



## **Independent Living Services Charging Policy**

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## 1. Policy

This policy will cover:

- When a support charge is appropriate e.g. where alarm service or contact/visiting service is provided to meet customer needs.
- How the level of charge will be determined.
- Eligibility criteria for accessing subsidy
- Arrangements covering the supply of both a support service and an alarm service

## 2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to set out when and how North Devon Homes (NDH) will make a charge for the provision of support services.

The term 'subsidy' will be used to refer to a situation whereby the cost of providing that service is to be met either fully or partially from any targeted support funding available to NDH (for example under the terms of a contract with other outside agencies such as Devon County Council (DCC), or internal subsidy).

## 3. Principles

The following principles will apply to this policy:

- It will be open, fair and transparent
- It will be reviewed every three years

## 4. Review

We will review this policy at least once every three years to ensure that it continues to operate within best practice, achieve measurable results, and achieve continuous service improvement.

Alternatively, the policy and all associated procedures will be reviewed immediately following any relevant change to government policy, regulation or legislation.

The Independent Living Services Manager will be responsible for ensuring that policy reviews are undertaken, that appropriate consultation takes place and that revisions are reported to the Board for its approval.

## 5. Application

North Devon Homes' Board will delegate responsibility to the Independent Living Services Manager for ensuring that this policy is communicated and implemented.

The Independent Living Services Manager will provide training for staff to ensure that they fully understand the wider issues surrounding this policy and the procedure.

## 6. Policy Statement

### 6.1 We will provide advice and assistance to our customers who are using our support services.

When a support service need is identified (by self referral or referral through a third party), we will provide clear advice regarding:

- The assessment process for deciding the level of need and nature of services to be provided.
- The cost of the agreed service and whether any subsidy may be available to the individual.
- Our commitments under the terms of the Support agreement,
- The customers responsibilities under the agreement including the payment of charges
- The steps that may be taken in the event of non-payment of charges.

### 6.2 We will provide clarity on the level and nature of the support to be provided

When a request for support is received, we will advise at that first point of contact whether we consider the customer may be eligible to access the service

The categories of support are:

- Community alarm only
- Support only
- Community alarm with support
- Crisis intervention
- Assistive technology

**Community Alarm only** – provision of the equipment only on a rental basis to include a 24hr, 365 days a year emergency monitoring service through an appropriate alarm monitoring centre. The service will also include

- The initial installation, fault diagnosis and replacement of faulty equipment.
- The administration of the account and assistance setting up and maintaining an appropriate method of payment
- Routine updating of information held and the collection of the equipment at the end of the agreement.

Customers may be required to replace durables (e.g. batteries) on certain types of equipment as/when necessary at their own expense. There is a minimum 2 month agreement period with a 1 month notice period to end any agreement.

### **Support only**

The level of support will be determined by assessment of the customer's needs. Where subsidy funding exists, we will use criteria as agreed with the subsidy fund provider to determine the support package.

Through our community support funding tenants of NDH will enjoy a subsidised rate for the support service. Non-tenants will be charged at an hourly rate commensurate with that for support services commissioned by statutory services.

**Community Alarm with support** – provision of community alarm service as part of a wider support package as above.

### **Crisis Intervention**

Support is agreed at very short notice with a customer or agency (including referrals from other NDH teams), for example social services, hospital to provide an immediate back up.

### **Assistive Technology**

We may offer assistive technology linked to an alarm system where this will help the customer retain or gain independence. This could complement any of the other packages above.

Each system proposal will be costed individually, and the customer quoted on the basis of full cost recovery. We will not offer any peripherals that provide the assistive technology on a rental basis (unlike the basic alarms), the customer will be liable to pay outright for them. Any associated costs (repair, maintenance, updates) will be the responsibility of the customer.

We will use our best efforts to seek to identify subsidy funding to enable people to access technology that will help retain their independence.

Our charges are set out in Appendix A to this policy

### **6.3 We will explain, in advance, customers' responsibilities under the terms of the Support Services Agreement with respect to payment of charges.**

The support service agreement states that customers are responsible for the payment of costs associated with the provision of their support package. If subsidy funding is available, this will be made clear.

