

Care Contributions questions and answers:

1. In the table of figures on page 1 of the Care Contributions update briefing, where it says “Monthly Total”, should that actually be “Annual Total”?

Yes, to clarify, the header in the table should say “Annual Total”.

2. In the same table, to which of the four categories of resident do physically disabled adults aged 18-65 belong? There is one category for older people and two categories for mental health so the only other option is Learning Disabilities. Are there no physically disabled adults aged 18-65 who do not have learning disabilities?

To clarify, physically disabled adults aged 18-65 who do not have a learning disability are captured in the Older Peoples Services category which is shorthand for Older People and Physical Disabilities, which is one of the two social work business units in the Adult Social Care Division.

3. The main question though is ... at the February meeting, Pauline said that the Fairer Contributions Policy had been brought in in 2015 and there was no reason why charges would have increased in the last two years, as families of service users at Bede House have been reporting. However, apparently there was a revised approach which was implemented in April 2021 (Cabinet paper dated 24 March 2020), so could she explain more about this and why this has resulted in charges being made which were never made before or in charges increasing significantly?

We would need to know the details of the individual cases to look into the reports of charges increasing but it is unlikely to be due to the changes made to the Council’s charging policy in 2020. The report to Cabinet in April 2020, updated the Council’s charging policy with a number of policy changes. These were to

- *Simplify the Fairer Contributions Policy document (FCP) to make our approaches to residential and non residential financial assessments clearer.*
- *Increase the minimum contribution towards social care costs from £3 to £5.*
- *Specify a charge of £200 for the council to arrange care for full cost service users assessed to require non-residential care excluding alarms.*
- *Use light touch assessments for those receiving alarm services only.*
- *Promote deferred payment agreements and charges on property as a way of paying for residential care.*

- *Implement a review trigger where allowances exceeding £20 per week on DRE (disability related expenditure) are claimed from April 2021.*

In addition, the April 2020 report to Cabinet delegated the final decision on the future of the Direct Debit Discount Scheme to the cabinet member for children, schools and adult care following a further consultation on this process.

4. There was a question asked previously but it might have got lost so its repeated here: “The national statistic for care charges being taken to the Ombudsman is that approximately 70% of cases are overturned. Can you confirm what the statistic is for Southwark and can you confirm what the cost to the Council is of such challenges being taken to the Ombudsman?”

Over 2022/23 no complaints regarding adult social care charges were referred to the Local Government Ombudsman (LGO) (see <https://www.lgo.org.uk/your-councils-performance>). In the previous five years two cases involving adult social care charges by Southwark Council were considered by the LGO but neither case involved a Council decision on adult social care charging being overturned.

5. Finally, are there plans to further increase the charges in the next budget year?

Adult social care charges are individual to each service user and are based on financial assessments. Financial assessments are individual assessments of a service user’s ability to either pay the full cost of their care, to make a contribution to the cost of their care or to receive fully funded adult social care services. If a charge is applied, and in common with other local authorities, this charge is adjusted each year via a process known as the “Financial Assessment Batch Uplift”. The FABU process adjusts a person’s charge to reflect changes to benefit rates. As part of this process, for service users whose charges factor in their disability related expenditure (DRE), the Council also adjusts the person’s DRE based on a measure of inflation known as the “Consumer Prices Index Including Owner Occupiers’ Housing Costs (CPIH). This ensures that any proposed increases in charges due to increases in benefits take into account inflationary increases in DRE.