
CHARGING POLICY FOR SUPPORTING PEOPLE IN ESSEX

1 SUMMARY

- 1.1 To present the Charging Policy for Supporting People in Essex for Members' information, as requested at an earlier meeting.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1 The Office of the Deputy Prime Minister (ODPM) has specified that Supporting People Commissioning Bodies should adopt an approach to financial assessments for purposes of determining eligibility for Supporting People Grant. This is consistent with the Administering Authority's (Essex County Council) "Fairer Charging policy for non-residential care services".
- 2.2 Under Supporting People, individuals who live in a service that is classed as providing short-term support (intended for up to two years) will not be required to pay any of the costs of the support they receive. The Supporting People programme will meet the full cost of their service.
- 2.3 People who live in long term supported housing may be liable to pay some or all of the cost of the services they receive. This category of support services includes sheltered housing for older people.
- 2.4 However, a very welcome principle under the Charging Policy for Supporting People, is protection for anyone who is living in supported housing or receiving a support service before 1 April 2003 from any additional charges for the life of their tenancy. Anyone who takes up a tenancy or starts to receive a long term support service up to 31 March 2003 is guaranteed not to pay any more than they would under the current system for as long as their tenancy lasts.

3 INCOME AND SAVINGS ASSESSMENTS

- 3.1 Apart from individuals who are receiving a short term support service, under the Charging Policy for Supporting People from 1 April 2003 individuals will be liable to a charge for the services they receive. However, for individuals who may not be able to afford the cost of the service, a system of determining who can and who cannot afford their services has been developed.
- 3.2 People who receive Housing Benefit will automatically be determined as not having to pay their charges. Existing and new tenants are

therefore encouraged to claim for Housing Benefit and for the importance of this check to be built in to future tenancy sign-ups.

- 3.3 People who are not receiving Housing Benefit can apply for a separate “Fairer Charging” assessment to determine whether they can afford to pay all, some or none of their charges.
- 3.4 For those people who are receiving Housing Benefit or who are financially assessed as being unable to afford the cost of their services, the Supporting People programme will pay a subsidy (covering all or some of their charges) direct to the organisation that provides the service. For those who are assessed as being able to afford to pay for their own services, the organisation providing the support will collect the charges direct from them.
- 3.5 The eligibility for subsidy flow chart (Appendix 1) may be helpful in understanding the programme’s new processes.

4 TRAINING, INFORMATION & PUBLICITY PROGRAMME

- 4.1 It is crucial that staff both dispersed and at Council offices have a clear understanding of the new charging policy. An intensive training, Information and publicity programme will aim to raise awareness of the programme internally and externally. It is crucial that people’s entitlement to either Housing Benefit or Fairer Charging is maximised.
- 4.2 A series of training sessions for staff, followed up by “Supporting People Information Days” facilitated by the Local Supporting People Officer at a number of sheltered schemes is planned for tenants. Plain English information will aim to further reinforce the new charging policy and provide contact details of where to seek advice and assistance. The Local Supporting People Officer and Benefits staff will continue to respond to individual enquiries.
- 4.3 Accompanying our local methodology, all sheltered housing tenants who currently receive Transitional Housing Benefit will receive correspondence jointly developed by the Essex Supporting People Team and Housing Benefit Officers. The purpose of the letter is to advise tenants Supporting People funding will replace their Transitional Housing Benefit and also to reassure tenants this will not affect their Housing Benefit claim that will continue for their rent.
- 4.4 Officers of the Supporting People Management Team will finalise implementation details of the training, information and publicity campaign in mid February.

5 RECOMMENDATION

5.1 It is proposed that this Committee **RESOLVES**

That the charging policy and information programme for Supporting People in Essex be noted.

G P Woolhouse

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Background Papers:

None.

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APPENDIX 1

The
Charging
Flow Chart

This flow chart answers
the question 'will a service
user need to pay for
support services
after April
2003?'

