

LONDON BOROUGH OF HAMMERSMITH & FULHAM

Report to: Full Council

Date: 17/10/2024

Subject: Free Home Care – Ten Years On

Report of: Councillor Alex Sanderson, Deputy Leader and Councillor Rowan Ree, Cabinet Member for Finance and Reform

Report authors: Katharine Willmette, Director Adult Social Care and Katie Estdale, Head of Chief Executive's Office

Responsible Director: Jacqui McShannon, Executive Director of People and Sukvinder Kalsi, Executive Director of Finance and Corporate Services

SUMMARY

The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham has not charged for home care since 1 April 2015, the only local authority in England to do so.

Next year will mark a decade of this unique policy which has helped many thousands of residents over the years to receive the support they need to live as independently as possible and giving them the dignity of staying at home for as long as possible without the fear of decisions about potentially needing to sell their home or other financial sacrifices in order to afford their care needs.

Welcome advances and improvements in modern medicine and living standards means that many residents are living longer and healthier lives than ever. However this increased longevity can result in more complex health conditions that need health and social care support, which can be more costly for public finances.

Our free Home Care services are a great example of the values of the Council that focus on 'creating a compassionate Council', 'doing things with local residents, not to them' and 'building shared prosperity'.

The Council has made this a key priority and has only been able to deliver this policy because it has been 'ruthlessly financially efficient' over the years in the management of our financial resources.

Furthermore, it would not be possible to deliver this without the dedicated, professional and expert teams that provide these services and our contracted care providers that provide the home care services.

This policy has allowed us to strengthen our work with our many public sector partners (especially the NHS) and our third sector services. It is inevitable that the Council's policy has provided value for money for the public finances by avoiding the

need for more intensive interventions and has consequently avoided service and financial pressures on other public services (in particular our hospitals).

RECOMMENDATIONS

That Full Council:

1. Recognises the significant and major achievement in the delivery of the unique free home care services for our residents for almost a decade (in the face of major financial challenges).
 2. Acknowledges the work of members, staff, public partners and care providers in the delivery of the home care services.
 3. Notes that this policy of the Council has reduced the financial pressures on public finances and avoided costs for our public sector partners.
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Wards Affected: All

Our Values	Summary of how this report aligns to the H&F Corporate Plan and the H&F Values
Building shared prosperity	We work with local providers who offer local employment opportunities. Our providers are also expected to build connections with other local services including the voluntary sector.
Creating a compassionate and inclusive council	Free home care is a service of compassion, and supports some of our most vulnerable residents to live as independently as possible. We are also compassionate to our care force, insisting on payment of the London Living Wage.
Doing things with local residents, not to them	Home care packages are agreed with residents and their families to help maximise and maintain their independence. Where preferred, residents are given the power to organise their own care with the money provided directly to them. Residents have also been invited to help codesign the new contracts for when the current ones end to take into account their feedback and experiences.
Being ruthlessly financially efficient	Although the costs of home care have increased, both in terms of the cost of care, and the amount of care needed by our population, robust financial management and review of packages takes place to ensure proper use of resources. An ECM system provides a live feed on the activity on home care council contracts to enable oversight of quality and spend.

Taking pride in H&F	We are proud to be the only council in England to not charge and this report recommends celebrating this decade milestone.
Rising to the challenge of the climate and ecological emergency	We work with local care providers in a patch model which minimises travel time and distance for carers between appointments to reduce the service's carbon footprint.

Background Papers Used in Preparing This Report

Report for Full Council, 25 February 2015 – Abolition of Charging for Home Care Services

DETAILED ANALYSIS

1. The London Borough of Hammersmith & Fulham is the only council in the country to offer free home care and one of the first councils in the country to have a vision of independent living coproduced with residents. Our independent living strategy, the inclusion of which was a recommendation from the Disabled People's Commission, states as its vision that "Our work will seek to promote, protect the fulfil the rights of Disabled residents to live independently in the community and to secure their full inclusion, contribution, and participation in all aspects of social and economic life".
2. The abolition of charging was brought into effect in H&F from 1 April 2015 to coincide with the introduction of the national Care Act 2014, the most significant piece of legislation in the care sector since the introduction of the welfare state in the 1940s. The Care Act replaced some 30 acts of parliament and various key reviews and reforms which were piecemeal pieces introduced over a period of 70 years. Before the Care Act, there was no single national eligibility threshold, which meant no continuity of care if moving areas.
3. Support at home can include carers, equipment and technology alongside a resident's wider support network. Residents are assessed, and based on their level of needs (which is assessed using a national framework), provided a personal budget for their care. Residents may choose to secure traditional support through care organised by a provider contracted by the council, or to choose their own care arrangements by handing their personal budget to them to manage themselves with support if needed (a direct payment).
4. Currently 2,855 H&F residents are supported by social care with 1,557 receiving homecare and 573 residents arranging their own support at home including employing carers via a Direct Payments. Rigorous financial management and care reviews mean we are still able to provide this within budget, although each year this becomes more challenging.
5. The free home care policy brings additional financial benefits to residents, the council and the NHS. The borough has a very low rate of people entering care

homes because they are able to remain at home longer. We have recently started working with Aston University to try and quantify the overall impact of the free home care policy.

6. We are always striving to better our model of delivery, as outlined in the administration's 2022 manifesto pledge to improve the quality of care so that residents have carers who are "consistent, well trained, regular, punctual and knowledgeable about individual residents' needs".

LIST OF APPENDICES

None.