

Independent Care Matters

the newsletter for independent care providers in York
and North Yorkshire

Top ups for care homes— how does it work?



Top ups is a subject shrouded in mystery—but there is general agreement among care home providers that top ups would not be needed if local authorities paid the true cost of care.

Top ups are a contribution paid to care homes by relatives. They are agreed through the local authority. Some care homes ask for them as a matter of course while others have persevered over months in order to get

the Council to agree and some say that they are actively discouraged from charging them by some Council officers telling them they will stop making referrals.

What is the true situation?

City of York Council says 'we are agreeable to top ups on placements where the home of choice is more expensive than that we would normally meet'. **NYCC** says 'It has long been acknowledged that some care homes require fees beyond the levels which the local authority would normally pay. This is usually, (but not always) because the home is offering additional services such as superior rooms or facilities. Under the terms of the agreement between care home providers and NYCC, unless for extras which are not part of the contracted service (hairdressing, personal toiletries, alcoholic drinks etc), the top up is a 3rd party contribution towards the gross cost of the service and, as such, forms part of the contract. All issues relating to publicly supported placements should be made to the Council.'

Under national Charges for Residential Accommodation (CRAG) no resident is permitted to pay their own 3rd party top up from personal resources*.

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Issue 4

Summer 2005



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Rising transport costs

Home care providers are telling **ICG** that rising petrol costs are affecting their businesses. The amount paid to care providers falls well below that paid by local authorities to their own staff. Is this a problem for you? Call **ICG** on 01423 816 582 and tell us why.

The future of long term care and - what future for care providers?

Well, these questions have been asked more and more of the **ICG** in recent times. The answers to these questions really depend upon where you sit along the continuum of care. My own personal view is the only certainty is that the status quo is not an option and that providers will need to change as the market itself changes if they want to survive.

The other factor which is central to the future is that with more and more people needing care and with the workforce shrinking - we need providers to stay in the marketplace, and to attract new ones to it. And, whether you are a small provider or a corporate provider, the challenges are im-

mense. However, I do feel that the odds are stacked against the survival of the smaller operators and it is time something practical was done to help them.

We need to keep a balance of choice in the market, and small providers together with the larger providers help keep that balance. Government, Primary Care Trusts (PCTs), and especially local authorities must act now.

More fine words and platitudes are not enough! The future can be bright for all of us ... but time is running out for some of the smaller providers, many of whom provide top quality services.

Mike Padgham, Chair of ICG

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ICG Conference— last year it was described as 'one of the most interesting and useful conferences I've been to in a long time'—this year will be even better!

Have you got your tickets for the ICG conference?

If you are a care provider or a care professional or just interested in the future of the care sector—then this is the North of England conference for you.

'Fit for the Future—the Health of the Care Sector'
Thursday 22 September 2005

York Racecourse

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Speakers will include:

- **William Laing** author of **a Fair Price for Care**
- **David Behan**, Chief Inspector of **CSCI**
- **Gary Fitzgerald**, Action on Elder Abuse

Local senior officials will take part in a **Question Time** session on local services.

For your booking form call Mike Wilby on **01904 709 706**. Reduced rates for **ICG** members

Collective buying can save you money—

A J Purchasing in Partnership with ICG

A J Purchasing provides a comprehensive service designed to meet the needs of care providers by reducing costs without compromising on quality. It specialises in the supply of food, cleaning systems, and medical disposables (suitable for home care).

John Jeffrey says 'We provide added value to the preferential terms which include personalised order forms, purchasing analysis and regular meetings with our clients. We do not charge a fee, but instead take a commission from the supplier. Zenith (see opposite) is one company we work closely with.) 'We are delighted to be working with **ICG**, and a number of care providers in York and North Yorkshire have started to make use of our service and the savings we are able to provide. We look forward to meeting members at the **ICG** Conference.'

For more information call John Jeffrey on **0131 477 8350**.

Celebrating Care

All across our region good quality care goes uncelebrated and unsung. ICG aims to put that right by publishing some of the countless positive comments made to care providers every day.

The Royal British Legion Lister House at Ripon receives many letters of thanks, here is just one example:

'I am writing to thank you and all your many wonderful staff for the friendship and care I have received over the past

twelve months. The physiotherapy staff have played a key part in keeping me in good shape not just physically but mentally too. By giving me a programme of both morning and afternoon activities they gave me companionship whilst imparting their professional knowledge. They also pushed me to new boundaries which I never thought I could reach including just recently helping me to swim unaided without any floats. The nurses and carers made me feel at home and showed a much higher

degree of care than I had previously experienced in hospital, making me feel more like a person again rather than just a set of chores. I hope that many of the great people I have been lucky enough to meet will stay in touch with me— I have formed new friendships for life.'



