

Residential & Nursing Care: Paying For Care In A Care Home

April 2019 - March 2020



Social Services

Introduction

This information is for people who are going into a residential or nursing home on a permanent basis. It explains about the costs of moving into a home and how you may be eligible to get help towards the costs. We realise that this is a difficult time for you and your relatives and hope that the information will be of assistance to you.

Help with understanding information

This information has been written to answer the most common financial questions we get asked about residential and nursing homes. After reading the information, if you feel you would like any points explaining further, please do not hesitate to contact the Social Services Finance Team.

Temporary Care or Trial Period

If you are going into a Residential or Nursing home on a temporary basis or for a trial period with a view to a permanent placement, the rules are the same as described in this information.

The Financial Assessment

An Income Maximisation Officer from Social Services will help you complete the Financial Assessment Form. The purpose of the form is to ensure that we are provided with accurate financial information to assist us to calculate any contribution you may need to make toward your care costs. The amount you will have to pay towards the cost of your stay in a residential or nursing home depends on your income and capital. Some examples are provided in this information, but please note that there may be other types that we have to consider. For all income, capital or savings, we must see evidence of up-to-date balances of accounts, for example bank statements.

What is counted as income?

Income means regular payments that you receive and includes State Retirement Pension and other benefits such as Pension Credit, Income Support or Occupational Pensions and any annuities or trust funds.

What is counted as capital?

Capital is your savings and property. Savings include bank or building society accounts, National Savings Certificates, bonds, PEP's, TESSA's, ISA's and shares. It could be in your sole name or jointly owned. We will need to see documentation to evidence income and capital.

Will I have to pay towards my care in a Residential/Nursing Home?

If you have been assessed by Social Services as needing long term residential or nursing care, we have to carry out a financial assessment.

Apart from those service users who are subject to S117 aftercare or are assessed as needing Continuing Healthcare, everyone has to pay something towards his or her care. If you think you may be eligible for Continuing Healthcare, please discuss this with your social worker/care manager.

How much will I have to pay?

Under the current legislation anyone who has more than £50,000 in capital or savings must pay the full cost of the placement in the home. This excludes the funded nursing care payment for nursing placements (see nursing care section).

How we calculate your contribution

Social Services will ignore any capital you have up to the value of £50,000.

In general, most of your income, including Social Security Benefits, counts towards the cost of your care.

If the person completing the form has legal authority to complete the details on your behalf, evidence of their authority must be enclosed with the form e.g. the power of attorney.

Once I have gone into residential/nursing care how much will I be able to keep for my personal expenses?

From 8th April 2019 the amount that you may keep for your own personal needs is £29.50; this amount is set annually by the Welsh Government. You can also retain up to a further £5.75 per single person or £8.60 per couple of Pension Credit, if eligible.



What if the fees of the home that I have chosen are more expensive than Social Services regard as reasonable?

Blaenau Gwent Social Services has a maximum price for categories of residential and nursing care. If the cost of the home that you have chosen exceeds the maximum for this Authority, a third party, often a friend or relative, will be required to cover the shortfall. They must enter into a formal agreement with Social Services and be able to maintain this agreement throughout the period of placement.

How am I told the amount I have to pay?

When you have completed your Financial Assessment Claim Form, Blaenau Gwent Social Services Income Team will notify you in writing of the amount that we will require you to pay.

If you have any questions about the amount, please contact the Social Services Income Team.



Benefits

Will I be able to claim Pension Credit?

Pension Credit is a means-tested benefit for people aged over pension age; it has previously been known as Supplementary Benefit, Income Support and Minimum Income Guarantee. We can assist you with a claim for Pension Credit if you wish.

Please note that if you decide not to claim Pension Credit when you are entitled to do so, you will nevertheless be assessed as though you are receiving the benefit.

Will going into permanent care affect any benefits that I claim now?

Attendance Allowance/Disability Living Allowance / Personal Independence Payment (PIP) (Care Component) will stop after 28 days of being continuously away from your own home if you are receiving financial help towards the cost of your stay from the Local Authority. If the Local Authority is not paying any contribution, you remain fully entitled to these benefits. If you receive any other benefits, and have any queries regarding contribution entitlement, (including what happens to benefits when in hospital) please contact the Social Services Income Team for further advice.

