



Activity costs and billing

Updated: Jan 2023

Activity costs

The social care funding aebal clients receive for their support is allocated to pay for support time only. Our hourly rate covers the period of time staff support our clients for each of their sessions and does not include the costs incurred for the various activities.

These costs are typically covered by our clients using PIP (Personal Independence Payment) or Universal Credit.

aebal will always discuss activity budgets and price appropriate sessions from the outset to ensure activities are accessible and affordable.

We also ensure we utilise 'aebal friendly venues' with concessionary rates for both our clients and staff. A typical week day session activity will cost around £5 and our Saturday trips are usually between £10 - £15

Staff member activity participation

As mentioned, the majority of the activity venues we utilise provide concessionary rates or free admission for carers. It is very uncommon for our clients to be expected to cover any additional costs for a staff member's involvement in an activity.

Small group activities

Usually, the activity cost is a set amount regardless of the number of participants. For example, the driving range charge £14 for an hour and unlimited golf balls. This cost would be divided amongst our clients but staff may join in too.

If there happens to be an additional charge for the staff member's involvement, aebal will cover this cost. Due to our support approach and the social dynamics we promote, we don't like our clients to pay any extra costs to cover staff's involvement. For example, on our Thursday "Rackets" session, aebal cover the £3 cost for each of our staff members to participate.

121 support

During a 121 session however, aebal would not be able to cover the cost if, on the rare occasion, there happened to be an additional charge for the staff member's participation in an activity. Additional staff costs are very uncommon as typically the 121 activity cost will cover the combined participation of both the client and staff member. For example, for a game of snooker the £5 cost for the table hire would be covered by the client.



Saturday session costs

Our Saturday Road Trip venues are generally more expensive to attend than the weekday activities. To ensure these are accessible for our clients we often subsidise entry costs* and just ask for a contribution instead. We generally keep Saturday activities under the £15 mark.

*This reduction in cost is covered by our service revenue and is not charged to client invoices

Food and drink costs

Session activities often fall around meal times so, when possible, we always encourage both clients and staff members to bring their own food along to avoid any unnecessary expense. However, for some of our sessions such as pub breakfast socials or evening meals out, the activity is the food! With these sessions clients are expected to bring money to cover the food and drink costs for their own meals. aebal will always cover the cost of staff members' food and drink and we never ask clients to pay for staff as this goes against our service ethos.

Travel costs

Mileage

As our activity venues are located all over Nottinghamshire, the service incorporates car transportation to and from the activity within our hourly support rate. There are no additional transport or mileage charges.

The total session time will usually include both the activity and the journey to and from the activity venue. Clients begin being charged from the moment our staff member meets with them and stop being charged once they are dropped back home. This aspect of the service is hugely beneficial to those who are incapable of independent travel and it also enables us to offer a wider range of activities.

Public transport

To reduce hours spent on travelling and to promote independence, we will always encourage clients to travel to venues on their own or request family members to assist. As we frequently run activities in the city centre, we have also supported many clients to learn how to catch buses/trams from their homes to a familiar meeting point in the city.

Clients are expected to cover their own public travel costs or have a travel card. If a group activity involves staff catching a bus or tram with clients to a venue, aebal will cover any additional travel expenses. For 121 sessions however, clients would need to ensure they have a companion card to enable free travel for carers or alternatively cover this additional cost.

Parking costs

If a group activity or Saturday Road Trip involves car parking costs, aebal will cover this expense and not expect clients to contribute. The exception again being if a client is receiving 121 support. aebal would require clients to cover any parking costs during a 121 session.



Charging and billing

Flexible use of hours

For the social dynamics we promote, we understand how important it is that the activity itself defines the session time and our clients gain authentic, real-life experiences. We feel that sustaining or ending a session due to rigid time constraints would add an unnecessary formality to our support which could negatively impact client's feelings of independence.

aebal support is about providing short, activity-focussed sessions full of energy and positivity. All our sessions vary in duration week to week due to the wide choice of activities and the changeable travel times to get to the various venues.

Some weeks the session activities may be shorter than a client's allocated hours and some weeks they may be longer. We perceive variation as being a very normal occurrence in everyday life and see no reason why it should be any different for the people we support.

For example, a client may have been allocated 4hrs per week of aebal support to cover one session. Unlike most support services, we would not charge exactly 4hrs a week as it is very unlikely every session activity that person attends would be for precisely 4hrs.

Instead, aebal charge the specific amount of time the activity (and travel time) lasts. Depending on the activity, some weeks the session may last 3hrs or other weeks perhaps 3.75hrs. Instead of forcing the session to last for a set amount of time, we instead enable our clients to use their hours flexibly and save the undelivered 1.25hrs towards future additional sessions or Saturday support.

Using support hours flexibly like this, we believe leads to a much higher quality of support. Our clients are never bored and unstimulated or feeling rushed to complete an activity because we do not attempt to keep within rigid time constraints. It is also a much better use of funding as the support time is maximised and our clients always get the most out of their allocated hours.

We carefully record, monitor and manage activity start and finish times to ensure hours delivered remain within weekly allocations, however this is done discretely so it doesn't impact the experience of the activity. (Please refer to "Invoicing" below for further information)

We of course understand that some of our support provides important respite for parents and carers and do not bring clients home earlier than expected! These variations in session durations are generally between 15 minutes and 45 minutes and information is sent out in our weekly session texts clearly stating expected "Drop off" times. We also run some regular weekly activities which do finish at the exact time each week. These are often accessed by clients who utilise aebal for a combination of outreach and respite support.



Rearranging / cancelling regular sessions:

During 6-week introduction

Whilst new clients are in their introduction period and 'regular' sessions are yet to be determined, we do not charge for any cancelled or unattended planned sessions.

