

Adults and Communities Reward and Recognition Policy

Payment and reimbursement of expenses for people who participate in Adults and Communities engagement activities

Revised November 2015

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1. Introduction

Barnet Council Adults and Communities Delivery Unit ('Adults and Communities') value the experience and expertise of people who use adult social care services and their carers.

We believe that involving service users and carers is essential to ensure we commission and develop adult social care services that are high quality, personalised and responsive to the needs of residents.

We therefore encourage service users and carers to get involved to help us plan, commission and monitor health and social care.

We have a range of ways people can contribute to this work, and this often involves inviting people to attend meetings, workshops or other engagement activities.

It is important that we recognise the valuable contribution people make. At a minimum, they should always be thanked for their participation and given feedback on the outcomes of the activity.

In addition, we have developed this **Reward and Recognition Policy** to acknowledge the contribution they make and cover out-of-pocket expenses including travel expenses.

The policy:

- provides a clear, consistent and fair system to recognise and reward service users and carers for their involvement in improving adult social care services
- sets out the responsibilities for both participants and Barnet Council and highlights issues such as employment status, taxation and impact on benefits that need to be considered by participants

Underlying this policy is our aim to:

- recognise the barriers to service user and carer involvement and try to overcome them
- try and include the broadest spectrum of people from different backgrounds and life experiences
- use the views and expertise of service users and carers to influence what we do

A Reward or Recognition payment is for involvement and the service user or carer will be acting as an independent advisor - they will not enter into an employment relationship with the London Borough of Barnet.

There is a glossary of terms used in the policy on page 4.

The national policy rationale for this policy can be found in Appendix 1.

2. Glossary

| | |
|-----------------------|--|
| Engagement activities | Opportunity for residents to have their say on social care issues |
| Expenses: | Specific cost(s) actually incurred by participants for which receipts are available |
| Incentive: | Something that encourages effort or action |
| Payment: | A fee paid to reward participants for their time and expertise |
| Recognition: | The way in which we demonstrate that people's participation is valued and appreciated |
| Reimbursement: | Refunding of specific expenses or costs that participants have incurred during their involvement |
| Remuneration: | Payment received in return for a service |
| Reward: | Something tangible that is of value to people |
| Volunteer: | People who prefer to offer their time and skills on a voluntary basis i.e. not to be paid |

3. People who can claim under this policy

This policy applies to adults who use adult social care services and carers who attend certain types of engagement activity.

Exemptions

The policy does **not** apply to representatives (volunteers or paid staff) from voluntary or private sector organisations who take part in these activities.

The organisation the representative is affiliated to may not claim the payment on their behalf.

In certain situations we may choose to contract with a user group or other similar organisation to run service user or carer events. In such cases, we will invite the organisation to submit an inclusive quote to cover their full costs, including payment to service users and carers.

The organisation running the activity or event will be expected to make the necessary arrangements to reward the contribution made by service users and carers. This will be in line with payments made under this policy.

People covered by this policy may, if they wish, choose not to claim out-of-pocket expenses.

4. Types of activity covered by this policy

Participation may be as a service user, carer, citizen or community representative.

Barnet Council, Adults and Communities offers a number of opportunities for service users and carers to be involved in the planning, monitoring and delivery of social care services.

These opportunities include:

- Focus groups
- Partnership Boards
- Experts by Experience
- Scrutiny panels
- Committees
- Workshops
- Task and Finish groups
- Recruitment panels

5. Reward by type of engagement activity

The form of payment reflects what Barnet Council considers to be an appropriate rate for the level of contribution made. This payment arrangement does not represent employment and should not be considered as a replacement for seeking employment.

| Activity | Reward and Recognition Payment |
|--|--|
| Public meeting or event | No payment or travel expenses |
| Attendance at meetings (as observer or in audience) | |
| Exhibition or roadshow | |
| Pre-meeting and post meeting in preparation for a partnership board | |
| Involvement in film production | |
| Completion of surveys / polls | No payment for completion but may offer optional entry into prize draw to encourage participation |
| Seminar or workshop | Travel expenses plus £10 shopping voucher (Love2Shop) |
| Participation in a working / focus groups | |
| Participation on task and finish groups or sub- groups for Partnership Boards | |
| One-to-one interviews | Travel expenses and a £10 shopping voucher or Travel expenses and a reward payment of £7.50 per hour |
| Committee / board meetings (including Partnership Boards meetings, co- chair meetings and agenda planning meeting) | |
| Acting as mystery shopper | |
| Involvement in recruitment panel | |
| Involvement on tendering panel | |
| Presenting or facilitating at a workshop / seminar / training event | |

6. Types of reward payment

The policy offers two types of reward payment depending on the type of engagement activity (listed above).

