

East lothian health and social care partnershp

Feedback from Adult Social Care Charging information Sessions/Online consultation March 2018

# Feedback from Fisherrow, Port Seton and Tynebank Resource Centres charging information sessions and Adult Services Online charging consultation

# Information sessions

## Introduction

Councillor Fiona O’Donnell held information meetings at each of the council’s three adult resource centres to explain the reason for having to increase charges for some adult social care services and starting to charge for some others, for example, adult day centres. She was supported by Bryan Davies, East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership Group Service Manager for Planning, Performance and Policy, and Communications/Engagement Officer Jane Ogden-Smith.

## Financial situation

East Lothian Council has to save around £39 million over five years. Part of that saving has to come from the adult social care budget. Adult social care (delivered by the East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership) provides a wide range of services to support a wide range of people, including older people, people with disabilities, people with mental health needs, and also carers. The services provided include care homes, care at home, day care provision, transport, meals at home and short breaks.

We have to make savings of £7.25 million in the adult social care budget over the next five years. This means that the council and East Lothian Health and Social Care Partnership have to consider how we can:

* Reduce costs
* Increase income streams
* Do more with less
* Change the way in which we currently deliver our local services.

One of the measures we have undertaken has been a review of charging for adult social care services. As a result, we will be increasing charges for some services, as well as introducing new charges.

## Presentation

Fiona began by saying that we were here to have a conversation about a difficult issue and to listen to people’s concerns and interests.

### Fiona’s presentation

### Slide 1

THE NUMBERS

* 14 December – Scottish Government announces budget and funding for East Lothian
* Error in funding – extra £1.2 million
* Deal in Holyrood – extra £3.02 million
* £1.37 million for new obligations. Not fully funded
* Overspend last year and this year
* Nation Care Home Contract

The bottom line – we have £9 million of savings/efficiencies to find over next 3 years.

2018-19 £3.7m 2019-20 £4.2m 2020-21 £1.1m

## Slide 2

East Lothian Council budget agreed on 13 February 2018   
£358,000 savings in adult wellbeing  
Charging policy being developed

* Reduce costs
* Increase income streams
* Do more with less
* Change the way we deliver services
* Close services
* Change assessment criteria

## Slide 3

Developing a Charging Policy

In overall ranking East Lothian ranks 31 out of 32 for the level of its charging and so is the second least charging authority.

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| Telecare / alarm | EL is 17th lowest out of 21 authorities |
| Care homes | EL is 13th lowest out of 17 authorities |
| Care at home | EL is 16th lowest out of 20 authorities |
| Night time support | EL is 12th lowest out of 13 authorities |
| Meals | EL is 12th lowest out of 21 authorities |
| Day care | EL is 22nd out of 22 authorities |
| Respite | EL is 3rd lowest out of 19th authorities |

## Slide 4

|  |  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- | --- |
| **Service** | **East Lothian** | **Average** | **Lowest** | **Highest** |
| **Telecare / alarm per week** | £2.00 | £2.78 | £0.00 | £5.00 |
| **Care home per week** | £525 | £628 | £150 | £1,173 |
| **Care at home per hour** | £11.50 | £12.55 | £0.00 | £17.22 |
| **Night time support per hour** | £3.20 | £10.21 | £0.00 | £28.00 |
| **Meals per meal** | £2.90 | £3.07 | £1.54 | £5.20 |
| **Respite per week** | £874 | £346 | £64 | £1,030 |
| **Day care per day** | £0.00 | £29.63 | £0.00 | £116.00 |

## Key issues from information meetings

### Affordability

At each meeting, a number of people said that they would not be able to pay. A figure of £18 a day was mentioned, based on figures wrongly quoted in the East Lothian Courier (2 X £5 sessions + cost of £8 for return transport). This article caused considerable concern.

#### Fiona explained that people would only be asked for what they could afford to pay for means-tested services and that the council has no option but to introduce new charges because it has to provide a wide range of Adult Social Care Services for a rapidly increasing population out of a reduced budget. She pointed out that the council is very limited in how it can raise money. She said that the council was raising council tax by 3% this year. They had applied to the Scottish Government to be able to raise it to 5% but had been refused. The council can only spend income – there is no leeway for overspending.

