



Paying for Residential Social Care

Will I have to pay for adult social care support?

This leaflet is for individuals who require residential care from Darlington Borough Council. The Council's Care and Support (Charging and Assessment of Resources) for Residential Services Policy says that anyone receiving social care support needs to have a financial assessment to determine if they can contribute towards the cost.

These contributions help us to continue to provide adult social care services to the growing number of people who need them. Everyone will be offered a financial assessment to work out how much they can afford to pay towards the cost of their care.

What services do the Council charge for?

Care homes can provide the following kinds of care:

- Long term residential care in a residential care home that provides personal care, meals and accommodation for people who can no longer manage to live independently, with help and support in their own home. Any nursing needs can be provided by a visiting district nurse.
- Long term residential care in a nursing home that provides personal care, meals and around the clock qualified nursing care.
- Short break stays in either a residential or nursing care home

What does a financial assessment involve?

If your assessment shows you are eligible for non-residential care and support, a Visiting Finance Officer will arrange to meet with you to gather information about your financial circumstances. This will determine if you have to make a contribution.

If you wish you may ask someone else to be present when we visit you. If you have someone who manages your finances, it may be helpful if they are also present at the visit. This person could be:

- your Appointee who helps you with your benefits from Department for Work and Pensions,
- your Power of Attorney over your affairs, or
- your Deputy for Property and Affairs appointed by the Court of Protection.

You can also invite an advocate to support you and help you explain your views if you wish.

What will we ask you?

During the visit you will be asked a number of questions to obtain full details of your income and capital (both property and money) and your household expenditure.

To confirm the information you provide is correct you will need to have the following documents available at the meeting:

- National Insurance Number
- Correspondence from the Department for Work and Pensions or JobCentre Plus stating the benefits you receive (if paid directly into your bank account)
- Occupational / Works / Personal pensions
- Recent bank, building society, and Post Office savings account passbooks
- Recent bank statements
- Documents showing any shares, national savings certificates or other financial assets
- Proof of rent/mortgage payments
- Council Tax payment details
- Fuel bills and other bills associated with any disabilities you may have (covering 1 year)
- Documents relating to property ownership
- Any documents relating to Power of Attorney, Deputyship or Court of Protection

How is the financial assessment calculated?

Three things will be looked at when calculating your contribution:

- your income
- your savings and assets, and
- any allowances to which you may be entitled

Income

Income includes all money you receive on a regular basis or any payment you receive which relates to a particular length of time. Income includes:

- State Retirement Pension
- Income Support or Pension Credits
- Occupational/works pensions, or personal pensions

- Employment Support Allowance / Incapacity Benefit
- Attendance Allowance / Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payments
- Annuities
- Rent from a property
- Trust fund payments

Savings and assets

You will be asked to provide full details of all your capital. Again, we will need to verify all the information. Savings and assets include:

- Money held in bank accounts (deposit accounts and current accounts), building society accounts and post office accounts.
- The market value of stocks and shares, bonds, Premium Bonds, ISA's, National Savings Certificates or any other investments you own.

Your savings will be taken into account in the financial assessment as follows:

Savings	Contribution
Below £14,250	We will not take these savings into account in the assessment
Between £14,250 and £23,250	A tariff income of £1.00 for each £250 (or part of £250) and add this to your income used in the assessment
Above £23,250	We will assess you as being able to pay the full cost towards your adult social care and support, no matter what other income and disability costs you may have.

If you are eligible for services, but you choose not to supply all of the information requested or your savings are above £23,250 you will need to make your own arrangements to purchase your services privately unless the Council has a duty to do so, e.g. if you don't have capacity to manage your own finances and you don't have a legal representative to make the arrangements.

Allowances/Disregards

Housing Costs

Disregards are made for certain housing-related costs, as follows:

- Mortgage payments - Mortgage payable net of any housing benefit is disregarded. This is divided by the number of people named on the deeds and whether there is a specified percentage share.
- Rent Payments - Rent payable net of housing benefit can be disregarded as long as the individual's name is on the tenancy and they are deemed eligible under the housing benefit rules.
- Council Tax – If you own the property that is vacant then you should be entitled to an exemption from council tax. If your exemption ceases then a disregard for council tax may be given.
- Water rates - If you own the property that is vacant there is no disregard for water rates unless proof can be provided of essential expenditure to maintain the property.
- Utility bills - If you own the property that is vacant there is no disregard for water rates unless proof can be provided of essential expenditure to maintain the property.
- Building Insurance - If you own the property that is vacant, a disregard can be given to ensure that your property is adequately insured.

Personal Allowance

A personal allowance of £24.90 is allowed for you to purchase personal items that the home does not provide.

If you are in receipt of the Savings Credit element of Pension Credit's you may be entitled to an additional allowance of up to £5.75.

You will be asked to sign a form which gives the Council permission to contact the Department for Work & Pensions (DWP) to confirm the amount of benefits paid to you. The Council will check the amount of benefit is correct. If the payment is not correct, they can ask the DWP on your behalf to pay you what you are entitled to.

We can also help you apply for any other benefit you may be entitled to which you are not currently receiving. This can include:

- completing the form and making your claim or,
- asking other agencies to help you with the forms

All information about your personal financial affairs is treated in the strictest confidence. It is not discussed with anyone else without your prior knowledge and permission. However, the information held by the Council may be used for the prevention and detection of fraud.

When will I know what I have to pay?

The information collected from you will be used to work out if you have to make any contribution and, if so, how much.

Once any allowances have been deducted from your assessed weekly income the amount remaining will be the maximum contribution you will make to your personal budget or cost of your non-residential care.

We will try to tell you how much you will have to pay when we visit you. You will be provided with details showing how the assessment has been worked out and we will explain this to you.

You will be sent a letter confirming your financial assessment once we have returned to the office.

Your contribution will start from the date you entered the residential home

Deferred payment agreements

If you need to move from your own home to live in a residential care home the value of your property may be taken into account in the financial assessment. If this is the case you may be eligible to enter into a deferred payment agreement.

A deferred payment agreement is an arrangement with the council that will enable you to use the value of your home to help pay care home costs. You can delay repaying us until you choose to sell your home, or until after your death.

For more information on the deferred payment scheme please see Darlington Borough Council's Deferred Payment Leaflet

If someone else continues to live in the property, its value will be ignored if they are one of the following:

- Your partner
- A member of your family who:
 1. Is aged 60 or over
 2. Is aged under 16 and is a child for whom you have responsibility to care for

3. Is receiving, or would qualify for one or more of the following benefits - Incapacity Benefit, Personal Independence Payment, Disability Living Allowance, Severe Disablement Allowance or Attendance Allowance).

Top up payments

If you choose a placement that is more expensive than the amount identified to meet your accommodation needs in your personal budget, a top up may be required to meet the additional cost. This would normally be paid by a third party, for example, family members, charities or friends, or in certain circumstances you may be willing and able to meet the additional cost.

A financial assessment will need to be completed with the person/persons undertaking the top up payment to ensure that affordability and sustainability of this amount is maintainable.

Temporary and short-term residents in care homes

If your stay in a care home is intended to last for a limited period of time and where there is a plan to return home you will still be required to have a financial assessment to work out how much you will need to pay towards this stay but you may be entitled to some additional allowances or disregards:

- Your Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payments (all components) are not taken into account.
- The Severe Disability Premium component of Pension Credits and Employment and Support Allowance is not taken into account.
- The value of your property will not be taken into account
- You may have additional expenditure for home commitments allowed for the duration of your stay.

Independent financial advice

Knowing the best way to fund your care can be very complicated and confusing. There will be times when you need to get financial advice which is impartial and independent of the local authority so you make the right decisions. For example:

- where there are a number of options available and you need advice on which one to choose, bearing in mind that often we are not allowed to recommend one.
- when there is potential conflict between the our interests and yours, such as advice on how assets are taken into consideration as part of your financial assessment.
- when you are about to enter into a legal agreement. For example, we can provide information about the consequences of entering into a deferred payment agreement (DPA), but cannot advise you on whether you should enter into it.
- where you want advice on specific financial products to get the most out of your assets; this would probably need 'regulated' advice.

