

Introduction to direct payments

All our information sheets are available on the **My Care North Tyneside** website – mycare.northtyneside.gov.uk – or you can ask your social care worker to give you a copy.

If you have been assessed as having eligible care and support needs, and the council will help you with the costs, you will be offered a personal budget. A personal budget is the amount of money needed to pay for your support.

What is a direct payment?

Some people prefer the council to arrange and pay for their support. This is called a 'managed budget'. Other people prefer to arrange their own support – you can do this using a direct payment.

With a direct payment, the council pays your personal budget into an account. You then choose the support to meet the needs set out in your support plan, and arrange payment for this using the money in the account.

A direct payment gives you maximum choice and flexibility about what support you get, and from whom – but it also comes with responsibilities.

However, there is support available to help you with this, explained in the information sheet **Support to manage a direct payment**.

Can I manage a direct payment for someone else?

You can manage a direct payment on someone's behalf if they agree to this, and the council agrees this is a suitable way to meet their needs.



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If you would like to arrange someone else's care using a direct payment, but they cannot make an informed choice about this, the person's social care worker will decide whether it is in their best interests to arrange their support in this way.

Is it my right to have a direct payment if I want one?

No. Adult Social Care wants you to have as much control over your care as possible, but direct payments are public money, so we have a duty to make sure it is managed safely and properly.

We need to agree that you are able to manage a direct payment, or that you have someone willing and suitable to do this on your behalf.

If the council does not agree to a direct payment, your social care worker will explain the reasons why. If you are not satisfied with the explanation, you can request that we reconsider.

This process is explained in the information sheet **Feedback, reconsidering decisions and complaints**.

What can I use a direct payment for?

You will agree how to use the direct payment with your social care worker. They will write down how you will use it in the support plan, so everyone is clear. Some examples of how people use direct payments are:

- To employ personal assistant(s) to provide care at home
- Support to get out and about
- Buying services from a care agency
- Attending day activities
- Respite care for short breaks (up to 4 weeks a year)
- Buying equipment to help you become more independent which is not available from the council.

If you want to change your support plan, you must contact the team who arranged your support to ask for a review.

There are some things that a direct payment can never be used for:

- Gambling
- Paying debts
- Paying for food, alcohol, cigarettes, or household bills
- Illegal items or activities
- Meeting healthcare needs, i.e. things that can be provided by the NHS
- Employing a friend or family member who lives with you, unless a manager agrees this in exceptional circumstances
- Long-term care in a residential or nursing home; or
- Support not outlined in your support plan.

Do I have to arrange all my support using a direct payment?

No. Sometimes people decide to use some of their personal budget as a direct payment, and some of their budget managed by the council. We call this a 'mixed budget'.

How are direct payments paid?

Usually direct payments are made to a pre-paid account, set up for you by the council. This is just like a bank account, allowing you to make payments and view your balance online. The council will also be able to see how the money is being used, to check it is being used correctly.

There is more information about direct payment accounts in the information sheet **Direct payment accounts**.

What records do I need to keep?

Because a direct payment includes public money, you need to show that it is being used as you agreed in your support plan.

You need to keep records like invoices, receipts, all employment records and payslips. Every so often, the council will check the paperwork, called an 'audit'. This usually happens at least once a year.

Are there organisations that can help with managing a direct payment?

Several organisations can support with recruiting personal assistants. They are listed in the information sheet **Support to manage a direct payment**.

How do I find out more?

- If you are currently planning care and support with a social care worker, ask them about direct payments.
- If you have an active care and support plan and would like to change to a direct payment, contact the team who arranges your care and ask for a review.
- If you already have a direct payment and have queries, you can contact the Direct Payments Team on 0191 643 7887, or email direct.payments@northtyneside.gov.uk

Alternative formats

If you need us to do anything differently (reasonable adjustments) to help you access our services, including providing this information in another language or format, please contact the Social Care Contact Centre on 0191 643 2777, or email: childrenandadultscontactcentre@northtyneside.gov.uk

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