

Dear Ms McMahon,

Sent on behalf of Councillor Iain McMillan, Convener of Renfrewshire Council's Social Work, Health and Well-being Policy Board.

Your consultation raises questions around the fairness and the consistency of the charging arrangements for social care services across the country, and whether such charges should be abolished.

Compliance with the national CoSLA guidance relating to the financial assessment process to determine affordability has sought to provide for consistency and fairness of approach. In this way, the amount charged takes cognisance of the ability to pay. Over the past 3 years or so there has been national work to look at those areas which can cause the most variation across local authorities, and this has looked at for example whether partner income is taken into account and more recently focussed on increasing the charging "buffer" from 16.5% to 25%. If implemented this would increase the amount which service users retain before any charges are levied.

In Renfrewshire, charging a combination of low flat rate charges (e.g for meals) and financially assessed charges e.g. for care at home, raises revenue of around £3m, which is used to help meet the rising cost of social care services. We have not increased our charges over recent years, in order to protect service users from additional financial pressures. The Council would support the proposed abolition of charges provided that the current and any future financial implications are fully funded by the Scottish Government. The demographic growth in demand for services is well documented, and services free at the point of access are likely to accelerate that growth. Therefore a budget allocation to the council which met current levels would build in ongoing annual cost pressures which would not be sustainable.

I hope this response is of assistance.

yours sincerely

Anne McMillan
Social Work, Head of Resources