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Review of Commercial Arrangements for the Home Support Service (HSS) contract with respect to monitoring and the option of using electronic monitoring of visits.

ECC has piloted a number of electronic time sheets systems over the years which showed limited benefit to the council and conflicted with the direction of travel away from “time and task” to outcomes.

ECC has promoted the use of electronic time sheets and our 2003 & 2005 Home Support Contracts had the following clause “Electronic time sheets are due to be introduced by Essex County Council during the life of the contract. The Service Provider will be required to implement and operate the new data recognition system when required by the Council”

There was an expectation from the block providers that ECC would fund the purchase and implementation of the electronic time sheet system, which was never our intention. Other large national providers raised concerns that ECC would enforce a system that was incompatible with their existing systems and that would lead to an inflexible and rigid approach.

The current position is that all our key Home Support providers operate electronic time sheet solutions that feed their payroll and billing systems for private users.

The new contracting arrangements implemented support the move towards personalisation moving away from the 'time and task' traditional timetabled individual visits, to a simple allocation of total weekly hours using one flexible diary.

This 'one diary' approach not only saves time for the key workers, the Budget Process Administrators, Service Placement Team (SPT) and managers at care validation stage but ensures greater flexibility for the service user giving them more choice and control over how their care needs are met.

Social workers assess the needs of a service user and identify the amount of hours necessary to meet those needs. ECC encourages the timing and duration of individual visits to be agreed and arranged flexibly between the service user and care provider. ECC will only stipulate timings and length of visits when absolutely required – for example with medication prompts. The duration of the visits is to be entirely decided between service user and the care provider in a way that is suitable and effective for meeting the assessed needs. Monitoring can only take the form of checking total hour and not individual visits.

However, if a care provider turns up late or doesn't stay the agreed time, service users should contact their social worker to report the incident. When the service user receives the invoice for their contribution to their care needs they should also check the accuracy and again raise any queries with their social worker or finance.

If the service user complaint regarding the performance of the provider is valid then these are referred to the Commercial Team. Some times missed visits are frustrated visits where the service user has not notified the provider of a hospital visit etc.

All concerns raised by service users, their families, social work teams, SPT and finance are collated regarding late visits, missed calls etc. The Commercial Team then investigates and seeks to remedy any concerns with the care providers. This process affords the Commercial Team the opportunity to highlight issue to care providers at an early stage so they can address them. It also allows trends to be picked up with any particular care provider or a group of care providers. The Commercial Team ensures that the most appropriate action is taken including referrals to the Quality Improvement Team and the Safeguarding Team and issuing breach notices to the care provider were necessary.

From the 20th February 2011, managed home support services are exclusively commissioned from the ranked provider lists (known as Best Value Ranked Lists - BVRLs). The principle of the BVRL's is that the care providers quality and price performance are combined every quarter to give them a ranking. ECC commission with the care providers in order of their rank (provider 1 is approached first, provider 2 second and so on). It is the care provider's performance that determines their rank on the HSS BVRL, so it is in the interest of the care provider to ensure visits are inline with that agreed with the service user.

The Commercial Team have regular Account Management meetings with Care Providers focussed on relationship building and addressing any issue that need to be resolved or progressed. Key Performance Indicators form a part of the discussion at these meetings and any issues with late, missed visits will be discussed in detail.

If an on-going issue for a particular service user can not be amicably resolved with the care provider then a new provider will be arranged for the service users. Alternatively, service users will be offered a personal budget as a cash payment in

lieu of services giving them more choice and control over planning and managing their support.