

## NORTH LANARKSHIRE COUNCIL

## REPORT

TO: Social Work Committee	Subject: <b>DRAFT GUIDANCE ON CHARGING FOR SERVICES THAT ENABLE PEOPLE TO REMAIN IN THEIR OWN HOME</b>
FROM: Director of Social Work	
DATE OF COMMITTEE: 21 November 2000	
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REF: JD/GMcI/DH	

**1 PURPOSE OF REPORT**

- 1.1 To advise the Social Work Committee of a consultation paper issued by COSLA on charging for social care services.

**2 BACKGROUND**

- 2.1 Last year COSLA established a group to look at charges for social care. The initial work of the group concentrated on those elements of services that enabled people to remain living in their own home.
- 2.2 Towards the end of the year the work of the group was scaled back in order to seek alignment with whatever was to emerge from the recommendations of the Joint Futures Group - options for charging were within that groups remit.
- 2.3 However, pending any firm decisions from the Scottish Executive, COSLA have now produced a draft guidance which is issued for consultation.

**3 DRAFT GUIDANCE**

- 3.1 The guidance looked at charging for non residential care services that enable people to remain in their own homes.
- 3.2 The guidance does not recommend a national system of charging. It provides a framework which maintains local accountability and discretion at the same time allows Councils to demonstrate that in arriving at charges they have followed best practice.

#### 4 COSLA RECOMMENDATIONS

4.1 In their recommendations to the Scottish Executive, COSLA suggest that national prescription is not a route that is supported by COSLA. It is stated that local authorities need to have the scope to set their own charges in order to have the financial means to provide services that meet local needs and meet the standards demanded by elected members and local people.

4.2 In their recommendations to local authorities COSLA proposes a number of steps which could be taken to bring some uniformity to local charging schemes, these include:-

- ◆ A common threshold at which charges would apply should be adopted, whilst retaining discretion to set the level of charge based on the disposable income which the service user has in excess of the threshold level.
- ◆ The threshold level at which charges would begin are £100 for single people and £130 for couples.
- ◆ There should be a standardised minimum level of capital to be agreed with no maximum figure.
- ◆ Housing, Council Tax and Mortgage costs should be deducted from the gross income.
- ◆ Local authorities should retain discretion to determine how income should be treated in the context of financial assessments for charging purposes, where services are being provided to individuals with dependent children, it is recommended there should be a standard disregard which takes account of the costs associated with maintaining a child.
- ◆ Local authorities should provide quality information which enables service users to appreciate and understand the criteria used to determine service charges and the mechanism for the collection of these.

4.3 In developing charging policies COSLA indicate there are a number of policy development issues which local authorities should take into account and these are as follows:-

- ◆ The need to think strategically about charging policy and relate this to overall plans and objectives.
- ◆ Develop new charging policies on the basis of reliable information base.
- ◆ Take account of a sufficient range of advice.
- ◆ Undertake appropriate stakeholder consultation.
- ◆ That charging policies should reflect the individuals capacity to contribute to the cost of the service.

## 5 RESPONSE TO THE PROPOSALS

- 5.1 The proposals made by COSLA broadly reflect the principles of the policy which operates in North Lanarkshire Council for home care charging.
- 5.2 The approach adopted by COSLA does not favour a scheme of national prescription of charges. This issue may require further consideration by COSLA in the light of a recent indication by the Minister that the Executive would if necessary legislate to introduce a national scheme if consistency could not be achieved by agreement.
- 5.3 The Social Work Department support the income threshold recommended by COSLA at which charges should apply.
- 5.4 In responding to the consultation document the Social Work Department recommends that the lower capital limit should be £3,000, with an income tariff of one pound for each unit of £250 in excess of this figure. This is in line with the current Income Support rules and is consistent with the present North Lanarkshire policy. In addition the Department would support the notion that there should be no upper capital limit which would debar people from receiving a service.
- 5.5 The Department would also suggest that the income disregard for service users with dependent children should be set out at £40 for each child. This again is consistent with the current North Lanarkshire policy.

## 6 CONCLUSION

- 6.1 The Social Work Department supports the broad principles of the COSLA recommendations as they are in line with the existing North Lanarkshire Council policies.

## 7 RECOMMENDATIONS

- 7.1 Committee is requested to:-
- i) Authorise the Director of Social Work to submit detailed comments on the COSLA consultation report.
  - ii) Following the deliberations by COSLA to request the Director of Social Work to bring forward proposed amendments, if required, to the current charging policy for home care.
  - iii) To otherwise note the report.

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**Jim Dickie**  
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**13 November 2000**

For further information on this report please contact, Principal Officer (Strategy) (TEL: 01698 332063)