

**NEWS RELEASE**

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**DOUBLE WHAMMY TO HIT OLDER PEOPLE AND THEIR CARERS: HIGHER CARE CHARGING AS WELL AS TIGHTER ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA**

Even before the outcome of October's Comprehensive Spending Review, Counsel and Care, the national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support, predicts a double whammy will hit older people and their carers, with some councils already increasing charging for home care as well as tightening their eligibility criteria for access to services.

Counsel and Care today (20 September) publishes the results of a national survey showing how councils' care budgets are under extreme financial pressure. Over half of councils surveyed confirmed that they would be carrying out budget cuts in social care or a reduction in the range of services available.

Six of the councils surveyed openly stated that they are considering increases to home care charging. A further four are known to be already consulting on raising charges.

Of the councils surveyed, the highest hourly rate charged now sits at £19.70 an hour. Currently 20 councils charge more than £14 an hour, with 12 charging more than £15 an hour for essential home care.

In particular, two councils are currently consulting on removing or increasing the maximum weekly charging level that they had previously set for home care per week. This is despite the highest rate now reaching £454.78 per week.

Stephen Burke, Chief Executive, Counsel and Care, said:

“Counsel and Care is extremely concerned about the knock-on effects such increases in charges will have on the quality of life for older people and their carers. If these short-sighted plans are put into action, the impact will be felt first by the most vulnerable, who will have to go without vital care and support and then on acute health services as people are forced to reach crisis point before they get help.

“This is not the only choice for local councils. We are aware of councils who are extending their eligibility criteria to support older people with low and moderate needs.

“Such short-sighted cuts will cost the public purse more in the long run. We acknowledge the pressures that local authorities are under, but call on councils to protect vital frontline services for older people and their carers. This worsening postcode lottery highlights the need for urgent reform to create a fair, simple and sustainable care system for older people and their families and carers.”

**-ENDS-**

## **NOTES TO EDITORS**

1. Counsel and Care surveyed 56 local authorities across the country during August 2010. The results provide a snapshot of charging policies and eligibility for services during this period.

2. Counsel and Care is a national charity working with older people, their families and carers to get the best care and support. Advice on issues affecting older people and carers can be obtained by calling 0845 300 7585 or emailing [advice@counselandcare.org.uk](mailto:advice@counselandcare.org.uk)
3. Counsel and Care's Advice Service opening hours are 10am-4pm Monday-Friday except Wednesday afternoons.
4. More information about Counsel and Care can be obtained from [www.counselandcare.org.uk](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk)