

SERVICE USER CONTRIBUTIONS - CONSULTATION SURVEY

Background Information

Non-residential services are a cornerstone of our strategy to support people in the community. For many people, it is the key to enabling them to remain independent and in their own homes. It is very important that the services are properly funded. The contributions made by people who use these services are an important part of that funding.

The Council is currently reviewing the contributions service users make towards the cost of these services.

If you receive any of the following services, or if you care for someone who receives a service, then this review could affect you. The services that it will cover are:

Home care
Supported living services
Respite care
Sitting services

Day services
Transport to day services
Family placement

We would welcome your views before we make any decisions about changing the way people contribute towards these services. Please do take time to think about how you feel about the questions we have asked in this survey.

If you feel you need any further information to complete this survey or would like some help to complete it, please ring our telephone helpline:

Telephone Helpline: 0113.....

Open Monday to Friday - 9.00 am to 4.30 pm

Why is this review taking place?

We want to make sure that we have enough money to provide the level of services that people need now and in the future and also to improve some important services. We get a large amount of funding from the government and the Council Tax, but we get less government funding than most other big cities and we do not get as much as most authorities from service user contributions.

We want to make the contributions we ask service users to pay fairer and reduce the differences between Leeds and most other authorities

We want to have some agreed principles for service user contributions so that when services change or new services are introduced we can set new service user contributions.

What do I need to know before I can make comments about how the Council should charge for its community-based social care services?

- The services someone receives are added together and then the financial assessment works out what they can afford to pay for the whole package of care, not for each individual service. Only meals and respite care are separate and everyone pays the same for those services.
- To protect people on a low income, when people are assessed the government says everyone is allowed to keep as their income the basic income support level plus a “buffer” of 25% on top before they pay anything towards their services. For someone over 60 this amount is £155.06 per week.
- The financial assessment takes account of what people have to pay for their housing costs and anything they need to spend because of their disability. These costs are added to the “Income Support plus 25%” figure. If someone’s income is below this overall total the government says they cannot contribute towards the cost of their services. This is to make sure that people do not pay more than they can afford.
- The government says that any savings below £13,500 must be ignored.
- The staff who carry out the financial assessment will check whether people are getting all the financial benefits they are entitled to. If they can claim other benefits the person who visits will help them to fill in a claim form or fill it in for them.
- Currently the contributions service users make in Leeds towards the cost of their services are significantly below the national average and neighbouring authorities.
- After we have deducted allowances for day to day expenses, housing costs and any costs related to a person’s disability from their income, anything left over this is called disposable income. Most other local authorities take all this disposable income as being available as a contribution towards the cost of someone’s services, but in Leeds at the moment we only take half.
- In Leeds we currently ignore the savings or investments that people have in assessing the amount they can pay towards the cost of their services. Almost all other local authorities take savings and investments into account. The Government says that we must ignore the value of a person’s home and any savings and investments below £13,500.

Whatever the Council decides about service user contributions towards community-based social care services, people whose income is less than “Income Support plus 25%” and who have savings of less than £13,500 will continue to receive free services.

Review of Service User Contributions Indicative Questions

The questions provided below are the basic questions we would seek to ask. They will be amended as appropriate based on the `preferred options` that emerge from the discussions held with the Service User and Carer Reference Group.

1. Are you the person who receives the service or someone completing it on their behalf?

Service User

Carer

Other (please state) _____

2. Which services do you use?

Home Care
Supported Living Services
Day Services
Transport to Day Services
Respite Care
Family Placement (Adults)
Sitting Services
Direct Payments

3. How would you describe your ethnic background?

WHITE	British	
	Irish	
	Any other White background	
MIXED	White & Black Caribbean	
	White & Black African	
	White & Asian	
	Any other mixed background	
ASIAN OR ASIAN BRITISH	Indian	
	Pakistani	
	Bangladeshi	
	Kashmiri	
	Any other Asian background	
BLACK OR BLACK BRITISH	Caribbean	
	African	
	Any other Black background	
BLACK OTHER ETHNIC GROUPS	Chinese	
	Gypsy/Traveller	
	Other	

4. Level of contribution towards the cost of services

The Council subsidises all services, but people are asked to make a contribution towards the cost of their services. In Leeds this contribution is less than in many other places.

