

Meals in the Community

Consultation results & what happens next

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We asked for people's views about proposed changes to how meals in the community are provided in East Sussex. The consultation took place over the summer months of last year.

East Sussex County Council's Cabinet was due to consider the proposed changes to the service and the consultation results in October 2014. The results from the consultation indicated that more work needed to be done on the proposals.

Cabinet instead considered the proposed changes at its January 2015 meeting. By moving the date we were able to provide the fullest possible information to Members of the Council.

This newsletter summarises the consultation results and what happens next.

Thank you to everyone who took the time to share their views with us.

Why we consulted

Since 2008, Adult Social Care has had a contract to provide and deliver hot meals and safety checks to people who get meals as part of their social care

support.

We pay towards the cost of this for older people who qualify for the service. At the moment, people pay £3.40 towards it, and we pay £4.10. The total cost of a meal and safety check is £7.50 currently.

East Sussex County Council needs to save money in these difficult financial times, and we need to use the resources that we have to support a wider group of people in better ways. We want to look at a different way for people to get meals and safety checks.

The number of people who choose to use the council's meal service has been falling steadily, and the number of meals delivered has reduced by about a third since the contract started in 2008. This is because there have been:

- changes in how people choose to get their support, and people having more choice and control in how their social care needs are met,
- an increase in supermarkets and other food outlets offering prepared meals, and
- a growing number of independent meal providers who offer more flexible ways to get hot or chilled meals.

Ending the contract and stopping the subsidy would save the council approximately £535,700 a year.

Our proposals were to:

- 1) Stop providing a subsidy (paying part of the cost) for the community meals service, and
- 2) put together a list of providers to choose from, that we know are high quality and are safety and quality checked.

What you told us

During a three month consultation period between June and September clients, carers, stakeholders and service providers were invited to comment on the proposals.

The table shows how people took part:

Response method	Total responses or attendees
Paper survey responses	120
Online survey responses	51
Attendees at Provider/Client event	13
Letters	3
Emails	6
Phone calls	6
Meetings attended	10 (approx. 100 attendees)

The key findings from the consultation were:

- 117 people (68.4%) disagree with the proposals to end the subsidy, and of those 84 people (49.1%) strongly disagree.
- People are mainly concerned about the affordability of the meals and the associated risks with not having a regular hot meal and safety check.
- 87 people (50.8%) agree with the proposal to create an approved providers list for meals, and of those 39 people (22.8%) strongly agree.
- People are mainly concerned about the quality of meals and visits that would be available; how providers would be monitored; and the availability of hot, delivered meals (as opposed to chilled or frozen).
- Some clients see the delivered meals as a means of social contact and would otherwise be socially isolated. This view is also supported by the current provider's client survey information.

What happens next

We listened to the concerns raised during the consultation, particularly around the subsidy. As a result, the subsidy will be maintained while we change over to the new arrangements. We will then consider whether or not to continue with the subsidy as part of our financial planning for 2016/17.

We will change from a single provider model and instead put together a list of providers to choose from. The consultation found that people were concerned about possibly losing the safe and well check, and about the nutritional quality of meals. As a result, all providers who want to join the Approved Provider Framework will be required to demonstrate how they meet the service needs, which will include the safe and well check. They will also have to pass an accreditation process managed through our Support with Confidence service. This will ensure we can monitor the quality of service provided to people.

The Council's Cabinet has now agreed the recommendations to:

- 1) withdraw from the single contracted provider arrangement for Meals in the Community;
- 2) set up an Approved Provider list for Meals in the Community in order to develop the market and provide greater choice for clients;
- 3) to retain the subsidy of the delivery costs of delivered meals until the new arrangements are established; and
- 4) to consider the future subsidy of Meals in the Community through the Reconciling Policy and Performance and Resources process for 2015/16.

The Cabinet's reasons for accepting the proposals can be found on our website in the minutes of the meeting (www.eastsussex.gov.uk).

We will work closely with those affected by the changes and their carers and family. The Council's priority is to ensure the safety of clients and to make sure their assessed needs are met in the most appropriate way.