

**South Ayrshire Council**

**Report by Director of South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership  
to Cabinet  
of 26<sup>th</sup> of May 2026**

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**Subject: South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership –  
Social Care Charges Increases 2026-27**

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**1. Purpose**

- 1.1 The purpose of this report is to present the proposed social care charges increases for the financial year 2026-27 for approval.

**2. Recommendation**

**2.1 It is recommended that the Cabinet:**

- 2.1.1 Approve the increase in proposed social care charges for 2026-27.**

**3. Background**

- 3.1 Since the introduction of Community Care and Health (Scotland) Act 2002, local authorities are able to charge for non-residential social care support with the exception of personal care. The Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (COSLA) produce annual guidance which defines a set of principles to underpin the development of local charging policies for social care support for people at home. It is managed by the COSLA Charging Guidance Working Group and any change to guidance requires approval by the political leadership of COSLA.
- 3.2 Charges are an important source of Council income and all income from social care service charges are reinvested through funding the Health and Social Care Partnership in order to maintain and develop services and in so doing are a means to help the Council deliver services within available resources.
- 3.3 South Ayrshire Council charges are set in line with statutory requirements and National Guidance and are subject to approval by elected members.

**4. Detail**

- 4.1 The proposed rates have been shared and reviewed with South Ayrshire IJB's budget working, who have recommended the proposed rates for approval.

- 4.2 Meals at Home are commissioned from an external provider, the current cost of a hot meal is £8.33 delivered to the service user's home. The current charge is £5.64 per meal; therefore, the meal is subsidised by £2.69 (32%) per meal.
- 4.3 Last year's Social Care Charging Proposals approved removing the subsidy over a three-year period, 2026-27 represents the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of the three-year period. The proposal is to increase meals at home by 21% to £6.85 per meal.
- 4.4 Community Alarms are charged as a flat rate per week and not means tested, the current charge is £5.10 per week. Community Alarms are now digital, following the transfer from analogue to digital over the last couple of years.
- 4.5 The cost of providing a community alarm including the responder service is £11.76 per alarm per week. An increase of 5% is proposed for 2026-27 to increase the charge to £5.35 per week.
- 4.6 Community Care (Non-Personal Care) is provided to individuals to support them with preparing food, shopping, accessing the community and socialising. The charge for non-personal care is means tested and a financial contribution is based on [COSLA non-residential charging financial assessment guidance](#). The cost of purchasing this service from providers is £24.44 per hour. An increase of 5% is proposed for 2026-27 to increase the charge from £14.39 per hour to £15.15 per hour.
- 4.7 South Ayrshire Council Finance Team manage Corporate Appointees/Access to Funds for service users who lack capacity to act and make financial decisions for themselves. The service provided includes all aspects of financial management, payment of utilities, rent, council tax, insurance as well as day to day living expenses and budget management in conjunction with the Care Manager. A weekly charge for these services was implemented last year.
- 4.8 It is proposed to increase the Corporate Appointee charge by 5%. For community-based services this will be an increase from £8.00 to £8.40 per week and for care home-based residents an increase from £3.00 to £3.15 per week. No charge will be made for the first 8 weeks from commencement of Appointee ship. This will allow a sufficient period to identify and budget income and expenditure on behalf of the individual.
- 4.9 Maximum Weekly Charge is the maximum a service user can be charged to contribute to their social care services. This is currently £102 per week the proposal is to increase this by 3% to £105 per week. Currently one service user pays the maximum weekly charge.
- 4.10 The Council operates two residential care homes, South Lodge in Ayr and Hillcrest in Girvan. It is proposed to increase the weekly charge to the National Care Home Contract (NCHC) for residential care, set at £930.45 per week for 2026-27 an increase of 14% from the current charge of £815.13 per week. The average weekly cost of a council care home placement is £1,254.80.
- 4.11 The increase to the council-run residential care nursing homes represents a 14% increase. This reflects the historically lower base rate compared to the NCHC, as previous years increases only matched then NCHC uplifts. To ensure equity and fairness with service users living in private care homes, who are charged the NCHC rate, it is proposed to align the council rate with the NCHC rate.

