Maximising Independence

The challenge

Providing quality social care that promotes wellbeing and ensures the best possible outcomes for people is becoming ever more challenging. Government funding has been falling while the population is growing and people are living longer with more complex conditions. This is happening in a period of rapid social, economic and technological change bringing new problems alongside new opportunities.

Doing our best for people in these challenging times means responding to people’s needs differently.

Successive governments have wrestled with the problem of finding a fair and sustainable way to fund long term care without reaching a consensus. The current government are developing proposals to be published as a green paper in the summer of 2018 but even if a deliverable solution is finally reached, implementation is likely to take years rather than months.

In this context we face a stark choice - either:

- Do less of the same, cutting the existing service model more each year, squeezing costs and diluting services; or
- Fundamentally re-think and re-design what we do, responding to needs, and work with care providers and partners in new ways

Over the last few years we have attempted to re-design services and the way in which we respond to the need for care or support but have often found ourselves forced by the scale and pace of the reductions in funding to cut more than we would like. We have achieved a great deal in a very challenging context but we will need to do even better in the next phase, achieving a genuine transformation, if the people we serve are to achieve the best possible outcomes within the resources available.

Our Vision

We want to promote wellbeing by helping people in North Somerset to be as independent as possible for as long possible.

This is what people want for themselves but it is also what we need to achieve if we are to continue to provide good quality, timely, care and support services for a rapidly growing and aging population.

Being independent means being able to live your own life as part of your community, making your own choices and decisions, living if possible in your own home or with your family, and not having to rely on others more than necessary for your safety and wellbeing, both physical and mental.

Our New Offer

Each of us can achieve different levels of independence at different points in our lives, and the level of support we need from our family, community or services will go up or down.
We have identified four levels of independence shown in the diagram overleaf. For each level we will provide a different offer, aiming to maintain the person at the lowest level as possible, and if their needs increase, to help them to quickly return to a lower level of support if possible.

We will work with partners and providers to commission the right advice, support and services at each level of independence, so that people get the right response at each stage, and the whole health and care system works together with families and communities to promote independence. This includes continuing to lead an effective multi-agency safeguarding system which strives to prevent neglect and abuse and acts quickly to stop it if it happens.

When residents or families approach us for advice, information or support we will first talk with them about what they can do for themselves and how their family, carer or wider social network can support them to be as independent as possible. We will also talk about any community or voluntary services that can support them.

We know that people want to remain as independent as possible and retain their dignity and pride in knowing that they can care for themselves. It is easier for people to stay independent if they have good community networks, so we will always encourage people to maintain or, if they are becoming socially isolated, to renew, their links with family members, friends, neighbours and community groups like clubs. If adults need support with personal care or maintaining their safety at home, we will always talk with them about providing equipment. Equipment can range from a simple walking aid, to a life line pendant or a costly item like a ceiling track hoist and will often be sufficient to meet someone’s needs. If a package of care and support is needed in addition to equipment we will assess for eligible social care needs and a financial assessment will determine if a charge will be applied for the services provided.

In determining what services are needed, we will only provide for assessed needs and any services that the council provides will be alongside, not instead of, family and community support. People may have to source support from their family or carers or pay for it themselves. Services will usually be short term and intended to bring people back to full independence. Long term care and support will only be provided to people with enduring conditions and people will often have to source some support from families or carers or pay for it themselves.
In working with people to assess what care and support is needed, the council must take account of best value and so will look at the most cost effective way of meeting an individual’s care needs. For people with long term care and support needs we may offer them a direct payment so that they can employ someone to carry out their care and support. If a person chooses to take a direct payment and the cost of their chosen provider is more than the cost that the council can commission the service, the person or their family will be responsible for meeting the additional cost.

Strong partnerships and effective commissioning are essential to achieving our vision. This will include improving integration between health and social care, building community capacity, shaping the market to ensure that when people do need services sufficient choice and quality is available locally, and working with care providers as partners in maximising independence. Our approach to commissioning will be evidence based and user-centred. The Housing with support strategy, and forthcoming Assistive Technology strategy, will ensure we are ambitious in supporting innovation and transformation in service delivery.

The council recognizes the enormous contribution of unpaid carers and will offer an individual assessment to all carers to determine eligibility for a service either in their own right or to support a relative or loved one.

We remain committed to providing timely and effective reablement services to return people to a higher level of independence as quickly as possible (indicated by the arrows in the diagram). We will also support carers to be independent themselves and to support the people they care for in the community.

We will continue to take our legal responsibilities for safeguarding extremely seriously and whenever we think an adult with care and support needs may be at risk of abuse or neglect we will ensure that enquiries are made to find out what action is needed to protect them.

Our Values

We will be changing many things but we will not be changing our values, which are essential to achieving good outcomes for people. The Council’s values like ‘putting customers first’ and ‘getting things done’ apply equally to all our services, but there are also specific values relevant to social care professions and roles:

- We will put people first and put them at the centre of what we do;
- We will treat people with dignity and respect, valuing their individuality and diversity;
- We will empower people, giving them as much choice and control as possible, maximising their independence, consistent with their safety and wellbeing;
- We will ensure that people are protected from abuse and neglect and we will protect the rights of people whose mental capacity is reduced by ill health or disability;
- We will work in partnership with our clients, their carers, the voluntary and community sector, and health organisations;
- We will ensure that the services which we provide, arrange or commission are of good quality;
- We will ensure that services are provided consistently and in line with standards, so that people know what to expect, and people with similar needs get a similar response;
- We will manage resources well on behalf of the community, conscious that if someone receives a service they don’t need, it may not be there for someone who does.
Our Programme

To achieve our vision in the challenging context described we need a bespoke transformation programme for adult social care. We call this programme *Maximising Independence* (TBC) and it consists of a series of projects which together aim to do just that.

The design of the programme is informed by some key assumptions:

- The funding position for local authorities is unlikely to improve significantly in the next few years;
- The national system for funding social care needs radical reform and until this is addressed we will continue to face severe budget pressures;
- Our goal is to get spending back on a sustainable trajectory but given the context we can’t guarantee how quickly this can be achieved. However the further we can get towards our goal the better it will be for our clients and the community as a whole;
- We have limited resources to support change projects. Therefore we need to prioritise carefully and focus on those things which will have the most impact;
- Most of the resource to deliver the programme will have to be re-directed from other priorities. This will have an impact;
- Managing projects in a programme is the most efficient and effective way to ensure that they deliver on time and in budget; that the expected benefits are realised and that interdependencies are identified and managed effectively.

To avoid spreading our effort too thinly we will focus our effort on a few high impact projects:

- Right response – continue to re-design our ‘front door’ and pathways, including the re-design of the SPA and the community clinic model, reducing the number of unnecessary assessments, helping people to help themselves whenever possible;
- Assistive technology – making the most of new technologies to support people to be as independent as possible and ensuring that the systems, processes and services are there to support this;
- Accommodation options – scaling up extra-care housing, shared lives and other alternatives to residential and nursing homes;
- Reviews – overhauling our approach to reviews so that whatever we provide, whether a personal budget or service, continues only for as long as needed and is effective in increasing independence;
- Empowering Communities – empowering communities and volunteers to play a bigger role in supporting people, building on the community connect approach;
- Systems and processes – replacing our AIS system with Liquid Logic and using this opportunity to review, streamline and standardise our key business processes, achieving a step change in our use of information;
- Savings Delivery – maximising delivery of existing MTFP savings, cost avoidance and income plans through robust monitoring and management.