The Council is thinking about increasing service user contributions for services to enable us to invest more in the services we provide and to improve the fairness of our contributions.

Would you agree with a proposal to increase the contribution for services to enable us to invest more in our services?

Agree strongly	
Agree	
Neither agree not disagree	
Disagree	
Disagree strongly	

5. The maximum payment

Currently contributions in Leeds are capped at £88 per week, regardless of whether people have enough money to pay more towards the cost of their care.

If we remove the maximum payment or increase it people will continue to be protected by the financial assessment and no-one will be asked to pay more than they can reasonably afford.

Would you agree with a proposal to remove the maximum payment?

Agree strongly	
Agree	
Neither agree not disagree	
Disagree	
Disagree strongly	

We could keep a maximum payment, but link it to the cost of residential care, which at the moment is around £420 per week. This link with residential care only relates to the maximum payment - the contributions for residential care are different to services in the community, so the value of a person's home is always ignored for community services.

Would you agree with a proposal to keep the maximum payment but to link it to the amount a person would pay if they went into residential care?

Agree strongly	
Agree	
Neither agree not disagree	
Disagree	
Disagree strongly	

6. Disposable income percentage

In the financial assessment we look at people's income and then give them allowances for day to day expenses, housing costs and any costs related to their disability. We deduct all these allowances from their income and if there is anything left over this is called disposable income.

Most other local authorities take 100% of disposable income as being available as a contribution towards the cost of someone's services, but in Leeds at the moment we only take 50% of disposable income as a contribution.

The Council is thinking about increasing the percentage of disposable income that it takes into account in assessing a service user's contribution to enable us to invest more in the services we provide and to improve the fairness of our contributions.

Would you agree with a proposal to increase the disposable income percentage to enable us to invest more in our services?

Agree strongly	
Agree	
Neither agree not disagree	
Disagree	
Disagree strongly	

7. Savings and investments

In Leeds we currently ignore any savings or investments that people have in assessing the amount they can pay towards the cost of their services. Almost all other local authorities take savings and investments into account. The Government says that we must ignore the value of a person's home and any savings and investments below £13,500.

The Council is thinking about taking capital into account to enable us to invest more in the services we provide and to improve the fairness of our contributions.

Would you agree with a proposal to take savings and investments over £13,500 into account to enable us to invest more in our services?

Agree strongly	
Agree	
Neither agree not disagree	
Disagree	
Disagree strongly	

We could take savings and investments into account in the same way as the government says we have to for people going into residential care. The value of a person's home will be ignored, but this would mean that anyone with savings over £22,250 would pay the full contribution for their services at the subsidised rate.

Would you agree with a proposal to take savings and investments into account in the same way that the Government says we have to for people going into residential care?

Agree strongly	
Agree	
Neither agree nor disagree	
Disagree	
Disagree strongly	

8. Phasing implementation

Any changes that the Council makes to its service user contributions may lead to a significant increase in the weekly charge for some people.

We may look at the timing of putting the changes in place so that people do not have to pay the full increase in the first year. We could do this in two main ways:

Option 1 By introducing part of a change in year 1 and the remainder in year 2. For example, we could increase the disposable income percentage in year 1, but delay the full increase until year 2.

Option 2 By capping the overall increase in weekly contributions

Which of these two options would you prefer?

Option 1	
Option 2	

Those people who see an increase in their contributions will not be asked to pay more than they can reasonably afford.

What would you consider to be an acceptable maximum increase in weekly contributions in the first year?

Maximum increase in the year 1 weekly contribution:	£	per week
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