Depending on the activity, the participant can choose **either**:

a) Reward payment

We will pay the participant **£7.50 per hour** (up to a maximum of 7 hours a day).

Where the hourly cash payment is used, the number of hours will be rounded up to the nearest half hour, for example: 2 ½ hours = £18.75.

This payment allows for the participant's time for preparation before the meeting, printing of papers, travel time and follow-up work as required.

The payment is made directly into their bank account via BACS transfer.

OR

b) Love2shop shopping voucher to the value of £10

This can be used in a range of shops. This is a way to receive reimbursement for a person's time and contribution, which will not impact any state benefits they may receive. Please see Appendix 3.

A participant may only claim one voucher in any one week.

OR

c) The option of no payment, where requested.

7. Travel expenses

Where possible, we encourage people to use public transport or car share in line with our sustainability plans. Travel costs may be reimbursed for activities, as per the table below.

The payment is made directly into their bank account via BACS transfer.

| | |
|--|---|
| For travel by public transport (bus, tube, rail) | Full reimbursement of travel costs to and from home address. The claimant must submit a receipt. |
| For travel by car | 46p per mile to and from home address to the event venue |
| Car parking | Full reimbursement of the cost to park your car for the duration of the engagement activity you are attending. (When there are no other suitable free alternatives.) |
| For travel by taxi or minicab in exceptional circumstances only* | <p>Full reimbursement of travel costs to and from home address. The claimant must submit a receipt.</p> <p><i>* Will only be reimbursed in exceptional circumstances, for example, if the person needs to travel by taxi for medical reasons or because it is impractical to use an alternative form of transport. The person must obtain prior agreement from the event organiser.</i></p> |

8. Caring costs

Caring costs can only be claimed when they are incurred as a direct result of the person's involvement.

These expenses must be agreed with the event organiser in advance and supported by receipts from a registered provider e.g. nursery, childminder, personal assistant, care agency.

- If a child would normally have been in childcare when the meeting takes place - no claim may be made.
- Where a carer needs to employ a registered care agency to look after their dependant while attending an involvement activity, a claim may be made.
- Where a service user needs the help of a personal care assistant or support worker to fully engage with the activity, a claim may be made.

9. Our responsibilities

Under the terms and conditions of this policy, Barnet Council, Adults and Communities will:

- recognise and reward any service user or carer who contributes to the planning, commissioning and provision of adult social care and health in Barnet. We will do so in a way which is appropriate to the level of their involvement (see table).
- if the activity attracts reward payment and travel expenses, we will send the participant:
 - an **agreement letter** to sign and return
 - a **guide to the Reward and Recognition Policy**
 - a **claim form** to complete and return
 - a BACS form (to be completed when claiming reward payment)
- process payments and/or send a voucher to the claimant within **10 working days** of receiving the claim
- provide any information requested by benefits administrators regarding payments to service users/carers

10. The participant's responsibilities

Under the terms and conditions of this policy:

- The participant will read, sign and return the agreement letter before taking part in an engagement activity
- The participant will provide their BACS transfer details before attending the activity
- When claiming and receiving payment for an agreed service or contribution, the claimant must consider the impact on their income – see Appendix 3
- If the participant is in receipt of state benefits, it is their responsibility to inform the Benefit Agency of any payment, which may affect their benefits – see Appendix 3
- If a service user or carer wishes to claim money for expenses they will be required to provide evidence, normally a receipt
- All claims must be made within **5 working days** of the activity being claimed for

11. Queries about the Reward and Recognition Policy

If the participant has any queries about this policy, they should contact:

Engagement Officer on **020 8359 4712** or email **engage.adults@barnet.gov.uk**

Appendix 1 - Reward and Recognition – National policy context

Legislation introduced in 2009¹ removed two significant barriers to involvement for service users who are in receipt of benefits. The legislation only applies where the organisation is required by law to involve service users:

- Service users who are paid for involvement may now be reimbursed out-of-pocket expenses without affecting their benefits. Reimbursements of expenses such as travel costs, necessary subsistence, childcare, replacement carer, personal assistant etc. and other expenses incurred because of involvement are now ignored.
- Service users who are involved may now decline an offer of a payment, or ask to be paid a lower amount or ask for the payment to be made to a charity, without 'notional earnings' being applied. Their benefits are unaffected².

