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4 March 2016

Dear Customer

Care Connect Consultation

The council has to make significant reductions in its spending and as part of these reductions we propose to save £750,000 from the Care Connect service from April 2016.

To meet this saving we propose to increase the charge you currently pay for the Care Connect service from £4.60 to £4.80 per week (excluding VAT) as part of the annual review of charges.

We are also proposing to introduce a contributory charge of £2.80 per week (excluding VAT) for those customers who signed up to the service prior to March 2014 and receive a free service as they are in receipt of a means tested benefit. This charge will be subject to the annual review of charges.

We would appreciate your comments on this consultation and how this proposed increase may impact on you. If you wish to comment, then please either email us at care.connect@durham.gov.uk or post your comments to the following address **by 30 November 2015**.

Care Connect
Chilton Industrial Estate
Chilton
County Durham DL17 0SD

Regards

Linda Ogilvie
Care Connect/CCTV Manager

Regeneration and Economic Development

Durham County Council, Care Connect, Chilton Industrial Estate, Chilton, Co. Durham DL17 0SD

Care Connect Consultation - Additional Information



7 October – 30 November 2015

Our proposed changes

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The Care Connect Service

Care Connect provides you with your pendant and intercom so that you can request help and assistance in an emergency and the service is available 24 hours a day, 365 days a year.

We offer this service to 16,300 households (around 20,000 customers). Currently some pay the full charge, some receive a free service and others pay a contribution to the cost.

- 9,750 households receive the service free as they receive means tested benefits and signed up for the service before April 2014.
- 4,750 households currently pay £4.60 per week (excluding VAT). This includes anyone who applied for the service from April 2014.
- 1,800 households receive a service which includes telecare such as a fall detector or a bed sensor. These customers have been assessed as needing the telecare equipment and have had a financial assessment carried out. Some of which receive this service free and others pay a small charge (£1.50 to a maximum of £4.50 per week).

Customers who applied for a Care Connect service after April 2014 pay the full charge, unless they have an assessed need these details are shown above. When last reviewed in December 2013, the council agreed to protect those customers already receiving a free service from the introduction of a charge for at least two years. This two year period ends on 31 March 2016.

Why we propose these changes to charges

We estimate that the council will have to spend £260 million less by 2020. We have already made reductions of £153 million and we have made these savings mainly by cutting non-frontline services, management and by making efficiency savings.

Between now and 2020, it is estimated that we have to save another £107 million or more. Trying to avoid impacts on our customers is becoming even more difficult and future savings will involve us making even harder decisions.

Across the council, all services have to consider savings. As part of the savings within our children and adults services, it is proposed to reduce this budget by £750,000 for the 2016/17 financial year.

Payments and VAT

Most of our customers are exempt from paying VAT as they have signed a self-declaration form which means VAT is not applied due to a medical condition or disability.

What happens next?

We are asking our customers to take part in this consultation and respond to us by 30 November 2015. We will then consider everybody's views and write a report for consideration by the council's Cabinet.

In February 2016, a decision will be made by the council's cabinet and we will write to you about what happens next.

If the decision is to go ahead with the increase in charges and the introduction of charges for those who currently receive a free service, then it is proposed that they will start from April 2016.