

## **Evaluation of Consultation on the changes to the “Charging Policy for Social Care Services”**

The authority currently has more than 4000 service users who fall under the charging policy annually, most of whom that will be unaffected by the proposed changes to the charging policy. The proposed changes will improve the policy and improve equity of charging in Carmarthenshire.

The authority has publicly consulted on the proposed changes to the current Charging Policy which ran between the 19/03/2024 and 10/06/2024 (14 weeks).

During this period the department has undertaken some targeted consultation, whereby they wrote 613 individual letters to highlight the key changes to the policy to key stakeholders.

There were 69 formal responses received during this period, in addition to a small number of phone calls and emails which were also received during consultation.

The responses are summarised below:

### **Q1: Charging Full Financially Assessed Contribution for Holidays/Temporary Stays Away**

- **Support (25 respondents):** 5 strongly agree, 20 agree
- **Opposition (30 respondents):** 14 disagree, 16 strongly disagree
- **Neutral (11 respondents):** Neither agree nor disagree

**Evaluation:** The responses indicate a slight majority opposing the proposal. The almost equal distribution between support and opposition suggests that while there are arguments on both sides, with very slight lean toward disagreement. There was a number of neutral responses indicates that some respondents may not feel strongly either way.

### **Proposed Action:**

Based on a low number of responses, and a neutral response, the department propose to implement the change.

## **Q2: Charging Full Financially Assessed Contribution During Hospital Admissions**

- **Support (20 respondents):** 4 strongly agree, 16 agree
- **Opposition (36 respondents):** 14 disagree, 22 strongly disagree
- **Neutral (9 respondents):** Neither agree nor disagree

**Evaluation:** The responses show some opposition to the proposal, which indicates opposition to charging residents during hospital admissions. The higher number of respondents who strongly disagree compared to those who strongly agree suggests some negative feelings about this proposal. This was still a low number of respondents based on overall service users.

### **Proposed Action:**

Based on a low number of responses, and to promote equity in the charging policy the department propose to implement the change.

## **Q3: Charging Administration Fee for Self-Funding Residents**

- **Support (18 respondents):** 3 strongly agree, 15 agree
- **Opposition (42 respondents):** 12 disagree, 30 strongly disagree
- **Neutral (6 respondents):** Neither agree nor disagree

**Evaluation:** This proposal faces some opposition, with more than twice as many respondents opposing than supporting based on the limited number of respondents. The comments reflect practical and emotional concerns, particularly about financial charge. This strong opposition, especially with detailed negative comments, suggests the proposal will mean a small number of individuals will be unhappy with the authority recovering costs incurred, but some comments suggested that service users and their representatives would contract privately, which will reduce the admin burden on the authority.

### **Proposed Action:**

There has been slightly greater number of strong opinions, but again it's a low number of responses given that more than 1100 service users in residential care in Carmarthenshire and given that service users do have an option to contract independently if they wish to avoid paying a charge. The department proposes to implement the change.

#### **Q4: Including Night-Time Component of Benefits in Financial Assessment**

- **Support (18 respondents):** 4 strongly agree, 14 agree
- **Opposition (37 respondents):** 15 disagree, 22 strongly disagree
- **Neutral (11 respondents):** Neither agree nor disagree

**Evaluation:** Similar to Q3, this proposal has some opposition, with more respondents disagreeing than agreeing. The number of neutral responses indicates some uncertainty or lack of strong feelings. Some suggestion that the impact on residents' finances may be a of concern.

#### **Proposed Action:**

The department will work with individuals to phase in the changeover this financial year, and continue to work with individuals on a case by case basis to support the changes in charging. The authority will ensure they refer service users to benefits advice where appropriate, so to prevent any financial difficulties. There were low number of responses, and the department would propose to implement the change over the financial year, with full implementation in 2025-2026.

#### **Q5: Introducing Fees for Deputyship Applications and Managing DWP Appointeeships**

- **Support (18 respondents):** 3 strongly agree, 15 agree
- **Opposition (36 respondents):** 11 disagree, 25 strongly disagree
- **Neutral (14 respondents):** Neither agree nor disagree

**Evaluation:** The proposal is met with some opposition. The opposition likely stems from concerns about additional financial burdens, which is noted. The neutral responses indicate some respondents do not have strong opinions on the matter.

#### **Proposed Action:**

The department propose to introduce the charge on the basis that the administration of deputyship is costly to the wider public, and service users could make alternative arrangements to manage their finances, which would be more costly than asking the local authority to administer. Again, there was low number of responses, the department propose to implement the change.

## **Q6: Introducing Administration Fee for Deferred Payment Agreements**

- **Support (16 respondents):** 3 strongly agree, 13 agree
- **Opposition (37 respondents):** 18 disagree, 19 strongly disagree
- **Neutral (10 respondents):** Neither agree nor disagree

**Evaluation:** There is some disagreement to this proposal. The opposition suggests a concern about additional costs for residents and their families. Neutral responses again indicate some individuals didn't feel strongly.

### **Proposed Action:**

Similar to Q5, service users to have other options, other than asking the authority to administer, which would be more costly. This service allows the family not to sell the family home during a challenging period, which otherwise would be more inconvenient if the family had to dispose of a property to pay for care. As with all questions, there was a low number of responses, and given the alternative options available to service users, the department propose to implement the change.

## **Q7: Changing Calculation Basis for 'Additional Costs' for Out of County Placements**

- **Support (27 respondents):** 4 strongly agree, 23 agree
- **Opposition (14 respondents):** 4 disagree, 10 strongly disagree
- **Neutral (24 respondents):** Neither agree nor disagree

**Evaluation:** This proposal has the majority in support. The number of neutral responses is high, which suggests that many respondents do not feel strongly about this change. The relatively lower opposition indicates that this proposal may be more acceptable to the community.

### **Proposed Action:**

The department propose to implement the change.

### **Summary:**

The general comments reflect concerns about financial strain on families. These sentiments are echoed in some opposition to the proposals, particularly those involving additional charges, which is not unexpected. Given the overall low number of respondents suggests that much of the public don't have any strong opinion either way.

Therefore, the department advocates that the council implement the above changes given the level of cost recovery that with the proposals would generate to help balance the council's budget.