Will owning my property affect my charges?

The value of your property does not count for the first 12 weeks of a permanent stay, but it will be included after 12 weeks (if it is sold within the first 12 weeks the proceeds will be taken into account as part of the financial assessment). This is called the 12 week disregard period.

During this 12 week disregard period, payment of any Attendance Allowance or Care Component of the Disability Living Allowance or Personal Independence Payment should stop after a maximum of 28 days for as long as the Local Authority is 'disregarding' the property. If you receive one of these benefits you should advise the Disability Benefits Centre of the arrangements (see useful contacts section). Again this does not apply if you are funding your placement. Any further queries regarding benefits in general should be addressed to the Social Services Finance Team.



Property

If I own a house, will I be expected to sell it?

The Local Authority does not have the power to enforce a sale of your property, but whilst the value of your property does not count for the first 12 weeks of your permanent placement, it will be included after 12 weeks (or its cash value, if it is sold before 12 weeks).

The value of a house or any other property or land you own will be taken into account in working out your contribution towards your care. However, in the following circumstances, your property will not be taken into account in calculating your weekly contribution:

- Your partner (provided you are not divorced or separated) remains in the property.

- A relative aged 16 or under (who is your responsibility) remains in the property.
- A relative who claims disability benefits remains in the property.

The Local Authority has discretion, in certain circumstances, to disregard the value of the property. For example, if your long-term carer continues to live there, or if selling the house would cause hardship for someone who has been sharing your home on a permanent basis. In such circumstances, you will need to provide a written request for a disregard to be made and give the facts in support of your request. We will notify you in writing of the outcome of the Local Authority decision following legal advice. The Authority is entitled to register an interest in your property if necessary.

What happens if I have trouble selling my house?

If after the initial 12 weeks has expired you have not sold your property, the value of your home will be taken into account in your financial assessment.

The Social Services Finance Team will then obtain a valuation figure and use it to work out your charge as if it were an amount of savings available to you. If you are not able to pay the weekly amount due in respect of the property you will have the option to enter into a deferred payment arrangement.

Deferred Payment Arrrangements

This arrangement allows you to defer payment of your charges and allow them to accumulate as a debt (loan) until the sale of the house takes place. In return for a legal charge on the property, the Council will pay the agreed care costs. The Local Authority will place a legal charge or caution (a form of mortgage deed) on the house with the Land Registry, which means that the outstanding balance has to

be paid when the house is sold. This protects the amount of money owed to the Local Authority.

When the house is eventually sold, your solicitor should send details of the net proceeds of sale to the Income Team. The Income Maximisation Officer will then be able to ensure that the correct figure has been used in calculating the arrears that are due at that time.

There may be set-up costs associated with Deferred Payments. Please contact the Social Services Income Team for further information.

Who is eligible for a deferred payment arrangement?

Home owners moving permanently into residential / nursing care funded by the local authority who either;

- Do not wish to sell their home, OR
- Are unable to sell their home quickly enough to pay for their care.

and meet the following criteria:

- Have been assessed by Social Services as requiring residential or nursing care.
- Are eligible for funding from the Council.
- Have a beneficial interest in a property they have been living in which is worth enough to cover the period of the placement.
- Are unable to sell their home quickly enough to pay for their care.
- Pay a weekly contribution based on an assessment of income and assets.
- Agree to the terms and conditions of the deferred payment arrangement and sign the agreement.

How does the scheme work?

For the first 12 weeks their property is disregarded. After this time, in line with the terms of the agreement, the Council will place a legal charge on their property. In return the Council will pay the balance of care costs up to an agreed rate that would have been met from the sale of the property.

When does the money be repaid?

The money must be repaid either:

- When the property has been sold, OR
- When the agreement is terminated, OR
- Within 56 days of death.

What if I do not wish to have deferred payment agreement?

If you do not wish to enter into a deferred payment arrangement you will be charged the full cost of your placement. It is up to determine how you meet this cost.

What if I own a former Council house purchased under the “Right to Buy” scheme?

