Appendix 6

ADULT SOCIAL SERVICES - CHARGING POLICY - SERVICE USERS RESIDING AT "IN HOUSE" SUPPORTED LIVING UNITS DURING THE PERIOD 1997 TO 2003

Audit Commission Report - May 2000- Charging for Care

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45. Much of this guidance focuses on questions of process – over how charges are managed, such as the operation of appeals systems or the monitoring of service take-up. Little is said about how 'reasonableness' should be interpreted. The implication is that this questions has no 'right answer'. Provided that decisions over the principles related to charging are properly debated and resolved, then the resultant approach can be considered to be 'reasonable'. Currently, the only clarification available to managers has come as a result of legal precedent. But even when a legal ruling is made, councils are often divided about how it should be interpreted. For example, while many councils use 'banded' systems to split users into groups based on benefits received, one council visited dismissed this option as contradicting a ruling that all income sources should be treated the same.

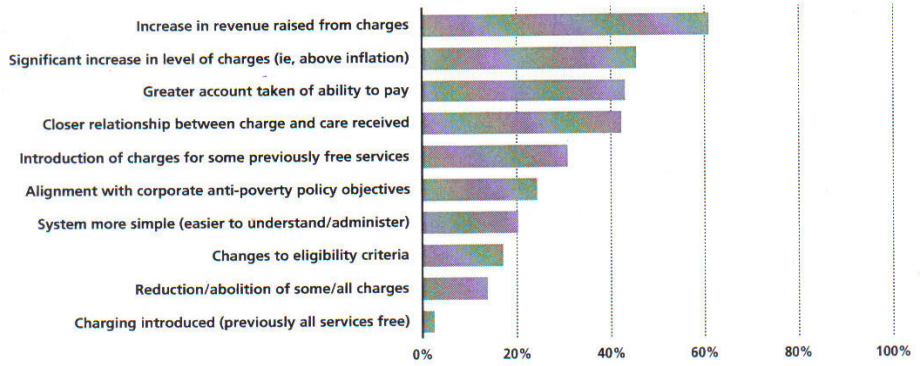
What drives councils' approaches to charging?

46. The analysis carried out of councils' most recent reviews of charging policies shows that financial considerations dominate, overriding concerns about the equity, affordability or understandability of charges **[EXHIBIT 7]**. Given a straight choice between cutting services by tightening eligibility criteria or maintaining services by increasing charges, increasing charges is often seen as the lesser of two evils (although 15 per cent of councils did both in their most recent reviews). Reviews of charges are rarely linked with wider issues of service planning and delivery.

EXHIBIT 7

Results of recent reviews

Financial considerations dominate many charging reviews.



Source: Audit Commission survey