

Report to: **Cabinet**

Date: **19 October 2004**

By: **Director of Social Services**

Title of report: **Review of Charging Policy for Supporting People**

Purpose of report: **To agree a charging policy for Supporting People Chargeable Services to replace the current interim policy**

RECOMMENDATIONS

The Cabinet is recommended to:

- 1. agree that the new Supporting People Charging Policy be adopted; and**
 - 2. agree that regular reviews are carried out to ensure that the balance of financial risk and efficiency of approach is maintained.**
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1. Financial Appraisal

- 1.1 The new policy does not change the overall approach to charging but instead increases the efficiency of carrying out financial assessments, reduces bureaucracy wherever that can be achieved without financial risk, confirms some internal arrangements of the process and the responsibilities of the different parties involved. It is not anticipated, therefore that there will be any impact on the overall budget.

2. Supporting Information

Introduction

- 2.1 Supporting People (SP) became a "live" service administered by the Social Services Department on 1 April 2003. Services which are deemed to be long term (i.e. likely to be provided to an individual customer for more than two years) can be charged for. Customers are entitled to a fully discounted service if they are in receipt of means-tested benefit. Other customers can request a financial assessment to see whether they could be entitled to a discount on the service charge for their SP service.

Background

- 2.2 Administering authorities must adopt a charging policy and align their policies on charges for SP services with that for fairer charging for social care services. Most authorities, to avoid confusion and challenge, have fully aligned the way in which income is treated when considering entitlement to discounts on service charges
- 2.3 Since the adoption of the interim SP charging policy, there have been a number of developments which drive this proposed review of the policy. Actual experience in administering financial assessments also has a significant effect on the review, as would be expected.
- 2.4 The most significant development is the joint visiting service now established between Social Services and the Department for Work and Pension's (DWP) Pension Credit Service. This has enabled an holistic approach to income maximisation and increased the efficiency of financial assessments. The DWP has carried out a full risk assessment of different types of customers' likelihood of change in entitlements over time; reducing the numbers of reviews that some customers are subject to. This particularly affects older

people, enabling them to have more certainty about how much they have to pay towards services over longer periods of time and up to five years.

3 Conclusion and Reason for Recommendation

- 3.2 The new charging policy (as set out in Appendix 1) incorporates the approach detailed above. It also adopts best practice in income maximisation and anti-poverty, whilst retaining the authority's right to charge for services where it can. The reason for the recommendation of the new charging policy is that it maximises efficiency and effectiveness whilst minimising financial risk to the authority.

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