If the house which you own is a former council house purchased under the “Right to Buy” scheme and somebody else has helped you with the purchase, it may be possible to disregard the value (or proportion of its value). The person who helped with the purchase needs to provide acceptable evidence of their contribution. This is not an automatic disregard and each case will be dealt with on an individual basis. Evidence should, therefore, be submitted with your Financial Assessment Form and you will be notified of the outcome of the Social Services legal decision in writing.

What happens if I give away my home?

If a person gives away their home, savings or other assets before going into residential/nursing care or when already living there, we must investigate the circumstances in detail. We must also examine any sale of an asset at less than its true market value.



As a Local Authority we have a duty to protect public funds, we must look to see if a significant reason for the disposal was a desire to avoid paying for, or towards, residential/nursing care fees.

If we decide that a significant factor in the decision to give away, or sell an asset at less than its market value was to avoid paying fees or reduce the amount payable, the law allows us to take action. Depending upon the circumstances, we can either assess you as still owning the asset(s), or require the person to whom you gave the property to contribute towards your fees.

Any large gifts or transfers of ownership will be investigated and appropriate legal action taken to recover these sums.

What happens if I go into Residential Care and my partner stays at home?

The financial assessment is based only on your income and assets. You will also be assessed on your share of any jointly owned assets (except property if your partner remains at your home).

Nursing Care

What are Funded Nursing Care payments?

All residents in a nursing placement have their care assessed by a registered nurse, and a set amount is then paid for by the Local Health Board.

This amount will be paid directly to the nursing home by the Local Health Board. This will not affect the contribution from the resident unless they are paying the cost of their placement directly to the home and are paying the full cost. In such cases the resident should check their weekly fees have been reduced accordingly.

What happens if any of my circumstances change?

If your circumstances have changed and you require advice, please contact the Social Services Income Team. If necessary, a new Financial Assessment Form will be completed.



Changes include:

- Increase/decrease in income or capital.
- A property that was previously disregarded no longer falls within the disregard criteria, e.g. a relative aged 60 or over moves out.
- If you become eligible for Continuing Healthcare.

What happens if I am initially paying the full cost of my care (self-funding) and the capital I have falls below £50,000?

The Local Authority may now be able to pay for part of the cost of your placement. This, however, depends upon what income you receive from other sources, e.g. occupational pensions. You need to speak to the Social Services Income Team.

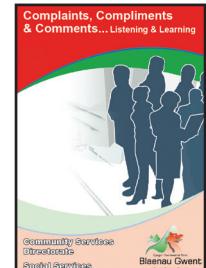
Social Services only become aware of changes of this nature if you advise us of them. You should contact C2BG about 3 months before you think your savings will reach this level and ask for a reassessment of your finances and care needs. The Local Authority will only provide funding from the date you contact them for help, therefore if your capital has already dropped below £50,000 prior to contacting the Local Authority you will not be reimbursed.

Reviews and Appeals

When a client has been assessed they are advised in writing of their charge. If a client is unhappy with the assessed charge a review should be requested within 10 days of receiving the written notification.

The review will be carried out by the Income Team Leader and will involve a re-calculation of the clients charge; the client will be notified of the outcome within 10 days from receipt of the request, this will give details of any change to the weekly assessed charge along with an explanation.

If after the review the client is still unhappy with their weekly assessed charge they should follow the Departments official complaint process.



How charges can be paid

Bills listing services that have been provided, their costs and the total amount payable will be sent out each month.

Payments can be made by:

- Direct Debit
- Cheque
- Standing Order
- Online Payment
- Credit Card or Debit Card* (by contacting C2BG - the Council's Contact Centre)
- Cash (by taking your invoice to any Post Office, Pay Point premises or the Civic Centre)

*Please note there is a small surcharge when making payment by credit/debit card.

In order that the charges for services are applied fairly, the County Borough Council will take appropriate action to collect unpaid charges from persons assessed as liable.

How a person can make sure they are claiming all their benefits to help pay for charges

The Welsh Government and Blaenau Gwent County Borough Council understand that having to pay for services is likely to be of great concern to people, even though the charges have been kept as low as possible. The calculation of what people will have to pay towards the cost of the services they receive takes account of their ability to pay.

