



Adult Social Care Scrutiny Review

Protection of Property (not including pets)

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Section 1 - What Costs Are Recovered

Adult Social Care Financial Services (ASCFS) seeks recovery of actual expenditure, including:

- Locksmith charges
- Storage charges
- Removal costs
- Property maintenance costs
- Charges from Facilities Services
- Garden maintenance costs
- Other contractor invoices.

The following are not currently recovered:

- Officer time
- Administration costs
- Mileage and travel expenses.

What has been claimed back

Financial Year	Amount Invoiced
2023/24	£90.00
2024/25	£218.00
2025/26	£1,134.00

There were previously no procedures in place for systematically recovering costs. We are now introducing new systems and procedures which accounts for the growth in the Invoices over the last 3 years.

Section 2 Policies and Procedures

Current arrangements include:

- Initial inventory of property and valuables
- Removal and secure storage of identified items where appropriate
- Weekly inspections of unoccupied properties
- Recording of visits and actions undertaken
- Compliance with insurer requirements for inspection frequency

- Invoicing and debt recovery processes where costs are recoverable.

Property records are currently maintained through:

- Paper visit records
- Excel spreadsheet recording costs, debts and invoices.

Future potential developments:

- Exploration of data recording systems
- Recording of information within the Adults Liquid Logic System to improve recording, monitoring and audit trails
- Debt procedure with referral to Corporate Debt

Other Local Authorities, Procedures

Information was requested from neighbouring authorities:

Middlesbrough Council

- Carry out protection of property visits every 28 days
- All visits undertaken by two officers
- Record activity on Caspar and supporting spreadsheets
- Recharge direct costs such as lock changes
- Do not recharge officer time
- Invoices may be issued but recovery can be difficult.

Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council

- Carry out monthly visits
- Use photographic records to monitor property condition
- Record activity using spreadsheets
- Recharge direct costs incurred
- Do not generally arrange insurance except for appointeeship/deputyship cases
- Individuals are advised of the need for empty property insurance where appropriate.

Common Themes from other Local Authorities

- Neither authority publicises protection of property services
- Neither authority charges for officer time
- Neither authority is aware of any national reporting requirements
- Both seek recovery of direct expenditure where appropriate.

Section 3 - Recovery of Costs

Current Approach:

Stockton Borough Council recovers only actual costs incurred through third-party suppliers and contractors.

Recovery may be sought from:

- The individual once capacity and circumstances permit
- Funds held under appointeeship/deputyship

Challenges:

- Delays in obtaining appointeeship or deputyship authority
- Individuals moving without leaving forwarding details
- Estates not yet administered

Section 4 - How much activity is undertaken

- Number of referrals received per year

Year	Number of referrals received per year
2023/24	22
2024/25	20
2025/26	21
2026/27	5 to date

- Approximately 20 open cases on a rolling basis
- Length of involvement can range from a few days to a few years
- Number of properties protected:

Year	Number of properties protected
2023/24	37
2024/25	44
2025/26	48
2026/27	28 to date

The lower number of properties protected in 2026/27 reflects improved case management processes, which have reduced the time properties remain under protection before sale. As the 2026/27 figure represents year-to-date activity and not a full financial year, direct comparison with previous years is limited.

Section 5 – Resource impact on Adult Social Care Financial Services

Staffing Resource

Protection of property is only one function of the team who are responsible for several other areas including: management of appointee, court appointed deputy, deceased estates and public funerals.

The team consists of full-time equivalents:

- Team Lead 1
- Clerks 2.5
- Finance officer 0.8
- Social care officers 1.5
- visiting officers 2

Annual Cost of Team Total £318,683.00

Protection of Property Annual Cost:

The estimated annual cost associated with officer time and travel for the Protection of Properties is £11,364 pa.

Comprising **0.23 FTE** officer time and travel expenses.

The largest element of expenditure relates to Employee Protection Register checks, visits and associated write-ups, **£7,687 (68% of total costs)**, with travel accounting for **£2,294 (20%)** and initial assessment visits **£1,383 (12%)**

- Approximately 7 hours per week spent undertaking property visits, EPR checks and recording activity
- Initial visits typically take around 5 hours and require two officers
- Work undertaken primarily by Visiting Officers (Grade H) and Social Care Officers (Grade I).
- Approximately 80 miles travelled per week.

This demonstrates the hidden cost that is not recharged.

The annual cost has been calculated using the current level of officer resource and travel required to deliver the Protection of Properties service. This includes initial property assessments, ongoing visits and checks, case management activity and associated mileage incurred while protecting properties on a rolling basis.

Actual costs may fluctuate from year to year depending on the number of properties requiring protection, the complexity of individual cases, the duration of involvement and travel requirements. The estimated annual cost therefore represents the current resource commitment associated with delivering the service.

Section 6 - Risks if the Council did not undertake this duty

Risks of not intervening

- Theft of valuables
- Damage to property
- Insurance becoming invalid
- Deterioration of homes
- Loss of important documents
- Safeguarding concerns
- Potential legal challenge for failure to discharge statutory duties.