



Community Services Charging Policy

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1. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to 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.

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).

2. Principles

The following principles will apply to this policy:

- It will be open, fair and transparent.
- It will promote charging consistency for customers
- It will ensure that there is a process for regular review of charges
- It will ensure that customers receive value for money

3. Review

We will review this policy at least once every two years to ensure that it continues to operate within best practice, achieves value for money and continuous service improvement.

Alternatively, the policy and all associated procedures will be reviewed immediately following any relevant change to government policy, regulation, or legislation, or as a result of request for internal review

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

4. Responsibilities

The Executive Team has delegated authority from the Board to approve this policy.

The Community Services Manager is responsible for ensuring that this policy is communicated to staff, appropriately implemented and that staff are suitably trained to ensure that they fully understand the wider issues surrounding this policy and the relevant procedures.

5. Scope

This policy applies to all customers receiving a support service and staff involved in providing the service.

6. Policy Statement

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

Resources invested in individual tenancy support have been shown to create longer term savings in tenancy management costs. In-house research suggests that every £1 invested in tenancy support returns far more to the business and our customers in longer term savings.

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 terms of agreement including the payment of charges where applicable.
- 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
- Independent Living Support
- Specialist Support medium term intervention
- Specialist Support crisis intervention
- Assistive technology (telecare).

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 receiving 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
- Timely updating of information supplied by customers 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 or when necessary, at their own expense. There is a minimum two-month agreement period with a one-month notice period to end any agreement.

Notice will be with immediate effect to the nearest Monday when we receive notice of death of a customer.

Independent Living Support (ILS)

The level of support will be determined by assessment of the customer's needs.

Residents of NDH will benefit from a subsidised rate for the support service.

Specialist Support Medium Term Intervention

The level of support will be determined by assessment of the customer's needs. We will use criteria as set out in a separate means test to carry out a financial assessment to determine whether charges can be applied for the medium-term support intervention.

Means testing will be carried out at each support review or where there has been an identifiable change to the customer's financial status.

Residents of NDH will benefit from a subsidised rate for the support service.

Specialist Support Crisis Intervention

The level of support will be determined by assessment of the customer's needs. The Specialist Support team will deliver intensive, focused short-term support to those in crisis and whose tenancy is therefore at risk, we will not apply a support charge for short-term essential intervention.

Means Testing and Charging

ILS retains a subsidised charge in all cases, whereas Medium-Term Specialist Support applies a means-tested fee. This is because:

- Specialist Support is a time-limited intervention and is focused on tenancy management and tenancy sustainability. Resources invested in pro-active Tenancy Support are shown to produce savings in longer-term tenancy management costs.
- ILS provides indefinite support focused on the needs of the individual.
- Demographic trends suggest that, whilst poverty is widespread amongst the over 65s, hardship and destitution are increasingly evident in the working-age population. NDH is committed to making our support services available and affordable to those who require them.

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 price quoted based on full cost recovery. We will not offer any peripherals that provide 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.

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

Where a chargeable service is being delivered, the support service agreement states that customers are responsible for the payment of costs associated with the provision of their support package.

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 arrange to enter into a repayment agreement in line with our Income Collection Policy.

We will always seek to offset any charges to the customer through subsidy arrangements that may be available 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.

We will pursue all debt outstanding, as set out in the Income Collection Policy.

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

The Specialist Support Team Leader or Independent Living Services Team Leader will be responsible for agreeing a payment plan 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 or alarm service debt.

The arrangement must always be set at a realistic sum and reflect the customer's capacity to pay.

The consequence of not keeping to the agreed arrangement may result in court action. Attempts will continue to be made to recover 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 the Financial Regulations.

6.5 We will review our charges annually

The Community Services Manager and the Independent Living Services Team Leader will review all charges annually in line with inflation and market rates for targeted support. The Executive Team must approve any changes to the rates charged. Where charges are increased customers will be given a minimum of four weeks' notice

7. Consultation

Date	Consultation methodology	Challenge / impact / result
13/03/2023	Customer Involvement Group	None
21/02/2023	Independent Living Team Meeting	None
14/03/2023	Specialist Support Team Meeting	None
15/03/2023	Neighbourhoods Team Meeting	None

8. Equality Impact Assessment

8.1 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	✓			

8.2 Does the Policy promote equality of opportunity?

Yes.

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

N/A

8.4 A full EIA (Equality Impact Assessment) is not required for this policy.

8.5 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 two years Next review date: May 2025.	
	Related Documents
	Appendix A – Charges Document

Appendix A to Independent Living Support Services Charging Policy

Charges from 1st April 2023

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

Non NDH Customers	Cost	Comments
Dispersed Alarm only	£4.41	Includes monitoring. VAT to be treated in line with statutory guidance.
<i>Alarm additional pendant (hard wired and/or dispersed)</i>	<i>+£0.42/wk</i>	
<i>Alarm falls pendant</i>	<i>+£1.58/wk</i>	
Alarm peripherals	At cost	Outright charge, no rental of equipment

NDH Customers	Cost	Comments
Dispersed Alarm only	£4.28	Includes monitoring. VAT to be treated in line with statutory guidance.
<i>Alarm additional pendant (hard wired and/or dispersed)</i>	<i>+£0.41/wk</i>	
<i>Alarm falls pendant</i>	<i>+£1.53/wk</i>	
Support only	£5.00/wk	ILS Customers and means tested for SS Customers
Support plus dispersed alarm	£5.00 £4.28	
Alarm peripherals	At cost	Outright charge, no rental of equipment