



Premises fact sheet - service charges for CHP and NHS Property Services tenants

We are aware that some practices are experiencing substantial increases in premises service charges and difficulties in understanding their invoices. We have produced a fact sheet to support you; we meet regularly with NHS England London, Community Health Partnerships (CHP and NHS Property Services (NHSPS) to raise your concerns about charges, invoices and communications with practices and have also escalated our concerns to the GPC as CHP and NHSPS hold national contracts. If you are having difficulty obtaining an adequate explanation of your service charges or need support in challenging them, you can contact the LMC GP Support team for impartial, confidential advice and assistance on gpsupport@lmc.org.uk.

The fact sheet is also available as a PDF.

Premises fact sheet: service charges for CHP and NHS Property Services tenants

This fact sheet is designed to help GP practices to understand changes to their service charges and to be able to challenge these where appropriate.

Background

Historically, many PCTs did not charge GP practice tenants their full service charges, the rationale for this is not known.

CHP and NHSPS are now required by the Department of Health to charge GP practice tenants at full cost recovery level.

NHSPS and CHP have undertaken a national re-procurement of facilities management service providers.

This will have resulted in different service charges for some services for a variety of reasons, including that the new service specification may be different.

Another reason is that previous service providers may have apportioned costs differently, eg if the service was provided for shared premises, across a group of premises, or if tenancies have since changed, including if you have changed the area you were occupying.

For NHSPS tenants in particular

16/17 billing to date of certain costs may have been based on the successful tender price, which is still under challenge.

Once the challenge process is complete, NHSPS will have agreed an actual service charge.

In May/June 2017, NHSPS will carry out a reconciliation process and advise GP practice tenants of the results.

What can GP practices do?

Please see the FAQs below

Please check your inbox or our website for the latest updates

Please contact our GP support department if you need assistance

Please let us know of premises issues that we can include in future fact sheets

Some items on your invoice may be reimbursable by NHS England London as per the Premises Cost Directions 2013 (it is unlikely that this will change when the new Premises Cost Directions are published).

These items are:

Rent

Business Rates

Water Rates

Clinical Waste (Please note – clinical waste may not necessarily appear in your service charges; it depends on local arrangements, which you should confirm. Those practices that share a building with Community Teams and therefore have Hospital Trusts as your landlords are likely to have clinical waste collected under your landlord's contract; this is less likely in NHSPS or CHP buildings).

Reimbursable items will be billed for separately. Where possible, you should set up reimbursable items as direct debits and send NHS England London information on the direct debit so that they can ensure you are reimbursed in a timely manner.

Do not include reimbursable items when calculating the service charges you owe.

The remaining items should be your service charges.

Question 1: I do not understand my invoices – how can I tell what service charges I owe?

Some items on your invoice may be reimbursable by NHS England London as per the Premises Cost Directions 2013 (it is unlikely that this will change when the new Premises Cost Directions are published).

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Question 2: My invoices are not fully itemised – how can I get a breakdown?

NHSPS have committed that from Quarter 1 2017/18 practices should receive an invoice with a backing sheet showing itemised reimbursable and non-reimbursable costs. If you have not received a backing sheet with your latest invoice, if you are querying earlier invoices, or your backing sheet is still not clear, you can ask for a breakdown by contacting: creditcontrol@property.nhs.uk Tel: 0800 085 3015

CHP send tenants an annual charge statement at the start of the financial year, breaking down items into reimbursable and non-reimbursable charges that will be on invoices. This provides an opportunity for challenge if you do not agree. CHP tenants then receive two invoices a month: one for reimbursable costs, which will be refunded by NHS ENGLAND LONDON (see above) and one for non-reimbursable service costs, which the practice has to pay. If you wish to query something on your invoice, please contact: c.services@communityhealthpartnerships.co.uk Tel: 0161 209 3463

Question 3: I do not agree with the service charges, they are higher than previously and will upset my practice cash flow. What can I do?

For NHSPS: Contact creditcontrol@property.nhs.uk Tel: 0800 085 3015

For CHP: Contact c.services@communityhealthpartnerships.co.uk Tel: 0161 209 3463 and let them know that you wish to challenge your invoice, you can:

Let Londonwide LMCs GP support department know as well, we can assist you

Pay what you can evidence historically (using old invoices, receipts, standing orders etc)

If you dispute the area covered (eg if you share premises or have changed the area of the premises you occupy) send in this evidence.

Clearly mark your payment 'Invoice paid under protest'.

Request the reasons for the change - If the specification has changed, you can ask for reasons and whether the specification can be amended on an individual basis (eg for security)

Set aside/accrue funds while you resolve your concerns with CHP/NHSPS.

Question 4: I seem to have been charged a leasehold management charge, what is this? (applicable to NHSPS tenants only)

This is a percentage charge on top of any leasehold rents paid to cover the cost of lease management. NHSPS are reviewing this in relation to charging GP practices.

Question 5: I think I know an alternative local provider that is cheaper than the new national provider – can I suggest them instead?

NHS England London, CHP and NHSPS are supportive of this in principle, however, you will need to consider the following:

If you are a CHP tenant, CHP will need to agree this with the superior landlord.

The specification of the services you wish to provide will need to be in line with NHS standards and limited to your demised area only.

If you are sharing premises you will need to take this into account; accommodation arrangements may prove complex.

You will still be required to contribute to the services to the common parts if applicable.

The alternative supplier will need to be contracted to and paid direct by the practice

The practice will need to indemnify CHP/NHSPS against any deficiencies in the service the alternative contractor provides against the national standards.

Question 6: The alternative service you provide will need to be treated as an additional contractor and will be audited by CHP or NHSPS?

I would like to talk to my CHP or NHSPS property manager about my Facilities Management (FM) contracts or the suppliers used, eg to make maintenance requests, report faults or log any service-related queries.

For NHSPS you can contact your FM Business Manager direct

NHSPS have just set up new FM helpdesks to support tenants: www.property.nhs.uk/fmhelpdesk Tel: 020 3688 2244

For CHP you can contact your CHP Property Team lead direct

The customer services team is on: c.services@communityhealthpartnerships.co.uk Tel: 0161 209 3463

What is my LMC doing?

Londonwide LMCs (LLMCs) meets regularly with NHS ENGLAND LONDON, CHP and NHSPS to raise your concerns

LLMCs has asked CHP and NHSPS to work transparently with practices: providing itemised invoices and regular updates

LLMCs has asked both CHP and NHSPS to write to their tenants with: - updates on the procurement - details of the successful service providers - new service charges and - reasons for any changes.

LLMCs has asked both CHP and NHSPS to provide details of how tenants can challenge their service charges if they consider them to be incorrect or wish to discuss alternatives

LLMCs has asked NHSPS in particular to provide itemised invoices as a matter of course

LLMCs has a GP support department that provides free, individual, confidential advice and can assist you.