

## **Charging for Care**

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*Bristol City Council is implementing its Direct Payment Charging Policy.*

### **What are these charges?**

Bristol City Council, like many other councils across the UK, have long had a policy of charging individuals who receive council care on a means tested basis.

Applying this charge to individuals who choose to receive their services by way of a Direct Payment takes this practice a step further.

Over the past six months, Bristol City Council has undertaken financial assessments of Direct Payments recipients in order to determine how much you should contribute towards the cost of your care. The implementation of these charges has only just begun.

More than 170 direct payment recipients have now received notification from Bristol City Council that they will be expected to contribute towards the cost of their direct payment.

### **What has been the impact?**

A large number of direct payments recipients who have contacted us about the new charges have said they have been surprised that they have to contribute, because they feel that they just don't have the money to put towards their direct payment account as required by the council.

Others have been concerned by the speed with which charging has been implemented. They have said that they risk going into debt because they have not had the time to adjust their household budgets and care arrangements.

### **What WECIL is doing?**

WECIL has raised the difficulties our service users are having with the implementation of charging with Bristol City Council at a senior level. Currently, we have succeeded in obtaining agreement that the council will:

- Review the criteria they use for deciding whether an individual will be charged and how much
- Review the charges for people who feel they cannot afford to pay them; paying
- Take into account the cost of repaying loans and/or the cost of making PAs redundant when undertaking these reviews

### **What does WECIL advise?**

- Pay the personal contribution as calculated into your direct payment bank account. Bristol City Council must see the amounts when they audit. If you do not pay your contribution there is a possibility that your direct payment may be reduced in the future.
- You may be concerned that having to pay a charge for your direct payment will mean you need to reduce the hours you employ a Personal Assistant (PA). Your PA has rights as an employee. Before reducing your PA's hours seek advice from either your insurer, WECIL or ACAS. Your advisor will instruct you on the correct procedure to follow.
- If you believe your direct payment charge is too high, you can request clarification from the Finance Department at Bristol City Council. Their phone number is 0117 903 6188 or you can email them on [accfinance.domcare@bristol.gov.uk](mailto:accfinance.domcare@bristol.gov.uk)
- Note that you continue to be entitled to hold up to eight times your weekly payment as a contingency.
- Note that if you end your direct payment and choose direct services, you may be charged for this also.

You may wish to discuss this matter with other direct payment recipients. Click here to join WECIL's forum.

<http://www.wecil.co.uk/forums>