Broadway Lodge in York has received many commendations from relatives including these:

'Last week I had an interesting visitor and I would like to share the news with you. He was my Auntie's grandson from Australia and he was enquiring about Broadway Lodge. I told him what a wonderful home it is and how happy Auntie was with you during her two



year stay. Always a very warm welcome is given to visitors and all the staff, under your supervision, give care and attention and sympathy (when needed) to your elderly people. Another plus

for Broadway is the clean and comfortable bedrooms and the food ... delicious! Well done to you and Mr Baccus and the staff and my never-ending 'thank yous'! PS. We thoroughly enjoyed the Christmas party and other activities.'

'We would like to thank you and the staff for looking after our mother so well. We were particularly pleased that you were able to continue to look after her in the more difficult time after her hip operation and that she was able to end her days in Broadway Lodge among people she knew. Thank you so much for coming to the funeral—it was much appreciated by the family.'

Home care too deserves recognition for high quality caring service. **Helping Hands** of Selby has a file of letters from clients and their families who have felt moved to write.

'Thank you for sending H to help whilst my present help is on holiday. H too is a real gem, not only swift and efficient but also a real pleasure to have in

one's home.'

'Thank you to you all for the compassion and dignity you gave to my husband during the time he was so ill and for the moral support you offered to me and the family. I really do appreciate all that you and the other carers did.'

'Thank you so much for the lovely flowers you sent and the message of condolence. I would

like to take this opportunity to thank you and your staff for all the help you gave G and me since we moved North. It was not just physical help but the emotional support and friendship all the girls gave us, especially our dear C. I shall really miss her bouncing in every morning. Many, many thanks.'

Celebrating good news

Raising money for good causes

Fisher Partnership of Harrogate (**ICG** Directors John Fisher and Richard Inman) was the main sponsor of a glamorous ball held recently at Beckwithshaw, near Harrogate which has raised £45,000 for sufferers of dementia, through the Acorn Committee.

The staff of Carewatch North and East Yorkshire (Managing Director Mike Padgham—**ICG** Chair) has raised £2,000 for the earthquake victims of the tsunami.

Good food celebrated

Congratulations to chef Rebecca Haggard of **Highfield Care Home**, Barkston Ash for winning third place in a national cookery competition—the Barchester Oscars.

Manager Mandy Daniel says 'The residents really enjoy Rebecca's food which is outstanding. The competition was judged by Celebrity Chef Paul Rankin—who has criticised food in care homes—and he was really impressed by the standard of the dishes.'

train2gain—it's new

Do you want to train your employees—but not sure if you can afford it?

Then **train2gain** could be the answer. It's a new Government funded initiative designed to encourage employers who have not previously invested to invest in skills training for their staff.

So what is different?

- **train2gain** pays for the cost of the training
- **train2gain** reimburses you for employee time spent training
- **train2gain** organizes and sets up the training at your workplace

Do you qualify for the **train2gain** programme? Yes if:

- you pay rates to a York and North Yorkshire authority
 - you are willing to release employees for training during work time
 - you are willing to release your employee for a 30 minutes follow up assessment to help to evaluate the initiative.
- * other conditions may apply

What else?

- your employee must be aged 19 or over and working in York and North Yorkshire
- your employee must not yet have reached NVQ level 2 or equivalent (e.g. 5 GCSEs)
- your employee must be a UK citizen or meet minimum residency requirements.

You can sign up as many of your employees as you like for training in basic literacy, numeracy, English for speakers of other languages, or vocational **social care skills**.

Your employees will obtain nationally recognised qualifications up to NVQ level 2.

There is likely to be a big demand for **train2gain. To find out more now call the Social Care Brokerage Service on 01904 520 170.**

train2gain is funded by Yorkshire Forward.

Your letters ...

Dear **ICG**

I have come up with a problem which other small homes may encounter. I had a need for a **disciplinary hearing** when my manager was on annual leave. This could not wait as the member of staff was suspended on full pay. Therefore I had to hold the hearing. The person has now appealed and I am advised by

my advice company that it is better for me not to do it (this is because I need to be fair and to be seen to be fair if this goes further).

I now need to find someone suitable to hear this appeal for me.

Is **ICG** able to help?

Liz Hancock
Fulford Nursing Home

Liz—**ICG** advises care



providers to pay for a professional HR advice service even though this can be costly. I know that you have this in place. If required we can put members in touch with each other for mutual support and assistance.

Dear **ICG**

Nursing homes are now being faced with extra costs for the disposal of prescription medicines but who is to foot the bill? New regulations from DEFRA classify waste drugs in a nursing home as industrial waste and not domestic waste as was previously the case and our local pharmacy is no longer allowed to take drugs from us for disposal. I believe this is yet another bureaucratic nail in the coffin. Seemingly, the legislation has been in place for eight years but it has taken until now to implement.

As a Nurse Manager of a nursing home I fail to see why there is a difference in classification between residential (domestic waste) and nursing (industrial waste) as all drugs are prescribed for and belong to the client and as such should be domestic. The drugs do not belong to the nursing home.