Should any equipment be lost or damaged, the customer will be responsible for the full cost of replacement at current market rates. Where the customer cannot pay the full amount they must make arrangements to enter into a repayment agreement in line with our rent collection and arrears recovery policy.

We will always seek to offset any charges to the customer through subsidy arrangements that may be able from time to time. If subsidies are available we will assess customers against any eligibility criteria relating to the subsidy. It is the responsibility of the customer to notify NDH of any changes in their circumstances that may affect their entitlement to any subsidy.

We provide a wide range of payment options to enable customers to make payments at a range of locations and using methods that best suit their requirements.

All charges will be reviewed annually and will be available on our website or to customers upon request. Where charges are increased customers will be given a minimum of four weeks notice.

We will pursue all debt outstanding, until it is deemed no longer economically viable to do so.

### **6.4 We will take all reasonable steps to recover any outstanding sums due as a result of the provision of support services**

The Independent Living Services Manager or Team Leader will be responsible for agreeing an arrangement payment facility with the customer. This responsibility may be passed to the Income Team if the customer is already making arranged payments for rent arrears. It is recognised that rent arrears should be the priority and only a small payment should be placed against the support service debt.

The arrangement must always be set at a realistic sum and reflect the customer's capacity to pay. The minimum arrangement for the support service will generally be £5 per week.

The consequence of not keeping to the agreed arrangement may result in court action. Attempts will continue to be made to recover any and all outstanding debt through normal working procedures where possible and practical. Any debts to be written off will be done so in line with current procedures and practices.

## 6.5 We will review our charges annually

The Independent Living Services Manager and the Finance department will review all charges annually in line with inflation and market rates for targeted support. The Independent Living Services Manager will be responsible for ensuring that policy reviews are undertaken, that appropriate consultation takes place and that revisions are reported to the Board for its approval.

## 7. Equality Impact Assessment

### 7.1 Who has been consulted in developing the Policy?

Date	Consultation methodology	Challenge/impact/result
Dec 2015	By review and feedback	
Jan 2019	Endorsement by C90	Charging structure agreed

### 7.2 Identify potential impact on each of the diversity “groups”

Strand	No impact	Negative impact	Positive impact	Comments / evidence
Race	✓			This policy relates to fair and open charging for a service and does not impact more positively or negatively on any group.
Disability	✓			
Gender	✓			
Gender Reassignment	✓			
Sexual orientation	✓			
Religion or belief	✓			
Age			✓	
Rural issues	✓			
Social Inclusion issues	✓			
Pregnancy and maternity	✓			
Marriage and civil partnership	✓			

### 7.3 Does the Policy promote equality of opportunity?

Yes

### 7.4 If “adverse impact” identified in the table above, please state how this policy addresses this.

N/A

7.5 A full EIA is not required for this policy.

7.6 If suggestions for improvement have been suggested, what should the positive outcome be for North Devon Homes' customers and stakeholders?

N/A

Next review date	
Every three years Next review date: March 2022	
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## Appendix A to Independent Living Support Services Charging Policy

Charges from 1<sup>st</sup> April 2019

NB: These charges only applied to new tenancies/support contracts. Existing (pre April 2019) customers have transitional protection for the life of their tenancy or support/alarm contract.

<b>Service</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Comments</b>
Alarm monitoring	£2.84/wk	Applicable to hard wired schemes only
Dispersed Alarm only	£4.20/wk	Includes monitoring. VAT to be treated in line with statutory guidance.
<i>Alarm additional pendant (hard wired and/or dispersed)</i>	<i>+£0.40/wk</i>	
<i>Alarm falls pendant</i>	<i>+£1.50/wk</i>	
Support only	£5.00/wk	NDH tenants
Support only	£17.60/hr	Non-NDH tenants
Support plus alarm monitoring	£7.84	NDH tenants only
Support plus dispersed alarm	£9.20	NDH tenants
Support plus dispersed alarm	£4.20 for the alarm, plus £17.60/hr.	Non-NDH tenants
Alarm peripherals	At cost	