



Committee's views on the proposed threshold for determining eligibility for social care services.

The Service Director of Adult Services reported that the Government viewed FACS as a central plank in its commitment to ensure that the national 'post-code lottery' of receiving and accessing social and health care services would be eliminated.

He stated that the new National Eligibility Framework consisted of four bands of eligibility, which described the seriousness of the risk to an individual's independence if their assessed needs for support were not addressed. These bands were:

- Critical
- Substantial
- Moderate
- Low

He stated that the bands had been set and defined by the Government and were designed to introduce consistency in eligibility bands amongst Council's across the Country. The report recommended that eligibility be pitched at a level to include all critical and substantial assessed needs. This threshold took into account the level of resources available.

Members of the Committee queried whether it was reasonable to exclude those with assessed needs of Moderate or Low. The Corporate Director stated that the threshold defined the level at which the Council was legally responsible for providing services. Those below the threshold could still receive services but were not among those that were prioritised.

In response to members' queries, the Service Director of Adult Services stated that the Council's 'Supporting People strategy' complemented this eligibility criteria, in that it promoted independence and provided some of the services needed by the Moderate and Low bands. For example, 'Supporting People' provided tenancy support services.

Members raised concerns that it was important that borderline cases were not pushed into the lower bands due to financial pressures. The Corporate Director stated that assessments could be challenged and would be open to interpretation case by case. Service users that were dissatisfied with their assessment could file a complaint through the Department's Complaints Procedure. The Service Director added that assessments were shared with service users and signed off by them, so it was ensured that they were satisfied with their assessment.

It was agreed that a recommendation be made to Cabinet that the Committee raised concerns about whether there were adequate safeguards/reviews in place for the application of the process.

RESOLVED:

- (1) The Scrutiny Committee supported the recommendation that the threshold of eligibility be pitched to include substantial and critical assessments. (as set out in Appendix A attached to the report.)
- (2) That the Cabinet Lead be asked to bring to Cabinet's attention the queries raised about safeguards and ask that he and the Cabinet keep this under review.

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