

East Renfrewshire care charge proposals

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Mum's plea over East Renfrewshire care charge proposals

By Gillian McPherson

Reporter

A worried mum is pleading with councillors to take a stand against “inhumane and cruel” proposals which “target vulnerable people”.

Karen Gilligan is one of four mothers who have signed a letter condemning proposals to introduce fees for non-residential care in East Renfrewshire.

All four have children in their thirties with Down’s syndrome who will be impacted if the plans go ahead.

Fees were originally set to be introduced from July this year after the council’s cabinet backed a proposal to do so, but following a full council meeting in February, Labour and SNP councillors agreed to defer the charges until April 2026, with a review to take place this month.

Councillors in East Renfrewshire will now consider a report and update on the proposals by the chief officer of the Health and Social Care Partnership (HSCP) at a meeting of the full council at 5pm tomorrow (October 22).

Karen, whose daughter Claire also has autism and other health conditions including epilepsy, said: “Since October 2024 there has been an active campaign against this plan.

“We may be confused by the intense push to drive through this discriminatory and regressive policy by the council but what we are not confused about is that it is both inhumane and cruel to target vulnerable people who deserve the help of the council rather than to fight them to prove they have a right to a good life.

“Of the 515 individuals affected, 268 have a learning disability. These individuals often live on the lowest incomes, with limited ability to advocate for themselves.

“The chances of our children with Down’s syndrome having early onset dementia is also very high, so they’re going to need more care in the future rather than less.

“By us going along with this and agreeing to these cuts now, do you think when the need gets greater, they’re going to increase the care package? I don’t.”

Non-residential care includes ‘social supports’ like support to go shopping or preparing food; housework; travelling for things like college, work, social activities or appointments; day activities; and help communicating with others or help understanding information.

The HSCP report, published online last week, provides an updated equalities impact assessment including the views of people impacted by the policy.

Furthermore, it provides an analysis of the “income maximisation efforts made to support all potentially affected users” and an analysis of the amount of revenue expected to be generated and the taper level recommended.

The HSCP is recommending the introduction of a 60% taper rate, meaning those with disposable income above the Minimum Income Guarantee (MIG) set by the Scottish Government would be required to pay for a proportion of their care.

The MIG ensures people retain enough for daily living—£170 per week for under 60s, and £284 for over 60s.

According to the local authority, the proposals would “ensure charges were only applied to those who can afford to pay, following a detailed financial assessment”.

The financial assessment would determine how much disposable income a person has above the minimum income threshold.

This excess amount is known as their 'chargeable income'.

The taper would then be applied to the chargeable income to calculate how much the person will contribute towards the cost of their care.

If there is no chargeable income, the person will not be charged.

If approved, financial assessments will begin in November, with charging set to commence on April 1, 2026.

Introducing a 60% taper is projected to generate up to £1.6 million annually, which the council says will help to avoid more severe service reductions that could impact vulnerable residents.

Karen from Giffnock, however, has slammed the report's "inadequate financial analysis".

"The financial assessment is based on just 15 cases, representing less than 3% of those affected," added the 62-year-old.

"This small, unrepresentative sample renders any financial modelling or conclusions unreliable and insufficient."

"The proposals will also have a severe impact on disposable income. It is recommended that 60% of our children's (chargeable) income (that is benefit payments) is clawed back.

"Based on the financial modelling, individuals with learning disabilities not in employment may currently have £93 per week (in what would be classed as chargeable income).

“Under a 60% taper, they could be left with just £37 per week of this — a devastating cut that directly threatens their well-being.

“This proposal is ill-conceived, poorly evidenced, and unfairly punitive. It risks deepening inequality and causing real harm to those least able to bear the cost.

“We urge councillors to reject this paper and demand a full review grounded in robust data, lived experience, and genuine consultation.

“Do councillors want the introduction of regressive care charges on the most vulnerable residents in East Renfrewshire to be their legacy, just months before an election?”

In response to the concerns raised, a spokesperson for HSCP said that they understand that families feel strongly about the impact of this proposal, and that some have raised concerns that it may be discriminatory.

“That is not the intention,” they added.

“Any charges introduced will follow national guidance from COSLA (The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities) and are reviewed annually as part of the council’s budget process.

“East Renfrewshire HSCP is the last area in Scotland to introduce charging. Agreed and established national guidance exists which East Renfrewshire will fully adhere to.

“All of the people who may have a charge were invited to take part in financial assessments. These were voluntary and a small number of people came forward, which then informed our financial modelling. The financial modelling outcomes corroborated our original modelling.

“We have undertaken extensive engagement with our residents to ensure their thoughts and views are included clearly within our ERFIA (equality, fairness and rights impact assessment).