In addition, there are a number of national papers that encourage and support service user involvement. These include:

Social Care White Paper 'A Vision for Adult Social Care'

Launched in November 2010, the vision outlines the government's thinking on Adult Social Care. Service user co-production features prominently:

"We want people who receive care and those who provide it to work with councils, user-led organisations and voluntary bodies to deliver outcomes that are right for them"

NHS White Paper 'Equity and Excellence - Liberating the NHS'

The government's NHS White paper also confirms the government's commitment to Service User involvement:

"We want the principle of 'shared decision-making' to become the norm: no decision about me without me. International evidence shows that involving patients in their care and treatment improves their health outcomes, boosts their satisfaction with services received, and increases not just their knowledge and understanding of their health status but also their adherence to a chosen treatment."

¹ Social Security (Miscellaneous Amendments) (No. 4) Regulations 2009, reg 1(1); 2 reg 1(2); 3 reg 1(6)

² For more information on DH Reward and Recognition policy see:

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Publicationsandstatistics/Publications/PublicationsPolicyAndGuidance/DH_4138523

Putting People First

Released in 2007, Putting People First set out a transformational vision for adult social care, where service users and carers are put at the heart of service commissioning and provision. It states;

“It is hoped that every local authority will create forums, networks and task groups which involve... people who use services and carers as active participants in the change process.”

Department of Health Guidelines on Reward and Recognition

Revised in 2006, the Department of Health good practice guide set out clear guidelines around Reward and Recognition. It sets out principles of good practice, reimbursement guidelines, paid involvement guidelines and guidelines on dealing with benefits. It states that service users and carers should be: *“offered payment for their involvement in activities that involve deciding together, acting together and encouraging independent initiatives”*.

More information on the Department of Health Guidelines on Reward and Recognition good practice guide can be found in Appendix A.

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance of the new Care Act 2015 also mentions engagement with people, carers and family members when developing and implementing information and advice plans and also throughout the section on commissioning and market shaping.

Appendix 2 - Department of Health - Good Practice Principles

We have based this policy on the Department of Health good practice principles for payment and reimbursement for service user engagement

http://www.shapingourlives.org.uk/documents/DH_RewardandRecognition.pdf

1. Service users are not to be left out of pocket or put at risk of being financially worse off as a result of their engagement in service improvement.
2. Service providers and service users will discuss and agree on the terms of engagement prior to committing to it.
3. Service users are given the right information at the right time to be able to make an informed choice about how and on what terms they want to be involved.
4. The contribution service users make can be recognised and valued in all sorts of ways such as being thanked, positive feedback and acknowledgement, staff time, practical assistance, training, personal development or seeing the impact of the work and changes made as a results of engagement. Payment can also be offered for certain levels of engagement.
5. A wide range of service users, with different needs and experiences are encouraged and supported to be involved. The way that payment and/or reimbursement of expenses are settled should not needlessly create barriers that deter service users from being involved.
6. Service users in receipt of benefits should seek information and support to prevent a breach of their benefit conditions. Breach of benefit conditions can result in benefits being stopped.
7. Service users are paid according to open and consistent criteria that take into account to the level of engagement, the type of work and skills and expertise required.
8. Paperwork to claim payment and reimbursement is kept to a minimum. Where paperwork is necessary to safeguard both the service provider and the service user, it should be accessible and easy to understand.

Appendix 3 - Volunteering, Benefits, Employment and Tax

The rules about how voluntary or paid work may effect benefits, allowances, taxation or work status are complex and depend on individual circumstances.

The following information is for general guidance only and individual citizens must be advised to seek advice from the appropriate agencies prior to participating on a voluntary or paid basis.

Volunteers

According to the Department of Work and Pensions, a volunteer is a person who is:

- Not given any money, apart from their expenses
- Not legally obliged to volunteer
- Doing something for a not-for-profit organisation
- Doing something for someone who is not a family member

If an individual gets money for volunteering apart from expenses it will be treated as income. This includes one-off payments, gifts or other payments in kind. A person who gets paid for all or part of their time is not a volunteer.

