

BEST VALUE REVIEW: FUTURE OF THE MEALS ON WHEELS SERVICE

SUMMARY

Current service

- A hot meals service is offered five days a week, excluding Bank Holidays.
- Frozen meals are delivered to 30 customers for consumption at the weekend.
- 300 individuals currently receive the hot meals service.
- The Meals on Wheels service has historically been provided by the Woman's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) on behalf of the Borough Council utilising volunteers.
- Hot meals are produced at several locations, including Day Centres and one private Nursing Home
- Meals are delivered by volunteers.
- the majority of these volunteers are not affiliated to WRVS.
- The service is generally accessed through a variety of agencies and few clients refer themselves.
- A two weekly frozen meals service is provided for approximately 20 people by an independent volunteer based at North Place.

Key Issues Identified by the Best Value Review

- At present, the service does not cover the whole of the Borough.
- support from Women's Royal Voluntary Service (WRVS) has reduced because of difficulties in recruiting a volunteer organiser
- difficulty of recruiting volunteers
- difficulty in recruiting a paid organiser to replace the volunteer organiser
- concern about failure to conform to environmental health legislation and financial regulations
- reducing demand
- no formal assessment of clients' needs
- clients begin receiving meals at 11.00 a.m. and clients with care packages may only just have been served breakfast at this hour
- meals are routinely left outside clients' homes by volunteers

- while only 3% of customers who completed questionnaires found the service below average or poor a higher percentage of those interviewed expressed concern about the quality and choice of meals and regular complaints are received
- the service is valued by Social Services Managers but they would like to see it extended to 7 days per week
- volunteers feel undervalued and unsupported
- staff experience particular difficulties when they are let down by volunteers at short notice
- many customers value the personal contact with volunteers delivering the meal
- discussions with the WRVS did not produce proposals to resolve difficulties

Performance Plan

- The current service provided by the WRVS will be replaced by a hot meals service provided by a company called 'Apetito' during the financial year 2001/02.
- Assessment criteria will be set and an assessment of existing and new clients will be made to determine whether a hot meal is required. Clients who do not need this service will be offered access to a frozen meals service.
- A range of luxury meals will also be offered to customers without an assessment procedure.
- The new service will be managed from the Park Barn Centre. A new office and freezer storage will be provided at Park Barn Centre to facilitate this.
- Independent budgets will be set up for the provision of meals.
- Monthly invoicing will be introduced for the service.
- The work carried out by volunteers is valued and it is intended that their services should be retained. Some volunteers will be retained as reserve drivers. Those who are not required as drivers will be offered an opportunity to assist in the Councils day centres or sheltered housing.
- The provision of an enhanced visiting service through Age Concern Guildford will be explored.
- The charge for Meals on Wheels and day centre meals of £2.40 will remain unchanged for 2001/02.
- An enhanced information leaflet will be produced.
- A full risk assessment will be carried out
- The introduction of a seven day week service will be investigated during 2002/03
- The need for an all day service to include breakfast and tea will be investigated during 2002/03
- A training programme will be provided for staff

- Meals on Wheels performance indicators will be introduced and monitored monthly to include:
 - Satisfaction levels
 - Response times to referrals
 - Financial collection targets
 - Cost per meal
 - Numbers of customers

- A five year action plan will be produced

