

APPENDIX 1

Removal of Direct Debit Discount Scheme Consultation report

The aim of this consultation was to seek the views of current service users and members of the public about the proposed removal of the Direct Debit Discount Scheme from the Council's Adult Social Care Fairer Contributions Policy (FCP). The FCP was first introduced in 2016, with further changes made in April 2020.

The channels that we used for the consultation were:

- An online consultation via the Council's Consultation Hub.
- Invitations to 30 community organisations and advocacy groups to engage.
- An open invitation to engage with any interested parties.
- Letters to service users with active Direct Debits.

Following a low response rate to the letters sent out to service users currently receiving the Direct Debit, officers attempted to contact all those sent a letter by phone.

Questions asked were:

For those who currently held direct debits the Council asked an open question on their views on the proposal and on the impact that it would have on them. The Council also provided a fact sheet about the proposal.

For those responding via the Consultation Hub the Council also asked some multiple choice questions around payment methods, and provided some further context for those that may not be familiar with the scheme of with adult social care charging.

These were:

- Please let us know your opinion on our proposal to remove the discount?
- Do you feel that there should be a range of options for people to pay for their care?
- Please take a look at the options for payment below and tick the three options by which you would be more inclined to pay.
- Do you feel that there should be equality in the cost to the individual (no additional discounts)?
- Would you like to make any other comment?

For community organisations officers provided an open invitation for feedback, shared the fact sheet that was sent to service users and some additional leaflets that ASC has made for service users and their families on the how the council's charging policy affects those in residential and non-residential care settings.

Summary of responses:

Online consultation:

There were three responses to the online consultation via the hub. Two of these were following the phone calls to those directly affected which are referenced below and had actively paid by Direct Debit, and the other said they would consider paying via Direct Debit in the future. Two of those who responded stated that they understood the reasons for the change, and agreed with it, and one person was not sure how they felt about the change. The preferred payment methods identified were Direct Debit, Standing Order and telephone payment. Two of those responding felt that no payment method should be incentivised over another.

Invitation to community organisations:

The council did not receive any formal responses from the community organisations that were contacted, this contrasts to three responses to the wider 2019/20 consultation on the FCP. Officers will be following up with organisations around the communications materials that we are developing which remain a priority.

Letters to service users:

There were no written responses to the 99 letters that were sent out to those with active direct debits. All those who were written to were contacted by telephone by officers of the Council and 40* service users or their financial representatives were spoken to. A summary of their feedback and their comments is included below.

Overall those we spoke to on the phone understand the rationale for the change, supported this happening. There were 25 people who stated they accepted the change, 11 were explicitly against it, and two people did not have a clear opinion either way, or two accepted the change but would have rather it stayed. The discussions provided a range of valuable insights into the Council's relationships with its service users and their financial representatives. These will be used to improve customer service going forward.

The comments provided are included below.

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| Doesn't remember receiving the letter. Does not have a problem with council removing the discount. Would like to continue to pay via DD. |
| Issue with change and double payments. Happy to pay either way, just wants it to be done right. |
| Invited to take up DD on the understanding that they would get the discount. Feels that the discount should be honoured. Significant problem with the old system. Prefers the new approach with regular invoices. Old system did not work. Annual changes, lack of clarity. |
| No issue with the proposed change. |
| Understands the need for it, happy to pay and agrees to remove it. He has been in hospital and his needs have now increased but he is happy to contribute. |
| Understands the rationale, no objections. |
| Thinks this is reasonable. Wanted to confirm it did not affect other payments. |
| No issue with change. Alarm only |
| Understands reason. No issue with change. |

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| Appreciates the reasons for it. Explained the financial implications. |
| No issues with the change. |
| Happy to pay increased charge. |
| Issues with invoices / DD not current. To investigate |
| Would prefer to keep the discount. |
| Would prefer not to remove the discount, but will accept it if the decision is made to remove the discount. |
| Quite happy to pay a bit more. Very appreciative of the Telecare service. Has no objections to the removal of the discount. |
| Has no objections but does worry about other service users who might not be able to afford it or who don't have someone to help them express their views. Wants to ensure other service users are not put into financial hardship as a result of this proposal. |
| Not happy about paying more for a service (Telecare) she hasn't needed to use yet but will abide by whatever decision is made |
| No, doesn't want to pay nearly £3 per week more. |
| Was initially okay with removal of the discount, but then asked to disregard his views as he doesn't pay much. |
| Yes, go ahead and remove the discount. Aunt needs the carers. |
| Issues with invoices / DD not current. To investigate |
| Spoke to client's partner A, having received client's permission. A says that she is not happy that the DD discount will be removed yet further stated "whatever he has to pay he has to pay it" |
| Client had no objection to the discount being removed and is happy to pay the charge. |
| No objection to discount being removed. |
| Finance rep says he will be sad if the discount is removed as any saying is helpful. However if the discount is removed he is okay to pay the full charge. |
| Strongly object to discount being removed as she will no longer be able to benefit from the savings she is currently receiving. |
| Very unhappy because client has to pay other expenses so discount does help client. |
| Yes would object as savings lost |
| Sad but happy to pay charge as service is important to him. |
| No objection to discount being removed. |
| Happy with DD overall, not happy with discount ending but understands the reasons for the scheme ending. |
| Happy for the discount to end, could see how SS can use that money towards care. |
| Comfortable with the removal of the discount as she has a reasonable pension, however other people may not be so fortunate and the removal may put them into hardship. |
| Happy with or without the 5% discount |
| Accepted why this is happening - didn't think a response was needed as client is not contesting the proposal |
| Not happy with the removal of the discount, any discounts are welcome. |
| Fine about the discount coming to an end as long as the DD system keeps running. We provide an excellent service so removal of the discount scheme is completely |

fine. Adult Social Services have gone above and beyond and without this service and the people who contribute towards the care/assessments the client and family would not know what to do. Only one point to mention, when uprating the charges annually (via DD) to do this as soon as possible and not allow client's to fall into arrears as client is very fragile and can't cope with letters containing the word 'debt/arrears'.