

Charging for Supporting People services

From 1st April 2006 revised guidance is set to come into force under which local authorities will be urged to take a more consistent approach to charging people for non-residential services that assist them to stay in their own homes.

At present those local authorities that charge certain groups of longer term users of housing support services typically use eligibility for housing benefit as a passport to exemption from charges. This is out of step with charging for other social care services for which a more detailed financial assessment tends to be carried out.

Local Authorities have flexibility in the extent to which they charge people for using 'long term' services under Supporting People. Typically authorities charge older people using sheltered housing services who are considered to be able to afford this.

Under the new guidance authorities are being urged to conduct a more detailed financial assessment and housing benefit entitlement would not be a passport to exemption from charges. Instead a taper would be used where someone's income is above the threshold.

The draft guidance has been developed by CoSLA and is due to be considered for final endorsement by council leaders on 27th January 2006.

It will not be mandatory for local authorities to follow it although it will be considered good practice and in line with the Scottish Executive's expectations that charging for non-residential services be carried out fairly.

Details of the revised guidance can be viewed from page 22 of the

CoSLA document at:
<http://www.cosla.gov.uk/attachments/execgroups/sh/shdec05agendaandpapers.doc>

The impact of this on providers will be a greater number of service users being brought into charging. Local authorities will retain the responsibility to carry out financial assessments and to collect charges but service providers will be required to assist with this by informing service users about the basis of any charge and helping to ensure that financial assessments are carried out timeously.

Existing service users who are not charged for housing support services will be protected from charges.

Over time, as more service users contribute to the costs of their housing support, a greater proportion of a services' funding will come from charging which may reduce the Supporting People contribution.

At the outset of Supporting People, the Scottish Executive, based on information provided by the DWP, made an assumption that local authorities would raise 20% of the value of their programmes through charging.

Grant allocations were made on the basis of this but recent analysis of returns from local authorities reveal that a much smaller percentage is being recovered in this way. The implementation of CoSLA's guidance could result in an increase in charging income though how significant this will be is as yet unknown.

supportingpeople

enabling unit

Bulletin

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Charging for services

Service Review

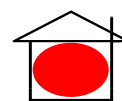
Use of technology

Qualifications

Care Commission

Accessing council reports on SP

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SCOTTISH EXECUTIVE

The Supporting People Enabling Unit is a partnership initiative between Community Care Providers Scotland (CCPS) and the Scottish Federation of Housing Associations (SFHA), funded by the Scottish Executive.

Analysis and research into the programme

Impact analysis

The Scottish Executive is currently analysing the first set of returns from local authorities about those services that have undergone service review and the impact that Supporting People funding restrictions are having on capacity and service level.

An interim report was presented to the Service Review and Impact Group on 20th December. At this stage the analysis was incomplete but did provide an opportunity for provider representatives to gain some insight into the emerging picture.

Generally local authorities are not reporting significant efficiency savings though some 'savings' have been made by not offering inflationary uplift. Local authorities have expressed unease about this approach as they realise this approach will have an impact on service levels in the future. The analysis does not, at the moment, distinguish providers across sectors so it does not reach any conclusions about the impact of current funding levels on the independent sector as opposed to those services directly provided by councils.

Of those local authorities that are facing a reduction in Supporting People grant some reported that they are reducing service levels according to where service users are moving on. The inevitable impact of this is that short term visiting support services will tend to shrink rather than longer term accommodation based services.

At least 15 out of 19 authorities said they had hoped for separate pipeline funding for 2004/05 when the Supporting People grant was allocated on the basis that any new project would have to be covered within the grant. Authorities have had to find other funding sources such as Social Work to facilitate new projects as well as using any small savings they have made. Generally, the savings being made at Service Review do not offset the lack of separate pipeline funding and there is uncertainty about the ongoing viability of some of these new projects.

Costs of coordination of the SP programme

So far local authorities have reported a significant disparity in terms of the % of the grant they spend on administration and coordination. Of those returns already analysed the amount varies between authorities from <1% to 16.6%.

For further details about the Service Review Group meetings go to the Scottish Executive's website at: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Housing/Housing/supportpeople/Page206>

Please note that minutes from the December meeting will not go on the website until after the next group meeting.

The initial analysis is being developed to incorporate all the local authority returns. This work will be completed soon. It is not known if this report will be made public but when it is completed a further update will be provided on the SP Enabling Unit's web pages at www.ccpscotland.org/spunit

Research consultant appointed and advisory group set up

The Scottish Executive has appointed Tribal as consultants to carry out research into the cost benefits of the Supporting People programme in Scotland. The aim of the research is to show the costs and benefits of the programme in terms of reduced spending by public services such as health and social care and in terms of improved outcomes for people using housing support funded through Supporting People. The Scottish Executive hope the final report from the research will be completed by the end of May 2006.

