



POLICY

Contributions and Fees

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Policy Version

2.0

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PURPOSE

To establish guidelines and procedures to ensure an equitable approach to determining client contributions for the Commonwealth Home Support Programme (CHSP) funded programs and services that will also align with the National CHSP Client Contribution Framework and also safeguard clients by maintaining fees to a minimum that is consistent with the level of services they receive.

SCOPE

This policy applies to:

- a) JCS staff for the purpose of determining or reviewing the applicable fee for new and existing Home & Community Support clients;
- b) All JCS clients and/or their carers currently in receipt of JCS Home & Community Support services;

External advocates, case managers, agencies and service providers for the purpose of advising a client in receipt of JCS Home & Community Support services.

DEFINITIONS

Advocate A person who represents and works with an individual or group of people who may need support and encouragement to exercise their rights, in order to ensure that their rights are upheld

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Carer A person who, through family relationship or friendship, looks after a frail older person or someone with a disability or chronic illness. Carers look after these people in the community or in their own homes (DoHA, 2006)

CHSP Home and Community Care Program

Client An individual, also known as a *consumer*, *service user* or *care recipient*, who is in receipt of an JCS CHSP service

POLICY

In setting and collecting client fees, JCS adopts the Principles outlined in the CHSP Client Contribution Framework to ensure a fair and equitable approach to user charging in the CHSP Program.

This policy takes account of both the level of income and amount of services used by JCS in considering the user's capacity to pay. In doing so, the policy acknowledges that the majority of JCS clients are dependent upon some form of pension or benefit for income support.

GUIDELINES

- a. All clients assessed and eligible to receive JCS Home & Community Support services will be required to make a contribution towards the cost of the services they receive. Assessment of a person's capacity to pay will be made as simple and unobtrusive as possible with due regard for the individuals privacy;
- b. Fees will be charged in accordance with the client's assessed level of income and capacity to pay. Clients will be informed of the contribution rate applicable to them at the time of initial assessment, review or service variation. Where a couple receive a service they will not be separately charged. Requests to waive a client contribution will be considered in accordance with this policy;
- c. The Home & Community Support service will not commence until the Income Self-Declaration Form is completed, unless approved by the Coordinator, or General Manager;
- d. Where a client has been assessed as not having the capacity to pay the determined fee, the rate may be reviewed in accordance with this policy;
- e. Inability to pay cannot be used as a basis for refusing or withdrawing a service to those clients who are assessed as requiring a service. However, unwillingness to pay may result in services being reduced or withdrawn, and no new or additional services will be provided until any outstanding debts are paid;
- f. Clients with high and/ or multiple service needs will not be charged more than a specified maximum amount of fees in a given period, irrespective of amounts of services used. Where clients receive multiple services (Bundling), client contribution and fees will be capped in accordance with the amounts set out in the Client Contribution and Fee Schedule;

- g. Clients may require or elect to have an advocate during any discussion on income and/or contribution or review, and have the right of appeal against a given contribution determination; and
- h. Client contributions and fees will be reviewed annually, or in accordance with the CHSP Client Contribution Framework. Where an increase is to be applied to a service, clients will be notified in writing including their rights to have their individual contribution rates reviewed.

Income and Client Contribution & Fee Assessment

- i. At the time of the initial assessment or review, all clients will be provided with a copy of the **Information about Client Contributions & Fees document**;
- ii. At the time of the client initial assessment or review, the Coordinator, Home & Community Support will ensure that the client is receiving all financial assistance available to them (e.g. rent assistance, Health Care Card concession on utilities, carer's allowance etc);
- iii. Clients are to be encouraged to raise any difficulties they have in paying their contribution and to advise JCS as soon as practical of any significant changes in their financial circumstances which may affect their income assessment or resulting level of fees;
- iv. All clients will be required to complete an Income Self-Declaration Form at the time of initial client assessment to determine the appropriate client fee to be charged for the Home & Community Support service;
- v. Where a client is living alone, or in a household of unrelated people living together, or is living with a family member (other than a spouse or partner) or carer (who is not a CHSP client), the client's income is assessed;
- vi. Where one member of a couple living together is the client, or a couple are both clients, the couple's combined income is assessed;
- vii. Clients assessed on higher incomes are eligible for CHSP services subject to availability and demand, and contributions charged appropriate to the income level of the individual; and
- viii. Where a client has received a lump sum or other compensation payment intended to cover the cost of community care, the client contribution will be set at the full cost recovery rate.