What is an independent or 'regulated' financial adviser?

Independent financial advice is available from a number of sources. Some services are free and provided by not-for-profit organisations, such as:

- Money Advice Service - free and impartial money advice, set up by government.
- Citizen's Advice Bureau - getting financial advice;
- The Society of Later Life Advisers – helps you and your family find trusted financial advisers who understand financial needs in later life.

There are also more formal 'independent financial advisers' (IFA), who you may need to pay for their advice. They can give you advice on financial matters and recommend suitable financial products.

Please note that:

- Some financial advisers are 'restricted', which means they can only sell you certain types of products.
- IFAs have to be regulated by the Financial Conduct Authority (FCA) and must meet their strict requirements and standards.
- Many IFAs are not experts in social care, and there are few products available for the various financial changes of Care Act about how to plan for your care.

How can I find independent financial advice?

Non-for-profit organisations:

- Money Advice Service - or phone 0300 500 5000);
- Citizen's Advice Bureau - getting financial advice;
- The Society of Later Life Advisers - helps you and your family find trusted financial advisers who understand financial needs in later life.

Can I get help if I have difficulties getting or understanding advice?

If you don't have family or friends to help you, and you think getting or understanding independent financial advice may be difficult, you may need an 'independent advocate'.

They can support or advocate on your behalf to ensure you have thought about the best way of supporting and representing yourself, with regard to your well-being and interests. This will help you to get the most out of any independent financial advice.

Other situations may mean you should have an independent advocate, such as when you need a long stay in a hospital or care home, or if there is a disagreement over your involvement.

What do I do if I think my contribution has not been worked out correctly?

If you think your contribution has not been calculated correctly please let us know. If you are not able to resolve matters with us you can request a review of your financial assessment to be completed by someone else.

If you remain unhappy with the outcome of your financial assessment you can find more information on the Council's Complaints Procedure, see leaflet G4 - "Complaints, Compliments and Comments"

How do I pay my contribution?

The Council will send you a bill every four weeks in arrears. Each bill will show for which period the payment is due.

Payments can be made in a number of different ways:

- You can make your payments by Direct Debit (we can provide a Direct Debit mandate for you to complete)
- By Debit and Credit Card, over the phone or Internet
- At a Post Office
- By cheque
- At the Dolphin Centre
- By Bank Credit

What do I do if I have problems paying my contribution?

Sometimes you can run into difficulties when paying your bills or making your contribution. Please tell us as soon as possible if this happens to you. We may be able to advise a course of action which will prevent you getting into debt. We must make every possible effort to make sure you pay the full amount you have been assessed to pay.

If you do not contact us and your bill remains unpaid Darlington Borough Council may take further action to recover the debt and this could include legal proceedings.

When does my contribution change?

Every year when your benefits increase we will complete an automatic reassessment of your contribution. We will send a letter to you to confirm your revised amount but you must inform us if any of the information is incorrect or your benefits have changed.

In addition to this we will contact you during the year to ensure that we have all of you up to date financial information and reassess you again if any of your circumstances have changed.

If your financial circumstances change you can contact us any time and we will carry out a new financial assessment based on your change in circumstances and advise you of your new contribution.

Contact Details

Financial Assessment Team, Neighbourhoods & Resources Department, Room 304,
Town Hall, Darlington, DL1 5QT

Tel: **01325 405461**

Fax: **xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx**

Minicom: **xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx**

Website - **www.darlington.gov.uk/adultservices**

NATIONAL FRAUD INITIATIVE

The Council has a statutory duty to protect the public funds that it administers. In order to do this, the council may need to use the information that you provide to assist in the prevention and detection of fraud and the council may also need to share the information with other organisations that handle public funds.

The Council's Data Protection notification lists the people or organisations with whom your information may be shared. In any event, your information will only be handled in accordance with the principles of the Data Protection Act (1998)

For further information please contact the Information Governance Team or Audit Services Section at **dataprotection@darlington.gov.uk** or refer to the Data Protection page of our website **www.darlington.gov.uk**

