

## **Option Appraisal for Proportionate Assessments.**

This paper outlines possible options for future delivery of Adult Social Care assessments under the Care Act 2014 (“the Act”) which is being considered by Southampton City Council Officers.

### Background/Current Situation

The Act is a significant piece of legislation, which bring the complex web of adult social care law into a single statute. It aims to transform both the social care system and its funding. The Act comes into force in April 2015 however a number of funding reforms come into force in April 2016.

Under Section 9 of the Act the Local Authority must carry out an assessment of an adult if it appears they have needs for care and support and identify what these needs are.

Under the Act’s statutory guidance and the Regulations it confirms that any assessment must be carried out in an appropriate and proportionate manner to the needs and circumstances of the individual and ensure that the individual is able to participate in the process and the LA must take into account the wishes and preferences of the individual, the outcome they seek and the severity and overall extent of the individual’s needs.

Although the Act places a statutory duty on the LA to carry out these assessment it is in the discretion of the LA as to how it meets this duty depending on the individual circumstances so long as the LA takes into account the Act, Guidance and Regulations and also has due regard to certain key principles which are:

- The principle of well-being. Any decision that the local authority makes must now promote an adult’s wellbeing.
- Preventative services must be provided to prevent, delay and reduce the development of care and support needs.
- Integration must be focused upon to ensure that any Local Authority integrate with Health Services; particularly where the integration promotes wellbeing, prevents or delays the development of need and improves the quality of support.
- Providing adults with choice over the support they receive. Different providers must be available to provide choice, quality, diversity and sustainability over the support that is provided. The choice available should be shaped by the demands of individuals, families and carers.

The statutory guidance makes it clear that the assessment may be carried out in a variety of different formats but the LA must not limit the formats as it must be appropriate and proportionate the individual.

### Options

#### **Option 1**

**To not provide any proportionate assessments** (the only assessment being offered would therefore be face to face).

## Positives

- Staff training would be simpler as only one requirement needs to be understood.
- Less development for IT systems such as PARIS as only one form need be developed.

## Negatives

- The act requires all assessments to be 'appropriate and proportionate'; should we not provide proportionate assessments SCC will not be compliant with legislation in April 2015 and the Council could face a legal challenge.
- Should all assessments provided be carried out in the most in-depth detail unnecessary resources (staff capacity and money) will needlessly be used up.
- Full assessments may polarise adults in need of care and support if we force them to forgo an entire assessment and don't tailor to meet their needs.

## Issues

- As a requirement of the Care Act is to provide proportionate assessments, following this option would result in non-compliance with the Act.

## Option 2

### **To provide proportionate assessments via means of phone in addition face to face assessments currently provided.**

## Positives

- This provision would link to current staff's skill sets and aligns with SCC's current provision.
- Some adults may prefer this format of assessment.
- Provision to provide assessments via phone are a cheaper alternative to face to face assessments.
- Phone assessments have the ability to be flexible to an individual's needs.

## Negatives

- While the Care Act supports phone assessments, it suggest that assessments should not be limited to this format
- Certain types of assessments (e.g. phone assessments) may pose risks for certain groups of adults. This may mean the assessment risk not fully exploring all the needs of an individual. A higher degree of training would be required to implement this method of assessment.
- Some people may not believe that phone assessments are an appropriate form of assessment.
- If the LA limit the assessment to only this format it is likely the Council could face a legal challenge as it would not be in the spirit of the Act.

## Issues

- Careful training is required to understand underlying conditions/requirement that may need care and support but do not appear obvious during a phone assessment.

### **Option 3**

**To provide proportionate assessments via means of online assessments in addition face to face assessments currently provided.**

#### Positives

- This provision would provide another alternative format of assessment that may be preferred by some adults.
- Online assessment would help streamline resources as by its nature as it is a screening process.
- Staff resource for carrying out the assessment is low/not required. (Note: the follow up from the online screening/assessment requires more staff resource).

#### Negatives

- This provision may provide an alternative format of assessment which some adults may not believe is appropriate. Additionally a large percentage of the adults with whom we work may not be computer literate and will find an online system difficult to use.
- While the Care Act supports on-line assessments, it suggest that assessments should not be limited to this format
- Some individuals may find that due to the difficulty they face with online assessments they require help and assistance in filling the form. Consideration must be given to resource implication of those who may not have an appropriate individual to help with the task.
- A robust and secure IT system is required to allow assessments to be undertaken and stored safely.
- Online assessments do not provide the flexibility that other forms of assessments provide.

#### Issues

- The reliability and security of an online provision needs to be given careful consideration. The method of how information is used to inform future care and support also needs careful consideration.

### **Option 4**

**Provide proportionate assessments via a combination of online, telephone and face to face assessments.**

It should be noted that the provision of these assessments are not intended to be a hierarchy where adults are expected to progress from one assessment to another, but that each point of entry will be able to highlight the level of need and appropriate actions taken from whatever the finding of the assessment is.

#### Positives

- The combination of assessments will mean that a higher proportion of adults will be able to undergo an assessment which meets their needs to the highest degree.

- This approach is supportive of the customer pathway desired by Adult Social Care at Southampton City Council. The outcome is a streamlined process which reduced wastage of staff resource and time.
- Assessments which can be described as 'resource heavy' are able to only be used and provided in suitable situations.
- The Statutory guidance suggests all assessments must be appropriate and proportionate and so a number of different formats should be available depending on the needs of the individual.

#### Negatives

- Communication regarding the types of assessments which are available needs careful management. We must be clear that individuals need not undergo a number of assessments and hierarchy of assessments does not exist.
- Recording of different types of assessments needs consideration. Should different PARIS forms be required this would create further work for other teams.
- To enable all types of assessment to be carried out successfully, a higher degree of staff training would be required. This needs to be built into the training schedule.

#### Recommendations

In conclusion, it is recommended that SCC pursue the fourth and final option provided by this option appraisal. The recommended option is therefore that SCC: **Provide proportionate assessments via a combination of online, telephone and face to face assessments.** This means that the current approach within Adult Social Care can be maintained. Furthermore this approach meets the statutory requirement within the Act. A number of considerations have been made as to how to mitigate risk and negative drawbacks which are raised through this option appraisal. The most significant drawback of implementing this approach would be the requirement for more in-depth training as a variety of different assessment skills would need to be covered in training for staff. However as this approach is already being implemented within Adult Social Care, training packages have already been considered and the majority of staff within Adult Social Care will already have the required skills to pursue this option.