

# THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE SYSTEM IN NORTHERN IRELAND

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Northern Ireland benefits from a fully integrated system of health and social care, with the Health and Social Care Board (HSCB) responsible for commissioning health and social care services for the local population, while 5 Health and Social Care Trusts (HSC Trusts) delivering those services.

This sheet summarises key details of the current health and social care system in Northern Ireland.

## HOW ARE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE NEEDS ASSESSED IN NORTHERN IRELAND?

Due to the fully integrated system, the assessment (eligibility) process covers both health and social care needs. At present, if the outcome of an assessment indicates a primary need for healthcare, then the HSCB is responsible for funding the complete package of care in whatever setting. This is what is known as continuing healthcare in the local context and is free at the point of need. Alternatively, a primary need for social care may be identified and where such a need is met in a residential or nursing home setting, legislation requires the HSC Trusts to levy a means-tested charge.

In Northern Ireland, the Single Assessment Tool has been developed to assess the health and social care needs of those aged over 65. It aims to get a full picture of the person being assessed to ensure they get the best possible care. It should also mean that different agencies do not have to ask the same questions or hold repeat assessments.

## DOMICILIARY CARE

If it is determined that an individual's care needs can be met through the provision of a care package in a domiciliary care setting, (i.e. in their own home) then a charge may sometimes be levied, in full or part, at the discretion of the HSC Trust. There is no charge to the individual if they are over 75 years of age.

For those aged 75 or under, if the trust decides to charge for these services, it must first conduct a financial assessment. The exception to this is the home-help service and the meals on wheels service, which are always charged at a standard rate.

## RESIDENTIAL AND NURSING HOME CARE

The current rules in Northern Ireland state that if someone has more than £23,250 in capital (i.e. savings or investments), they must pay the full cost of their care. If they have less than £14,250, the HSC Trust will fund their care in full. For those with capital between these limits, the HSC Trust will part-fund their care on a sliding scale. The rules on what counts as capital are complicated.

## PROPERTY DISREGARD

If the person needing care owns their own home, the value of their home may be counted as capital 12 weeks after they have moved into a residential care or nursing home on a permanent basis. However, their home won't be counted as capital in certain circumstances, including:

- if their husband, wife, partner or civil partner still live there
- if a close relative who is 60 or over, or incapacitated still lives there
- if their ex-husband, ex-wife, ex-civil partner or ex-partner if they are a lone parent and have been continuing to live in the home
- when the Trust has used discretion and has chosen not to count the home as capital because of specific other circumstances - for example because the person's carer lives there.

## SPENDING MONEY

When the HSC Trust is contributing to the cost of residential care, any benefits the individual is entitled to will be put towards the cost of care and they will be left with an agreed amount of "spending money" - currently set at £24.90 per week. If they are funding their own care in full, they will still be able to receive state pensions and other benefits such as Attendance Allowance and these can be used to help pay their fees.

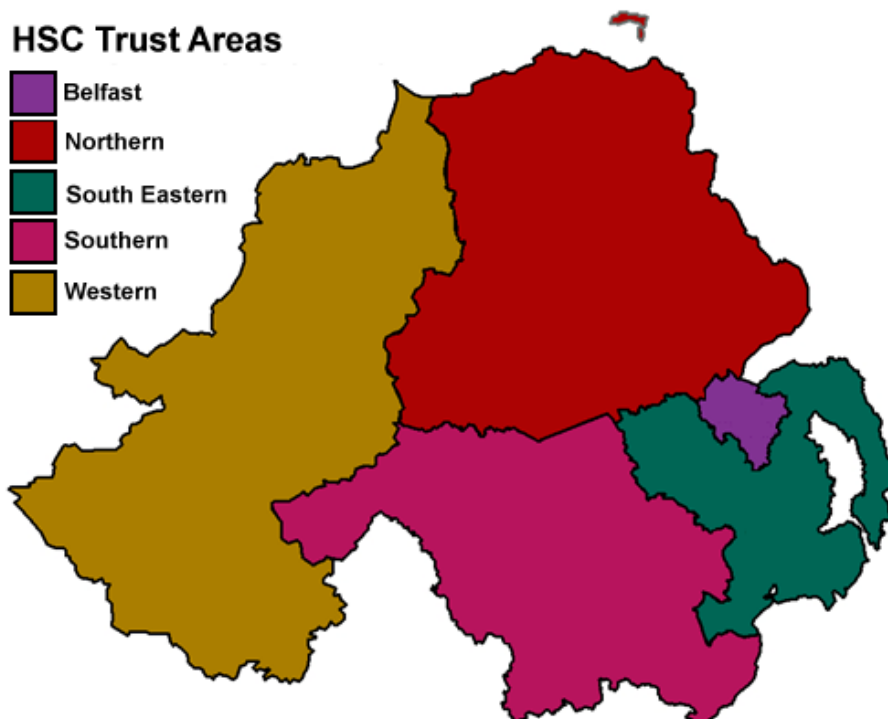
## A CONTRIBUTION TOWARDS NURSING CARE FOR SELF FUNDERS

If a needs assessment identifies that nursing home care is appropriate and the individual is responsible for meeting the full costs of their own nursing home care, then the relevant HSC Trust should make a payment of £100 per week towards the cost of providing the nursing care. This payment is made directly by the HSC Trust to the nursing home provider.

The full guide to how charges for residential accommodation are assessed can be found at [www.dhsspsni.gov.uk](http://www.dhsspsni.gov.uk)

## THE HEALTH AND SOCIAL CARE TRUSTS

The 5 Health and Social Care Trusts which provide integrated services are as follows:



*(Source – Health and Social Care NI online)*

## REGULATION IN NORTHERN IRELAND

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) is the independent body responsible for monitoring and inspecting the availability and quality of health and social care services in Northern Ireland and encouraging improvements in the quality of those services.

Further information can be found at <https://www.rqia.org.uk/>

## LOOKING FORWARD

On 5 December 2016 former Health Minister, Michelle O’Neill, appointed an Expert Advisory Panel on Adult Care and Support, tasked with identifying a range of proposals for change. Its report was issued on 11<sup>th</sup> December 2017 and amongst its recommendations was that care packages in the home should be means tested, based on the principle that where a person can afford to contribute to the cost of a service they should do so regardless of setting.

The full report can be found at:

<https://www.health-ni.gov.uk/sites/default/files/publications/health/power-to-people-full-report.PDF>

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