We perceive this period as an opportunity to try new activities and get to know other clients and staff. There is no obligation to join every session offered and we encourage new starters to take their time integrating into the service.

The only situations where we would still need to charge in an introduction period is if a staff member had travelled to the new client's home without being notified about a cancellation or a new client had a place reserved on a Saturday Road Trip and we were unable to find a replacement. (See below)

Registered clients

To avoid charging when a client cannot attend one of their regular sessions, we also encourage the flexible use of support hours by allowing session hours to be rearranged to another time or day.

The Service Manager will need to determine if rearranging a session disrupts the support of other clients or affect staff's hours however, if the missed hours can be conveniently moved then we will always attempt to do this.

If a cancelled regular session cannot be conveniently moved then, unfortunately, we must charge for the session.

Regular session hours are defined in each client's Session Timetable

Terms for cancelling sessions

Once a client is registered and support has officially commenced:

- We request as much notice as possible to allow us the opportunity to reallocate cancelled regular session hours. Any request under 48hrs notice will not be considered.
- Even with sufficient notice it is always at the Service Manager's discretion to determine whether it is possible for a cancelled regular session to be rearranged or whether it needs to be charged (see above).
- If a client cancels within 48hrs of a planned regular session, we will always have to charge due to having insufficient time to reallocate hours.
- Cancelled session hours can only be rearranged to another time the same week or the following week.
- A session can only be cancelled / rearranged once. If the rearranged session is consequently cancelled then the original missed session will be charged.
- Only a single session can potentially be rearranged. We cannot reallocate, for example, a full week of missed sessions.
- Optional sessions that are not attended (as stated in the Session Timetables) will not be charged unless staff have travelled to the client's home without being notified.
- Saturday Road Trips qualify as optional sessions, however if a client has agreed to attend and had their place reserved, then cancels within 48hrs of the trip, this session will need to be charged.



- With Saturday Road Trip cancellations, to avoid charging we will always do our best to find a replacement if more than 48hrs notice is given.
- As session activities often vary in length, a standard session time is stated on each Session Timetable. This is the number of hours that will be charged if a regular session is cancelled.
- If a session is cancelled by aebal, this is non-payable and will not be charged. In these circumstances we will again attempt to rearrange the session or the hours can be saved for future sessions / Saturday Road trips.

Cancellations due to illness:

- It is the client/parent/carers responsibility to ensure clients are well enough to attend their regular or optional sessions.
- If a client is feeling unwell, we ask them/parent/carer to contact us as soon as is possible to cancel the session.
- aebal staff members have the discretion to make a decision on the day if they feel a client is not well enough to attend their session.
- On the day cancellations due to illness will always be charged as stated above.

Permitted holidays

- To permit for holidays and other pre-planned commitments, aebal will allow a total of 3 weeks of non-attended sessions per calendar year. Providing at least 4 weeks' notice has been given, these missed sessions will not be charged or need to be rearranged for the following week. The undelivered hours will simply be saved for future undetermined sessions. Unused holiday allowance weeks cannot be rolled over to the following year.

Adverse/Extreme Weather Policy

We endeavour to provide sessions in all weather conditions and aebal staff members will always make every effort to reach our clients. However, if aebal management deem the weather to be too hazardous or that the adverse/excessive weather may affect the safety of our clients / staff members, then this will be classed as "circumstances beyond our control" and result in a cancelled on the day session which will typically be charged (as stated above). We hope such instances will be rare.

Under these conditions we will always attempt to reschedule sessions to later in the day if possible or provide the alternative of remote support including Zoom sessions and phone calls.

Bank Holidays

Staff will sometimes be unavailable on Bank Holidays; however, our service remains open and sessions typically run as normal. Our clients come first and Bank Holidays are rarely different to any other Monday or Friday so we do not like to cancel sessions on these days.

The service closes for a week over Christmas each year.



Invoicing

aebal is both a commissioned service with Nottingham City council and a Direct Payment service with Nottinghamshire County council. Some of our clients also self-fund for their support.

We invoice every 4 weeks for support hours delivered, which is in alignment with Nottingham City Council's payment cycle.

Our City council invoices are emailed directly to local authority for payment and for County council and self-funding clients the invoices are emailed directly to clients (please refer to Support Rates for more information). There are 13 x 4 weekly invoice periods each calendar year.

Our invoices clearly state the start date and end date for the period of support and include a week-by-week breakdown of hours delivered (rounded up or down to the nearest 15 minutes). There is also an ongoing balance at the bottom of each invoice indicating how many hours have been saved / used flexibly for the following 4 weekly period.

As stated, we carefully manage and monitor the flexible use of hours each period to ensure support hours are being used efficiently. Precise session start time and end time breakdowns are available on request.

aebal is also a VAT registered service which is included in our hourly rate and clearly stated on our invoices.

Querying invoices:

We always encourage the recipients of our invoices to query any discrepancies they may notice. It should be noted, in accordance with local authority 4 weekly payment cycles, each week of support commences from the Saturday to the Friday and not Monday to Sunday as you would expect. This means that Saturday sessions are technically the first day of each week in terms of invoicing, which can often be confusing.

As a service we aim to be as transparent as possible with the hours we are charging for and are happy to email breakdowns of individual sessions attended if there is any confusion around the weekly amounts stated on the invoices.

We are very friendly and approachable so please feel free to get in touch!

Ending support / reducing support hours

aebal require a minimum of 4 weeks' notice for changes in support hours. This includes a reduction in support hours, suspending support hours or terminating support. This notice period will preferably be initiated as part of a support review, however written notice by email is also sufficient.

An increase in support hours may also require a 4-week notice period depending on current session availability.

