

When the Council restored the £60,000.00 to the 2014-15 budget to pay the support fees for pensioners on the Bronze Band—Alarm System Only--sheltered housing service, I thought that the issue had been successfully resolved. Then I received notice that the £60,000.00 was insufficient to pay this charge for all affected sheltered housing tenants and beginning the 1st of April they will all be expected to pay this weekly charge. For Curo tenants this charge is £3.60 rising to £187.20 a year.

An Alarm Subsidy Fund has been hastily set up for pensioners in “financial difficulty”. What exactly will it cover?

According to information I received on 25th of March—5 days before the 1st of April charge date—  
And I Quote;

“The fund will cover the annual cost of your hard-wired alarm for 2014-15. The actual amount will vary depending on where you live. In some cases, you may find that, even with the Subsidy Fund payment, you have a charge to pay.”

In other words there is no guarantee that some pensioners will not fall through the net.

I rang the Welfare Support Team on 3rd of April to find out how this service was being implemented. I was told that they had only just heard that they were expected to administer this fund on 1st April, the same day it started. Already they’ve received over 100 applications, which they plan to process within the next 2 weeks, or by 21st April. That’s 3 weeks late.

I was told that this wouldn’t matter because once the applications were processed, the full yearly amount would be sent. Really?

I would like to remind the Council, that the pensioners involved are all of advancing years with increasing vulnerability. Already on a low income, their rent is paid by Housing Benefit and they are already struggling with rising food and energy costs.