

WEST DUNBARTONSHIRE COUNCIL

Report by the Director of Community Health & Care Partnership

Committee: 15 December 2010

Subject: Revision of Charging Policy

1. Purpose

- 1.1** To provide members of the Committee with information regarding the proposed new charging policy for community based care services.

2. Background

- 2.1** The Council, at the special Council meeting on 14 October 2010, agreed to implement a revised charging policy. The revised charging policy was to see the introduction of a policy which was means-tested for homecare and housing support services.
- 2.2** Council agreed that this new policy should be implemented during the current financial year and based on the level of assumed income target to be achieved this financial year, requires to be implemented by 1 January 2011.

3. Main Issues

- 3.1** The Council, on 25 November 2009, introduced a range of new charges for care services provided by, the then, Social Work and Health Department. All of these charges were flat-rate charges with no means-tested element included, though the already existing charge for home care was means-tested.
- 3.2** As noted at 2.1 above, Council has now agreed to introduce a new charging policy for homecare and housing support services to allow the charges for these services to be means-tested.
- 3.3** In approving the change to the charging methodology for these services Council set a target annual increase in income from charges by £350,000 per year, with £87,500 to be achieved in financial year 2010/11. In order to achieve this income target then the revised policy requires to be implemented on 1 January 2011.
- 3.4** The remaining existing charges which the department currently applies remain as flat-rate charges.

- 3.5. The attached Charging Policy provides the detail as to how the revised set of charges will operate, and covers all charges for all community care services, whether means-tested or flat rate.
- 3.6 The attached policy is compliant with the CoSLA Guidance on Community Care charging.
- 3.7 The new means-tested elements of the charging policy will change the level of charge to current service users. Due to the means-tested nature of the new policy it is expected that some service users will experience a reduction in charge, while it is expected that others will experience an increase in charge.
- 3.8 The ability of the Council to attain the targeted level of income will depend on the income levels of service users, which will change over time as the service user base changes over time.
- 3.9 The proposed Welfare Reform changes and those proposed to Housing Benefit which have been described recently by central government is expected to reduce the income available to service users, however the full effect of this will not be known for a number of years. The department's budgeted level of income on an ongoing basis will therefore require to take into account the ongoing changes and the possible effect on service user income which could have an effect charge levels achieved.

4. People Implications

- 4.1 There are no direct people implications as a result of the new policy, though the means-tested methodology does require more administration. This will require to be absorbed within existing resources.

5. Financial Implications

- 5.1 The new policy is expected to generate additional income from service users by relating the charge made to the cost of the service provided. The ongoing value of such income will vary depending on the level of service provided and the level of income which each service user has. This will vary over time as the service user base changes. The department will require to recognise this over future years when setting income budgets.
- 5.2 It is not clear how the recently announced welfare reforms will affect the ability of the department to continue to achieve the level of income targeted by Council. The department will monitor any effects on the ability to recover the expected level of income as these changes are implemented.

6. Risk Analysis

- 6.1 The main risk is in relation to the ability of the department to recover the charges described in the policy to the level recently targeted by Council. This risk is in relation to the issues highlighted within the Financial Implications section above. In order to mitigate the above risk the department will attempt

to ensure that income is maximised for all service users who are subject to the charging policy through referral to advice-giving agencies.

7. Equalities Impact

- 7.1** An impact assessment has been carried on the implementation of the new policy and is available as a background paper to this report.

8. Conclusions and Recommendations

- 8.1** The attached Charging Policy requires to be implemented from 1 January 2011 in order to seek to attain the targeted level of income which is implied by the Council's decision on 14 October 2010 to obtain an additional £87,500 of income during the current financial year.
- 8.2** Committee is asked to approve the attached Charging Policy for implementation from 1 January 2011.

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Director.

Person to Contact:	Stephen West, Head of Service – Resources and Performance
Appendix:	Draft Charging Policy for Community Care Services
Background Papers:	Integrated Impact Assessment Summary
Wards Affected:	All wards