

People and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

Initial Scoping Proposal

<p>Item:</p> <p>Fair Charges for Care and Support</p>	<p>Lead Member:</p> <p>David Walsh, Chairman</p> <hr/> <p>Lead Officer:</p> <p>Michael Ford, Service Manager</p>
<p>Suggested Scope:</p> <p>This proposal is already the subject of a report to the Cabinet on 28 September 2016.</p> <p>The proposal will give members an opportunity to shape new adult social care charging policies in the light of the Care Act and the significant budget gap identified in the county council's medium term financial plan. All directorates are working towards budget reduction targets. Increasing charges to some people who can afford to pay them, may help to avoid cuts in services that would affect all adults in need of care and support.</p> <p>The Care Act 2014 gives the council a duty to arrange care and support for adults with eligible needs, and a power to meet non-eligible needs. In each case we have the discretion to choose whether or not to charge, unless the law says that the care or support must be provided free of charge. The proposal is that we review the way we will exercise that discretion, in accordance with the regulations; the statutory guidance and the overarching principle that people should only be asked to contribute what they can afford.</p> <p>The review will consider the council's use of public money to subsidise certain services. Untargeted subsidies do not align with our overall social care policy direction towards 'personalisation' and they tend to undermine our efforts to treat people equitably.</p> <p>The proposed review will consider the following eight areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">(i) Discretionary 'disregards' in the financial means-test;(ii) Charges for residential and non-residential care;(iii) 'Top-up' payments in residential care;(iv) Administration charges for arranging care and support;(v) Deferred payment agreements;(vi) Charges made by the SUFA team;(vii) Concessionary transport;(viii) Information and advice.	
<p>Methodology:</p> <p>The new policy proposals will be developed on the basis of evidence gathered from practice, research and data analysis. Additionally, and in order to achieve a fair outcome, it is proposed that a key part of the review will be a public consultation, which would:</p>	

- a) provide evidence to inform the completion of the Equalities Impact Assessment;
- b) seek feedback to help shape the proposed policy changes whilst they are still at a formative stage;
- c) contribute to raising the overall level of public engagement in county council policy development.

It is proposed that the review will be shaped by a principle that the Cabinet has previously supported - that we will generally identify the actual cost of care and support services and will then charge that amount to a person, in proportion to their ability to pay, as determined by an individual means-test. With input from members, the review will seek to identify any appropriate exceptions to that principle.

Exceptions to the principle might include certain services to carers; and situations where the Equalities Impact Assessment has identified a need to mitigate against cumulative negative impacts on groups with protected characteristics.

The Executive Advisory Panel that oversees this work has adopted nine 'guiding principles' from Care Act statutory guidance to underpin the development of financial policies. In brief these include: affordability; consistency, transparency; and wellbeing etc.

Timescale:

Implementation of the new policy on 1 April 2017, subject to alignment with the new case management system.

Date approved:

'Making Charges Fairer' for Adult Social Care - 6 December 2016 Update

The Cabinet gave its approval to the proposed review and consultation about our charging policy on 28 September 2016. A draft questionnaire was considered at a workshop with voluntary sector partners in October. The final version of the questionnaire seeks to reflect the feedback from the workshop, which included that we should try to simplify it, and also explain the proposed positive impacts more clearly.

The consultation was launched on 1 December and it will run for 10 weeks until 13 February 2017. As part of the communication strategy we have sent a personally addressed letter to the 5,600 people on our records who receive care and support. That number includes people known to us, who fund their own care and support. The letter draws attention to the review and offers different ways for people to access and complete the questionnaire.

The outcome of the review and consultation, together with a revised EqIA, will be presented to a special meeting of the Executive Advisory Panel for Pathways in February. The Panel has overseen this work since the evidence-gathering stage. It would be possible to invite all county councillors to the special meeting, to give a better opportunity for shaping and scrutiny by members before any recommendations for revisions to our charging policy are put to the Cabinet in March 2017.