

COUNCIL POLICY

Client Contributions and Fess Policy



POLICY TITLE:	Client Contributions and Fees Policy
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RESOLUTION NUMBER:	1510
POLICY TYPE:	Statutory
APPROVING OFFICER:	Council Adoption
DATE OF ADOPTION:	19 September 2017
TIME PERIOD OF REVIEW:	3 Years
DATE OF NEXT REVIEW:	19 September 2020
RESPONSIBLE DEPARTMENT:	Community Care
LINK TO CORPORATE PLAN:	Our Community - We will work with our community to provide an appealing lifestyle with the available resources to build a healthy, happy and caring community.

1. OBJECTIVE

This Policy sets out the Flinders Shire Council's intent for a principles-based approach in setting, implementing and reporting of client contributions for Flinders Shire Council Community Care Program services and in doing so meet its responsibility to the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) Client Contribution Framework (October 2015) and the Commonwealth Home Support Program Service Agreement.

To ensure that those who can afford to contribute to the cost of the services they receive do so whilst providing appropriate safeguards for those who are financially disadvantaged taking into account the approval criteria for that service.

To move towards the national approach of financial sustainability of the CHSP whilst creating fairness and consistency in the way in which new and existing persons contribute to the cost of their care.

2. SCOPE

This Policy relates to all persons approved to use Flinders Shire Council Community Care Programs and to all staff, volunteers and contractors who are involved in providing services on behalf of the Council.

3. DEFINITIONS

Client and Persons - The words 'client' and 'persons' are used interchangeably and refer to the person using the service.

Client Contribution - refers to the fee paid directly to Council by the person using the service.

Community Care Program - refers to services delivered by Council's Community Care Program to eligible residents (see 'Approved' clients / persons below).

CHSP - Commonwealth Home Support Programme

An unsubsidised service - relates to a client contribution that approximates the full cost of the service.

A subsidised service - relates to a reduced client contribution made possible by grant funding provided by the CHSP

Approved - clients/persons using services have been assessed as eligible for a Community Care Program based on the scope and guidelines specific to that service.

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Approved clients/persons using services include:

- People 65 years or over or 50 years or over if Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander eligible to receive a CHSP subsidy
- Persons seeking to complement their Home Care Package
- Other persons approved for a specific service as per the scope and guidelines of that service.

4. ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

Community Care Staff - are required to inform the client of the Client Contribution Policy and related fees applicable to the approved services as identified on the client support plan.

Community Care Manager - will provide management oversight over program deliverables as per relevant funding and service agreements, and ensure adequate processes are in place.

Finance Manager - will ensure efficient and effective administration of Client Contributions and any financial audits

5. PRINCIPLES

The Flinders Shire council is committed to supporting the following principles provided by the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) Client Contribution Framework (October 2015) as principles for its Community Care Program.

- **Consistency:** All clients who can afford to contribute to the cost of their care should do so. Client contributions should not exceed the actual cost of service provision.
- **Transparency:** Information regarding client contribution is publicly available given to, and explained to, all new and existing clients.
- **Hardship:** The Client Contribution arrangements will include those who are unable to pay the requested contribution.
- **Reporting:** Grant agreement and Council obligation will be adhered to by reporting the dollar amount collected from client contributions.
- **Fairness:** The Client Contribution arrangement will take into account the person's capacity to pay and should not exceed the actual cost to deliver the services. In administering this, the needs of partnered persons, persons in receipt of compensation payments and bundling of services will be taken into account.
- **Sustainability:** Revenue from client contributions will be used to support ongoing service delivery and expand the services currently funded to deliver.

6. POLICY

6.1. The Flinders Shire Council recognises its legislative and contractual obligations in relation to the setting, implementing and reporting of client contributions for services delivered by Council including the CHSP grant agreements or any other such relevant grant agreement that may become available into the future.

6.2. People with similar levels of income and service usage patterns and eligibility will be charged equivalent for equivalent services and will be taken into account in determining the structure for Client Contributions

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6.3. The schedule of fees will be based on criteria including (but not exclusive to) the actual cost of the service, consistency with neighbouring services, indexation rates. Fees will vary across services and remain affordable.

