

	Lead Policy: Financial Policies and Procedures	Issue Date:	14 March 2023
	Chats Fee Procedure (v.1)	Review Date:	30 June 2024
		Date Manager Social Services Approved:	8 March 2023
		Author:	Manager Social Services

Governing Policy:

This procedure is made under the suite of Lifeline Tasmania's financial policies and procedures, and meets requirements contained within the *Tasmanian Home and Community Care (HACC) Program Manual Interim Update 2020* and the *National Guide to the CHSP Client Contribution Framework*.

Purpose:

This procedure ensures Lifeline Tasmania (LT) charges program participants reasonable contribution fees. LT is required by Government guidelines to develop and have in place, including on agency website, a client contribution policy and system to assess fee waivers. LT recognises participants may experience times of financial hardship due to changes in circumstances beyond their control. The *Chats Fee Procedure* affirms Lifeline Tasmania's commitment to helping Chats participants who have the intent, but not the capacity, to make payments to support their independence, physical and mental health, and community connections.

Definitions:

CHSP: Commonwealth Home Support Program

HACC: Home and Community Care

HCP: Home Care Package

FFS: Fee-for-Service (such as HCP participants, self-funded retirees and residents of aged care facilities)

Scope:

This procedure applies to all Chats employees conducting an intake and/or review where the need for a fee waiver has been identified.

Roles and Responsibilities:

Managers, Coordinators and/or Supervisors

- Assist employees in complying with this procedure.
- Ensure information is provided to employees and schedule training as needed.
- Investigate circumstances where there has been a breach of this procedure.

Employees

- Comply with this procedure.
- Maintain a record of all fee waivers approved by the Manager or supervisor.

Procedure:

Lifeline Tasmania receives funding from both the Australian Government and the Tasmanian Government to support the delivery of the Chats program. Grant obligations include a requirement for LT to report to Government the fees collected from participants.

Lifeline Tasmania reserves the right to vary, replace or terminate this policy from time to time.

Participant fees are charged for services, at a set rate, as detailed in the *Chats Fee Schedule*. LT asks that people using the services contribute to their cost, in a way that promotes fairness and consistency for both new and existing participants. Cost recovery is required, within participant capacity, by both the Australian and Tasmanian Governments.

LT conducts an annual review of the fee structures for HACC, CHSP and FFS participants accessing Chats services. These are updated as required, in line with advice from Government and cost of living expenses. The review is conducted by the Manager of Social Services, in conjunction with the Senior Manager Corporate Services. All changes to fees are communicated, in writing, to existing participants (and HCP providers and participant representatives where appropriate) 1 month prior to the change being implemented.

All participants will be informed of the fees associated with service delivery at the time of intake/assessment/entry to the service. This will include the amount and how to pay the fees. Participants will also be informed of any forthcoming variation to fees that may affect them.

In charging fees, the following principles will apply:

- the full cost of the service will be charged if participants are receiving or have received compensation payments intended to cover the cost of community care;
- HCP client charges will be on a full cost recovery basis in line with the *CHSP Program Manual*;
- payment of a fee will only be sought from participants who are assessed as having the capacity to pay; and
- revenue from fees will be used to support ongoing service delivery and expansion.

Fees

Participants will be given at least 30 days' notice of any changes to Lifeline Tasmania's *Chats Fees Schedule* and or *Chats Fee Procedure*.

Payment of Fees

Participants have a responsibility to:

- pay any fees as agreed or arrange for an alternative agreement with LT if changes occur to their financial circumstances; and
- provide enough information for LT to determine an appropriate review of fees applied.

Invoices

LT will commence a whole of program invoicing system for all Chats participants (or their HCP provider or representative) in 2023. Invoices will be sent to coincide with the end of each month.

Fee Payments

Participants can pay their invoices:

- at our offices in Bellerive, Devonport or Launceston (by cash or cheque)
- by post (either cheque or credit card details)
- by internet banking (Eway portal, EFT, Direct Debit)

Pending introduction of the monthly invoicing system, participants will continue to pay cash on the day to Chats staff for the support service they are participating in.

Non-payment of Fees

- Participants will be sent a reminder of unpaid invoice/s.
- The participant (or their representative) will be contacted by LT to discuss the matter. The participant will be advised they can have an advocate present for the discussion. The meeting may take the form of putting in place a payment plan.
- If, after consultation, the participant refuses to pay, they will be provided with a letter of action (which may include application and assessment of financial hardship).
- If, after 30 days of the due date, payment has not been made, and ability to pay is not an issue, LT may notify the person that services will be withdrawn. If payment is still not made within a total of 45 days from the original due date, services may be ceased. The participant will be informed in writing of LT's decision and will have their right of appeal explained.

Fee Waivers

CHSP, HACC and FFS fees may be reduced or waived through a process whereby the participant's ability to pay the fee is determined. The waiver process aims to reach a decision in a consultative, sensitive and equitable way. All documentation will be confidentially maintained by LT to ensure a participant's privacy.

After completing a *Chats Fee Waiver Form* with a participant, the form will be sent to the regional supervisor or Manager for assessment:

1. on approval of a partial or full fee waiver, the Manager/supervisor will sign and send the paperwork to the relevant worker;
2. the worker will add the document to the participant's file, and note a 'fee waiver' entry in the file;
3. the worker will make a note of the waiver in the relevant fee waiver column on the *State-wide Participant Register*. The fee waiver column will be close to the annual review date so the worker undertaking the annual review will also renew the fee waiver application, as required.

RELATED DOCUMENTS

- *Chats Fee Waiver Form*
- *Chats Fee Schedule*
- *Lifeline Tasmania Confidentiality Policy*
- *Lifeline Tasmania Code of Conduct*
- *Tasmanian Home and Community Care (HACC) Program Manual Interim Update 2020*
- *National Guide to the CHSP Client Contribution Framework*
- *Commonwealth Home Support Program Manual 2022-2023*