

Deputy Office Services Consultation: Frequently asked questions

Q: Is there a letter telling people they're going to lose services?

A: No. There will be a letter which explains the Council are considering some changes to services, mainly relating to fees and charges. No decisions will be made about these changes until after people have had the chance to have their say.

Q: What services is this about?

A: This consultation is about the deputy office service and changes to fixed fees and charges. Deputy Office services are for people who do not have the capacity or ability to manage their financial affairs and have nobody suitable that can help them.

Q: Do people have to complete the questionnaire?

A: No. But we hope many people will take the time to do this or respond to the consultation in other ways. This will help the Council to make decisions which are right for the people who would be affected by them.

Q: Is there help to complete the questionnaire?

A: Yes. People can call 0118 937 4609 if they have questions about how to complete the questionnaire. Where suitable, we will support people by talking through the questionnaire individually.

Q: Is the questionnaire available in other formats and languages?

A: Yes. We can arrange for large print, Braille or audio versions of the questionnaire as well as copies in languages other than English if people call us on 0118 937 2383 or at wellbeing.service@reading.gov.uk to request this.

Q: How do people who don't use deputy office services at the moment have their say?

A: We're interested in hearing from anyone who has an opinion about these important issues. Anyone can complete the questionnaire online <https://consult.reading.gov.uk/> or request a copy by calling 0118 937 2383.

Q: When will the Council make a decision about these possible changes?

A: Delegated decision makers will look at what people have said after the consultation has closed on the 14th November 2016. They'll decide then what happens next and customers will be informed.

Q: How many people are affected by the changes being considered?

A: There are around 225 people who use deputy office services in Reading at the moment. If the proposed changes are fully implemented, it is likely to impact on everyone using the service.

Q: What happens to people who use adult social care services if the Council does decide to make changes next year?

A: If we change the way we charge for the services we will ensure that the financial plans for everyone who uses services is updated and Officers will help people assess how the new charges affect their individual finances. Some people may not be charged depending on their level of savings (that will not change). Officers will support all customers to ensure that nobody is placed in undue hardship as a result of the changes.

Q: What is the main reason for changing the Deputy Office Policy?

There are two reasons:

The existing Policy is now outdated and does not fully reflect the service. For example, the Council has not been charging some deputy office clients as we said we would in the original policy.

The Council would like to align the charging for both deputies and appointees with those published by the Court of Protection and introduce a disbursement charge for specialist services. This improves the financial sustainability of the service.

Q: Who would be affected if the changes to the Deputy Office Policy are introduced?

A: The changes are likely to affect all existing deputy office customers who are assessed as paying towards the costs of deputy office services they receive.

NB: Those people currently assessed as not having to make any contribution to their deputy services will continue to pay nothing unless their financial circumstances change.

Q: Are any people exempt from paying the new fixed rate charges?

A: Yes - people who are may be placed in undue hardship as a result of paying the new fees will be able to apply for an exemption. Officers will support these people.

Q: Might some people pay the same or less towards the services they receive under the proposed new Deputy Office Policy?

A: Yes. There may be some people who will pay the same as what they already do and some may pay less depending on the service they receive and their financial situations.

Q: How will existing service users find out about any effect to them?

A: If a decision is made to change how we charge for deputy office services, we will write to everyone who uses services at the moment to let them know. Where we can and it is deemed appropriate, we will arrange to reassess everyone's financial plans, inviting them to participate and make decisions where they can. In cases where we are unable to consult with the customer due to lack of capacity, the deputy office may seek input from people involved in the person life, or make a best interest decision and seek legal advice on a case by case situation. All appropriate records will be kept. The deputy office are subject to supervision and inspection by the Office for the Public Guardian.