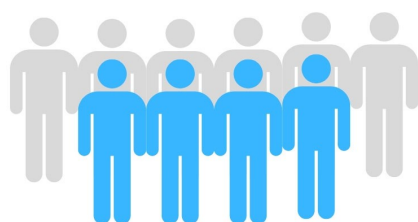


Charging for social care: A tax on the need for support?

The Independent Living Strategy Group recently carried out a study of local authority charges for social care, exploring in particular whether and to what extent the practice of charging is undermining people's wellbeing, the primary purpose of social care services as set out in the Care Act 2014. We examined some key features of the way local authorities implement charges and gathered evidence on the impact of charges on disabled people. Our study comprised of two parts: an online survey of people who had received a community care assessment; and a Freedom of Information request to 152 English local authorities.

The key findings from the survey of disabled people's experiences of paying towards their support: The survey was open for responses between April 19th 2018 and 9th July 2018. In total we received 604 responses.

Charges are increasing rapidly;



Four out of ten of people said they had experienced **a substantial increase in the level of charging** over the past 2 years.

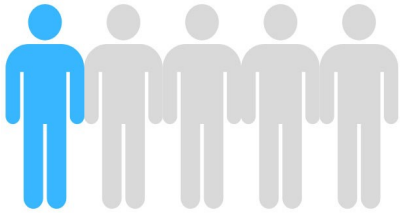
A third of people providing a figure for the increase in charges said they had experienced an **increase of over 50% in the last two years.**



People are struggling to pay;

Just under half of the group said they had **frequently or occasionally used money intended for other household costs** such as food and heating to pay for care and support.

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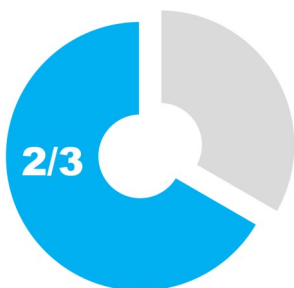
One in five reported that they had **gone into debt by borrowing to pay for care and support**. Informal debt was more common, with over half the group saying they had relied on family or friends to meet the cost of care and support.

Just over a third of the group reported that they **had struggled to pay for care and support** falling behind or delaying payments that were due.

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Three quarters of the group said that they **worried about the cost of care and support**. People are having to find money for care and support from other areas of essential spend: over a third reported that they had reduced spending on housing costs; Just under half had reduced the amount they spend on food and heating to meet the cost of care.

Charging is viewed negatively by people;



The majority of people are critical of the local charging policy in their area, Just under two thirds of **people viewed their policy as poor or very poor in terms of fairness**.

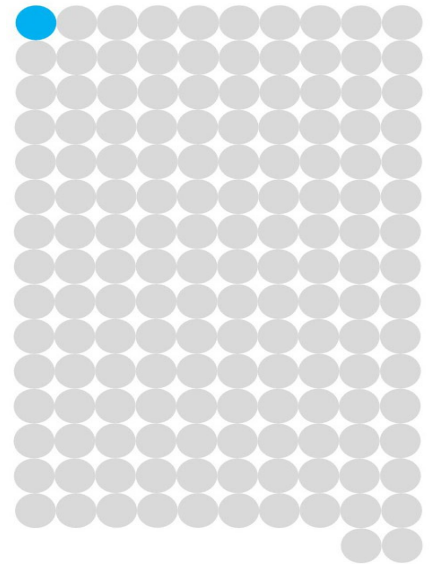
Approaching three quarters of people rated their **policy as poor or very poor in terms of being easy to understand**.

Amongst other things **people spoke about the unfairness of the system**, having to challenge the application of local policies, increasing amounts of money that had to be paid, **the stress of paying for care and having to rely on family members** to pay charges.

The key findings relating to a freedom of information request to Local Authorities regarding charging for social care: We made freedom of information request to 152 local authorities April 2018 following a series of follow up requests we received 100% response by July.

All but one local authority **choose to exercise their power to make a charge for social care services to people** who need support. **The nearly all make services available to carers free of charge.**

The majority of local authorities had renewed or introduced their charging policy since the Care Act 2014 and the majority had carried out an equality impact assessment.



13%

13% of local authorities who undertook an **equality assessment failed to identify a single risk** associated with their charging policy.

Those who did anticipate risks described a range of concerns associated with their charging policies including **a risk to peoples' wellbeing and a risk of financial hardship.**

Risks to the wellbeing of carers were also identified and that people in need would decline help. Local authorities identified risks to themselves including a loss of income and legal challenges.



Some, but by no means all, local authorities demonstrated **they had a good understanding of the risks associated with charging for social care** and had some strategies in place to monitor and mitigate some risks.

The **majority of councils undertake assessment and collection of charges directly**, with only a very small number outsourcing the task.

Income from charging contributes around **12% of the cost of community support**.



On average local authorities spend just over **£44 million on community based services** and **collect just over five million pounds through charging**.

On average local authorities spend around £ 421,383 on collecting charges (around 8% of the total raised) and a further 3% is written off as uncollectible.

Typically **half of those receiving support pay a charge**.

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The average **charge per person was £2,243.42**.

For more information...

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Read the full report here: <http://www.in-control.org.uk>