

Fairer Charging Consultation

Hertfordshire County Council's Adult Care Services is consulting on proposals to change its Fairer Charging policy. This consultation runs from 20 July to 11 October 2010.

We hope this fact sheet will help you take part in the consultation. If you still have questions after reading this fact sheet, please contact us and one of our officers will be pleased to help you. You can contact us between 10am and 4pm on Monday to Friday:

Telephone: **0300 123 4044**.

Email: ACScharging@hertscc.gov.uk

The consultation documents are being sent to around 10,000 people across Hertfordshire, so we may be busy and it will not always be able to answer your phone call or email immediately. Someone will call or email you back as soon as they can.

If you have access to the internet you may also find the information on our website useful. Please visit www.hertsdirect.org/acsc consultations

Answers to some questions you might have:

What is the Fairer Charging Policy?

Some people who receive social care services make a financial contribution towards the cost of their care. To make sure this is fair, Hertfordshire County Council has a policy for charging adults who live at home and receive social services. This is reviewed every year to ensure that people are not asked to make a contribution towards their care that will leave them in financial difficulty or hardship. The council has a leaflet explaining more, which can be found on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/chargingleaflet

How will this affect me?

It will depend on your circumstances. We will re-assess everyone and inform you of any changes to your charges. Charges will increase for some, but not for others. We cannot say how it will affect individuals until they are re-assessed, as everybody's financial circumstances are different.

Hertfordshire County Council
Adult Care Services

www.hertsdirect.org/acsc consultations
Telephone: 0300 123 4044



Why is the council increasing some charges?

We are in difficult financial times and the council faces tough choices. If we are to avoid making cuts to essential frontline services, we need to raise additional money. We think the fairest way to do this is to ask those who can afford it to pay a little more for the services they receive. We have reviewed the charges set by similar local authorities to ours to ensure that our proposed changes are in line with other areas of the country.

What if I'm not able to pay?

No-one will be asked to pay more than they can afford and we will continue to make sure people receive the services and support they need.

The proposed changes

We have four proposed changes to our policy:

Proposal 1

We must make sure that you are left with enough money for everyday things, after you have paid any charges for social care services. This is called 'protected income' and it provides you with a reasonable standard of living.

Anything above this amount is called 'disposable income'. Hertfordshire currently takes 75% of your disposable income into account when calculating their charge. We are now consulting on taking 100% into account, bringing us into line with some other councils.

More information is available on page 9 of our charging leaflet, which can be found on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/chargingleaflet

Proposal 2

The most we charge adults who live at home and receive social services is £346.50 per week. We are consulting on not having a maximum weekly charge, again bringing us into line with some other councils. This will only affect you if you are one of the very few people currently pay £346.50 per week.

More information is available on page 7 of our charging leaflet, which can be found on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/chargingleaflet

Proposal 3

When we are working out how much we think you can afford to pay for social services, we take into account the money you spend on things which are needed to help with your disability. These are called your 'disability-related expenses' (DRE), and they can lead to a reduction in the amount we charge you. We are consulting on setting a limit on that reduction of £20 per week. The average reduction for DREs in 2009 was £17.45 a week, so for many of you this limit will not make a difference to the amount you pay. We will have an appeals process for people who can show that they need more than £20 a week.

More information is available on page 10 of our charging leaflet, which can be found on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/chargingleaflet

Proposal 4

Sometimes people will have a short break from their own home to help them, or their carer, while they recover from an accident or illness (sometimes known as respite). We propose to make the way we charge for this service fairer for all, by asking each person to pay according

to their means. Some people may pay the same as or less than they do now, and some may have to pay a contribution who didn't before.

Next steps

The consultation runs from 20 July to 11 October 2010. We will review the proposed charges in the light of the feedback we receive from you. A final decision will be made by Hertfordshire County Council's elected councillors at their Cabinet meeting on 29 November 2010. The county councillors will have all the feedback from the consultation to help them make the final decision.

We will contact all current service users as soon as we possibly can after the Cabinet decision on 29 November 2010.

Most changes, if they are agreed, will take place from April 2011.

Give us your views

You can:

- complete the questionnaire and return it to us
- drop the questionnaire into a local library, County Hall Hertford, Farnham House Stevenage or Apsley One, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead.
- complete the questionnaire on our website at www.hertsdirect.org/acsc consultations
- attend one of our four focus groups:

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| 25 August 2010 | 6.30pm-9.00pm | Farnham House, Stevenage |
| 1 September 2010 | 1.30pm-4.00pm | County Hall, Hertford |
| 6 September 2010 | 1.30pm-4.00pm | Apsley One, Apsley, Hemel Hempstead |
| 8 September 2010 | 6.30pm-9.00pm | County Hall, Hertford |

If you wish to attend any of these groups please call us on **0300 123 4044** to book your place and find out more details. Spaces are limited and will therefore be allocated on a first come-first served basis.

If you don't want to complete a questionnaire or attend a focus group you can still give us your views, or find out any more information, by:

writing to us at ACS Charging Consultation, Room 239, County Hall, Hertford, SG13 8DP

speaking to us on **0300 123 4044**

emailing us at **ACScharging@hertsc.gov.uk**

Abuse Hurts: If you are worried that someone you know is at risk of harm, neglect or mistreatment please call us in confidence to report your concerns on 0300 123 4042.

This information can be made available on request in other formats, including large print, Braille, audio and other languages.