldn't be able to afford them. The impact is likely to be more significant for people who are particularly vulnerable or who have complex needs, as they might be unable to access a meal or would be at risk if they were left to prepare food for themselves. For example, when we previously consulted, one of people's concerns was how those with memory problems would cope.

If the proposal went ahead, people would have to decide whether they wanted to continue with their current service, move to a less expensive meals service, or look at whether alternative options could work for them. There could also be a small group of

people who would continue to need additional support from us. This might be through using a personal care service to support people to access or re-heat a meal.

The majority of people who get the subsidy have 7 meals delivered a week. The table below provides some examples of the estimated financial impact of the proposal.

Examples	What is happening now?	If the proposal went ahead?
People who have 7 meals a week, costing £4 a meal	We are paying the cost of all the meals (£28 a week)	People would pay the full cost of £28 themselves
People who have 7 meals a week, costing £6 a meal	We are paying £28.70 a week and people are paying £13.30 a week	People would pay the full cost of £42 themselves
People who have 7 meals a week, costing £8 a meal	We are paying £28.70 a week and people are paying £27.30 a week	People would pay the full cost of £56 themselves

What would happen if the proposal went ahead?

➤ **We would let people know that the subsidy was stopping and find out what they wanted to do next. Support would be available when it was needed to help people look at their options.**

We would write to everyone currently receiving the subsidy and let them know when it would be stopping. We would also look at people’s circumstances to see if they needed help from us to decide what to do, or support to look at alternative services to having a meal delivered.

People would then have time to make a decision about what they wished to do next. Our assessment team would be available to talk to people and their families about what the decision meant for them and look at their options. In some cases, this might include doing an assessment of their social care needs or helping them to maximise their income.

It’s important to say that we are removing the subsidy and not the services. People would have the option of paying the full cost of their meal and continuing with the service.

What happens next?

➤ **Members will make a decision in September about what happens next.**

Your views are an important part of the decision making process. What you tell us will help us to understand whether people would want to continue using meals in the community services, how they would be affected, and whether a small group of people may still need additional support. We will also use your feedback to support our Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) process. We use EIAs to comply with the Equality Act 2010 and see what effect our proposals are likely to have on different groups in the community.

We will make a recommendation about what happens next, which will be considered by members in September 2019. In making their decision, members will consider our recommendation, the results of the consultation and the EIA, alongside client and market data.

The questionnaire

Please answer as many questions as you like. If you don't want to answer a question you can leave it blank. Please send us your completed survey by 6 August 2019.

Q1) Are you completing the survey as:

- Someone working in a front-line role in adult social care
- Someone working in a support role in adult social care
- Someone working in another department for the Council

Q2a) How much do you agree or disagree that it is reasonable to ask people to pay the full cost of their meals?

- Strongly agree Agree Neither agree nor disagree Disagree Strongly disagree

Q2b) Please explain why you agree or disagree:

.....

.....

.....

Q3a) Do you think we should continue to offer additional support to access and prepare food to certain groups of people if the proposal goes ahead?

- Yes No Don't know

Q3b) If you said 'yes', do you have any suggestions for what criteria we use?

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q4) How would your work be affected if the proposal went ahead?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q5) What would help you in your role if the proposal went ahead?

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

Q6) Do you have any other comments or suggestions about the proposal?

Yes No

Your comments:

.....

.....

.....

Thank you for sharing your views.

You can return your survey to: ASC Meals Subsidy Consultation,
North A Floor, County Hall, St Anne’s Crescent, Lewes, BN7 1UE.