There is a commitment from the Welsh Government and Social Services to anyone being charged for services, that help to claim all the Social Security benefits and pensions they are entitled to must be provided. This includes benefits that people may have missed out on in the past.

The Income Maximisation Officer will complete a benefit check when they complete the financial assessment. There is no charge for this service and it is available to everyone who receives a chargeable service from the Department.

What happens to the financial and personal information given?

Social Services will deal with all information with complete confidentiality.

The information will not be used for any purpose other than calculating the expected contribution towards the charges.

We may share information with other Departments within the Council, such as Housing Benefit and Council Tax to ensure that the information held is accurate.

Comments, Complaints and Compliments

We have a system set up to make sure your comments, complaints and compliments are taken notice of. Perhaps you want us to know how you feel about the service which has been offered to you, the way decisions have been made or the Financial Assessment process.

If so, you should talk to your Care Manager who has arranged the services for you. If you are not happy with the way they have responded to your comments, or you feel unable to discuss matters with them, then you should contact the Social Services Complaints Officer (see useful contacts section).

Please note that the rules on financial assessments, charges payable, and capital limits are subject to change. This information is current from 8th April 2019 - March 2020. To find out if any amendments have taken place since its publication you should speak to the Social Services Income Team (see the useful contacts section). You should be aware that these notes are intended as a guide only.

Useful Contacts

If you are considering going into a Residential or Nursing home, or act on behalf of someone in that situation and you would like advice, the following are useful contacts:

C2BG – initial referrals to Social Services:

C2BG (Connect to Blaenau Gwent)
The Contact Centre
Tel: (01495) 311556
Duty Referral Team
Tel: (01495) 315700



Social Services Income Team – who deal with benefits advice and financial assessments:

Resources Department
Anvil Court
Church Street
Abertillery
NP13 1DB
Tel: (01495) 355794

Social Services Complaints

Customer Services Officer
Anvil Court
Church Street
Abertillery
NP13 1DB
Tel: (01495) 357715

The Social Services Contracts Team - ensures contract documentation is completed by all relevant parties:

Commissioning & Contracting Team

Social Services
Anvil Court
Church Street
Abertillery
NP13 1DB
Tel: (01495) 356096

Disability Benefits Centre

Mail Handling Site A
Wolverhampton
WV98 2AD

Tel:
Disability Living Allowance 0800 121 4600
Attendance Allowance 0800 731 0122
Personal Independence Payment 0800 121 4433

The Welsh Government has produced a useful booklet called "Thinking About A Care Home - A Guide To What You Need To Know". Download a copy at www.wales.gov.uk/health or contact (029) 2082 3944.

The Pension Service - This is the part of the Department for Work and Pensions (formerly DHSS, DSS and Benefits Agency) that deals with claims and payments of benefits for people aged over 60 (see www.dwp.gov.uk).

Post Handling Site B
Wolverhampton
WV99 1AN
Telephone: 0800 731 0469

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

1 Ffordd yr Hen Gae
Pencoed
CF3 1BN
Telephone: (01656) 641150

Carer's Allowance Unit

Phone: 0800 731 0297
Textphone: 0800 731 0317 (for hearing or speech difficulties)
Lines are open between 9am and 5pm Monday to Thursday,
9am to 4.30pm on Fridays.
By email: cau.customer-services@dwp.gsi.gov.uk

Carer's Allowance Unit
Mail Handling Site A
Wolverhampton
WV98 2AD
Telephone: 0300 7900 126

Voluntary Organisations

Carers Wales

River House
Ynysbridge Court
Gwaelod y Garth
Cardiff
CF15 9SS
Telephone: (029) 2081 1370
www.carerswales.co.uk



Brynmawr Citizens Advice

107 - 110 Worcester Street
Brynmawr
Blaenau Gwent
NP23 4JP
Telephone (03444) 772020

Age Cymru - www.ageuk.org.uk
Telephone (08000) 223 444

To receive this information in Braille, large print, electronically or on audio tape please contact the Information Officer on (01495) 354630.

Leaflet BM08-5 April 2019
www.blaenau-gwent.gov.uk