An Advisory Board is being set up to help steer the research. The Board will include local authorities and providers from CCPS and SFHA as well as the SP Enabling Unit. The Board will approve the research methods proposed by the consultant as well as approve the draft findings and the final report.

This research has been inspired by the research carried out in England by Matrix Consultancy which showed that through housing support, public services saved nearly as much as was spent on it by the Supporting People programme.

It is likely that the Scottish Executive will be commissioning further research in order to uncover how unit costs differ in England and Scotland. Up to now the unit cost of housing support looks more expensive in Scotland than in England. The Scottish Executive is keen to examine this in more detail and to find out the reasons for any variation.

Looking ahead

Supporting People Model Contract

A meeting was organised by the Unit on 29th November involving Disclosure Scotland, local authorities, a solicitor from Glasgow City Council, providers, Scottish Executive, and SFHA to discuss the difficulties providers have been facing because of some local authorities requests to see Disclosure Scotland Certificates.

The purpose of the meeting was to discuss a way forward so that providers are not being asked to share information or Disclosure Certificates with local authorities that would go against Disclosure Scotland's Code of Practice or be in breach of legislation. Agreement was reached at the meeting that core clause 10.11 should be amended so that it would not be requiring providers to show Disclosure Certificates to local authorities but rather lay out the information that providers can record about the certificate in line with Disclosure Scotland's Code of Practice.

The Local Authority Solicitors Group is currently considering the revisions and once agreed the Scottish Executive will incorporate the revised clause into the Contract Framework. In addition to this, Angus Council has now redrawn the core clause for their own use and has removed any requirement for the Council to see Certificates. To see Disclosure Scotland's Code of Practice go to www.disclosurescotland.co.uk. For further information about the progress being made to amend clause 10.11 go to the Unit's web pages at: www.ccpScotland.org/spunit

Supporting People and consultation document England

The ODPM launched a consultation strategy document in November. The consultation period ends on 28th February 2006. The ODPM has identified 3 types of need for services funded through Supporting People and has highlighted particular challenges the programme faces in delivering services to meet that need. The challenges identified are:

- to improve the commissioning arrangements of services where people need health/care and support
- to improve the extent to which people can secure small amounts of support in their own homes

- to improve the focus of the programme on people who need help to prevent or deal with a crisis situation

Reducing bureaucracy

Service providers in Scotland may be interested to see that in England the ODPM has acknowledged some of the administrative issues that Supporting People has brought with it. The consultation document at section 119 acknowledges that this has brought a cost to service providers. The ODPM is urging authorities to be 'proportionate' in their approach rather than making blanket requirements across all services. At section 121 the ODPM states that 'Given the need to work within finite resources, it may in some cases be appropriate to scale back administrative requirements and release a greater amount of funding for direct service delivery.'

The role of voluntary and community sector providers

The ODPM recognizes the contribution to the programme of the voluntary and community sector acknowledging that in England about 2/3 of providers are from this sector. The ODPM urges authorities to support and assist this sector and highlights an example of good practice where the London Borough of Haringey has taken steps to develop/provide ongoing support for small BME providers.

Whilst the consultation strategy does not impact directly on service providers in Scotland, the Scottish Executive has indicated that it is watching the development of the strategy with interest. The consultation document is available on the ODPM website at: www.odpm.gov.uk

Further funding for the SP Enabling Unit

The Supporting People Enabling Unit is set to continue to support and assist voluntary and independent sector service providers. The Scottish Executive has agreed to continue to contribute most of the costs associated with the Unit for a further 2 years from April 2006 - March 2008. The Unit also receives assistance from Capability Scotland in the form of office accommodation and some providers sponsor the printing costs of the Bulletin.

Technology in the home: West Lothian's approach

West Lothian Council has developed a plan to integrate telecare solutions with existing service provision to promote independent living as a real, cost effective alternative to institutional care.

How does it work? Telecare technology uses sensors and detectors within the home which alerts the West Lothian Careline if something appears unusual. For example, the sensor could alert the call centre if there was smoke, extreme heat or if there had been no movement within the house for some time. When contacted, a trained operator at the call centre decides on the appropriate response. This may be contacting the service user, emergency services, a GP, plumber or family member depending on the situation. An assessment is done on each person when they opt into the telecare system which means the call centre operators have a good idea about what would be considered normal within each home and also have information on preferred contacts if something does appear worrying.