Choosing not to be paid is not the same as volunteering. If the organisation would normally expect to pay someone for the work then notional earnings may apply which could affect their benefits and also have national minimum wage implications for the organisation.

It is good practice to reimburse volunteers' out of pocket expenses. Expenses can generally be refunded for costs incurred without it affecting benefit or credit. However, the costs must actually be incurred or be based on a genuine calculation of average costs e.g. council mileage rates.

Do not use rounded-up or flat rate expenses that do not reflect the actual costs incurred by each individual. Rounded-up or flat rate amounts may be treated as income. Receipts must be kept and produced to back up any and all claims.

If an individual is receiving Jobseeker's Allowance, Income Support or Incapacity Benefit they should always talk to their relevant Jobcentre Plus and/or other relevant Personal Advisor, before they start volunteering. People on income-related benefits e.g. Income Support, Jobseeker's Allowance, Council Tax Benefit must declare any payment, payments in kind or expenses for doing voluntary work.

Individuals must always be advised to obtain specific advice from their benefit provider before volunteering.

Further general information is available from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) publication, *A Guide to Volunteering While on Benefits*.

Expenses and payments for people on benefits

Service providers such as the Barnet Council Adults and Communities, as well as individuals participating in Adults and Communities engagement or service development activities need to be aware of how the reimbursement of expenses can impact on benefits and HMRC rules.

The general rule for the benefit and tax system is that expenses must be wholly, exclusively and necessarily incurred. This may include:

- The costs of travel based on actual fares or a mileage allowance
- Telephone or postage costs incurred
- Cost of childcare or carer

Please note:

- Expense amounts must not be rounded-up. Rounded-up amounts will be treated as income
- Flat rates must be a genuine calculation of average costs e.g. council mileage rates
- Guidance issued by the DWP advise that lunch is not a legitimate expense for people on Income Support or Jobseeker's Allowance as these have an allowance for basic needs including lunch.

If a benefit is paid by Jobcentre Plus, that individual must declare all of their expenses to Jobcentre Plus. Receipts for expenses must be kept to back up claims.

People in receipt of benefits should discuss their potential payment for participation in council service development exercises with their benefit provider. They should be aware that fee payments and expense reimbursement could impact on their benefit conditions. The terms of the involvement may need to be modified to prevent any unnecessary anxiety or risk of financial loss for the service user.

Be aware that individuals are ultimately responsible for ensuring that they keep within benefit conditions, although they are entitled to expect adequate support and information from the council. Service users on benefits should not be expected to make any commitment to involvement work until they understand how it will affect their benefits. They should be encouraged to obtain welfare rights advice on their benefit conditions.

Participants should also ensure that the sum amount of their involvement, if engaged in service involvement across more than one project or organisation and any related payments or reimbursements do not breach their benefit conditions.

Be aware that it is not possible to accept payment and arrange for this to be donated to a charity. Jobcentre Plus will treat the amount as notional earnings as if a payment has been made to the service user. This can affect benefits and tax.

Individuals must also keep to the benefit conditions that are required by Jobcentre Plus such as letting them know about voluntary work and earnings as requested.

National Minimum Wage and employment law

Involvement activity is not the same as paid employment covered by a contract of employment between an employer and an employee or self-employed consultants or contractors employed under contract for specific services / time period.

However, people who participate in regular paid activity and are not covered by a formal contract are still entitled to certain rights under employment law regulations including:

- The National Minimum Wage applies to people who are paid for their participation
- Where participation is paid and continuing the council must provide terms and conditions
- Citizens participating on a paid basis have employment rights, but not rights to sick pay, maternity pay or pension

Council officers should consult with Employee Services to ensure that people participating in council service improvement activities (but not employees or self-employed consultants or contractors) are appropriately engaged, advised and paid.

Jobcentre Plus

Jobcentre Plus administers claims to benefits for people of working age and advertises jobs. If the Council, as a service provider needs to contact Jobcentre Plus it should be made with the district Jobcentre Plus Development Team.

The Development Team deals with policy issues and has the authority to resolve problems. If liaising with Jobcentre Plus (or any other agency), it is important to consider the Data Protection Act and not to discuss a third party without their express authority.

Citizens should contact their personal advisor or other relevant staff at their local Jobcentre Plus office, to discuss their participation in council service development activities.