

# Equality Impact Assessment

## Name of project/proposal

Meal on Wheels - proposed price increase

Contact name

Samantha Hudson

Department

Adult Services

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10 Jan 2017

## Purpose for project/proposal

Meals on Wheels is a 365 day countywide service which provides a two course hot meal to people aged over 55 years old in their own homes. The function of the service is to promote health and wellbeing of individuals by supporting and enabling people over the age of 55, to continue to live in their own homes by providing a hot, nutritionally balanced meal. In addition a welfare check is included which identifies any wellbeing and safety concerns.

The service currently supports 1794 customers and delivers up to 1300 hot meals a day. It is funded by contributions from individual customers and Adults' Health and Care Department.

The proposal is to continue the existing provision and cease direct funding of the service by implementing a full cost recovery model. This will mean that customers will move from the current charge per meal of £3.95 to £4.55 from 1 April 2017, an increase of 60 pence. This proposal would see an annual recurring saving of £235,000 to Adults' Health and Care department.

## Consultation

Has engagement or consultation been carried out? Yes

In December 2016 one thousand customers of Meals and Wheels were invited to complete a short questionnaire to share their views. The questionnaire asked for views on three proposed options to increase charges per meal of an:

1. Increase from £3.95 to £4.60
2. Increase from £3.95 to £5.50
3. Increase from £3.95 to £6.50

People were asked to state whether each of the three proposed price increases would be affordable, if it would mean they would purchase fewer meals or if it would result in them sourcing their meal from elsewhere.

409 completed questionnaires were returned. The findings of the questionnaires are as follows:

1. majority of respondents (80%) felt that £4.60 was an affordable price to pay for a meal. 11% said they would have to buy fewer meals. 9% said they would try to get their meals from elsewhere.
2. 35% said that an increase to £5.50 would be affordable. 30% said they would have to buy fewer meals. 35% said they would try to get their meals from elsewhere.
3. 19% said that an increase to £6.50 would be affordable. 22% said they would have to buy fewer meals. 59% said they would try to get their meal elsewhere.

## Statutory considerations

### Impact

Age	High
Disability	High
Sexual orientation	Low
Race	Low
Religion and belief	Low
Gender reassignment	Low
Sex	Medium
Marriage and civil partnership	Low
Pregnancy and maternity	Low

### Other policy considerations

Poverty	Medium
Rurality	Medium
Other factors	Medium
If other please describe	

Geographical impact All Hampshire  
Have you identified any medium or high impact?  Yes  No

## Equality statement

In carrying out the Equalities Impact Assessment, those characteristics that relate specifically to the people using the Meals on Wheels service have been specifically considered. These are age, gender and disability.

### Age

The service is only available to those aged 55 or over. 64% of active Meals on Wheels customers are aged 75 or over, with 36% aged between 55 and 75. There is no proposed change to the age group that the service will be offered to. Therefore there will be disproportionate impact on this age group.

### Disability

Disability is of high relevance to the service as the majority of people who access the service have either a physical or mental disability, including dementia, sensory condition and frailty. Of these a proportion will be unable to prepare a meal for themselves and require assistance to manage and maintain their own nutrition.

### Sex

It is acknowledged that this proposal would have a disproportionate impact on women. This however, is due to the fact there are more women than men using the Meals on Wheels service. However, it is also acknowledged that many widowed men use the service as their spouses had historically supported them.

### Poverty

In December 2016, 1028 customers bought a meal each day of the week. Customers relying on the service, who purchase meal each day of the week could see their weekly Meals on Wheels Costs rise to £31.85 from £27.65, an increase of £4.20 per week. It is noted that these proposals could impact the most vulnerable people financially; work has

been carried out to determine that this proposed price increase is broadly in line with prices elsewhere in the county. Indeed, other nearby local authorities charge significantly more than the proposed price increase for their Meals on Wheels service.

### **Other factors**

The change to a full cost recovery model may have an impact on the requirements for additional support for some customers who require support to consider the changes.

### **Have you identified any medium or high impact?**

Taking a full cost recovery model will bring the Meals on Wheels service in line with other County Council services. Such action will result in 1794 current customers paying 60p more for their meal.

The majority of customers are over 55 years of age, with physical or mental disabilities. Any changes in provision will have a high impact on this group of people. To mitigate the impact it will be necessary to provide clear information and advice to reduce concerns and support a smooth transition to the full cost recovery model. The Adults' Health and Care Team in HantsDirect will be available to offer a wellbeing check to help customers identify appropriate options. Particular care will be taken to support customers with additional support needs who will find the change difficult to understand and may need assistance in determining their options.

Some current customers will seek alternative options to source their meal either through a new supplier or alternative service. Where customers choose to attend a group activity to source their meal, such as a lunch club, there will be associated positive wellbeing benefits, through social interaction and taking part in stimulating activities.

To mitigate against the negative impacts of the changes a communication plan has been developed. The plan details actions which will help reassure customers. The plan will take full account of how to inform customers of the changes and will supply alternative local options. The options provided will take into account the needs of people with different dietary needs.

Date to review actions

06 Jun 2017

### **Final decision date**

Final decision date due  
Decision to be made by

17 Feb 2017  
Executive Member