Who can use it? The core package of telecare technology is available to all people in West Lothian aged over 60 assessed as needing it due to illness, vulnerability, or other risk factors that technology could alleviate as well as some vulnerable people who are younger.

The telecare technology is simple to use and install and does not look out of place within the home. Lynn McAllister of West Lothian Council said "I have always been clear that telecare equipment is going into people's homes and so should not be intrusive or unattractive".

Not a replacement for human contact The advantage of telecare equipment is that older people can be confident help will be sought if they have a fall or are in danger. However, it cannot be considered as an alternative to human contact. Katy McBride of West Lothian Council explained "In West Lothian the technology has not replaced face to face contact. However, it has freed up staff/carer time to concentrate on other areas which benefits the clients more effectively."

Helping people move on from hospital. West Lothian Council was awarded first prize for the best use of IT in primary and community care in 2005 by the Healthcare IT Effectiveness Awards. Judges were particularly impressed that the mean duration of length of stay in hospital by a patient who had been assessed as being ready to move is 32 days compared with the Scottish average of 78 days. Further research has shown that the number of patients awaiting discharge in West Lothian in April 2005 was 15 compared to 67 in April 2000.

Provider's experience. West Lothian Council works in partnership with various housing associations including Bield to provide telecare technology to housing association tenants. The council employs staff to provide a housing support service at each of Bield's 3 Housing with Care schemes, and they meet the cost of providing the equipment via SP funding. Bield's own community alarm service, Bield Response24, responds to calls when the Council's housing support staff are not on duty within the schemes. Ann Nolan, Bield's Service Manager said "we carry out joint assessments with the council to ensure that applicants understand and will benefit from the housing and services offered within our schemes". Ann explained that as a result of having the telecare technology within the schemes Bield is able to offer housing to people who would otherwise require residential care housing. For more information on Bield's Housing with Care schemes contact a.nolan@bield.co.uk.

Cost benefit. Currently West Lothian has 1900 service users. Stirling University is undertaking a series of evaluation reports on the system to assess how service users' and stake holders are finding using telecare technology. Nearly all the survey respondents have reported a positive impact of the telecare technology, which has been important in relieving worries about falling and about home security. The research also highlights that telecare solutions have reduced pressure on the health authority, as the gross annual cost for providing one care home place stands at £21,840, compared with £7,121 for the support in the community package, which includes the telecare technology, 24 hour response and ten hours of care per week.

Funding the service. The service is provided free to service users if they assessed as needing it. West Lothian uses Supporting People grant and funding from their social policy budget. Together these covers the cost of the call centre, the health and care team and maintenance of the system. To set up the scheme West Lothian received some assistance from the Scottish Executive's Challenge Funding and Modernising Government funding. For more information on telecare in West Lothian contact Lynn.McAllister@westlothian.gov.uk.

Promotion of telecare in England. For more ideas about the use of technology within the home keep an eye on developments in England as the Department of Health has created an £80M grant fund to develop telecare service. More information about telecare in England can be found at the DOH's website on www.dh.gov.uk/PolicyAndGuidance/HealthAndSocialCareTopics/OlderPeoplesServices/OlderPeopleArticle/fs/e.n?CONTENT_ID=4116208&chk=g6m5JL

Care Commission

Fees. The Scottish Executive has announced that the fees charged by the Care Commission in 2006/07 will be frozen at current levels and fees for care home will be reduced by 10%. The Care Commission had been expected to be self-financing by 2006/07 but the Scottish Executive has decided to continue with its subsidy. Deputy Health Minister Lewis Macdonald said "As part of its current Care Inquiry the Health Committee is reviewing the Regulation of Care (Scotland) Act 2001, focusing specifically on the Commission and the wider inspection regime including funding issues. Before considering further possible changes in fees, it will be important to consider the outcome of that review and its impact on the Care Commission."

Inspection. In December 2005 the Care Commission informed the Supporting People Service Review and Impact Group that approximately 40% of Housing Support Services Inspections had taken place. 50% of Care at Home Inspections for 2005/06 were complete by December 2005. The Impact Group was also informed that the Care Commission has received 85 complaints in relation to housing support which is 6% of complaints over all.