6.4. Client Contributions will cover all materials used in the delivery of the service not exceeding the cost of the service provision.

6.5. The Flinders Shire Council will endeavour to meet the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) Client Contribution Framework (October 2015) aim for total contributions collected be a minimum of 15% of Council's grant revenue for these services.

6.6. Client Contributions will be reviewed in accordance with the Flinders Shire Council Schedule of Fees and Charges review and be considered part of the Schedule.

6.7. Information regarding the Client Contribution Schedule and this Policy will be made readily available via the Flinders Shire Council Website, brochures and where required in different formats. Costs relating to services will be explained upon initial contact with the person requesting a service. Where larger or variable costs apply (such as contractor arrangements) information about costs or quotes will be supplied in writing.

6.8 Where clients are receiving multiple services concurrently, contributions will be bundled to ensure the cost of the combined activities is not prohibitive. Where more than one individual is a CHSP client they will not be asked to contribute separately.

6.9. Persons requesting a service will be asked whether the contribution will pose a difficulty for them. Inability to pay will not be used as a basis for refusing a service. However, unwillingness to pay may result in services being reduced or withdrawn, and no new or additional services will be provided until any outstanding debts are paid.

6.10. When necessary services will be prioritised to those in greatest need, having regard to the individual's comparative need for a service and not on the individual's capacity to pay.

6.11. Payment plans and options and fee waivers will be considered on a case by case basis and in full consultation with the person requesting the service and / or the preferred advocate. Regularly reviewed operational guidelines will provide administering staff criteria regarding other financial burden and special circumstances such as (but not be limited to) medical, health, essential services, cost of living, other service provider fees, outstanding debts, health status, memory loss, crisis or other diminished capacity. If, after all reasonable attempts to negotiate payment and a client's account remain outstanding, the matter will be referred to the Community Care Manager, Chief Executive Officer and Finance Manager for a review of services being provided. The client will be advised in writing that Flinders Shire Council will exercise its right to reduce or cease services to address any non-payment issues.

6.12. There may be occasions where a person requesting a service is not eligible for the grant subsidy available and it is deemed appropriate by administration to supply the service to that person if possible. This will be determined on a case by case basis and the person will be charged an unsubsidised contribution that approximates the full cost of the service. Circumstances where this applies may include where the service is purchased as part of a service package provided by another aged care or disability service provider, where the person has exceeded their subsidised allowance / package and seeks to pay privately or where compensation payments apply.

6.13 If a service is cancelled by the client with **less than 24 hours notice** or the client is not at home when the Flinders Shire Council staff member arrives, the client will incur a service cancellation charge equivalent to the client's usual fee, unless the reason for cancellation is due to circumstances beyond the client's control. E.g: medical emergency and/or hospitalisation.

6.14. The Flinders Shire Council will ensure efficient and effective administrative integrity of the implementation of the Client Contribution Framework.

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6.15. People receiving services will be encouraged to contact administering staff at any time if they experience difficulties with meeting the costs of services or are dissatisfied with Client Contribution arrangements. People receiving services and/or their advocates have the right to utilise the Flinders Shire Council Complaints process to appeal against a given Client Contribution arrangement.

7. RELATED LEGISLATION

- [Home Care Standards - Guidelines](#)
- [Commonwealth Home Support Programme Manual 2017](#)
- [Chapter 4 – Client contribution Framework](#)

8. RELATED DOCUMENTS (LOCAL LAWS, POLICIES, DELEGATIONS ETC)

- Flinders Shire Council Strategic Plan

9. REVIEW TRIGGER

This Policy will be reviewed every three years or upon significant change to grant funding agreements.

10. PRIVACY PROVISION

Council respects and protects people's privacy and collects, stores, uses and discloses personal information responsibly and transparently when delivering Council services and business.

11. APPROVAL

Adopted at the September 2017 Council Meeting - Resolution Number 1510.