

East Lothian Council

FOI Ref: 2018/116(13230)

Research shows that the everyday cost of having a disability can be substantial, relative to the cost a non-disabled person would otherwise have to spend in order to meet their physical and social needs. Much of the additional cost arises from how disabled people lead their lives, which is not well recognised by the benefits system. Understanding the true cost of living with a disability is critical for any social support system to ensure that people do not have to live in undue hardship.

With this in mind:

1. If a person can evidence disability related expenses, do you pay these / subtract them from a person's care charges?

East Lothian Council (ELC) does not routinely do this at present although our charging policy is under review.

2. Do you have a definitive list of what constitutes disability related expenses?

Not at present although this is under review.

3. If yes to 2 above, please supply the list.

N/A

4. If no to 2 above, can you give examples of what you would consider as disability related expenses, based on what you have paid for in the past.

Currently, if a client considers charges are placing themselves in hardship and have DRE we invite them to write to us to review their charges and we consider each case individually.

5. Please say if you would pay for any of the following as disability related expenses to enable disabled people to reach a minimal acceptable standard of living:

- Technological equipment, software and IT training (eg. laptop, mobile phone, screen reader software, etc.) to enable communication, facilitate access to written materials, make the best use of a person's sight, etc;**

Potentially yes, subject to an SDS Assessment and application of eligibility criteria.

East Lothian Council

FOI Ref: 2018/116(13230)

- ***Domestic help, eg. regular help with cleaning, dealing with particular jobs;***

Again, this would be considered subject to SDS Assessment as above.

- ***Additional travel costs, eg. taxi journeys to medical appointments, visits to dispersed social networks;***

Again, this would be considered subject to SDS Assessment as above.

- ***Additional costs of socialising and going on holiday, eg. companion's travel costs (without whom a holiday would be impossible), using a hotel rather than self-catering accommodation, etc;***

Again, this would be considered subject to SDS Assessment as above.

- ***Additional cost of household goods, eg. better lighting, floor coverings, paying someone to help with home maintenance, etc;***

We would support people to access Scottish Welfare Fund for furnishings etc.

- ***Additional health care costs, eg. increase in the number of prescriptions, purchase of sanitary/hygiene items, etc;***

No, information will be held by Health.

- ***Utilities, eg. additional cost of electricity to run technological equipment, additional lighting, etc;***

No, unless considered under discretion re: DRE.

- ***Specialist support, eg. sign language interpreters, which is not always considered a 'reasonable adjustment' to providing services;***

We do pay for specialist interpreter services especially during the assessment process and interviews.

- ***Social activities, eg. to combat the risk of social isolation;***

Yes, we fund a range of services including community based activities and day services.

East Lothian Council

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- ***Anything else?***

N/A

Finally, it may help to explain that Freedom of Information legislation only applies to information which is held or recorded by a public authority. It does not apply to views, opinions, intentions or questions which simply require a yes/no answer. In view of this, some of the questions asked are not technically valid for the purposes of this legislation as they are not requests for specific recorded information that ELC may or may not hold.

In order to assist you, however, colleagues have addressed the questions posed to the best of their knowledge. For future reference, a link to the "Tips for Requesters" page of the Scottish Information Commissioner's website has been provided which you may find useful:

<http://www.itspublicknowledge.info/YourRights/Tipsforrequesters.aspx>