Client Review of Contributions & Fees

- i. Client fees may be reviewed at the request of a client or initiated by JCS either as part of the initial client assessment or at anytime the client's service requirements or their financial situation changes. Clients will be required to complete the Income Self-Declaration Form and provide supporting information;

- ii. If a client declines to complete any element of the Income Self-Declaration Form or provide relevant supporting information they are to be informed that a contribution review will not be conducted and the client will be required to continue paying the originally assessed contribution rate;

The following documents will be required to facilitate a fee review:

- the client's Income Self-Declaration Form and
 - all relevant supporting information, and
- iii. Where a client who is receiving all relevant assistance would still experience financial hardship in paying the assessed fee, the Coordinator, Home & Community Support will negotiate with the client to determine what the client can contribute. The Coordinator, Home & Community Support will discuss with the General Manager and seek approval for a reduced rate; and
 - iv. A fee reduction may be approved for a set period of time or for the duration of the service to be provided. The reduction, if approved, would start from the date the client request was received. All approvals for long term contribution fee reductions will be reviewed annually as part of the client annual review.

Client Contribution & Fee Schedule

- i. The Client Fee Schedule will be reviewed annually in accordance with this policy. The client fees will reflect the level of funding required to meet the expected level of service to be delivered in the following year based on an assessment of:
 - the amount of CHSP funding to be received,
 - the expected amount of indexation to be received,
 - the expected amount of client contributions to be received (per service by client income level),
 - the total cost of each service that is provided (total costs to include direct staff costs, operating costs and allocated administrative overhead costs), and
 - any gap between total funding expected to be received and the cost of service delivery.
- ii. Following the annual review of the Client Contribution & Fee Schedule and a general rate increase is applied; the same percentage increase is to be applied to clients with reduced contribution rates.

Collection of Client Contributions Fees & Cancellation of Service

- i. Clients will be charged on the basis of service times recorded on staff and volunteer timesheets and confirmed by the client signing for the service provided.
- ii. Transport client fees will be invoiced monthly for each individual one-way or return trip provided.
- iii. JCS will issue monthly accounts detailing the client charges including the types and quantity of services provided in the previous month. Accounts are due and payable by the date specified on the account.
- iv. If a service is cancelled by the client **less than 24 hours** of service or the client is not at home when the JCS staff member arrives, the client will incur a service cancellation charge equivalent to the client's usual fee, unless the reason for cancellation is due to circumstances beyond the control of the client due to hospitalisation or medical emergency.
- v. If a client is in arrears without prior arrangements, the Coordinator or General Manager will implement measures to recover outstanding monies by working with the client or their carer, advocate or other individuals or agencies to determine a suitable arrangement.
- vi. If, after all reasonable attempts to negotiate payment and a client still has not paid their outstanding account, the matter will be referred to the General Manager and Board of Management for a review of services being provided to the client. The client will be advised in writing that JCS will exercise its right to reduce or cease services to address any non-payment issues. The advice will specify the hours of service that will be reduced if there is no effort made to pay or substantially reduce the debt.

Appeals and Complaints

Clients, or their nominated advocates, have a right of appeal if they are unhappy with any aspect of their income assessment, fee setting or review, or any dispute over outstanding payments. All clients will be advised of this right and the process of appeal under the JCS Compliments, Suggestions, Complaints & Feedback Policy at the time of assessment and subsequent reviews. If there is still no satisfactory resolution after an internal review, the client will be encouraged to refer their complaint via the **Aged Care Complaints Commissioner on 1800 550 552**. No client will be disadvantaged or penalised as a result of lodging an appeal.

RELATED DOCUMENTS & ATTACHMENTS

Related Legislation/Acts

- [Aged Care Act 1997](#)
- [Aged Care Complaints Commissioner](#)
- [Commonwealth Home Support Program Manual 2015](#)
- [National Guide to the CHSP Client Contribution Framework](#)
- [Charter of Rights & Responsibilities for Home Care \(Department of Social Services\)](#)

Related JCS Policies/Documents/Forms

- Advocacy Policy
- Client Cancellations & Non Attendance Policy
- Client Contributions & Fees Schedule – CHSP Funded Services
- Compliments, Suggestions, Complaints & Feedback Policy (JCS)
- Outstanding Monies & Debt Collection Policy
- Withdrawal of Service Policy

Related Standards

[Home Care Standards 2011](#)

- 2.1 Service Access
- 3.1 Information Provision
- 3.3 Complaints and Service User Feedback
- 3.4 Advocacy