### Flat rate or financial assessment?

People felt that if we went for flat rate charges across the board, rather than having a mixed approach of flat rate for some and financial assessment for others, it might have a harder impact overall. Slightly more people wanted separate charging than one payment. It was suggested that a very low flat rate might be acceptable- £1/2 a day - better than means testing and assessment. Some people felt that means testing [financial assessment] was abhorrent. People wanted to know how we work out who can pay.

#### Bryan said that we did this in line with COSLA guidance on financial assessment. He felt that on the matter of assessment or flat fee, it was better to keep that mix, which in turn would keep the charges lower in resource centres. In the case of resource centres, this would be a flat fee – so that the cost of the service was the same for everyone. He emphasised that we wanted to build in flexibility and a robust appeals procedure. It would centre around ability to pay and the appropriateness of paying. This is in line with COSLA guidance and the policy as a whole.

#### Fiona added that it was about spreading the burden further and keeping individual costs down.

#### *Fiona mentioned that extra money was being allocated to children and adult wellbeing budgets*.

Someone asked if financial assessment would be done under the current rules.

#### Bryan said that the policy was changing not the criteria. Some of the charges will be flat fee so everyone shares the cost. We are not going to drive anyone into poverty.

People wanted to know many people we anticipated paying charges.

#### Bryan said that he thought it would be the same people being charged as now, plus those people using the newly chargeable services.

Some said that only a small minority of service users have any assets. Most are on benefits and only have around £200 a week. Paying for buses, transportation etc comes to around £120 month out of a fixed income. Where do you find extra £30 a week?

Someone else felt that the burden falls on self-funders. What do carers or service users have to give up to afford the service?

#### Fiona said that the charging has to be affordable for people.

Someone said that savings are penalised.

#### Bryan said that the financial assessment will take account of that.

### Generating income from other sources

Some carers wondered if it would be possible to ask the ILF redirect some ILF money to local authorities. People also wondered about the administrative cost of charging. Raising invoices for Adult Social Care Services was much more expensive than raising invoices for Council Tax. We need a

system that cascades down throughout the organisation, cutting down on bureaucracy. Someone else pointed out that the ILF Assessment was taking money away from the council and that the council could save money by not having to do a council assessment too.

#### Bryan will take this up with the auditors and we will be looking at the most efficient way of collecting charges.

Jane Crawford from CAPS felt that we should look at other ways that other councils brought in funds.

#### Fiona said that the council was already raising money from coastal car parking charges and that there might be considerable financial gain if the council could look at parking, and in particular, off street parking again. This might bring in anything between £2.5 to £8 million. She also mentioned that the three council departments now had to generate £60,000 next year between them. She also said that instrumental tuition charges are also being introduced.

Someone asked why money couldn’t be taken from other services’ budgets, for example, drug and alcohol services or older people.

#### Fiona said that we were not taking money away from you to invest in other services. This new charge is strictly to help to cover providing the cost of Adult Day Services. In any case, older people already paying so we can’t place more burdens on them. In essence, it was a question of imposing charges for Adult Day Services or facing the prospect of losing the resource centres.

### Value for money

The three resource centres offer different things. Some people are getting less for their money.

What would be the impact on personal budgets? Were we looking at opportunities in other commissioned services? Is there a potential of people being charged twice for sessions?

#### Fiona said that we need to get the details right before we start casting net wide – we have to look at equity and fairness.

### More involvement for service-users

People felt that we needed to offer people more opportunities to say how changes are affecting them and someone asked about whether this process had so far been subject to an integrated impact assessment (IIA).

#### Bryan said that there would be an IIA of final charging policy.

Someone said we shouldn’t introduce new charges until the impact assessment is done.

### Respite/short breaks

People felt that we needed to get better at letting people know from the outset what respite costs. Day centres served as respite for carers at a time when there was so much pressure on other short break providers. Service-users really need to know the cost of services before they access them. People felt that this wasn’t happening in the case of respite centres and that it was unacceptable that people were receiving bills up to three months after using respite services.

### Facts and figures

People were also very keen to have more precise figures for charging and to know how we could introduce charging at the beginning of April when we still hadn’t sorted the figures.

