

Joint Area Committee – North - 25 November 2009

8. Report on work of Somerset Financial and Benefits Team (FAB)

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Purpose of the Report

To inform Members on the work of the Somerset Financial and Benefits (FAB) Team within South Somerset.

Recommendation

Members are invited to comment on the report.

Background

The Somerset Financial and Benefits (FAB) Team was created in 2002 and was the first joint team of its type in the country. The team is jointly financed by Somerset County Council and the Pensions Directorate and Carers Service, part of the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP).

The FAB Team visit elderly and vulnerable people in their homes supporting them to maximise their full benefit entitlement and assess their contribution towards any care and support services that they receive from Somerset County Council.

One officer, rather than up to seven officers, goes up the customer's garden path obtaining all the relevant financial and health information which they then share, with the customer's permission with any relevant organisations.

The team won the Best Joined Up Government Initiative of the Year LGC award in 2004.

Structure

There are four visiting teams comprising in total of 23.4 visiting officers situated at Yeovil, Bridgwater, Frome and Taunton which are supported by a small administrative team based in Bridgwater.

Referrals to the service

12,000 referrals are currently received annually from Somerset Direct, Primary Care Trust staff, voluntary organisations, local authority staff and DWP benefit processing centres. 11% of current referrals are due to recommendations from other service users.

Visit Outcomes

In 2002 the FAB team generated £2.3 million of additional benefit take up. This figure has increased each year and during 2008/2009 **£10.3 million** of additional benefit was obtained for people in Somerset as a result of the support of the FAB team.

On a visit the FAB officer will maximise the whole household's benefit entitlement and this has increased family income by over £200 per week on occasions.

The FAB officer assesses a customer's liability to pay for service provision for

- Home Care Provision
- Nursing and Residential fees
- Supported People
- Direct Payment

The officer will allow for any extra disability related expenditure that an individual may incur and 96% of service users are advised of the charge at the home visit.

Complementary Services

Whilst carrying out the visit the officer will also identify any additional complementary services that may enhance a customer's well being

- Extra aids and adaptations
- Help with fuel poverty issues-payment of a fuel bill, advice re fuel appliances. Grant aid to replace fuel appliances
- Details of Active Living Centres
- Cruise
- Befriending services
- Carers support services
- Fire Alarms
- Door Locks
- Garden clearance via community service
- Handy man schemes

Currently in 31% of all visits officers are making a referral to partners for additional service provision.

Surgeries and outreach work

Regular surgeries are held at West Somerset CIB and Bridgwater CAB by appointment only. Last year there were 71 talks to various groups and partners such as stroke clinics at Yeovil Hospital and carers groups via St John's Ambulance. The FAB team is currently working with 74 partners across Somerset and hosts quarterly meetings with voluntary organisations and partners.

Customer Feedback

The team has been described as 'Angels without wings'

Financial Implications:

None

Implications for Corporate Priorities

- § Corporate aim 2: increase economic vitality and prosperity
- § Corporate aim 3: improve the health and well-being of our citizens

Implications for Area North Development Plan (2008/09)

- § Promote and enhance services for older people
- § Promote access to public/voluntary services

Background Papers: *None.*
