

**By Email**

Mr John Taylor  
Director  
Healthwatch Worcestershire  
Civic Centre  
Persnore  
WR10 1PT

20<sup>th</sup> February 2023

Dear Mr Taylor,

Thank you for your letter dated 25<sup>th</sup> January. I hope the responses contained in this letter answers some of your concerns and respond to the issues raised. For ease I have taken each of you bullet points in turn.

1. Does the County Council's Charging Policy allow discretion to enable people who are making a contribution to their care costs to retain a level of income higher than the Government set minimum?
  - The Council's Charging policy, in line with statutory guidance, uses minimum income guarantee rates dependent on a person's age and circumstances. For those people receiving a Disability Benefit (Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance and Personal Independence Payment), we have a standard disability related expenditure allowance which sees an additional 20% of the relevant benefit disregarded. Individual DRE can be considered on application instead of this standard allowance, supported by relevant verification.
2. Can an individual apply to the County Council to have their individual care contribution reviewed and the level of their minimum income guarantee increased in the light of increases to their day to day living costs, rather than a substantial change to their financial circumstances?
  - Anyone can request a review of their financial assessment at any time. However, increase in cost of day to day living expenditure would not alter the amount they were contributing to care, these would include costs such as food, basic utilities etc. Changes in some housing costs, such mortgages, service charges, household

insurance or rent and Council Tax (where a person does not receive full benefit to cover these) could change the amount the person is asked to pay.

3. Can the County Council apply its discretion to enable a higher rate of income to be retained above the minimum income guarantee by all those who make a care contribution, rather than on a case by case basis?
  - The Council has to be fair and consistent to everyone when applying its charging policy. We cannot apply a discretionary increase to one person's minimum income guarantee, any discretionary increase would need to be applied in all cases.
4. If so does the County Council have any plans in place to consider utilising this discretion?
  - There are no current plans for the Council to change the level of minimum income guarantee it allows within its charging policy.

We do appreciate that like everyone our clients are feeling the impact of the current cost of living rises. State benefits have increased in line with inflation, likewise the government has increased the minimum income guarantee rates from April 2023, also in line with inflation. As you have mentioned in your letter the government has announced continued support to those households that are most vulnerable, via continued Cost of Living Payments throughout 2023.

Yours Sincerely



Charles Huntington  
Head of Finance Operational Services

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cc Paul Robinson  
cc Cllr Adrian Hardman  
cc Mark Fitton  
cc Kerry McCrossan  
cc Michael Hudson