Consultation. The Care Commission is in the process of consulting with providers on the inspection process. A meeting will be held at the end on January with invited stakeholders and the Care Commission is seeking peoples' views by e-mail via the website www.carecommission.com

Memorandum of Understanding. 8 local authorities have entered a Memorandum of Understanding with the Care Commission which sets out the working relationship between them and the Care Commission. The local authorities are:

- Western Isles Council
- East Ayrshire
- Fife Council
- North Ayrshire
- North Lanarkshire Council
- Scottish Borders Council
- South Ayrshire
- South Lanarkshire Council

Full details are on the Care Commission website at <http://www.carecommission.com/publications/displaycategory.php?catid=11>

Access to LA reports on SP

Access to minutes of council meetings and reports presented to council regarding Supporting People programmes can be a useful source of information for service providers. Local authorities do vary as to the powers delegated to council staff but generally SP strategies and the principles being used to commission services are decided by council members. Often these reports are available on the local authority website as they are a matter of public interest. However, it can be difficult to source these documents if you do not know exactly which committee is involved and exactly when meetings take place. The unit has recognised this difficulty and has started to develop an area on its web pages to assist. know of

Supporting People Lead officers across Scotland have agreed to alert the Unit when reports are presented to local councillors and how to access these reports via the internet. We will use this information to build up a store of links and contacts to Supporting People reports across the country. Currently 11 local authorities have notified us of reports related to SP. Over the next year we hope to build on this so that all local authority reports on Supporting People that are in the public domain can be easily found. To view the work in progress go to http://www.ccpscotland.org/spunit/info/local_authorities.php and then choose the local authority area you are interested in. If you know of additional reports you believe should be included in this section please do get in touch and we will be happy to use the information to keep the website as up to date as possible.

Scottish Social Services Council

No date has been set for the opening of the SSSC's register of the housing support workforce. However many providers are starting to prepare for the register now. In

Information on the qualifications that will be accepted is available on www.sssc.uk.com.

In addition the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit has produced a publication titled "Navigating the Funding Streams" which aims to help voluntary sector social service organisations identify funding sources which will assist with the development of the workforce and compliance with essential learning and qualifications requirements. A copy can be downloaded from their website at http://www.ccpscotland.org/workforceunit/info/documents/Navigatingthefundingstreams_v1.1_001.pdf

Question Time: Supporting People Issues

Q. From having had no service-users transferring to another Local Authority, we now have 2 in the space of one month. Am I right in thinking that if Transitional Housing Benefit was accessed prior to March 31st 2003, then the funding is secure for that individual even if they transfer to another LA? One local authority has told me that the money no longer follows the person. This is a real problem as one of the service users has an urgent and regular need of this service but currently it is not being funded.

A. The issue of who pays when a service user moves between local authorities is a difficult one. Ultimately it is down to the two local authorities involved to agree a solution in each case. The Scottish Executive's guidance to local authorities is to work out a solution between themselves and to avoid cases being taken to judicial review.

Regarding the transfer from Transitional Housing Benefit - as you say, the general principle behind Supporting People was that no service user should be disadvantaged because of the move from Transitional Housing Benefit to Supporting People. Where a move to another local authority takes place, however, there is no straight forward way of ensuring continued funding because the Transitional Housing Benefit money went into the original local authority Supporting People grant and there is no requirement for the original local authority to pass the money onto the next local authority.

It is really important that a case manager - usually a social worker in one of the local authorities - takes the lead and ensures an up to date needs assessment has been carried out and services planned accordingly. Where the original local authority assists a person to move then they are deemed to be 'placing' someone in the new area and should pay for the support. If a person moves of their own volition then the new local authority should carry out an assessment and fund the necessary care and support. Where a

service user is facing unreasonable delays because of a lack of agreement that person may wish to make a formal complaint to the LA they now reside in.

The Scottish Executive recently reviewed its definition of 'Ordinary Residence'. This has an impact on this type of situation. To see the consultation document go to: <http://www.scotland.gov.uk/Resource/Doc/924/0017116.pdf> Also, local authorities have been discussing new protocols and have written a draft document called: 'Cross Authority Arrangements Proposal'. The draft protocol can be seen on the Unit's web page at: www.ccpScotland.org/spunit This proposal spells out clearly that people using short term housing support services, particularly those accessed on an emergency basis like hostels for people who are homeless, should be funded through the Supporting People grant where the hostel is situated in. The draft proposals include a variety of scenarios as examples of what should happen.

Q. Can a provider legitimately refuse to send the SP Team copies of housing support plans?

A. Providers of housing support have to comply with data protection regulations which means they cannot share personal or sensitive information about service users without their consent. For most services this is not a problem and consent can be explained and obtained as a matter of course with service users as part of the support planning process.

There are some services, for instance those working with women fleeing domestic violence, where this would pose a barrier to delivering a service. In this sort of situation service providers should discuss with their local authority more appropriate ways to monitor housing support planning. Perhaps anonymised examples of housing support plans might be sufficient.

