

Information sheet C11 – NHS Continuing Health Care (CHC)

If you need care and support because of a disability or illness, you may be eligible either for “social care” support, which is funded under arrangements made by Northumberland County Council, or for NHS Continuing Health Care (NHS CHC) funded by the NHS. In Northumberland, these two kinds of arrangement are both managed in the same way through a partnership between the NHS and the County Council. This makes it easier to ensure that people have continuity of support arrangements if their needs change either from social care to NHS CHC or vice versa.

Care and support funded through NHS CHC may involve similar services to social care support, including personal care in your own home or accommodation in a care home. One important difference is that there are no charges for NHS CHC, whereas most people have to make a financial contribution towards the cost of social care support (depending on their means).

You will only be eligible for NHS CHC if you have a “primary health need”. The Department of Health has published a booklet explaining how decisions are made about whether someone has a “primary health need”, based on the nature, complexity, intensity and unpredictability of their care needs. You can ask your care manager for a copy, or if you have access to the internet you can find it at www.tinyurl.com/CHCbooklet2013.

■ How do I find out if I might be eligible for NHS CHC?

If you are in hospital, and it becomes clear that you will need care and support after your discharge, or if social care services are arranged for you, the professionals working with you should consider whether you need an NHS CHC assessment. If you think that you might be eligible, but you are not sure whether this has been considered, please ask. If your care needs are fairly straightforward, they may tell you that you are not likely to be eligible, though you do still have a right to ask for an “NHS CHC checklist” to be completed to confirm whether there is a need to complete a full assessment of your needs.

If an NHS CHC checklist indicates that a full assessment is called for, a specialist nurse will consult all the health and social care professionals who are working with you and complete a “Decision Support Tool”. A recommendation on your eligibility for NHS CHC will then be made to Northumberland Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) and a panel led by the CCG will then consider whether you are eligible. We will let you know in writing what decision the panel has made.

■ What if I think the decision is wrong?

The specialist nurse who coordinates your assessment should discuss the information with you before the Decision Support Tool is submitted, so usually the recommendation and decision should not be a surprise. However if you think something has gone wrong, please contact our Complaints Team, by phoning (01670) 62 88 88, or by writing to:

CHC Complaints, FREEPOST RLTX-LBXU-SHBS, County Hall, Morpeth, NE61 2EF
Email: CHCcomplaints@northumbria.nhs.uk

If you are still not happy with our response, we can let you know how to contact NHS England to ask for an independent review of the decision.

■ What care and support will I get if I am eligible for NHS CHC?

As with social care, we will aim to make sure that you have all the care and support which you need to protect your health, safety and dignity. If you become eligible for NHS CHC after previously being eligible for social care (or vice versa), we will make decisions about the *level* of support which you need in essentially the same way, though some of the *kinds* of support which you need may well be different (for instance some of your care and support may have to be provided by qualified health professionals).

Whether your care and support is funded as social care or as NHS CHC, we will aim to give you as much choice and control as possible over how it is provided. However we are only able to fund care and support which is necessary to meet your assessed needs, and we do have to consider the requirement to make efficient use of public resources. Information sheet C3 has more information about how we decide about this.

■ How much of my care and support will be funded by NHS CHC?

If you are assessed as eligible for NHS CHC, all of the care and support that you need will be paid for by the NHS, including services such as home care or a place in a care home which could otherwise have been arranged as social care.

When people who are *not* assessed as eligible for NHS CHC have a level of needs which is close to the level where NHS CHC would be approved, we sometimes agree a shared arrangement, in which part of the cost of your care and support will be paid for by the NHS and part by the County Council. In this case, you may have to contribute part (or all) of the cost of the social care element yourself, depending on your financial means.

■ When might my eligibility for NHS CHC change?

Whether your care and support is funded as social care or as NHS CHC, we will aim to review your needs and your care and support plan at least every twelve months, and if there is a significant change in your needs we will carry out a review sooner than that.

Each time we review your needs, we will consider again whether you may be eligible for NHS CHC, or if your care and support is already funded as NHS CHC, whether you are still eligible. If we think your eligibility may have changed, we will go through the same process that is described above, to make sure that our decision takes account of all relevant issues.

■ Can I arrange my own care and support with a direct payment?

Yes. Where safety and quality can be assured, you can make arrangements yourself using a direct payment paid into an account which you manage. This includes any additional care and support from health professionals which you have been assessed as needing as part of your NHS CHC plan, over and above what is routinely offered by the NHS. As with direct payments for social care, in order to make direct payments for NHS CHC we will first need to agree a care and support plan with you, setting out how you will use the money to meet your assessed needs in a safe and effective way.