“It is important to note that any agreed policy will adhere to agreed national guidance/legislation

including the minimum income guarantee for all residents who may or may not be eligible to make a contribution towards the cost of their care.

“Financial assessments are focused on the ability to pay and take account of individual circumstances which will vary from person to person.”

Fears were also raised that members of the public would be barred from tomorrow’s meeting which will also see councillors asked to approve £1.9 million of additional funding to meet the cost of the new Eastwood Leisure Centre.

Due to renovations at the council’s Eastwood headquarters, council and committee meetings are being held at Eastwood House where there is no public gallery due to “limited space”.

Councillor Andrew Morrison pressed the council’s chief executive and senior officials on the matter and the local authority is now permitting limited seating in a small public gallery.

“The council’s position was that nobody would be admitted to any council meetings for as long as they are taking place in Eastwood House during the decant period,” explained Cllr Morrison.

“I am delighted that they have looked again and made an effort to facilitate attendance in-person.

“It has been said by campaigners that because many recipients of adult social care need more support to participate fully in society, their concerns can be easily disregarded or remain unseen.

“It is therefore very important that the people who will be potentially impacted, and their families and friends, are not ‘out of sight, out of mind’ when councillors consider this issue.”

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Re: East Renfrewshire care charge proposals

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Controversial East Renfrewshire care charges decision delayed

By Drew Sandelands

Local Democracy Reporter

A decision on the potential roll-out of controversial new social care charges in East Renfrewshire has been pushed back again.

The planned introduction of means-tested £20 per hour fees for non-residential care — which covers activities like help with shopping, housework or travel — has sparked opposition from families and carers, who are concerned about the impact on the elderly and disabled.

Councillors agreed to defer the charges, originally set to come into force in July this year, in February. They chose to revisit the plan this month ahead of a proposed roll-out in April next year.

At a meeting on Wednesday, October 22, East Renfrewshire Council voted to defer a decision on the proposal to charge for the services until December at the earliest.

They made the call as local government body COSLA is set to consider how funding for adult social care is allocated to councils. It could increase the amount of money available to some local authorities.

Council leader Owen O'Donnell, Labour, said deferring the decision would “allow officers to understand the implications of any changes to distribution and to brief members before any final decision is made”.

Over 1,000 people signed a petition calling for the plans to introduce charges to be dropped. People believe the proposal is “unfair” as it “will disproportionately affect the learning disability community”.

They also fear the move would put more pressure and stress on carers. Families have said it could lead to social isolation.

East Renfrewshire is currently the only council area in Scotland which doesn't charge for non-residential care services, councillors were told at Wednesday's meeting.

However, officials recognise the proposals are a "significant change" for residents. They proposed a 60% taper on the amount of a person's disposable income which can be spent on the fees.

It would bring in around £1.5m to help East Renfrewshire's health and social care partnership (HSCP), which officials say is facing a £9.2m funding gap in 2026/27.

It is believed 515 of 1,674 people currently receiving care from the HSCP would be eligible for the charges. Those with disposable income above a nationally set threshold would pay, and financial assessments would be carried out to determine how much chargeable income a person has.

The taper is applied to the chargeable income to calculate how much they pay. A council report estimates a 60% taper would see those affected pay around £55.97 per week.

Health and social care chiefs added anything less than £1.5m income from non-residential care charging will mean other savings options are needed.

However, at yesterday's meeting, an official revealed COSLA leaders will consider a paper on "proposals to amend the distribution methodology which determines the grant funding each council receives in relation to adult social care" at the end of this month.

These could "see the funding allocations for adult social care for some councils going up, some going down and some remaining broadly the same", she added.

"This is a very complex proposal, and at present I cannot confirm what the impact of this change will be for East Renfrewshire Council, but note that it could be significant."

Cllr O'Donnell put forward a Labour motion to defer a decision until the next full council meeting on December 10 at the earliest.

The Conservative group's amendment said the charges should not be considered for the remainder of the current Scottish Government administration to give "clarity and stability" to service users and their families.

Labour's motion passed by seven votes to five, with SNP members and Cllr David Macdonald, an independent, abstaining. It then went up against an SNP amendment.

The SNP group wanted to push back any decision until the council sets a budget in February or March next year, when the details of both UK and Scottish Government budgets will be known.

Conservative councillors backed the Labour motion, which passed by 11 votes to seven. Cllr O'Donnell said it was for the Integration Joint Board (IJB), which directs the HSCP, to set its own budget, which typically happens after the council sets its budget.

He acknowledged officials "may not have the full facts by December" and it was "entirely possible" the issue would be considered by the council at its budget meeting in February.

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