

**Equality Forum
5 July 2011
Q&A**

- 1. Geraldine Moore email: gmoore@ageuklancas.org.uk asked – what will happen to many current users of day support who find the costs too high – transport, lunches etc? Many older/disabled people are very fearful that services such as Fosterfields will no longer be available and loneliness and isolation will increase.**

Response received from Lancashire County Council is as follows:

I appreciate your concern at the impact of the new charging policy and the difficulties faced when charges are increased, particularly for people on fixed incomes. We consulted as widely as we could about the need to increase charges. Questionnaires were sent to a sample of service users and other affected parties, it was available online on the county council website and four well attended public meetings were held across Lancashire. The recipients of the questionnaires represented a cross section of our service users. They were older people; adults of working age with different needs; those who are not required to pay charges; those whose charge is based on their weekly income and those who are required to pay the maximum charge.

Lancashire County Council must reduce its spending by almost £180 million over the next three years. The county council must balance the needs of many different vulnerable groups, including older people, adults with learning difficulties, children at risk of abuse, people at risk of rural isolation and vulnerable road users to name but a few. This is why some 53% of the savings needed in 2011/12 will be made by efficiencies through different ways of working, reducing management costs, reducing bureaucracy and increasing charges. Over the next three years almost half of the savings needed will be met from these sources.

In the area of adult social care, the county council had to actively consider a number of actions, including raising the charges people are asked to pay for services. The reality is we cannot afford to deliver the services in the same way and to the same level as we have in the past. We believe that we need to target our resources

effectively towards the most vulnerable people and that people who use our services should contribute towards them, if they can afford to. In particular, the county council has heavily subsidised day care services for a number of years, and to a much greater extent than other social care services. For example under the previous charging policy the standard price paid by the county council to care agencies for home care was £11.96 per hour and the charge levied on users of the service was £11 per hour, whereas the price paid to agencies for the provision of day care was £30.75 per session and the charge levied on users was a maximum of £5.

I realise that some service users may choose to no longer attend day centres rather than pay the increased charges. To mitigate this, the county council is limiting the increase in charges anyone is asked to pay in 2011/12. We also offer a financial reassessment if needed to make sure that people can afford to meet the charge being levied and are claiming all state benefits to which they are entitled. Additionally, service users contacting the county council with a view to cancelling services are offered advice on alternative options available to them. My officers are closely monitoring the number of cancellations and the impact on providers of day care services.

We recognise that these changes may produce significant increases for some existing service users particularly those who have advised that they have savings of over £23,250. If a person feels that their financial circumstances have changed, a further financial assessment can be carried out, to ensure that liability for charges has been correctly assessed. In particular if a person's savings are less than £23,250 then they may not be required to meet the full cost of the service.

I hope that you now understand better the position we are in and why we need to change how we charge for services. However if you still have any concerns at all please contact the Finance Team on 01772 531149. Additional information can also be accessed on our website -www.lancashire.gov.uk under Changes to Adult Social Care.

We are monitoring the impact of the changes to our services. People may contact us by e-mailing: Changestomycare@lancashire.gov.uk

We deliberately opted for an email address as our main communications channel for feedback because from past experience, many service users and their families (who often reply on their relatives' behalf) do find it easy and accessible to use.

Alternatively, people can write to:

Changes to my Care
Room 228
East Cliff
Lancashire County Council
Preston
PR1 3EA

2. **Yvonne Curwen email: yvonnecurwen@btopenworld.com asked: What was happening to Astley Hall Farmhouse (CVS building)?**

Response from Chorley Council is as follows:

We are in the process of undertaking some market testing to look at alternative uses for the farmhouse. We expect this to be completed in the next 6 months. We are considering options that will generate income and complement the offer of the other facilities such as Cafe Ambio and Astley Hall – examples would include a farm shop or a garden centre.

