

## **RBG Charging Guidance Appendix 2: Disability Related Expenditure**

### **1. What is Disability Related Expenditure?**

Disability Related Expenditure, or 'DRE' is the term for additional regular expenses a person incurs in their daily life because of their disability or illness. People who receive a disability benefit and would be liable to pay towards the cost of their care, can have their charges reduced or fully exempted allow for these extra expenses under certain conditions.

### **2. Qualifying for DRE**

To qualify for a reduction of social care charges because of disability related expenditure, a person must:

- Use chargeable care & support services arranged by Royal Borough of Greenwich
- Be willing to have a financial assessment/ or already paying charges
- Be in receipt of disability benefits, for example Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance (Care Component) or Personal Independence Payment (Daily living Component)

Where someone does not currently get disability benefits that would qualify them for DRE, and appears to be eligible, the Financial Assessment Team will assist them to claim the benefit and complete the DRE assessment once the benefit is awarded.

### **3. Flat Rate exemption**

When determining how much a person can afford to pay towards their care costs in the Financial Assessment, we will make a standard minimum exemption for Disability Related Expenses of £10.00 per week for everyone who receives disability benefits, with a higher exemption of £15.30 per week for people on higher rate of disability benefits. A person would only need to make a claim for disability related expenditure and provide evidence if they believed they had disability-related costs over the weekly flat rate.

## **4. Application for DRE**

At Financial Assessment or a Review of Financial Assessment, people will be invited to apply for Disability Related Expenses. This requires completion of a short form. If the person requires assistance to complete the form the Financial Assessment Team can complete the DRE assessment on the phone or in person. The person can ask a friend or family member to help them. If an advocate is required, this will be arranged. If the person lacks Mental Capacity the person with legal responsibility for finances can complete this on their behalf.

People may apply for a review of their DRE at any time, for example where their expenses have changed due to a change in need or circumstances or they believe the previous DRE assessment did not take full account of their expenses.

## **5. Evidence and “grace period”**

Evidence of spending is not required for DRE exemption at the flat rate. Nor is it required for expenses over this amount in all cases. Where it is clear from the person’s assessed needs and support plan that the cost would be incurred this is not necessary.

For most items evidence should be submitted with the form (ideally scanned or photographed and emailed). Evidence can include invoices, bank statements, receipts and delivery notes. For ongoing weekly expenses, evidence of repeated spend will be needed.

However, the Council accepts that it may not always be possible to find appropriate evidence as people may not know this is required in advance of a financial assessment. Where expenses are reasonable and in line with the person’s assessed needs and living situation, but the person is not able to provide evidence of spend, they can sign a declaration of truth that they incur the expense and agree to provide the evidence within 3 months. The exemption will be made with a review in 3 months– if evidence is not then provided, the exemption will be amended.

## **6. Assessment of Disability related expenses**

An exemption/ reduction of charges will be agreed to take account of Disability Related Expenses provided the following conditions are met.

a) **The person has evidence that they buy the items or services**

The regularity may vary– the expense may be daily, weekly, monthly, or annual for example– and one-off costs can be included. DRE will be calculated as a weekly average for the purpose of reducing/ exempting from charges. Where there is a large one-off cost, depreciation costs may be included.

b) **There is a greater than average cost for everyday expenses**

Where the expense is something that a person without disabilities would need to purchase (such as heating, laundry, food, and transport), only the extra amount a person has to pay because of their disability will be considered DRE– for example heating costs over the average cost for the type of home, extra loads of laundry over the average amount per person each week.

c) **The expense is necessary given the person's level of need**

The DRE assessment will be made considering the person's care and support needs as outlined in their assessment and other evidence available. Where someone purchases items or services through personal choice rather than necessity, these will not be agreed as DRE. Where there is no clear evidence of need, the assessor may contact medical or social care professionals.

d) **The cost is reasonable for the type of expense**

The DRE assessor will allow for “reasonable” or average cost for items or services. For example, if a person needs a gluten free diet, the cost allowed would be based on a high-street supermarket rather than a specialist provider. If the person chooses to purchase their gluten free items from a specialist provider, this is a choice rather than necessity, so the higher cost would not be agreed.

e) **The expense is not already provided for in another way**

Where items or services are reasonably available free of charge or a nominal charge, extra costs will not be agreed as DRE. For example, where medicines, therapies or equipment are available from the NHS or Council we would not agree the cost of private purchase. We will take account of any mobility benefits and only agree additional transport costs above the amount received. Where an expense is a housing cost this will be dealt with under Housing Expenses in the Financial Assessment rather than DRE.

## 7. Allowable expenses

These will either relate to specialist items and services, or increased use / higher cost of non-specialised items and services. Items that will always be DRE are:

- Payment for any community alarm system,
- costs of any privately arranged care services required including respite care (meeting assessed needs), and
- the costs of any specialist items needed to meet the adult's disability.

Examples of what may be considered Disability Related Expenditure is provided below. **It is important to note that this list of examples is not exhaustive and other kinds of expense may be eligible.**

- Need for special washing powders or costs of extra laundry;
- Additional costs of dietary needs due to illness or disability (special foods required or home delivery costs for example)
- Special clothing or footwear, for example, where this needs to be specially made; or additional wear and tear caused by disability;
- Additional costs of bedding, for example, because of incontinence or extra wear and tear due to disability or illness;
- Prescription costs, or continence supplies where suitable NHS provision is not available.
- Heating or electricity costs, or metered costs of water, above the average levels for the area and housing type, occasioned by age, medical condition or disability;
- Costs of basic garden maintenance, cleaning, or domestic help, if necessitated by the individual's disability and not met by social services
- Purchase and maintenance of disability-related equipment, including for the purposes of work; this may include IT equipment, where necessitated by the disability. Reasonable hire costs of equipment may be included, if due to waiting for supply of equipment from the Council or NHS.

- Personal assistance costs, including extra costs for them to go with you to activities or appointments, any household or other necessary costs arising for the person (such as gloves, aprons and wipes for PAs to use).
- Internet access where extra costs are needed as a result of disability.
- Transport costs necessitated by illness or disability, including costs of transport to day centres, over and above the mobility component of DLA or PIP, if in payment and available for these costs.