- 4.12 The contribution a person makes to their care home fees is determined by a financial assessment following the Scottish Government's [Charging for Residential Accommodation Guidance](#) rules. The financial assessment takes account of income and capital a person has and applies specific disregards as defined in the guidance. This guidance is applied to all residents of care homes and ensures fairness and equality in determining contribution to residential care home fees.
- 4.13 Where respite in a care home is required for the persons care needs and not for carers respite there is a weekly charge that is not means tested and based on Department for Work and Pensions benefits for employment support allowance, disability premium less personal expenses allowance.
- 4.14 Where respite is provided to give a carer a break from their caring duties. The charge for respite is waived.
- 4.15 Appendix one provides a summary of the proposed increases for approval.

## **5. Legal and Procurement Implications**

- 5.1 There are no legal implications arising from this report.
- 5.2 There are no procurement implications arising from this report.

## **6. Financial Implications**

- 6.1 The proposals in this report will provide £0.115m of additional funding to assist the HSCP in balancing the budget for 2026-27 and ensure sustainability of service delivery.

## **7. Human Resources Implications**

- 7.1 There are no human resource implications.

## **8. Risk**

### ***8.1 Risk Implications of Adopting the Recommendations***

- 8.1.1 There is a risk that service users may stop using services due to an inability to pay, this risk will be mitigated by ensuring service users benefits are maximised and they are in receipt of all benefits they are entitled to.

### ***8.2 Risk Implications of Rejecting the Recommendations***

***Insert one of the following statements:***

- 8.2.1 Rejection of the recommendations will increase the financial burden to the Health and Social Care Partnership.

## **9. Integrated Impact Assessment (incorporating Equalities)**

- 9.1 An Integrated Impact Assessment has been carried out on the proposals contained in this report, which identifies potential negative impacts. The IIA Summary Report is attached as Appendix 2 which includes information on any mitigating or follow-up action required.

A copy of the fully completed IIA can be accessed at [x IIA - HSCP SOCIAL CARE CHARGING INCREASES PROPOSAL 2026-27.xlsm](#)

## 10. Sustainable Development Implications

- 10.1 **Considering Strategic Environmental Assessment (SEA)** - This report does not propose or seek approval for a plan, policy, programme or strategy or document otherwise described which could be considered to constitute a plan, programme, policy or strategy.

## 11. Options Appraisal

- 11.1 An options appraisal has not been carried out in relation to the subject matter of this report.

The proposals are annual increases to charges. The proposals are in line with COSLA Non-Residential Charging Guidance.

## 12. Link to Council Plan

- 12.1 The matters referred to in this report contribute to Priority 4 of the Council Plan: Efficient and effective enabling services and the report aligns with the IJB Strategic Priority “We are an ambitious and effective partnership”.

## 13. Link to Shaping Our Future Council Yes No

- 13.1 Increasing of charges will contribute to £0.115m of funding to Health and Social Care Partnerships budget, this contribution will help sustain delivery of social care provision in day care, community alarms, non-personal care and provision of meals services.

## 14. Results of Consultation

- 14.1 There has been public consultation on the Council’s Budget for 2026-27 this gathered input on financial priorities, service charges and potential cost-saving measures.

- 14.2 Feedback on fees and charges showed a strong preference for flexibility in fees and charges. Nearly half (48%) selected a ‘varying rates’ approach (between 2.5% and 10%), compared with 30% favouring a flat 2.5% increase and 22% favouring a flat 5% increase. This suggests a preference for differentiated fees, not uniform uplifts.

- 14.3 Consultation has taken place with Councillor Hugh Hunter, Portfolio Lead for Health and Social Care Partnership, and IJB Budget Working Group includes all SAC voting members. The contents of this report reflect any feedback provided.

## 15. Next Steps for Decision Tracking

- 15.1 If the recommendations above are approved by Members, the Director of South Ayrshire Health and Social Care Partnership will ensure that all necessary steps are taken to ensure full implementation of the decision within the following timescales, with the completion status reported to the Cabinet in the 'Council and Cabinet Decision Log' at each of its meetings until such time as the decision is fully implemented:

<b><i>Implementation</i></b>	<b><i>Due date</i></b>	<b><i>Managed by</i></b>
Increase in Charges	June 2026	Service Lead - Revenue and Benefits

**Background Papers**    **None**

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**Date:**    **8<sup>th</sup> April 2026**