

Fairer charging



Paying towards the cost of social care services for adults living at home



Fairer charging

Since 1 April 2003 all councils have had to follow Government guidance about the way they charge people for services they get to help them carry on living in their own home. This is to make sure councils are charging people fairly and do not leave anyone with a very low income. In Birmingham, the Adults and Communities Directorate is working with the Fairer Charging Team from our Chief Executive's Directorate to do this.

Which services do I have to pay for?

A social worker will visit you to assess your social care needs. After the assessment, if we decide that we are going to provide or pay for any of the services from the list below to meet your care needs, you may have to pay towards the cost of the service.

- Home care – practical support and personal care in your home
- Day services – social and leisure activities to meet the needs of your care plan
- Adult Placement service – sharing a home with other adults who give you the support you need
- Direct payments – money the council can give you to buy the support you need

We do not charge you separately for transport.

If you use our Meals Direct service, you will pay for this separately because there is a charge whatever your income may be.

How do you decide if I have to pay towards the cost of the service?

An advisor from our Fairer Charging Team will visit you to:

- make sure you are getting all the benefits you are entitled to, and help you claim any you are not receiving; and
- carry out a financial assessment to decide how much you will have to pay towards the cost of your care.

How much will I have to pay?

If you have more than £23,000 in savings and investments, you will pay towards the cost of your care.

If you have less than £23,000 in savings and investments, the Fairer Charging Team have to make sure you have enough money to cover all of the following, before you will pay towards the cost of your care:

- An amount that is equal to Income Support (this is a weekly amount of money the Government sets as the lowest level of income that everyone should have to live on).
- 25% of the Income Support entitlement, to make sure that you are not left with a very low income. At the moment (July 2009), Income Support, including the 25% for a single person, is as follows:

Age	Benefit	Amount you get
18 to 24	Income Support plus 25%	= £ 98.06
18 to 24	Disability Living Allowance (higher rate) care Income Support plus 25%	= £114.81
25 to 59	Income Support plus 25%	= £114.75
25 to 59	Disability Living Allowance (higher rate) care Income Support plus 25%	= £131.50
60 or over	Income Support plus 25%	= £162.50

- Enough income to pay for all of your housing costs including rent (after you get Housing Benefit), mortgage payments, buildings insurance and council tax (before you get any Council Tax Benefit).
- Enough income to cover any costs related to a disability you have.

We will look at your total income (but not your wages or any money you get from the Independent Living Fund) and take away your Income Support plus 25%, as well as any money you pay out. The amount left is called your **assessable income**.

Your income

Take away any money you pay out

Take away any money you pay in relation to your disability

Take away your Income Support plus 25%

This is your assessable income

Savings and investments

We will not include any savings and investments you have that are less than £14,000 in your financial assessment.

Savings includes money in bank accounts or building society accounts. Investments includes stocks, shares and, property (other than your own home).

What will your advisor need to know about?

- ***Your income*** – this could be a State Pension, a private pension or, most benefits, but not your wages or money that you get from the Independent Living Fund.
- ***Your savings and investments***
- ***The money you have going out*** – such as your rent (after you get Housing Benefit), your mortgage (after you get any Income Support or Pension Credit), council tax (after you get Council Tax Benefit), the costs of running your home, and buildings insurance (if you're an owner-occupier).
- ***Any costs you have related to your disability*** – you will have a chance to speak to an advisor from the Fairer Charging Team about the money you spend in relation to your disability. Before you meet with the advisor, it would be useful if you could think about what types of things you spend your money on.

- Any equipment you buy or have repaired, that you need because of your disability. This could include stair lifts, wheelchairs, special beds, hoists and electric buggies.
- Any heating costs or water meter costs above the average levels for the area and the type of property you live in, and that you need because of your age, medical condition or disability.
- Any costs for buying special clothing or footwear, for example if you need to have this specially made, or there is extra wear and tear because of your disability.
- The cost of a yearly season ticket for prescription charges, if you do not qualify for free prescriptions.

If you want to include any costs that are from your disability in your financial assessment, you will need to prove (for example with receipts) that you actually pay this money, and that it is directly related to your disability.

You will not have to pay more than your assessable income (see page 4), and this could be less, depending on the amount of service you get. The one payment covers any home care, day care, adult placement or direct payments you get.

Example one

Sanjay is single and lives with his parents. He goes to a day centre twice a week.

