

WIRRAL COUNCIL

DELEGATED DECISION BY PORTFOLIO HOLDER

26 SEPTEMBER 2014

SUBJECT:	Charging for Day Services in the Voluntary, Community & Faith Sector
WARD/S AFFECTED:	All Wards
REPORT OF:	Director of Adult Social Services
RESPONSIBLE PORTFOLIO HOLDER:	Councillor Christine Jones
KEY DECISION?	Yes

1.0 EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1 A recent consultation has been undertaken on the proposed changes to charging for day services commissioned by the Department from the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector. The purpose/aim was to recommend a change to the charging policy to ensure equity across day services and in the application of the Fairer Charging Policy.

2.0 BACKGROUND

2.1 The Council's Fairer Charging Policy states that day care services should be charged at £25 per session or £50 per day, subject to a financial assessment. Under the current arrangements there is a disparity in charging practice for day services as this charge has only been applied at specific centres.

2.2 The introduction of charges for day services provided by organisations in the Voluntary, Community and Faith sector will ensure a consistent approach to charging and reduce the inequity across all day services.

2.3 Whilst the proposed cost has been calculated as £25 per session or £50 per day a financial assessment will determine the amount each individual person will be liable to pay.

2.4 A safeguard does exist to ensure the charge would not cause an individual's income to fall below the minimum income guarantee plus a 25% buffer.

3.0 CONSULTATION FEEDBACK

3.1 An eight week targeted consultation process commenced on 24 July and closed on 17 September 2014. A total of 125 people who use day services provided by the Voluntary, Community & Faith sector were contacted and asked to complete a short questionnaire with regards to the proposal to implement a charge for these services.

- 3.2 A total of 53 responses were received which equates to a 42% response rate. Table 1 below provides a breakdown of the day centres attended by the individuals who responded to the consultation and Table 2 identifies the respondents.

Table 1 – Responses by Day Centre

Day Centre	Number of Responses
Devonshire Centre	17
Fusion Centre	12
Meadowcroft	20
Not specified	4
Total	53

Table 2 - Respondents

Respondents	Number of Responses
Carers	30
Parent/Relative	10
Service User	5
Not specified	8
Total	53

- 3.3 The majority of the respondents felt that the charge would cause financial difficulty with many responding to say that they felt the charge was unreasonable.

4.0 APPLICATION OF CHARGES

- 4.1 Whilst the proposed charge is £25 per session, £50 per day, the charges will not be applied until a full financial assessment has been undertaken to ensure that the charges reflect the service users' personal financial circumstances.
- 4.2 The charge will be based on an individual's ability to pay and those currently financially assessed in line with the Council's Fairer Charging Policy may not see an increase in their charge if they are already paying their maximum weekly contribution towards their overall service costs.
- 4.3 The amount charged will not reduce a person's disposable income below basic levels of income support plus a 25% buffer. The buffer provides an additional safeguard to prevent users' independence of living from being undermined by charging policies
- 4.4 If individuals are in receipt of disability related benefits and incur any extraordinary expenditure in relation to their disability then an allowance can be included in the financial assessment to reflect this.

5.0 RELEVANT RISKS

- 5.1 The purpose of the proposal is to, ensure equity, eliminate the financial risk of challenge to financial assessments and to maximise income.
- 5.2 There is a risk that increased charges could lead to individuals withdrawing from the service.

6.0 OTHER OPTIONS CONSIDERED

- 6.1 Not to charge for these services was considered, however for equity reasons this was not considered feasible and would have left the Council vulnerable to challenge from those using services and being charged for them.

7.0 CONSULTATION

- 7.1 The Department has undertaken a targeted 8 week consultation process with individuals who are directly affected by these proposals.

8.0 OUTSTANDING PREVIOUSLY APPROVED ACTIONS

- 8.1 None.

9.0 IMPLICATIONS FOR VOLUNTARY, COMMUNITY AND FAITH GROUPS

- 9.1 There is a risk that demand for these services may reduce. The services are currently funded under a block contract arrangement.

10.0 RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS: FINANCIAL; IT; STAFFING; AND ASSETS

- 10.1 It is anticipated that the revised charging arrangements could potentially generate up to a maximum of £250,000 a year. This figure includes the introduction of charges for Supported Employment schemes.

11.0 LEGAL IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1 None.

12.0 EQUALITIES IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1 The Policy is in accordance with Fairer Charging and Fairer Contributions guidance issued by the Department of Health. The proposed change relates to the uniform application of approved charging principles.
- 12.2 An equalities impact assessment was prepared during the preparation of the 2014-15 budget proposals.

13.0 CARBON REDUCTION AND ENVIRONMENTAL IMPLICATIONS

- 13.1 None.

14.0 PLANNING AND COMMUNITY SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

14.1 None.

15.0 RECOMMENDATIONS

15.1 That this report is noted and the charging process agreed.

16.0 REASON/S FOR RECOMMENDATION/S

16.1 To ensure equity across the service and in the application of the Fairer Charging Policy.

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APPENDICES

N/A

BACKGROUND PAPERS/REFERENCE MATERIAL

BRIEFING NOTES HISTORY

Briefing Note	Date
N/A	

SUBJECT HISTORY (last 3 years)

Council Meeting	Date
Cabinet	10 th December 2013