

KEY ISSUES FROM SERVICE USER AND CARER WORKING GROUP REPORT

The views of the working group on the proposals that formed the basis of the consultation survey are set out below in italics along with details of how they have been addressed.

1. *The proposed increases in what people will pay are too high and the increase in the amount that a number of people will have to pay is too high.*

The financial challenges facing the Council have to be considered alongside the views of the working group and the outcomes of the consultation process in developing proposals. Sections 5.3 and 5.4 of the report set out revised proposals for lower charges for day care and transport than were originally proposed. The report also proposes that a maximum weekly charge is retained, albeit at a higher level than currently. The benchmarking information set out in section 3.10 of the report shows that the revised charges proposed are in line with those of the majority of comparator authorities and the financial assessment methodology in Leeds remains more generous than most. It is acknowledged, however, that the Working Group did not feel that the changes to the original proposals went far enough. As outlined in section 5.7 of the report, transitional arrangements are proposed to cap the increase for those who would otherwise face the highest increases in their contributions and services cannot be withdrawn for non-payment. The potential impact of increased contributions is acknowledged with particular reference to the current environment in section 4.13 of the report and the Equality Impact Assessment includes actions to closely monitor the impact of any changes on customers. Service users will receive an explanation of the changes to charges following the Executive Board decision and a telephone helpline will be available to address any concerns they may raise.

2. *People may cease or reduce their services or that in continuing to use the services they will forego other necessities.*

Section 6.5 of the report outlines the monitoring of service take-up that will take place following implementation and confirms that services cannot be withdrawn if service users do not pay their assessed contribution. As outlined in section 6.3 of the report there is a review process if service users do not feel that they can afford their assessed contribution and the Director of Adult Social Services has discretion to waive customer contributions if this is considered appropriate. To reduce the impact of the changes on customers a cap on the increase in the weekly payment that existing service users would face initially is proposed as set out in section 5.7 of the report. Providing people have had a financial assessment, they should not have to forego necessities to pay for their services as the assessment gives an allowance for daily living costs. The financial assessment process includes a benefits check to maximise people's benefits income, which includes completing benefits claims forms on behalf of the customer. For those with savings/investments over £14,250 the assessment effectively assumes that they will utilise some of their savings to fund their care and this will be explained in the letter to customers explaining any changes made to charges. Section 6.4 of the report outlines the steps that will be taken to encourage customers to have a financial assessment who have chosen not to have one previously.

3. *Everyone is entitled to a subsidy*

The revised proposals set out in section 5.4 provide some subsidy for day care and a much greater subsidy for transport. Although there is no subsidy proposed within the charge for independent sector home care, this does represent a subsidised charge compared with the overall cost to the Council of providing home care as the costs of the directly provided service are higher. There is no subsidy for direct payments which reflects the position for two-thirds of comparator authorities.

4. *In terms of day services, that a differential charge reflecting the different service group costs, should be applied to avoid cross subsidy.*

This is included in the revised proposals as set out in section 5.4 of the report.

5. *The maximum weekly charge must be retained as this means that people do not pay more just because they need more services.*

This is included in the revised proposals as set out in section 5.6 of the report.

6. *Transitional arrangements should be put in place to mitigate the impact of the proposals and that in their view the transitional arrangements should be extended over a longer period as possible, in 12 month phases.*

Transitional protection is included in the proposals as set out in section 5.7 of the report, but they are for six-monthly rather than annual increases. The financial challenges facing the Council have to be considered alongside the views of the working group.

7. *In their application, the proposals should be fair and proportionate; this can be applied through the financial assessment which assesses people's ability to pay.*

The revised proposals set out in sections 5.4 to 5.7 of the report have sought to be fair and proportionate within the context of the financial challenges facing the Council. Sections 6.2 to 6.4 of the report outline the efforts that will be made to encourage the take-up of financial assessments and ensure that the process takes full account of people's individual circumstances.