

EAST AYRSHIRE COUNCIL

CUMNOCK AREA LOCAL COMMITTEE – 25 AUGUST 2005

LOCAL ISSUE – MEALS AT HOME SERVICE

Report by Executive Director of Educational and Social services

1. PURPOSE OF THIS REPORT

- 1.1 To advise the Local Committee on development of the Community Meals Service.

2. BACKGROUND

- 2.1 Local authorities have a mandatory requirement to ensure that services provide Best Value to members of the community. The Community Meal Service was reviewed in 2004 and this review highlighted that in some areas the current service was only available two days per week, with no service available at weekends or public holidays. The range of food which could be delivered was limited and the delivery time could only be during the day.
- 2.2 To address these issues the Council invited tenders that had to meet rigorous specifications. This included ensuring the availability of meals across the whole of East Ayrshire 365 days a year, to provide a choice of meals for service users and provide more flexibility which would allow service users to eat their meal when it suits them.

3. PROPOSED IMPROVEMENTS

- 3.1 A flexible and innovative new Meals at home service has been introduced throughout East Ayrshire after a contract was awarded to the well respected national company Apetito.
- 3.2 The successful bidder Apetito has a proven track record in the provision of meals at home to Vulnerable Older People and recently achieved the Queens award for enterprise.
- 3.3 They can accommodate special diets and ethnic meals. They have a broad menu range and will provide frozen foods to the service user based on their preferred selection. A freezer and microfix (microwave) will be provided in each persons home to ensure that the meals are stored and heated correctly.
- 3.4 Older People can now select what they want to eat and when they would like to eat it.

- 3.5 The key to this service is flexibility, safety and ease of use. The food package is supplied with a large number on the front of the box. The service user merely has to type this number in to the microfix key pads. The microfix accounts for heating the food and rest time after cooking.
- 3.6 Lunch clubs are not included in these changes. The new service focuses on vulnerable people in their own homes.

4. IMPLEMENTATION

- 4.1 People who have previously been assessed as requiring a meals service have been contacted regarding the changes and advised of how the transition to the new service will take place. Approximately 300 people are now using the service and they have been supported in making their menu selection and preparing to receive the new equipment by social work staff. Any additional support which the person may need with the implementation of the new service will be provided. It is anticipated that the service will be fully operational by the end of August 2005.
- 4.2 Implementation has been phased across the authority starting in the South. This area has been in need of an extended service and this will improve the equity of access to the meals at home service across the authority. Implementation began in June and is rolling across the authority with the intention of everyone receiving the new service by August 2005.
- 4.3 Many of the most vulnerable older people who receive this service currently receive a home care service. The availability of this meals service will allow homecare staff more time for personal care, communication and supporting people to be as independent as possible in their own home.
- 4.4 The majority of people receiving the service are very positive about the change. They particularly enjoy the extensive menu and the personal choice this offers. Some service users have experienced difficulties with the change and staff are supporting them through this.

5. CHARGING

- 5.1 At present service users pay £1.75 for a two course meal. This charge can be reduced through the new service to £1.56. The economies of scale which can be applied through a frozen meals service will benefit the service user.
- 5.2 There is also a three course meal available at £1.93 and service users can purchase additional meals if they wish to entertain friends and family.

6. SUMMARY OF BENEFITS

6.1

1. For the most vulnerable people the service will be available 7 days per week and will not be affected by weekends or public holidays.
2. The menu can be extensive through the frozen meals service and therefore provides greater variety and capacity to meet personal choices.
3. The Health and Safety requirements of the provision of meals can be more effectively adhered to through this service.
4. There will be equitable access to the service across the authority.
5. The requirements of special diets and ethnic meals can be accommodated.
6. The charge will reduce from £1.75 to £1.56 (for 2 courses) with £1.93 (for 3 courses) being good value for money in today's climate.

6.2 It is appreciated that change can be difficult for any of us, not least older people however the new system will be well supported by personal carers to ensure that the transition period causes as little disruption to service users as possible. Ongoing support from staff will be available to service users who need it. This is an exciting new era for the Meals at Home Service and we believe the new service will bring positive change to supporting people at home.

7. RECOMMENDATIONS

7.1 It is recommended that the Committee:

- (i) Note the contents of this report.

John Mulgrew
Executive Director (Educational and Social Services)

12 August 2005

LIST OF BACKGROUND PAPERS

Nil

Members wishing further information please contact Eddie Fraser, Senior Manager
Community Care, telephone: 01563 554825

IMPLEMENTATION OFFICER: JACKIE DONNELLY