



Subject:	Motion: Care Home and Top Up Fees – Response from Minister of Health
Date:	19th August, 2022
Reporting Officer:	John Walsh, Chief Executive
Contact Officer:	Jim Hanna, Senior Democratic Services Officer

Restricted Reports	
Is this report restricted?	Yes <input type="checkbox"/> No <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
If Yes, when will the report become unrestricted?	
After Committee Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
After Council Decision	<input type="checkbox"/>
Sometime in the future	<input type="checkbox"/>
Never	<input type="checkbox"/>

Call-in	
Is the decision eligible for Call-in?	Yes <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No <input type="checkbox"/>

1.0	Purpose of Report or Summary of Main Issues
1.1	To consider a response from the Minister of Health to a motion on Care Home and Top Up Fees which was passed by the Standards and Business Committee at its meeting on 28th June.
2.0	Recommendation
2.1	The Committee is requested to consider the response and take such action thereon as may be determined.
3.0	Main Report
	<u>Key Issues</u>
3.1	The Standards and Business Committee, at its meeting on 28th June, in considering a report in relation to motions which had been received in advance of the Council meeting on 4th

July, adopted the following motion which had been proposed by Councillor Heading and seconded by Councillor Lyons:

Care Home and Top Up Fees

“This Council notes that Residential Care of Older People is a statutory function of the Department of Health and delivered through a number of private Care Home companies. The Council also notes that costs for standard care is paid from the budget of the Department of Health. Placement in a care home can be means tested and affecting savings and property owned by the resident. There are some cases where top up fees are introduced and paid for by either the resident and or family and introduces a second level of care based which profits the residential care home company. Furthermore, these top fees vary from care home and company to company and is not always reflected in the level of care or the wages of staff employed in care homes. The care of our older people is important to society and accordingly this Council calls upon the Department of Health to investigate the top up costs charged by care homes.”

3.2 A response to the motion has now been received from the Minister of Health, a copy of which is attached.

3.3 The Minister begins by pointing out that the policy on charging top-up fees, or third party charges, is detailed in Departmental guidance ECCU 1/2010 ‘Care Management, Provision of Services and Charging Guidance’ (<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/dhssps/hsc-eccu-1-2010.pdf>)

This guidance states that Health and Social Care Trusts must contract for placements at the most competitive rate available, which it considers suitable for meeting an individual’s assessed need, even where this is not obtainable at the regional rate. Where a Trust has contracted at that rate there is no top-up.

3.4 He explains that, should a service user select accommodation which is more expensive than other appropriate accommodation which the Health and Social Care Trust can secure at a lower rate, an example of which is provided, the Trust will facilitate that choice. However, the additional cost must be met by a third party such as a family member or friend, which is referred to as a top-up.

3.5	The Minister goes on to state that, whilst the aim should always be to facilitate choice for service users, Trusts have a parallel responsibility to secure the best value for money option and to protect the public funds for which they are accountable.
3.6	<p>He concludes by stating that these additional charges (top-ups) relate to the cost of accommodation provided by independent care providers and are set by them at a level which they deem appropriate to reflect market prices. As such, it is not appropriate for his Department to investigate the level of these charges.</p> <p><u>Financial and Resource Implications</u></p> <p>None.</p> <p><u>Equality or Good Relations Implications/Rural Needs Assessment</u></p> <p>None associated with this report.</p>
4.0	Document Attached
	Response from Minister of Health