

30 January 2017

Engagement, Participation & Involvement Team,
Northamptonshire County Council,
Room 129, County Hall,
PO Box 177,
Northampton,
NN1 1AY

Dear Sir or Madam,

Response to Consultation on: Paying for Care and Support in Your Own Home

In response to the above mentioned consultation Healthwatch Northamptonshire submits the following response.

How understandable is the language used in the document?

Whilst the language used is relatively clear and understandable, there is a lot of information to digest and potentially, quite a number of questions and queries people may have. We feel it would be been appropriate and beneficial to have organized some locality based consultation sessions open to both current users and carers, as well as general members of the public.

Is there anything missing from the document

There is no reference to the Department of Health's Care Act Statutory Guidance document (updated 2016), which gives the basis on which local authorities can make decisions to make administration charges. Therefore, people are not aware that Section 8 - Care and Support, states the following:

- 8.60 Local authorities must not charge people for a financial assessment, a needs assessment or the preparation of a care and support plan.
- 8.61 It may be appropriate for local authorities to charge a flat fee for arranging care. This can help ensure people have clarity about the costs they will face if they ask the local authority to arrange their care. However, such flat rate costs must be set at a level where they do not exceed the costs the local authority actually incurs.

As a result, Healthwatch Northamptonshire would like to challenge the consultation process on two grounds:

- a. Lack of accurate information prevents people from being able to make an informed decision.
- b. Charging for assessments is not legal, as shown in the above extract from the Statutory Guidance document.

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Any other comments

In general, the vast majority of people have little knowledge or understanding of social care and how it works until there is a need. Often there is confusion after an initial post-hospital period of free reablement/enablement support, when people needing ongoing domiciliary care support are advised social care support is needs assessed and means tested, so they will be required to partly or fully fund their support services.

Healthwatch Northamptonshire feels it is important, particularly if the decision is taken to introduce an administration fee for arranging care, for there to be clear information about accessing and paying for social care support, as well as the assessment and review processes, advocacy support and ensuring people are signposted to specialist agencies such as Northants Carers, Alzheimers Society, Age UK, etc.

Finally, we feel it is crucial to involve users, carers and others in the community in the planning and development of such information, and would welcome the opportunity of working with the County Council to promote the process and encourage involvement from the diverse communities across the county.

Yours sincerely,

William Pope
Chair
Chair Healthwatch Northamptonshire

Teresa Dobson
(Interim Chair from 1st April 2017)