

HEALTH AND ADULT SOCIAL CARE OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE



Report subject	Adult Social Care Charging Policy. Implementation Summary
Meeting date	27 September 2021
Status	Public Report
Executive summary	The new Adult Social Care Charging Policy was implemented in April 2021. A range of support was made available to local residents to mitigate against any adverse financial impacts but no complaints or requests for waivers resulting from the charging policy changes have been received at this time. Several measures remain in place for clients should they experience financial difficulties.
Recommendations	It is RECOMMENDED that: a) Committee note the content of this report and the completion of the Adult Social Care Charging Policy implementation
Reason for recommendations	This report is a response to a request from Committee to be assured that clients were supported through the implementation of the Charging Policy.

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Wards	Council-wide
Classification	For Information

Background

1. Prior to the implementation of BCP Council's Adult Social Care Charging Policy in April 2021, the Council operated with three legacy charging policies inherited from the three preceding councils. It was important that the inconsistencies and disparities between these legacy arrangements were replaced by a single charging approach for all residents within BCP Council.
2. Following recommendation from the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee in November 2019, and approval from Cabinet in December 2019, an 8-week public consultation was launched. The consultation on the proposal to introduce a new single charging policy for Adult Social Care ran from January - March 2020 and tested the principal that those who could afford to do so should pay the full cost of their care services, although recognising that many people would be assessed as making a partial or no contribution towards their care costs, depending on their financial means.
3. The results of this consultation were used to draft a new, single, charging policy which was reviewed by the Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee in September 2020 before being finally approved by Cabinet on 11 November. Work then began to implement the Charging Policy from 12 April this year.

The New Charging Policy

4. The new Charging Policy is underpinned by a number of key principles which were established through the public consultation, namely:
 - Adult Social Care charging will be fair, consistent and equitable across the BCP Council area, all client groups and all services
 - All client contributions towards the cost of their care will be based on a person's ability to pay and no one will be asked to pay more than they can afford
 - All maximum charges will be based on the actual cost to BCP Council of delivering the service
 - Clear and accessible information as to how a client's contribution is calculated will always be provided
5. Therefore, whilst no individual would be required to pay more than they can afford towards the cost of their care, under the new policy, some of the changes consulted on would result in an increase in some charges for a small number of individuals.

6. As a result several mitigations, some of which were directly recommended by the Members' Working Group, were put in place in the lead up to the policy's implementation.

Mitigations

7. The first mitigation was to introduce a notice period which would give individuals more time to plan for the changes and to engage with any additional support that they may have required. Early notification was provided to each client in writing, in letters dated the 24 February. Each client then received a more detailed and personalised notification of their own charges for the new financial year, which included any changes to their benefit and pension income. These were sent to clients from the 8 March.
8. Within the notice period, it was important to ensure that there was adequate support, information and advice on offer. The contact details of the Adult Social Care Finance teams, including a phone number to be used as a hotline, were circulated in all the above communications which were made available in alternative formats where required.
9. Finally, for individuals facing exceptional circumstances or severe financial hardship the policy sanctions the responsible Service Director to approve a full or partial waiver of charges.
10. At the time of writing, no complaints regarding the new Charging Policy have been received, nor any requests to waive charges specifically related to increases from the policy's implementation. The Adult Social Care Finance teams did not report any noticeable increases in the number of calls during or immediately following the implementation period.
11. Apart from the implementation notice period, the other mitigations will remain in place. Should any individual encounter financial difficulties they will be supported; repayment plans can be arranged, and the responsible Service Director retains the delegated authority to waive or write-off charges if clients find themselves in exceptional financial hardship. The Adult Social Care Finance teams remain in place and continue to respond to queries and provide information, advice and support wherever necessary.

Summary of financial implications

12. Whilst Adult Social Care charging income changes continuously depending on the relative ability of our current client cohort to contribute, the budgeted ASC charging income for 2021/22 is £22.045m which equates to a monthly amount of £1.837m.

Summary of legal implications

13. The legislative framework which governs the contents of the charging policy is contained in the Care Act 2014 which, together with the related statutory instruments and regulations, provides a single framework for charging for care and support. Section 14 of the Act affords local authorities the power to charge individuals in receipt of care and support services, for these services where the local authority is permitted to charge.

Summary of human resources implications

14. With the Charging Policy now implemented, and with staff remaining within the Adult Social Care Finance teams who can give support and information to clients, there are no human resources implications.

Summary of sustainability impact

15. Whilst the policy change relates to charging and is, therefore, not expected to have a detrimental environmental impact, the Member Working Group gave consideration as to how day centre transport charges may influence clients' behaviours in choosing more sustainable options.

Summary of public health implications

16. The ongoing provision of Adult Social Care Services which is, in part, supported by income received from charging for services is an important component of realising the wellbeing principle of the Care Act 2014

Summary of equality implications

17. A full equality impact assessment of the new policy was undertaken [[here](#)] which directly impacted the content of the policy.
18. The equality impact assessment, combined with the consultation results and the work of the Member's Working Group resulted in the mitigations which are referred to earlier in this paper.

Summary of risk assessment

19. The impact on individuals was noted in the consultation exercise and the mitigations which were put in place helped to limit the impact of the policy implementation. Whilst the introduction of the new Charging Policy may be seen as an increase in charges, that was only ever true for a limited number of individuals who could afford to contribute more towards their care than they already did. The impact on these individuals is, in turn, mitigated by the established financial assessment process and the principal guarantee that no one will contribute more than they can afford towards the cost of their care.

Background papers

'Published works'

- [Adult Social Care Charging Policy, Health and Adult Social Care Overview and Scrutiny Committee papers, 28 September 2020](#)
- [Adult Social Care Charging Policy, Cabinet papers, 11 November 2020](#)
- [Adult Social Care Charging Policy](#)