

REPORT

To: SOCIAL WORK COMMITTEE		Subject: CHARGING POLICY FOR CARE AT HOME SERVICES
From: DIRECTOR OF SOCIAL WORK		
Date: 10 MARCH 2005	Ref: JD/GMcl	

1. Purpose of Report/Introduction

The purpose of this report is to advise Committee of the increased income threshold at which care at home charges will apply, and to intimate some minor amendments to the COSLA guidance on charging.

2. Background

- 2.1. Since the inception of North Lanarkshire Council, charges for home support services have been applied in line with powers contained within the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 and guidance on charging issued by COSLA.
- 2.2. The original charging guidance issued by COSLA in 2002 was subject to review by COSLA and the Scottish Executive. This review was conducted last year and introduces some modifications to the guidance.
- 2.3. Both the original guidance and the revised procedures contain a formula to uprate on an annual basis, the income level at which service users would become liable to pay a charge contribution towards the cost of their service.
- 2.4. In line with previous Committee determination, the Council will continue to exempt community alarm services from charging. Personal care services for people over 65 years are exempt from charge as a result of the national policy to provide free personal care.
- 2.5. Following the review of the guidance on charging policies for non residential care services, COSLA recommend changes in the following areas: -
 - The guidance should apply to all service users not just older people. (This is a principle which currently operates in North Lanarkshire.)
 - There should be a charge threshold which applies to people below the age of 60 years.
 - A minimum earnings disregard of at least £20 per week should be applied to earned income.
 - The previous £50 disregard from income for each dependant child should be abolished and following the introduction of Child Tax Credits all income derived from the following sources be disregarded from the financial assessment. Child Tax Credit, Child Benefit and any disability benefits paid in respect of a child.

- 2.6. Services which are subject to charge arrangements include domestic assistance, housing support and personal care provided in respect of those below the age of 65. The remainder of the guidance and the application of charges is in line with previous Committee approvals.
- 2.7. Committee will be aware that recent changes to the calculation of Pension Credits have made provision to disregard payments made to former miners and their families, where cash in lieu of concessionary coal is paid. It is proposed that this change be adopted when calculating income for home support services.
- 2.8. In addition to the specific amendments noted above, the application of the COSLA formula to increase the income threshold at which charges will apply, introduces the following changes for 2005 – 2006

	Current Threshold 2004/05	Revised Threshold 2005/06	Proposed Threshold 2005/06
Single person under 60 years	£93.00	£94.00	£128.00
Couple under 60 years	£142.00	£143.00	£195.00
Single person over 60 years	£123.00	£128.00	£128.00
Couple over 60 years	£188.00	£195.00	£195.00

- 2.9. In addition to the changes introduced by the amendments to the COSLA guidance, Committees attention is drawn to the position of home support services which are provided primarily in respect of children. There are instances where Social Work will arrange the provision of home support services to address child care issues. In these circumstances there is no charge applied in respect of the service. However, there are situations where services have been provided to meet the needs of a child with disabilities. It is proposed, where such disabilities have been the subject of significant financial compensation and the child has been awarded resources towards the cost of their care, then appropriate charges should be applied.
- 2.10. The COSLA guidance reminds local Authorities to rigorously pursue opportunities for income maximisation for persons receiving home support services. This is an approach which North Lanarkshire Council approves and applies to everyone receiving a service.

3. **Financial/Personnel/Legal/Policy Implications**

- 3.1. The Council is empowered under the Social Work (Scotland) Act 1968 to apply charges in respect of services for home support and have made use of these services to generate income which enables the provision of quality services.


4. **Recommendation**

- 4.1 Committee is asked to approve the following recommendations:-

- (i) In setting the charge threshold for people under 60 years at a similar rate to the over sixties, the Council is taking advantage of the local flexibility which is permitted under the COSLA Guidance on Charging.

- (ii) That income derived from cash in lieu of concessionary coal be disregarded when calculating charge contributions.
- (iii) The proposed changes to the calculation of income in respect of children be adopted.
- (iv) The minimum earnings disregard should also be applied.

- (v) That where appropriate and in line with the terms of this report, that charges may be applied where services are primarily provided for children and there exists the means to pay for such services.
- (vi) That Committee agrees to the uprating of the income threshold as outlined in section 2.8 of the report. Furthermore the threshold applied shall be the equivalent to that of people over the age of 60 years.
- (vi) Otherwise note the content of this report.


Director of Social Work
4 February 2005

For further information on this report please contact George McNally, Manager Social Work Strategy on telephone 01698 332555