

Transport  
and your  
personal  
budget



## Transport and your personal budget

Cumbria County Council is making changes to the way people choose to use transport to access adult social care services in Cumbria.

This will affect you if you currently use council funded transport – such as private hire taxis, minibuses or volunteer driver scheme – to access a range of services such as day care centres, employment training opportunities, and respite centres.

Since November 2009, the council has provided individuals with a personal budget. This is an amount of money that the council pays towards the cost of your social care services. This has given people greater flexibility in choosing the services and support they want.

As of October 2011, Cumbria County Council transport services will be included in people's personal budgets.

## Why are these changes being made?

The current system excludes transport from the personal budget arrangement. Including transport in personal budgets will provide a fuller picture of the cost of all the social care related services provided for someone by the council. This will allow people to make a more informed choice about which services best meet their needs.

Users can consider a range of transport options which may make better use of their personal budget than the arrangements currently in place. The new approach will offer people more choice and control in relation to how they are supported and the role council funded transport plays as part of this.



At present, people who pay towards the costs of the services they receive via a means-tested financial assessment, are also asked to pay an additional flat rate payment for any transport. This is usually collected by the day centre and is not means-tested. As a result, some people may be paying a charge for transport which a means-test would show they should not be because they have a low level of income.

### How will the transport element of my personal budget be worked out?

Whenever you need the council to organise transport to access a service, a cost for this transport will be included within your support plan and your personal budget is used to pay for it in the same way that already happens for other services. Your personal budget is available to pay for the total cost of care services and transport.

Under the new system, transport will be included within personal budgets as a per journey cost calculated at £1.50 per mile. There will be a minimum cost of £3.00 (2 miles) per journey and a maximum cost of £22.50 (15 miles) per journey. This is similar to the way that, for example, taxi and bus companies calculate their fares.

### For example

Mrs Jennings attends a day centre 4.8 miles away from her home. She goes two days a week and uses council transport for the journey each way on both days.

The amount against her personal budget for the journeys is calculated as follows:

- £1.50 x 4.8 miles resulting in £7.20 each way for the journey.
- £7.20 x 2 gives a total of £14.40 for the complete return journey.
- As the journey is made twice per week, transport provision within Mrs Jennings' personal budget will be £28.80.



- Mrs Jennings will have the remainder of her personal budget available to her to provide for the support she needs. For example, to pay for day care or home care.
- The actual amount Mrs Jennings herself will be asked to pay will depend on the outcome of her financial assessment which looks at the cost of all the services in her personal budget and not just the transport. This is the approach that was already used to calculate the charge for other services such as day care.

### What does this mean for me?

By including council-funded transport provision into personal budgets, you will have more choice in how the funds available to you are spent to support you with your social care needs.

As a result of the change some people may want to review the services they access. This can be done by requesting a review of your support plan with your social worker. As part of this process the social worker will complete an assessment of your need for transport.

This assessment will ensure that all transport options are explored with you before any county council transport is booked. This will include looking into the potential of receiving the service more locally, achieving the outcome in a different way by choosing a different service, or by changing the way you make the journey, for example by walking, using your own vehicle or public transport, utilising mobility allowance, support from family or friends, etc.

If you are in receipt of other adult social care services provided by Cumbria County Council you will already have had a financial assessment to calculate your contribution to the services you receive. As transport provision will be included within your personal budget, you will no longer be asked to make a separate payment towards the cost of transport which means that the financial contributions people make will be fairer. The same level of council subsidy will be applied to transport and care services alike, so that you are only ever asked to contribute a maximum of 66.1% of the total cost of your services. This percentage is reviewed every year when the council sets its budget.

You will continue to pay the least of

- a) 66.1% of the total cost of your services (personal budget) (2011/12) or
- b) the maximum contribution set by the council, £270 per week (2011/12), or
- c) your maximum assessed weekly contribution (this is between nil and £270 per week depending on personal circumstances)

By making the financial contributions fairer, the majority of people will pay less towards the costs of their care and transport or see no difference, although some people will pay more.

