

Nottinghamshire County Council First Contact –Customer Services Centre (CSC)

1. Introduction

How can Councils reduce process at their point of First Contact to ensure it is efficient, effective and Care Act ready? What functions could be undertaken at the Customer Services Centre that are currently undertaken within adult social care teams?

The model below describes how one Council has streamlined its Customer Services Centre through the introduction of an Adult Access Service “triage” process and is further developing reduced process through a “self serve” facility which will give people the option to complete an “on line” assessment of needs.

2. Background information

Nottinghamshire has a CSC which responds to over 60,000 social care enquiries each year - 38% of which are for advice and information. The Council has restructured its CSC and established a “triage” process the key elements of which are:

- Identified Customer Services Advisors (level 2) who respond to all social care enquiries
- A range of tools and resources to assist “triage” in the form of “on screen ” information, scripts, process flow charts and assessment forms
- A multi disciplinary Adult Access Service who deal with more complex referrals and undertake a range of assessments previously completed within operational teams
- From March 2105 introduction of a “self serve” option at First Contact. A system where people have the information they need to take control of their care and support and choose the options that are right for them

What has been the impact on work flow? Over 75 % of social care enquiries into the CSC are now resolved at the front end reducing work flow into operational teams and freeing up professional staff to focus on more complex cases and providing the customer with a more timely and targeted response.

Findings

Nottinghamshire has developed a “specialist” CSC advisor role whose role is to identify needs and outcomes, establish priorities and the most effective pathway forward with an emphasis on promoting independence and well being. The advisors receive “on going” training about adult social care, have access to professional support and advice from the Adult Access Service plus coaching from senior advisors.

Tools and resources

The advisors have access to a number of tools to support their role:

- An ‘on line’ directory of universal and preventative services to support signposting

- “On screen” process flow charts to determine suitability for a direct referral into the Short Term Assessment and Reablement service (START) or into the Multi Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH)
In the past both such referrals would have been passed directly on to operational teams to process.
- A Contact Assessment.

“The new contact assessment form has streamlined our processes even further. The form was developed with input from practitioners and is consistent with information required for the Care Act. CSC advisors are confident using it knowing that all the information gathered is relevant. We will be involving customers who have used the new assessment in helping us to fine tune it over the next 2 months” Development Officer, Customer Development and Improvement CSC.

By including a prompt question about benefits advice in the new assessment the Council has seen people maximising their annual income from £47,165.56 in August 2014 up to £164,888.60 in September 2014. This prompt question has also reduced process further down the line as benefits are more likely to be in place at the point where a Community Care Assessment is completed enabling the financial assessment process to be more streamlined.

Adult Access Service (AAS)

More complex enquiries at the CSC are referred on to the multi disciplinary Adult Access Service who also undertake non-complex assessments, reviews and minor package amendments across both social work and occupational therapy. A number of initiatives within the AAS are further reducing process and diverting work away from front line teams, including:

- Identifying older adults undergoing pre-elective surgery who will require reablement potential upon discharge
- Occupational Therapy pilot to undertake non complex assessments and provide equipment
- Telephone assessments of non-complex occupational therapy assessments and assessment of eligibility for services.
- Minor adjustments to existing social care packages
- Carers telephone assessments

“Self Serve” Model

As part of the Councils channel shift towards encouraging people to help themselves a “self serve” option will be available on the Council’s website from March 2015, where people can access a wider range of universal information and advice from a more comprehensive “on line” Directory.

For more specialist advice people will have the option to complete an “on line” Contact Assessment which will provide a quicker indication of their care and support needs and eligibility for funded support. The “on line” form will undertake some of the prioritising of work currently undertaken by staff and will feed directly into the council’s computerised case management system. Where people have ineligible needs they will receive an “Information Prescription” and be signposted to the relevant information and advice pages on the directory.

4. Describe the minimum process

75 % of adult social care referrals are now resolved within the CSC/ AAS

People who contact the CSC have their enquiry dealt with in the simplest and least bureaucratic way.

People speak to a CSC advisor equipped with skills and knowledge to identify needs and outcomes, establish priorities and decide the most effective pathway forward.

CSC Advisors have access to “on screen” scripts and process flow charts to aid decision making and to an “on line” directory of information about universal and targeted services

Further triage of more complex cases and telephone assessments are completed within the multi disciplinary AAS

A Contact Assessment will be available to complete “on line” from March 2015 and will provide an indication of eligibility and an “information prescription”

By providing information in a variety of ways, including “on line” the Council aims to further speed up its First Contact process

Future web developments will enable users to complete e-forms, make appointments and payments online.

For more Information contact:

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Further information can be provided including Nottinghamshire On-Line Assessment and Information and Advice provision in relation to Adult Social Care- report (8.9.2014)