



## Oxfordshire Supporting People Charging Policy, March 2012

### **Introduction**

1. This policy was approved by the Supporting People Commissioning Body on 23 March 2012 and starts on 9 April 2012.
2. The aim of the policy is to ensure the Oxfordshire Supporting People programme only pays the cost of a person's housing related support if that person:
  - needs housing related support
  - receives housing related support
  - has a support plan agreed with the provider of that support
  - is unable to meet the whole of any charge for that support from their own resources
3. The basic aims of this policy are that it should be:
  - simple and cost effective to administer, and
  - easy to understand.

### **Services that are free**

4. Housing related support services are free to people if they are intended to be short term, which means they are mainly aimed at people who need support for less than two years. The only exception is the kind of housing related support provided by a home improvement agency.
5. Short term services are typically aimed at meeting the needs of:
  - homeless people
  - people with drug/alcohol problems
  - women at risk of domestic violence
  - vulnerable young people
  - ex offenders
6. Providers know from their Supporting People contract if they are expected to provide housing related support free of charge.

### **Services that are not free**

7. A charge is made for housing related support services if they are intended to be long term, which means they are mainly aimed at people who need support for two years or more.
8. Long term services are typically aimed at:
  - older people
  - people with a physical disability or sensory impairment
  - people with learning disabilities

- people with mental health problems
9. Providers know from their Supporting People contract if they are allowed to make a charge for providing housing related support, and the contract also says how much they are allowed to charge for the services covered by the contract.

### **Supporting People Payments**

10. A person who wants help with the cost of housing related support must apply to the Supporting People payments team by completing a Supporting People subsidy application form.
11. The application will be assessed in two ways, each of which is explained further below. The Supporting People team will conduct two tests:
- a support test
  - a financial test.

#### The support test

12. Everyone who applies for help with the cost of housing related support is asked to get a supporting evidence form completed by a support worker, doctor or other care professional to confirm why they need housing related support.
13. It is helpful to say if the person:
- Is registered blind, deaf or disabled
  - Receives Community Care services, such as home support
  - Receives benefits such as Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance
14. The Supporting People team will make enquiries to ensure the cost is reasonable and the support is of good quality if a person applies for help with the cost of housing related support provided by an organisation which does not have an Oxfordshire Supporting People contract.
15. The Supporting People payments team will check there is a support plan in place and support is being provided. They will look at the supporting evidence form.
16. They will notify the person applying whether they are satisfied the support test is satisfied.

#### The financial test

17. Anyone who receives Housing Benefit is entitled to have the whole cost of the housing related support they need met by payments from Oxfordshire County Council – provided the support test is satisfied.
18. If a person who does not receive Housing Benefit, they may request a Fairer Charging financial assessment in line with Oxfordshire County Council's Fairer Charging policy.
19. They may be entitled to have the whole or part of the cost of the housing related support they need met by payments from Oxfordshire County Council.

20. The following benefits automatically entitle the person to a Fairer Charging assessment:
  - Pension credit
  - Council tax benefit
  - Income support
  - Minimum income guarantee
  - Job seekers allowance
21. Where a person applies for a payment and the cost of the support services that person receives is less than £20 per week, a Fairer Charging assessment will be waived if the person receives any means-tested benefit listed above.
22. Where Supporting People payments are made it will be the responsibility of the person or someone acting on their behalf to notify the county council of any change in their circumstances that is likely to affect the eligibility for Supporting People subsidy, as stated on the subsidy application form and subsidy award letter.
23. People who receive Home Support and Supporting People services will only be subjected to one financial assessment.
24. People who receive both Home Support and Supporting People services will not have to pay more than the maximum contribution for those services set out in Oxfordshire County Council's Fairer Charging policy.
25. Where the cost of Home Support and Supporting People services exceeds the determined maximum contribution, the split between the amounts of help given with the cost of Home Support and Supporting People will be made according to the procedure agreed by Oxfordshire County Council.
26. The Supporting People payments team will notify the person applying for subsidy:
  - Whether they will have their support charge paid by Supporting People
  - How much that payment will be
  - The date from which the payment starts

### **Applications for direct payments**

27. Everything above applies as much to applications for direct payments (including from leaseholders) as to all other applications but in the case of direct payment applications the Supporting People team will always have to make enquiries to ensure the cost is reasonable and the support is of good quality because support providers whose clients apply for direct payments often do not hold Supporting People contracts.
28. In the case of leaseholders information will also often be required from The Pension Service.

### **Responsibilities of applicants**

29. It is the responsibility of the person who applies for help with the cost of housing related support to provide the Supporting People payments team with the evidence required to process their application.

30. It is the responsibility of the person who applies for help with the cost of housing related support to notify the Supporting People payments team of any change in their circumstances that is likely to affect their eligibility for Supporting People subsidy - as stated on the subsidy application form and subsidy award letter.

### **Acting on someone else's behalf**

31. An application or an appeal may be made on a person's behalf by another person if they can provide written evidence of their authority to act on that person's behalf.

### **Appeals**

32. A person may appeal against a decision in writing. The decision will be looked at by a different person. A further appeal may be made to a manager.

### **When payments start**

33. If a person who applies for Supporting People payments also receives Housing Benefit, payments will usually start on the date when their application was received or the date from which their Housing Benefit was awarded.
34. For a person who needs a Fairer Charging assessment, the Supporting People payments will usually start from the date when their request for an assessment was received.
35. The start of payments can be backdated up to a maximum of three months or thirteen weeks before the date the Supporting People payments team received a fully completed application.
36. If there are changes relating to the supporting evidence after applying, the original subsidy application will be accepted for up to 3 months from the date it was first received, after 3 months the person will need to reapply.
37. Payments are usually made to the organisation providing the housing related support, the organisation which is making the support charge, provided it holds a Supporting People contract

### **Keeping everything up to date**

38. Assessments are reviewed annually.
39. The Supporting People payments team will do an annual check with the relevant district council on whether people are receiving Housing Benefit where people have given their permission for this.
40. If permission is not given, it is the responsibility of the person who receives Supporting People payments to give the Supporting People payments team evidence such as their most recent Housing Benefit award letter.
41. It is an obligation of service providers under their Supporting People contracts to notify the Supporting People payments team of:
- Errors regarding any people that are sent on the remittances by the Supporting People payments team
  - People who no longer use or have left the service

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- Any information known to them about a person which may affect their entitlement to subsidy

**Review of the charging policy**

42. This policy will be reviewed in March 2015, or earlier if required by changes in national or local guidance.