

Appendix A – Personal Finance Contribution Management Response

1.1a Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the Finance Manager ensures there is sufficient guidance in relation to unpaid income from clients including Social Worker involvement (where relevant) and timescales for escalating the recovery actions to the Legal Team. Guidance should refer to the Corporate Code of Practice for Income Management.

1.1a Management Response

A restructure of all Adults Local Finance Teams is already underway which whilst resulting in a reduction in staff, is introducing a dedicated debt recovery post. This will result in a more consistent recovery however given the nature of the debtor, i.e. vulnerable adults/wills/estates/probate, the collection of these debts require a more flexible approach

1.1a Audit Committee Update 21 September 2017

It is considered that escalation of recovery actions should be the responsibility of a dedicated member of staff in Finance. Consideration is being given as to how this can be implemented as part of the restructure and downsizing of Finance establishment

1.2a Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the Finance Manager ensures that contracts provide greater detail on what information needs to be provided to both clients and the local authority regarding recovery action undertaken. Guidance should include:

- how debt should be reported to the client and the role of the local authority following non-payment;
- details on how to engage in Social Worker support if required; and
- records of any conversations with clients (or family/support if appropriate) regarding the non-payment of debt.

Example pro-formas could be provided by the Local Authority to ensure consistency across all providers with a lead officer working with providers to ensure continuous improvement

1.2a Management Response

Whilst recognising these points, it should be noted that the large majority of client debt is collected successfully by the providers. Not only this – It also reduces the administrative financial burden on the council. The finance service do however recognise the need to work with providers to ensure they have suitable debt recovery processes in place. This will be considered by a new dedicated debt recovery post.

1.2a Audit Committee Update 21 September 2017

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Finance Management Team to agree implementation

1.3a Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the Finance Manager ensures that there is a single defined process to manage debt recording, recovery and the retention of records ensuring consistency across all areas. Processes should be consistent and records accessible from other offices to ensure business continuity in the event of staff absence. This may be delivered through the planned restructure.

1.3a Management Response [Target Date September 2017]

A restructure of all Adults Local Finance Teams is already underway which whilst resulting in a reduction in staff, is introducing a dedicated debt recovery post. This will result in a more consistent recovery across the county.

1.3a Audit Committee Update 21 September 2017

A full review of the Income Code of Practice has been completed and an implementation plan agreed (see Appendix B). In addition the centralisation of staff from four to two offices and the establishment of one Finance Manage overseeing all local team staff and practice will ensure greater consistency.

1.4a Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the Finance Manager develops a protocol that ensures there is sufficient cover for managing debts rather than being managed locally the responsibility of one individual to ensure sufficient cover in the event of staff absence/turnover.

1.4a Management Response

There are insufficient resources to provide this function consistently across the service in periods of extended staff absence. This will be considered however as the restructure is implemented.

1.4a Management Update 21 September 2017

Consideration is being given as to how this can be implemented as part of the restructure and downsizing of Finance establishment. Centralisation of staff (see above) will provide greater cover.

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1.5a Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the Finance Manager should develop guidance for the Finance Officers on what attempts should be made to recover debt and when they should be referred to legal. Guidance should consider the following:

- Timescales for managing the process, to include consideration of time already spent by Care Homes pursuing debts; and
- Guidance on where exceptions or social worker involvement may apply and an identified authorisation process to apply such exceptions.

1.5a Management Response

We acknowledge the findings above and will be implement a more robust process as part of the restructure.

1.5a Audit Committee Update 21 September 2017

An additional Adults appendix to the Income Code of Practice will be provided (see Appendix B).

1.6a Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the Finance Manager should ensure that debt is progressed to write-off once adequate demonstration of non-recovery has been identified.

1.6a Management Response

We acknowledge the findings above and will be implement a more robust process as part of the restructure.

1.6a Audit Committee Update 21 September 2017

See Appendix B attached. Reiteration of best practice included.

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2.1a Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the **Senior FAB Assessor** develops a process for monitoring the performance of the FAB team and FAB assessments, this data should then be used to inform future performance targets.

2.1a Management Response

Agreed

2.1a Audit Committee Update 21 September 2017

We are in the process of setting up performance monitoring, with expectations of the number of residential and fairer charging assessments to be completed per week by each FTE staff member on a pro rata basis, being reported on through Infoview. However we are presently rethinking our work processes, and writing a business case for Mel Lock for increased staff resources, and so these are still a work in progress.

2.1b Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the Team Manager - Client Finances and FAB Team develops a strategy with the Care Coordination team to develop a manageable flow of referrals to the FAB team, this may involve cross-team working to minimise impact of high demand for care provision.

2.1b Management Response

Business Support Manager – since the audit testing was undertaken additional resource has been made available in the care coordination team and the backlog is now cleared. The team is currently going through a restructuring process which will facilitate an improvement in the process.

2.1b Audit Committee Update 21 September 2017

The FAB Team works closely, and liaises with, the Care Coordination Team on a regular basis. However the Care Coordination Team has to forward work to the FAB Team when it is appropriate, and managing this work is not easily managed, as it depends on demand on the Care Coordination Team to access care. The backlogs in work of the Care Coordination Team have been worked on.

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2.3a Agreed Outcome

I recommend that the Team Manager – Client Finances and FAB ensures that the Finance and Benefits Assessment procedures are updated to include the Council's policy of allowing clients to delay a FAB assessment three times before they are automatically assessed as being self-funding.

2.3a Management Response

Agreed

2.3a Audit Committee Update 21 September 2017

This has been amended in 'Charging policy' Personal Budgets 2017' page 3 found at: <http://extranet.somerset.gov.uk/adults-and-health/policies-and-processes/money-matters/>