There is extra cost and work incurred in setting up the new waste disposal contract. Our cost will be a minimum of £313 per year for prescribed drugs but will rise if we have a higher level of residents requiring palliative care, or a controlled drug prescriptions increase.

Currently, there are only two nursing homes in Harrogate offering palliative care. Statistics show that countrywide, nursing homes offering this registration are decreasing and this extra cost will, I feel, encourage this trend.

Sandra Atkinson
Bilton Hall Nursing Home



Your letters ...



Dear **ICG**

We signed up for electronic invoicing a year ago but using the system is still causing us extra work and we are not getting paid any quicker.



The file generator system is not straightforward and requires us to enter a lot of data for each invoice. The NYCC administration assistants who pass the invoices for payment still want to see a paper copy of each invoice so we do not actually save any paper and still have the postage costs. Invoices have to be sent in batches to the appropriate code so they reach the correct person at NYCC, however this person has kept changing and NYCC very rarely tells us of the change. If somebody at Scarborough received an invoice which wasn't for them they would not pass it on to the correct person and as a result I have a number of invoices still outstanding that I am continually chasing as they appear to have been lost in the system since last year. Other problems have included the file generator not working since April

so we have been unable to use the system and this has meant I have had to write numerous letters explaining the problems to NYCC because we were told that once we joined electronic invoicing they would no longer process our invoices in the usual way.

We are charged for every invoice but this has not been as expensive as I anticipated and has cost £39 for nine months and I have not had to pay the annual subscription for the first year. If, however, I had paid I would be very annoyed.

I would like to think that I am open-minded, I like to move with the times and keep up to date with modern technology but as a result of this years antics I will not be pursuing electronic invoicing in the future. It is very time consuming, costly and NYCC have no intentions of paying your invoices sooner so there are actually no benefits to ourselves for using the system.

Erica Gray
Simplycare Ltd

News in brief

City of York Council - latest

ICG is very disappointed to report there is still no news on a further settlement from CYC. The Council is considering whether any improvement can be made to this year's 2.3% increase. Gary Brittain, Commissioning & Contracts Manager, says 'We are still working out what might be possible within a very tight budget.' Further talks will take place with **ICG** over the coming weeks.

Harrogate & Knaresborough MP Phil Willis is to look into the funding of care



Mike Padgham & Phil Willis MP

Phil Willis MP tells **ICG** about research he is commissioning into the care sector: Phil has engaged a research assistant to investigate the variations in support for adults in residential and nursing homes by Social Services in various regions of England. He will also look at examples of joint funding arrangements between local authorities and PCTs.

Senior Care Managers Forum

Mike Padgham, **ICG** Chair told delegates at a conference in London of the difficulties of running a small care business in a changing marketplace with a scarcity of financial incentives.

Mike was an invited speaker at the Laing Buisson Senior Care Managers Forum.

Independent Care Group



The voice of independent care providers in York and N Yorkshire

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ICG represents independent care providers in York & North Yorkshire including care home providers for all client groups, domiciliary care agencies, supported living and extra care housing providers, and day centres in the private and voluntary parts of the independent sector.

Independent Care Matters is sent currently to all care providers in York and North Yorkshire, all City Councillors, all County Councillors, senior managers and Chairs of the PCTs, Borough and District Councils, NHS Trusts, Strategic Health Authority, to all local MPs and MEPs and senior managers at NYCC & CYC.

With this issue—look out for the ICG special offer on a **Quality Management System** specifically designed to help care homes and home care agencies meet the Care Standards. Available from **Required Systems**
For more information contact: 01236 782 477.

Top ups—continued from front page

* Residents may top up from their own resources only if they and the local authority have made a deferred payment agreement or the resident is subject to the 12 weeks property disregard.

What care providers have told ICG ...

'Top ups is a subject that nobody is clear on.'

'The attitude we take is that we decide what our fees need to be when we make an assessment for an individual's care needs. If we are not happy with the nursing assessment or we feel we need higher fees for other reasons we negotiate accordingly.'

'You need to be strong and hold fast. One or two referrals may

be lost at first, however as the local authorities become more used to your fees, the referrals will carry on. Most families will fund a top up if it is realistic.'

'Don't be weak but leave some room for compromise.'

'There should be no need for top ups and it's particularly galling when we compete against a NYCC home and they don't inform people who are paying privately that there are other options available at the same or a lower price and with en-suite rooms.'

'I think it is important when a home charges a top up to make it very clear that the charge is

made only because the local authority refuses to pay the true cost of care. Some authorities decide not to send residents to homes where they charge a top up. They actively encourage people to go elsewhere. They have no right to do this.'

'My main concern regarding top ups is that we are not allowed to increase them even by the rate of inflation. This encourages providers to ask for a high top up initially which is counter-productive for all parties.'

NYCC has promised to look closely at this in preparation for next year's budget.

Any comments please to **Keren Wilson**—see full contact details above.

