

NHFA News Release

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Advice Available For Older People With A Partner Entering Care

For many couples, what on one day may have been a comfortable retirement the next can be devastated if one or both of them require Nursing Home or Residential Care. In particular, if local authorities in applying their charging procedures cause them extreme financial hardship. For couples faced with this situation, the NHFA Care Fee Advisory Services offers the following guidance:

- If one partner enters care, the Local Authority will initiate and carry out a financial assessment to ascertain how much the person in need of care can afford to contribute to the cost. It is important to realize that the local authority does not have the right to financially assess the spouse left at home and the assessment is limited to personal assets and a 50% share of joint assets belonging to the person in need of care.
- The Local Authority will take into account 50% of joint savings over £39,000 (Double the £19,500 means test limit) therefore, to accelerate financial help it is better to have separate single accounts meeting care costs paid from the account of the person in the care home.
- The value of a property is disregarded from the assessment if a spouse/partner continues to live there. However, if that home is sold to buy somewhere smaller for the remaining spouse/partner, then such of the sale proceeds not used to purchase the smaller property could be caught in the means test. Similarly if capital is released through Equity Release 50% could get caught.
- If the Local Authority considers they can afford it a spouse may be asked to contribute to the cost of their partner's care. There are no fixed rules for calculating this and, if they refuse the local authority must continue to provide the care.
- If the partner in the care home care receives income from a private pension (either occupational, personal or retirement annuity) 50% should be returned to their spouse/partner at home.
- If the your spouse in the care home is the recipient of most of the joint income and has savings over the means test limit, consider purchasing an immediate need care fee payment plan to meet the full cost of care, cap the loss of capital and enable the spouse at home to enjoy more of the joint income.

Philip Spiers partner at the NHFA comments: "This is an extremely difficult and emotional time for couples who have previously spent most of their lives together. The financial worries are an extra

burden that can be alleviated with advice. Often it's the husband needing care and leaving at home a wife to cope on just her share of pensions. Local authorities do not allow any extra money to be kept back for home commitments. Long Term care Insurance could provide a solution but care fees funding is complex area and professional advice should be sought."

The Care Fees Advisory Services from NHFA provides free advice to anyone entering or already in care, regardless of means. By combining specialist financial advice with information on the many associated issues, such as local authority charging procedures, health authority responsibilities, DWP disability benefits and legal matters, the service is able to illustrate the affordability of chosen care and produces a number of fact sheets including Infosheet 7 'Treatment of Couples'.

freephone Care Advice Line **0800 99 88 33**, web site, **www.nhfa.co.uk**

Further information can be obtained from NHFA, St Leonards House, Mill Street, Eynsham, Oxford, OX29 4JX. Telephone 01865 733000 Email enquiries@nhfa.co.uk

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Notes for Editors:

The Nursing Home Fees Agency (NHFA) independent of all care providers, financial institutions and authorities provides free advice and information on obtaining and paying for long term care. NHFA advice is available to all regardless of means and encompasses the many financial and legal issues older people and their families should consider when the need for care arises.

Combines specialist financial advice with the complexities of our care system including local authority assessment and charging procedures, health authority responsibilities, DWP welfare benefits and legal matters i.e. enduring power of attorney.

Free Publications include Long Term Care Guides and an extensive range of 'Infosheets' on common problems including 'Treatment of Couples', 'Treatment of Property', 'Deprivation of Assets', 'The Legal Framework', 'Local Authority Charging Procedures', 'NHS Nursing Care Contribution', 'Immediate Need Care Fee Payment Plans', 'Issues Surrounding Choice' and 'Inheritance Tax Planning'.

The aim of the NHFA is to enable older people meet the cost of chosen care for life whilst also preserving their original capital and with that their independence, dignity and right of choice.