

Consultation:

1. Consultation on the proposed changes to the policy took place between 19th January 2021 and 18th March 2021. A range of consultation exercises have been undertaken in respect of this proposal:
 - Gateshead Council Budget Consultation
 - 2 x VCS leaders ASC Budget Consultation sessions
 - Gateshead Health and Care System Consultation session
 - 2 x Public Teams Live sessions with people affected/their representatives
 - Email/paper form/phone line consultation with people affected/their representatives
2. There were 19 respondents to the Council wide budget consultation exercise in relation to the Client Income Review proposal.
3. A range of views were expressed. Some respondents were supportive of this proposal and the potential to reduce costs, with 2 agreeing and a further 5 supportive of a means tested approach which is already a key component of the financial assessment, and the principle that nobody is asked to pay more than they can afford.
4. Some expressed concerns that it may impact on the level of care provided and needs may not be fully met.
5. One detailed response raised a question of whether the policy is discriminatory for severely disabled adults who are unable to work and reference the recent Norfolk County Council case which is referred to in the Cabinet paper.
6. Two written responses were received from VCS partners, recognising that whilst no one will be asked to pay more than they can afford, concerns were raised that this could cause hardship for some and suggested that the right to have individual assessments should be widely publicised.
7. 70 responses were received in total from those clients/representatives who may be directly affected by the proposals, this includes people who attended the live consultation sessions, and written responses. Not all respondents commented, and some of these were queries around how this would affect them personally and some did not understand the letter.

Disagreed	45	64%
Agreed	13	19%
Not Applicable	12	17%

8. The majority of the comments received were in disagreement of the proposed changes, the most frequent being concerns around the most 'disadvantaged' and 'vulnerable' members of Gateshead being penalised to 'balance the Councils budget'.
9. Others disputed that offering individual assessments would likely cost the Council more in the long term.

10. There were concerns that removing the Disability Related Expenditure was going to put people into financial difficulty especially due to other costs of living increases including Council tax.
11. Of the people who agreed with the proposal there was a consensus that the allowance should be based on 'individual circumstances' however the Council should be 'open' and 'clear' that an individual assessment can be requested.