

**ADULT SERVICES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE – 2 DECEMBER 2009**

**THE MONEY MANAGEMENT SERVICE**

**Report by the Head of Shared Services**

**Background to Report**

1. In December 2008, the Social & Community Services Scrutiny Committee received an initial report on the operation of the Money Management Service. The Adult Services Scrutiny Committee received a follow up report at its meeting in July 2009. This report highlighted on-going issues in the delivery of the service, and covered how these issues were being addressed by the introduction of new technology, and improved working arrangements. The Committee discussed the demands on the service, which were likely to increase, and the implications of this, together with the efficiency savings target to be met by the Service. The Committee asked for a further report to be brought to its December meeting prior to the setting of the 2010 budget, so that it could review whether the situation had improved.
2. In particular, the Committee asked for information on the implementation of the specialist money management database, the results of the planned benchmarking work to be undertaken by the Association of Public Authority Deputies and the new joint Money Management Panel. The Committee wished to know how these factors were impacting on the waiting list for the service, and the numbers of clients supported to return to live independently in the community.

**Developments since the July Report**

3. Since the July Committee meeting, the Money Management Team has begun to use the specialist Money Management Database, as part of an extended testing period. Unfortunately, the team has continued to experience problems with the system throughout this extended period, and at the time of writing this report, has been unable to sign off the system as fit for day to day operational use. The problems are all with the system supplier for resolution. The system supplier is due to visit Oxford before this Committee's December meeting and it is hoped that it will be possible to update the Committee on the outstanding issues, and a target sign off date.
4. There are two key areas which need to be resolved before the system can be signed off as fit for purpose. The first relates to the automatic reconciliation of the client's individual bank account records, with the account information held on their database record. This is a critical control check to ensure each client's resources are properly protected. The new system was supposed to reduce the amount of manual effort involved, and provide a more timely reconciliation than the old manual process.

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5. The second outstanding area is the report generator for the system, which is seen as essential for providing the management information for the strategic management of the service, as well as key control data for managing individual cases. At present all information is held on spreadsheets, and is difficult to interrogate.
6. Given the current state of the implementation, it is fair to say that no real benefits to service delivery have yet been realised from the database.
7. It is also unfortunate that the Association of Public Authority Deputies have delayed the circulation of their benchmarking questionnaire. At the present time we are still awaiting the survey forms to complete, so benchmarking data is not now expected until 2010.
8. The new Joint Money Management Review Panel has met, and has agreed its terms of reference. These include:
  - to review the management of the waiting list, and to develop recommended action plans to address unacceptable waiting times;
  - to review the Service Level Agreement, ensuring performance levels are achieved, and customer satisfaction scores monitored;
  - to oversee the review of existing clients, and to ensure that planned outcomes are being delivered;
  - to review the processes and systems surrounding the money management function, across both care management and money management;
  - to ensure that the financial advice service offered by our partner bodies is consistent with the money management service, and that adequate advice services are being signposted and provided;
  - to review safeguarding issues, and the management of financial abuse.
9. It is intended that future Panel meetings will be supported in meeting these responsibilities through the regular flow of management information. At present the Panel's effectiveness is restricted by the lack of readily available management information, pending the delivery of the report suite from the new database.
10. At the time of the July report, the Money Management Team employed 11.1fte staff against an approved establishment of 13.9fte. As highlighted in the previous reports, the approved establishment is set to reduce to 11.9fte as part of the delivery of the Shared Services business case savings.
11. Since July, the Team have successfully recruited a new case officer, and with adjustments in part time hours elsewhere, the Team is now operating at its on-going established level of 11.9fte.
12. The increase in case officer hours following this new recruitment has allowed the waiting list to be reduced from 56 at the time of the last report, to 31. The increased capacity has also assisted the process for taking up all urgent cases, including financial abuse cases, and it remains the situation that these cases are picked up immediately, without delay.

## Conclusion

13. Whilst it is disappointing that final sign off of the specialist database is still outstanding, it does seem that the Money Management Team is managing the increased demands on the service, as measured through the reduction in the waiting list.
14. Until the new database is fully operational though, there does remain the risk that the reduction in the waiting list is at the expense of service quality. In the absence of readily available clear and consistent management information, it cannot be readily confirmed that the service is fully meeting the needs of clients as set out initially in the referral from Care Management. Given the nature of the clients and the lack of suitable alternative appointees/deputies, the service cannot rely on complaints to indicate a drop in service standards.
15. The establishment of the new Joint Money Management Review Panel will provide a better oversight of the service and a forum for the strategic development of the service. At this stage, and particularly in light of the financial circumstances facing the Council, there does not appear to be any compelling evidence to suggest a need for additional resources for this service.

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Background Papers: Nil

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