

AUDIT COMMITTEE – 20 JANUARY 2010

UPDATE ON WORK ON FAIRER CHARGING INCOME

Report by Director for Social & Community Services and
Assistant Chief Executive & Chief Finance Officer

Introduction

1. At the October 2009 meeting of the Audit Working Group, Officers set out a detailed action plan for the remaining actions to be completed in order to improve the end to end fairer charging assessment process, with a view to reducing (or eliminating) the amount of foregone income.
2. This report updates Members on the progress against the action plan, and the impact of these and previous actions on the levels of foregone income. This report has come straight to the Audit Committee following the cancellation of the Audit Working Group during the difficult weather conditions.

Summary of work done since last Audit Working Group

3. The main areas of work undertaken since the last meeting of the Audit working group can be summarised under a number of headings as follows:

Key ideas

- Fairer Charging referral to be sent to the Financial Assessment Team in Shared Services
- Date the referral is sent to be recorded on the Service requisition
- Manager authorising service requisition to check this date is filled in and to investigate if not
- Date sent to be recorded on SWIFT
- Home Support Procurement Officers to consistently record all home support services on SWIFT, whether internal or external
- Fairer Charging team to compare SWIFT and Abacus for home support clients (based on the above SWIFT entries)

Key Benefits

- Ensuring sending of Fairer Charging referrals are complete and timely
- Comparing home support service starts on SWIFT to the “referral sent” recording will highlight those where referrals are still not sent before care starts
- Comparing SWIFT entries to Abacus will ensure that any clients without assessment should be highlighted much more quickly, ensuring no long delays
- Better statistics on the timeliness of the process and where delays are occurring.

Process documentation produced

- Consulted with operational staff
- High level support map produced
- Key rules document prepared, referenced to the process map
- So only 2 pages for simplicity

Forms

- Amended domiciliary care service requisition – to add box to record when Fairer Charging referral was sent
- Amended Fairer Charging referral – to ask care teams for prior information useful in arranging and prioritising visits eg whether client likely to be full cost, whether representatives/ power of attorney needs to be present during the financial assessment visit

SWIFT recording

- Added new assessment outcome to record the date the Fairer Charging referral was sent
- Updated assessment outcomes guidance

Reports

- Updated SWIFT report regarding new SWIFT services that is checked by the Fairer Charging team:
 - Date criterion changed from 7 to 14 days
 - More Fairer Charged services added
 - Selected on date service record was created rather than the service start date – sometimes backdated services were missed
- New report developed to show Home Support services within a date range, checked to see if referrals are sent. This report can also be picked up by the Fairer Charging team for checking against Abacus.
 - Using one report for two purposes ensures we are all looking at the same information
 - Better control through the system; we can pick up errors earlier and get a feel for how long this process should take

Next Steps

4. The two main actions which are planned to be completed between now and the end of the financial year are the introduction of nominal charges, and the implementation of new mobile working tools for the financial assessment officers.
5. The introduction of nominal charges has been agreed in principle, and the next three months will be spent agreeing the final detail of the arrangements (particularly to ensure care managers fully understand the process, and are in a position to fully explain the charge to the clients, and manage cases where

clients look to withdraw from care where they do not understand the process). Nominal charges will not eliminate foregone income, but will reduce the level built into the current arrangements, whereby it is not feasible to complete a financial assessment before care starts.

6. The implementation of new mobile working tools for the financial assessment officers will provide two benefits to the management of fairer charging income. Firstly, it will reduce the current assessment process by a week on average, by allowing the assessment to be completed within the client's home. The second benefit will be improvements in the management information readily available and the ability to eliminate the requirement on a series of stand alone spreadsheets. A number of the issues identified to date have resulted from the lack of a comprehensive management information system and the need to reconcile data between spreadsheets, Swift and Abacus. The new software should enable full management reporting from Abacus.

Latest Performance Data

7. At the last Audit Working Group, Officers did discuss alternative ways of presenting the data on foregone income in the future which would better represent the trends in performance. Unfortunately, in the absence of the new software, and given the volume of data held across various spreadsheets, it has not been possible to complete this exercise for this meeting.
8. The Audit Working Group did though also request data on trends in how long assessments were taking to be completed. This data also provides a key measure of the effectiveness of service performance. The table below shows the numbers of assessments completed in the quarter October-December 2009, analysed by the time from care starting to assessments completed.

Time from Care Starting to Assessment	Number of Assessments	Total Days	% of total Assessments	% of total Assessments July 2009
No Delay	179	0	37.8	27.5
1 Month	178	2,955	37.6	18.4
2 Months	86	3,760	18.1	21.1
3 Months	22	1,542	4.6	16.5
Over 3 Months	9	4,123	1.9	16.5
Totals	474	12,380	100.0	100.0

9. These figures show an increase of 10% of all assessments completed before care starts, with 75% of all assessments now completed within a month of care starting, compared to just 45% in July.
10. The improvements in performance stem from a number of improvements in the process in booking assessments, chasing up where visits have been

delayed, and writing to clients with a provisional full cost assessment where the assessment visit is unduly delayed.

11. The data on average time for the completion of assessments in the last 3 months of 2009 shows a similar level of improvement. The average delay for financial assessments completed in October to December was 23.4 days, compared to an average across the whole of 2009 of 38.1 days.
12. From a fairly static position where assessments were taking on average around 40 days from the start of care to complete, October's figure fell to 30 days, with further falls in November and December to 17 and 21 days respectively.
13. Using the old measure of foregone income also shows significant improvement in performance over the last three months of 2009. The level of foregone income per completed assessment for October-December was around 50% of levels for earlier in the year.
14. The level of assessments actually completed in November and December was down on previous months. One concern therefore is that the improving trend in the above figures will be reversed at the start of 2010. However, further analysis of the management data now collected indicates that at the time of writing this report there were only 11 clients identified as having care starting before December where neither a visit has been booked, nor a provisional full cost assessment letter sent out. Of these, 4 clients are currently in hospital, 2 have subsequently stopped care, 3 are unlikely to be making a contribution based on information already held, and the last 2 are being chased to agree a visit date and will be sent a provisional full cost assessment if this cannot be agreed this week.

Conclusion

15. The above figures suggest that the actions previously taken and reported to the Audit Working Group, plus those further actions detailed in this report are having the desired consequences in terms of improving the effectiveness of the fairer charging assessment process, as measured in terms of time taken to complete assessments, and the levels of foregone income.
16. The figures suggest that further improvement is still possible, and two key actions are planned for implementation at the start of the new financial year which should bring further reductions in the levels of foregone income. These improvements should also improve the management information available to officers managing the service, and for future reports to this Audit Working Group if required. To enable meaningful data to be collated from these new reports, it is suggested that if any further performance report is required on the levels of foregone income, then this is delayed to a summer meeting of the Audit Working Group. Clearly Officers would maintain a rigorous review of available data in the meantime.

RECOMMENDATION

17. **The Committee are RECOMMENDED to note the report.**

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Background Papers; Nil

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