



## **Supporting People – paying for supported accommodation (May 2006)**

**Ref IS/19**

This information sheet refers to the situation in England. If you live in Scotland, Wales or Northern Ireland you may wish to contact:

Age Concern Scotland, Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh EH9 1PR, tel: 0845 125 9732 (local call rate), website: [www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk](http://www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk);

Age Concern Cymru, Units 13 & 14 Neptune Court, Vanguard Way, Cardiff CF24 5PJ, tel: 029 2043 1555 (national call rate); website: [www.accymru.org.uk](http://www.accymru.org.uk);

Age Concern Northern Ireland, 3 Lower Crescent, Belfast BT7 1NR, tel: 028 9032 5055 (national call rate) Monday to Friday 9.30am - 1pm.

### **What is supported accommodation?**

There are many different types of supported accommodation to meet the needs of a wide range of people. Residents may have extra needs due to disability, their age or other reasons. The accommodation may have been specially adapted or designed to meet particular physical needs, or it may provide extra support through the use of wardens or other staff to help residents live independently.

Some people who do not live in specially adapted accommodation may also have housing-related support needs.

Examples of housing-related support services include:

- wardens in sheltered housing;
- visiting support services to help older people remain in their own homes;
- community alarm services;
- support to help people set up home after leaving institutions (e.g. prison) or being homeless;
- ongoing support for vulnerable people adjusting to independent living in their own home.

### **How are housing-related support services funded?**

Since April 2003 the planning and funding of these sorts of housing-related support services has been the responsibility of local authorities through the Supporting People scheme. Supporting People does not fund care in a registered care home, or personal care provided at home by a registered provider, or nursing care. These services will continue to be funded under existing community care arrangements.

The Supporting People scheme has brought together and replaced a variety of funding from other sources, such as Transitional Housing Benefit, Income Support for housing support costs, the Supported Housing Management Grant, and the Home Improvement Agency Grant.

One of the aims of the Supporting People reforms was to try to ensure that housing-related support services could be made available to people in different sorts of housing – not just tenants or leaseholders in supported schemes, but also owner-occupiers who need help to remain in their own homes. In practice this has often not happened. For example, a person may subscribe to a community alarm service, but that service will not be covered by the Supporting People scheme unless it is provided under a contract with the local Supporting People team.

Local authorities are responsible for administering the Supporting People scheme in their area. In areas with two-tier local government the county council (or equivalent) will be the administering authority. Administering authorities should devise local strategies to promote an improved quality of

service to users, and undertake service reviews (involving users) in order to establish how services should evolve.

This paper concentrates on those aspects of the Supporting People scheme most likely to affect older people.

## **Paying for housing-related support services**

Since April 2003 social security benefits have no longer been paid in respect of the cost of housing-related support services. This may have affected residents' Housing Benefit (and transitional Housing Benefit) and housing costs paid with Pension Credit (PC), Income Support (IS) or Jobseeker's Allowance (JSA). The amount a resident receives in their benefits may no longer cover the full cost of the service charge for their accommodation.

The local Supporting People team will make a charge for the housing-related support services they have arranged, but many people will receive help towards these charges (see below).

Rent and non support-related charges are still covered by Housing Benefit (HB) for tenants and PC, IS or JSA for owner occupiers.

## **Charges for Supporting People Services**

Residents may have to contribute towards the cost of Supporting People services, but this will depend on their circumstances. Each administering authority should produce a set of rules on charging as part of its Supporting People strategy and should ensure that these are seen to be applied on a transparent and fair basis.

Short term services, such as hostels or refuges, cannot charge for their support-related charges.

Anyone who has been in their accommodation since April 2003 should not be made worse off under the Supporting People scheme, at least until an appropriate service review has been carried out.

The following are some of the key points on charging for Supporting People services:

- tenants getting HB should not be charged. The Supporting People scheme will make payment directly to the landlord or service provider for the support element of the tenant's rent. Tenants who got HB prior to April 2003 should be assisted so that they are left no worse off;
- owner occupiers who prior to April 2003 got Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG), IS or JSA including support costs should be assisted by the Supporting People scheme so that they are left no worse off;
- councils should offer protection to tenants from excessive increases in their charges (in local authority schemes where support costs were previously pooled). This will be at the discretion of the local authority.

This is not an exhaustive list of concessions. If you receive a support service and find that your support charges have increased substantially since April 2003, you should seek further advice from a local advice agency.

## **Getting help through Fairer Charging**

A resident who also gets help from social services for their other care needs should have any charges for their Supporting People Services included in one overall charging calculation (see Factsheet 46 *Paying for Care and support at home* for details of the Fairer Charging scheme). They will not be charged for support services if they fall into one the first two categories above.

A tenant who does not receive HB or an owner occupier not getting PC, IS or JSA might be able to get help towards the charges for their support services through the local authority's Fairer Charging policies (see Factsheet 46 above). Local authorities have been told they must avoid a 'cliff edge', so that residents whose incomes are just above benefit level do not have to pay the full cost of their support services.

A resident who does not receive one of the above benefits but considers that they need help with their support charges should contact their local Supporting People team. Local authorities may vary in whether they are prepared to use their Fairer Charging policies for Supporting People services. If the administering authority will not do this you can complain through your local authority complaints procedure.

If you would like to receive this information in large print phone 0800 00 99 66 (free call) or write to Age Concern FREEPOST (SWB 30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ.

Find out more about Age Concern England online at [www.ageconcern.org.uk](http://www.ageconcern.org.uk)

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