

Information sheet 17 – reclaiming charges for breaks in services

The normal charge you pay for community services, whether by Direct Debit or by invoice, will be based on the home care, day care and other community services in your care plan.

If you receive less than the normal level of service in a particular week, this may reduce your charge. This sheet explains when the charge will be reduced, and how to claim the money back. Please note that this information does **not** apply to people who opt to manage their care themselves through a direct payment.

There are slightly different rules for support in your own home (home care) and support with activities outside your home.

■ When is the charge for home care reduced?

The charge for home care is worked out from the cost of the visits that you receive in a week (Monday to Sunday). Short visits cost more per minute than longer visits, because of the travel time involved, and costs also depend on where in Northumberland you live, because it costs less to provide home care in South East Northumberland.

If the cost of the visits which you still do get in a week still adds up to more than the maximum charge we have notified to you, there won't be a reduction in your charge for that week, even if you got less support than usual – and it is not worth letting us know about the interruption to the service.

For instance if your maximum charge is £146, and you get three half hour visits each day, you will pay £146. If you miss two days in a particular week, you will still pay £146, since the cost of your service is still more than that (15 half-hour visits usually cost £237.15, or £205.35 in South East Northumberland). However, if there is a week when you only get visits on three days, your charge will be only £142.29, or £123.21 in South East Northumberland. You can therefore reclaim part of your charge – unless you are also getting other support which brings the total cost for the week above £146.

If you get *no* home care or other support in a week, you can reclaim the charge in full.

■ What kinds of interruption in home care can I claim for?

We can refund charges for any interruption in service unless you have failed to tell us that you would not be there and the home carer has made an unnecessary visit. (If you could not tell us through no fault of your own – for instance because of an emergency hospital admission – we *will* refund any overpaid charges).

If your care manager arranges a short break in a care home for you, we will automatically take account of this – you do **not** need to contact us.

If your service is interrupted for other reasons, such as a hospital stay or a holiday, you will need to tell us about this if you want to reclaim the charge.

■ What about support outside my home?

Support outside your home includes going to day care or day centres, and support from an “enabler” to help you get out and about. If you are supported by an “enabler”, the rules will be the same as for home care, but if you are supported in a day centre they will be different. This is because we will still have to pay the same costs for running the day centre whether or not you are there. The charges for day centres are therefore set on the basis that people will usually pay for their booked place whether or not they attend every week. For instance if you go on holiday, we will expect you still to pay for the service.

However we will refund charges if you miss day care because:

- you are in hospital, or you have a hospital appointment
- you are ill for more than two weeks (refunds will start from the third week)
- the centre is closed, or the centre's transport is unavailable
- we have arranged a short break for you in a care home (you should get a refund automatically in this case – you don't need to send us a card)

■ How to ask for a refund

If you or someone who helps you is happy to send us information by email, that is likely to be the quickest and easiest way to ask for a refund.

Your email should be addressed to SCFinance@northumberland.gov.uk, and should include the following information:

- The dates of the first and last days when you did **not** get a service. You don't need to write down the details of the hours or days of care that you missed – we can work this out from the computer record of your care plan.
- Enough information for us to identify you. If you have a copy of one of our letters about charges, please include the reference number for you at the top right of the letter (this will be a six-digit number starting with "1", "2" or "3").

If you would rather not use email, please phone our Charges Helpline on (01670) 622 891.

■ How we will refund charges

If we agree that you are due a refund, we will arrange to credit your account at the same time as the next Direct Debit payment, or we will deduct it from your next invoice. If you are paying by Direct Debit, you will see two entries on your bank statement. The Direct Debit payment will go through as normal (for the full sum of money based on your care plan), and the credit should usually appear in the next row of the statement. If you send us the information close to the time when a Direct Debit payment is due, the credit may appear four weeks later, at the time of the next payment.

We will not normally send a detailed explanation of how we have calculated the refund. If you wish to see an explanation, please contact us (see below for the number).

■ If you have queries

If you have any queries about how to reclaim charges, or about a particular claim that you have made, please phone our charges helpline on (01670) 622 891.