

Northumberland County Council

Care and Support in Northumberland

Updated 5/4/17

## **Information sheet 29 – Making allowance for the costs of disability**

When we assess people's ability to pay for home care, we take into account money that they need to spend on other costs arising from their disability. This information sheet explains how we do this.

### **How we take account of the costs of disability**

People who are disabled or who have a long-term illness often have to spend extra money to stay independent and protect their health. That is why disability benefits such as Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance are available.

The Government has said that it is reasonable for councils to take these disability benefits into account when they set charges for home care. However it has said that councils must ask people about the other extra costs they have, to make sure that they are left with enough money to meet them.

When we have consulted people about this in the past, most said they did not want to have to produce detailed evidence about what they spend. So the County Council decided to make automatic allowances for other costs of disability without the need for evidence.

## **What we have allowed in calculating your charge**

When we calculate people's charges, we automatically include an allowance for other costs that they have because of their disability. How much we allow depends on what disability benefits you receive.

If you are getting Attendance Allowance at the “lower” rate, or Disability Living Allowance (Care Component) at the “middle” rate, or Personal Independence Payment (Daily Living Component) at the “standard” rate (all three benefits are set at £55.65 from 10 April 2017), we allow £20 per week.

If you are getting the “high” or “enhanced” rate of any of these benefits (£83.10 from 10 April 2017), we will allow £47.45 per week.

Otherwise we allow £5 per week.

## **Your right to an assessment**

These allowances are designed to make sure that you don't have to produce detailed evidence about what you spend if you don't want to. But if you think that you have extra costs which are *more* than the allowance we have made, you have a right to ask for a detailed assessment.

## **What kinds of cost do we take into account?**

We usually only take account of extra costs that you have because of your illness or disability (though you can also let us know if you think you cannot reasonably afford to pay the charge for some other special reason).

We only take into account the extra costs that you face. For instance some people have high heating costs because of their disability or illness. What we will take into account when we work these out is the additional cost compared to what someone who wasn't disabled would spend on heating a home like yours.

Similarly, some people's disabilities mean that they have to use taxis to get to places. When we work out their extra costs, we subtract what people who are not disabled typically spend each week on transport. (We also subtract any costs which you can meet using mobility benefits).

Some other examples of extra costs which people may have because of disability are:

- Additional care or equipment that you pay for yourself (but we will usually only allow this if your care manager confirms that you need it)
- Private domestic help (for instance to do basic cleaning)
- Help with basic maintenance of your garden
- Payments for alarm call systems
- Extra costs because you need special clothes or footwear
- Extra costs because you wear out clothes or bedding quicker than normal, or because you need to do more laundry than usual
- Extra costs because of a special diet that your doctor has told you to follow

# **How to ask for an assessment of your costs**

If you think that your extra costs may be higher than the allowance that we have made, please let us know by phoning our charges helpline on (01670) 622 891.

We will arrange for a Financial Assessment and Benefits Officer to contact you to discuss the costs which you think might be relevant. Usually the initial contact will be by phone. If it looks as if your costs may be higher than the allowance we have made, the Financial Assessment and Benefits Officer will check in detail your evidence of extra spending. Please try to collect together any relevant bills and receipts which you may have, to help with this.