

OPTION: CHARGING FOR NON-RESIDENTIAL SERVICES

BUDGET SAVING: £880,000

DESCRIPTION OF OPTION

The Council has the ability to charge people for the social care services they receive. These charges are for services which include home care, supported living, day care and transport.

Most Councils charge for these services, and many Councils charge 100% of a person's disposable income. Wirral currently charges 75% of a person's disposable income and the option in this area is to increase this level to 100% from April 2013.

This option will increase the contributions made for their care by vulnerable and elderly people. However, the charges are based entirely on a person's ability to pay, and will bring our levels of charges in line with other Councils in the North West.

RATIONALE FOR SAVINGS

Local authorities have discretionary powers under Section 17 of the Health and Social Services and Social Security Adjudication Act 1983 to charge adult recipients of non-residential care services. Charging for non-residential services is covered in the Local Authority Circular LAC (2001)32 - Fairer Charging Policies for Home Care and Other non-residential Social Services published by the Department of Health in November 2001. The Fairer Charging guidance allows local authorities to decide whether to charge for services and there is quite significant scope for local discretion.

Further guidance was issued by the Department of Health in July 2009 to supplement the Fairer Charging guidance. This fairer contributions guidance provides a model for calculating a person's contribution to their personal budget.

The assessed charge is based on the person's ability to pay and, unless they are assessed to pay the maximum charge for their services, it is a contribution towards their package of care irrespective of the type or volume of support provided.

Benchmarking information has been obtained to compare the charge applied by Wirral with that of other North West Authorities. This is shown in the table below.

| Council | % Charge against Disposable income |
|----------------|---|
| Wirral | 75 |
| Wigan | 75 |
| Sefton | 80 |
| Lancashire | 85 |
| Rochdale | 90 |
| Cheshire East | 97 |
| Blackpool | 100 |
| Bury | 100 |

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|------------|-----|
| Cumbria | 100 |
| St Helen's | 100 |
| Stockport | 100 |
| Tameside | 100 |
| Trafford | 100 |

The potential impact on an individual's weekly charge from an increase in the charging policy is provided in the table below. The examples shown cover the most common weekly assessed charges.

| Current Charge | Revised Weekly Charge | | | |
|----------------|-----------------------|--------|--------|--------|
| | 85% | 90% | 95% | 100% |
| £12.13 | £13.75 | £14.56 | £15.37 | £16.18 |
| £17.11 | £19.39 | £20.53 | £21.67 | £22.81 |
| £19.88 | £22.54 | £23.87 | £25.20 | £26.53 |
| £55.78 | £63.22 | £66.94 | £70.66 | £74.38 |
| £63.53 | £72.01 | £76.25 | £80.49 | £84.73 |

IMPACT

Whilst the service will remain unchanged the proposal will increase the contributions made by vulnerable and elderly people in the Borough towards the cost of their care and support. People may decline the service if charges are increased and this may impact on their health and wellbeing. There may also be an impact on the level of Council debt as people may not pay the increased charge.

MITIGATION

Charges are based on a person's ability to pay and will be reviewed on a case by case basis for individuals who experience difficulty in paying their assessed charge.