3. **Marel Urry email: marel.urry@tesco.net asked about Lancashire County Council Library service – trailer/mobile library service to rural areas. After a period of consultation 2009-2010, the trailer library service was replaced by a mobile library van operating a reduced service from 1 July 2010. Rural areas such as Brindle, Hoghton, Bretherton and Croston went from a weekly 12 hour shared service to 3 hours fortnightly – despite a high number of service users. This worked well until April/May when Easter holidays/public holidays etc took 3 weeks out of the provision. In June the van came to Gregson Lane on only one Friday. The Library Service rang regular users to individually tell them the van could not be in service on 17 June. On 1 July (the next visit) users were told the next visit would be 29 July provisionally – another 4 week gap. The reason given was that the routes and provisions was being reconsidered as fewer people were using the service. This is**

not surprising as we have only had 1/3 of the promised provision. Many users are giving up as the mobile library had been cancelled at such short notice that they mistakenly believe the service had been withdrawn through poor communication. Please could you enquire what are the long term plans for the mobile library provisions for the rural areas?

Could you also let the Equality Forum know what the are the current levels of provisions – and cuts to the Lancashire Library Services and Chorley Borough Library for all age, social, rural and community groups. I know this is a big ask, but from really readers to silver surfer classes many of the excellent provisions of the Library Service seem to be disappearing. Those living in the rural/remote areas or with physical or social needs seem to be particularly hardest hit as are many disadvantaged groups under our equality strands.

Response received from Lancashire County Council is as follows:

Thank you for the opportunity to update you on the position about the mobile library service. If it is still primarily the ex-Trailer sites that you are interested in, the position remains unchanged and there is little new to add, though the bullet points below provide you with an update on the overall picture following the implementation of the Mobile Library Review:

- The Mobile Library Review was implemented earlier than originally anticipated, with the old routes going out for the last time in the weeks leading up to the 1 July and the new routes starting on Monday 18 July.
- All existing stops with regular customers are still receiving a service, though the day and times of operation have probably changed.
- Requests for new stops have been accommodated where possible.
- The route network is now operated by nine vehicles rather than eleven as the routes have all been redrawn to operate in the most efficient manner possible and stop durations have been reviewed to reflect the level of business at each.
- Because of a misunderstanding, there were some problems in the south of the County in notifying customers of the day and time of their next call when the new routes came into operation. These have now all been resolved.

- The three ex-Trailer stops are continuing exactly as before, with service provided for half a day per fortnight at the same times as previously. The Croston times had already altered to make this a morning rather than an afternoon stop. Anecdotal evidence from the mobile library staff suggests that this remains the quietest of the three stops.
- The location of the Croston stop has been changed from the ex-Trailer site to the car park of the Lord Nelson pub, thanks to the co-operation of the licensee. This is adjacent to the old stop, but may be slightly more visible from Town Road, which could attract extra customers. No-one should be inconvenienced by this change.
- The new routes will be reviewed after six months of operation. This is not with the intention of making further major changes – merely tidying up what we have already done and changing anything which has proved problematic operationally.
- At the moment there are no plans for any further review of mobile services. I suspect this means that the routes will effectively continue on the current basis until at least March 2013. I cannot, however, absolutely guarantee this as so much is dependent on the County Council's financial position.

I hope that this helps. Basically customers at Croston, Gregson Lane and Banks should be receiving a service almost exactly as before.

4. Judith Daniels asked “What is the latest position on town centre A Boards obstructing pavements?”

A review of highways issues in the borough has recently been completed by the Council’s Overview and Scrutiny committee. This highlighted issues around the use of advertising boards and overhanging vegetation that cause obstructions. The Executive cabinet have now asked officers to continue to make arrangements to transfer enforcement powers from Lancashire County Council to Chorley Council. Chorley Council is also continuing to work with town centre traders to ensure they are aware of the problems that ‘A’ boards can cause visitors.

5. Please can you provide an update on the provision of wheelchair swings? Barry Moss

The swing which was suitable for wheelchairs and used to be located at Coronation recreation ground was removed after it was damaged. It has been replaced by a basket swing, which is suitable for wheelchair users but does not attach the wheelchair to the swing itself.

The decision to not replace the original swing on a like-for-like basis was taken because advice was that the wheelchair specific swings were more suited for more controlled environments (such as schools), as any misuse or damage to the equipment can result in serious injuries. In addition, the basket swing allows all children to play together on the same equipment.

Unfortunately, the newly installed basket swing has been vandalised, and is awaiting refurbishment following the damage.

If Mr Moss would like to meet relevant officers to discuss the provision of play equipment, we would be happy to arrange.