During October, financial assessment officers will contact individuals whose contribution will increase as a result of this change to let them know how they will be affected.

If you currently pay a separate transport charge to your day centre this should cease from 24 October 2011. If you currently pay a combined transport and meal charge of £3.70 you will pay only a meal charge of £1.95 from 24 October 2011.

## When will it come into effect?

Transport provision will be included within your personal budget and the calculation of your contribution will take effect from 24 October 2011. The first statement of account showing the new calculations will arrive with you during the week beginning 28 November.

People whose financial charge will increase as a result of this change will be contacted directly between now and the new contributions coming into affect. People whose charge reduces will just see their bill reduced.

## How can I find out more?

If you need to talk to anyone about how these changes might affect you contact your social worker or financial assessment officer at your local adult social care office.



## Some questions you might have

**Q Will my transport change on the day this starts without me knowing?**

A No. The personal budget is your entitlement. Any changes in how you chose to spend your personal budget will be discussed and agreed with you as part of the existing review arrangements.

**Q What if I don't have any other services except transport.**

A Almost everyone has services funded by the council as well as transport. These are very often from another organisation but the council pays for them using a personal budget approach. We will contact you to arrange a personal budget if you do not already have one and are only receiving a transport service.

**Q If I use transport to a day centre, and then onward to another venue (such as education or employment) is this classed as two journeys?**

A No, this will be treated as one journey.

**Q Will my transport costs within my personal budget always be calculated based upon both the journey to and from the service?**

A No, transport costs are based upon single trips to enable greater flexibility for those with alternative means of transport for one end of the day.

**Q How much will I actually pay towards the cost of the transport I use?**

A From October, Cumbria County Council will stop setting separate transport charges and instead incorporate transport costs within individuals' personal budgets. Everyone who receives a personal budget to meet their social care needs also receives a financial assessment that determines how much they can afford to pay towards the cost of their care. Fairer Contributions is the system for working out how much someone is assessed to contribute towards the cost of their services.

**Q My current assessed contribution is £nil, but I currently pay for transport every time I attend a day centre. What will I pay in future?**

A. By bringing together care services and transport into a single financial assessment, you will continue to be assessed as paying nothing but will also benefit from no longer being asked to pay for a non means-tested transport charge. You will only be asked to pay £1.95 for each meal you receive while attending a day centre.

**Q I have received a financial assessment and already pay the maximum contribution towards the costs of my care. How will this change affect me?**

A. The total amount you will pay will be less. By combining services and transport together within your personal budget means that the contribution you will be asked to make will be determined from the financial assessment only and you will no longer be asked to pay for transport in addition to this.

**Q Will everyone pay less?**

A. No. Some people will pay more as a result of these changes; however the majority of people will pay less or experience no change. During October, everyone will have their own financial circumstances reviewed by a financial assessment officer who will contact those people whose contribution will increase as a result of this change and inform people exactly how they will be affected.

**Q My transport is arranged and provided by the same organisation that provides my day services. Will I be asked for a contribution towards the cost of this transport?**

A. Some day services organisations provide a package of day service and transport combined. Where this is the case you will not have to make an additional contribution for the transport element.

**Q Will these changes affect other transport services such as hospital transfers?**

A. No. This only affects council-funded transport that is delivered as part of an individual's social care support arrangements.

**Q I am usually accompanied by an escort when I travel. Will this become an additional cost against my personal budget?**

A. No, unless very specialised support is required which will have been commissioned and included in your support plan as a separate service.

**Q What happens if for whatever reason I cannot attend the service and will not use the transport?**

A. You should let your local office know as soon as possible. Where services are paid for by the council and not used by individuals, the cost of those services will be included in the calculation of your contribution where notice is not provided. Where services are cancelled with notice, the cost will not be included. This will apply to other services as well as transport.