Some people felt the whole process was still a bit abstract and wanted to know what are the disregards would be and would people have to pay another increase next year?

#### Bryan talked a bit about the make-up of charging group – that it included carers, third sector reps and officers. He also spoke of the financial modelling which showed that we were one of the lowest charging authorities for Adult Social Care services in Scotland. These increases and new charges would still only raise us to the middle rankings. The group was carrying out a lot of work around profiling new and current clients and the impact this would have on them. He would look at how we could offset admin charges. However, he and his team were still working really hard at coming up with definitive figures because they we still waiting for information on the final Financial Settlement from the Scottish Government and about whether the council could further increase council tax.

### Cost of Price Waterhouse Cooper (PWC) survey

People asked how much the PWC survey cost and asked why we could do this sort of analysis ourselves.

#### Bryan said that PWC were brought in by the whole council and that even they had huge difficulty in getting benchmarking information from other councils.

## Impact on service-users and carers

* It’s not just about losing income but about losing quality of life/life
* People in the focus groups were saying that they could maybe pay a couple of pounds but if it’s more they just won’t come. The resulting impact on the use of the centres might lead to them closing down
* Already lost Prestonpans physical disability resource, when the two centres merged into one (Port Seton). That lost a lot of people. Fiona said that we have to look at other ways of getting people out in their communities, with greater involvement of the voluntary sector.
* People were already having to access services in Edinburgh because provision in East Lothian is unable to administer certain medications (rectal diazepam, for example)
* Service-users were unable to use taxis because taxi drivers don’t get training in how to administer meds
* There was already lack of respite – if people could afford resource centre sessions, how do families get a break, catch up on lost sleep etc? There are parents out there who will just stop looking at these centres, specially with transport and meals on top
* People felt that the council is just passing their troubles onto carers
* If you don’t get the charging right, families might start not using services, for example, they might give their community alarms back leading to increased risk.
* The charges have an extra impact when you are also paying for trips and activities on top of it
* People forget that the impact of severe disability is that people are unable to earn and their carers are unable to earn
* Some people felt that we were targeting people on benefit
* The choice is wrong - have to look somewhere else. Can’t afford to lose centres.
* We’re already not getting a service due to staff shortages. Fiona said that we have to introduce charges or lose services but that we won’t close Tynebank
* Carers don’t really understand what the charges will mean for them – they need to know what the financial impact will be for them
* If I am sick will I still be charged?

## Communication and engagement

People didn’t feel that they had been given adequate warning or information. Although service-users reps and advocacy groups were on the working group, people felt that the wider carer community hadn’t been able to feed into the process early enough.

People felt that they should have been written to individually rather than by being given flyers by the centres, seeing a poster, seeing the meetings and consultation advertised on Facebook or reading about them in the paper.

People worried about service-users and carers who were not online being left out. They suggested letters and newsletters be used.

I am really disappointed in the lack of consultation – I will be very angry if I see these meetings used to represent some sort of consultation with service users.

Carer, Tynebank

#### The Carers Strategy Group says has said that in future, we must make sure that changes are well publicised and write to carers in good time to make them aware of impending changes.

# Online charging consultation

### East Lothian Consultation Hub 23 January to 20 Feb 2018

We welcomed views from service-users, families, carers, and third sector partners. As well as these meetings, we also held focus groups with service-users and also conducted on online consultation about whether introducing new charges was fair. 99 people responded.

#### Results

The key findings of this were:

* 72% strongly agree (18%) or tend to agree (54%) that increasing charges/introducing charges is acceptable if it means services can continue to be delivered
* 80% strongly agree (22%) or tend to agree (58%) that charges for social care services in East Lothian should be in line with the Scottish average
* 65% strongly agree (35%) or tend to agree (30%) that those who can afford to should pay a bit more for social care services they receive
* 94% strongly agree (70%) or tend to agree (24%) that help should be available to make sure people paying for services receive the financial support they are entitled to.

All of the options for services to be charged for received majority support, apart from the day centre attendance which 54% disagreed with (for other services support was fairly marginally, e.g. 52% in agreement re community alarms/48% disagreeing).

It’s also worth noting that whilst 44% had current or past experience as a service user or carer; 55% had no such experience.