Question Time: Supporting People Issues

Q We currently receive what was a SNAP grant from two local authorities. One local authority has recently informed us that we should no longer be receiving this as it is for a service that is now a registered care home, not a housing support service. What is the position with SNAP funding?

A. If the registration status of the service has changed making it no longer eligible for Supporting People funding then the LA is right not to try to fund it out of SP. Now that SNAP funding is part of the SP grant it does not need to be accounted for separately though individual service users do have protection. In order for the local authority to uphold its obligation to this former SNAP service user an alternative funding source would have to be found.

Q. How much insurance does a local authority expect a provider to have to indemnify the local authority in case of proceedings against it brought due to acts or omissions of the provider?

A. Section 20 of the core clauses of the Supporting People contracting framework deals with indemnity but does not specify an amount that providers should insure for. In general local authorities do not expect providers to take out separate insurance to indemnify the Council. It is common for local authorities to require Public Liability of £5m and Employee Liability of £10m.

Q My local authority has issued a list of housing support tasks some of which can be charged to Supporting People and some cannot. Are the 21 tasks of housing support, developed at the time of Transitional Housing Benefit, still applicable?

A. The 21 tasks remain in force as SP eligibility criteria but local authorities can choose to fund housing support from elsewhere if they wish. It may be, therefore, that a local authority has decided that it will fund certain sorts of housing support from a fund other than SP - even though it would meet SP eligibility criteria.

Q. Our local authority has told us that we will receive a 34% reduction in our funding but the Service Review process has not started yet? Can they do this?

A. Where such a significant change to SP funding is being contemplated it is better practice for a Service Review to be undertaken. The Unit is aware that some local authorities have had to pull back on their funding commitments under SP in advance of completing all Service Reviews. Decisions about where to reduce funding in this sort of situation have sometimes been made according to where lower levels of service volume have been delivered than originally agreed. This way funding can be reduced without existing service users suffering.

You should refer to the Letter of Agreement in place (or Interim or Full Contract). It should state the amount the LA will pay for a specific level of service. It should also state whether / how changes to the terms can be made and when the agreement ends. If you feel that your local authority is in breach of contract then ask to meet with the SP Lead Officer urgently. (In this actual case a Service Review was then undertaken and the actual reduction to funding was scaled down).

Q. Has there been a Supporting People Service Review case taken to judicial review yet?

In England a case has been conducted where a provider's funding had been reduced dramatically and a case taken to judicial review.

The judgement made was that an adequate review had not taken place and that it should be re-run by 6th Feb 2006.

The case is: Supportways Community Services Ltd v Hampshire County Council (2005) CO/1505/2005,QBD. Both parties have announced that the ruling has gone in their favour.

For Your Noticeboard

Events

Developing the housing support workforce seminars for February 2006

SPEU, the Voluntary Sector Social Services Workforce Unit and the SSSC are jointly hosting a seminar programme which aims to help providers gain a better understanding of the new qualification framework for housing support service staff. In particular delegates will be able to discuss:

- Registration issues: timescales and qualifications
- Planning for success
- Sharing good practice: an employer's perspective

The seminars will be particularly useful for Training Officers and Senior Managers with responsibility for staff development and will take place from 10 am - 12.45 pm on the following dates:

- 22 February Glasgow
- 24 February Dundee
- 9 March Glasgow

There is no charge for these events but delegates must register in advance. Booking forms are available by contacting vswu.admin@ccpscotland.org

Inverness Regional Event

The Supporting People Enabling Unit is hosting regional meetings that will give providers an opportunity to hear the latest news about the Supporting People programme and a chance to exchange views and experiences.

Inverness 1.30 pm Thursday 2 March 2006

Contact heather.martin@ccpscotland.org for further information.

Aberdeen and Aberdeenshire Council Joint Event on Housing Support and Supporting People

Aberdeen 1pm - 5.30pm 16 March 2006

Contact suzanne.lamb@aberdeenshire.gov.uk for more information.

Publications

Managing Outcomes: A Guide for Homelessness Organisations

Sara Burns and Sally Cuppitt
Charities Evaluation Service
2003

ISBN 1-897963-22-X

This is a practical guide to help homelessness organisations assess the difference their service makes to service users.

For more information go to www.ces-vol.org.uk

Creating Sustainable Communities: Supporting Independence

ODPM Publications

November 2005

Product code 05 SP 03453

Consultation document on a strategy for the Supporting People Programme (in England).

More information from odpm@twoten.press.net or the ODPM website at www.spkweb.org.uk

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