- His income is **£148.50** per week, which is made up of Income Support and Disability Living Allowance.
- He has no money going out
- He spends **£9.59** a week on fares for his carer, which is related to his disability.
- His Income Support plus 25%, is **£131.50**.

To work out what Sanjay has to pay towards the cost of going to the day centre, take away his Income Support plus 25% (£131.50) and the money he spends on his disability (£9.59) from his total income of £148.50:

$$\mathbf{£148.50 - £131.50 - £9.59 = £7.41}$$

Sanjay has to pay **£7.41** towards the cost of his day centre.

Example two

Ethel is 80 and lives alone. She gets one hour of home care a week, which costs **£14.91**. She owns her own house and has full help with her council tax.

- Her income is **£130** a week, which is made up of her State Pension and Pension Credit.
- Her building insurance and maintenance is **£15.59** a week.
- She spends **£15.50** a week on a gardener and payments on a stair lift.
- Her Income Support entitlement plus 25% is **£162.50**.
- As her income is lower than her Income Support plus 25%, she will not have to pay anything towards the cost of her home care.
- During the assessment, the advisor who carried out the assessment found that Ethel should be claiming Attendance Allowance.
- Her income has now increased to **£229.95** a week, and is made up of her State Pension, Pension Credit and the lower rate of Attendance Allowance. Her income has increased by **£95.20** a week.

To work out how much Ethel has to pay towards the cost of her home care, take away her Income Support plus 25% (£162.50), the money she has going out (£15.59) and the money she spends on her disability (£15.50) from her total income of £229.95.

$$\mathbf{£229.95 - £162.50 - £15.59 - £15.50 = £36.36}$$

Ethel has **£36.36** left to pay towards her home care costs of £14.91 a week.

After paying £14.91 a week, Ethel is better off by **£85.04**.

If Ethel needs extra home care, and this costs more than the £35.42 a week, she will only pay up to £36.36 a week. She will still be better off by **£63.59** a week.

What if I don't want a financial assessment?

If you do not want a financial assessment, you will have to pay the full costs of your service.

When will I know how much I have to pay?

When the advisor from the Fairer Charging Team visits you, they will tell you how much they think you have to pay towards your care. Once we have checked this, we will send you a letter that explains how we have worked out the amount you have to pay. You must start paying towards your care from the date of your financial assessment, or the date the service started if this is later.

As part of the assessment, we will give you advice about other benefits you may be entitled to, such as Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Benefit. The advisor will help you claim.



How do I pay?

You pay towards the cost of your care every four to five weeks, when our Income Management Team send you a bill. On the back of the invoice is information about the ways you can pay.

What if I don't agree with the amount I have to pay towards my care?

If you think we have not worked out the amount you have to pay correctly, you can ask us to look at it again. You should write to the Fairer Charging Team's Service Delivery Manager within 42 days of being told how much you have to pay. The address is on the back of this leaflet.

The Service Delivery Manager will check the financial assessment and send you a written answer within 28 days. If you are still not happy, the letter will tell you how you can appeal.

What if my financial circumstances change?

If your circumstances change, you should ask the Fairer Charging Team to look again at how much you should be paying. You can do this at any time, for example if your income changes, or if you have extra money to pay out.

What happens if I don't pay?

If you don't pay within 21 days of receiving your bill, we will send you a reminder letter. We will continue to send you reminders until you pay all the money you owe us. If you do not pay, we may pass your details to a debt collection agency or our legal services department.

How to contact us

If you have any questions about Fairer Charging, please contact:

**Fairer Charging Team
288 Gooch Street
Highgate
Birmingham B5 7JE**

phone: **0121 303 2156**

fax: **0121 464 4587**

If you have any questions about bills, contact:

**Adult Social Care
Contributions
Ground Floor
Waterlinks House, Lord
Street
Birmingham B7 4AA**

phone: **0121 303 2976**

email:

**Accomodation.charges.ssf
@birmingham.gov.uk**

If you have questions about the service you receive, contact:

your local **Adults and
Communities office** or
phone **Older People's Access
Service** on **0121 303 1234**.

Your right to be heard

If you have any comments, compliments or complaints, please contact:

**Customer Relations Service
Milton Grange
16 Handsworth Wood Road
Birmingham
B20 2DR**

phone: **0121 303 5161**

fax: **0121 303 7208**

email: **schcomplaintsteam
@birmingham.gov.uk**



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Plain English Campaign
Committed to clearer communication.

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