

Managing your direct payment

This factsheet follows **Direct payments – an overview**. It is for people who have chosen a direct payment (or are about to start one).

The direct payment agreement

Before your direct payment starts, you (or the person supporting you to manage the payment) will sign a direct payment agreement.

The agreement sets out:

- what you can expect from us
- what we expect from you
- how we will keep in touch and check the direct payment is being used in the agreed way.

Spending the money in the agreed way

You must use the money only to pay for the support agreed in your care and support plan.

You cannot use a direct payment for:

- anything not agreed in your care and support plan
- rent, household bills or general living costs
- NHS services or NHS-provided equipment
- anything illegal
- long-term residential or nursing care (unless agreed as part of specific arrangements).

This is not a complete list. If you are unsure, ask your social care worker.

You cannot spend your direct payments while you are outside the UK for more than four weeks in a year, unless we agree to this.

If money is spent on things that are not in your care and support plan, we may ask for it to be paid back.

If you want to use your direct payment in a new way, talk to your social care worker first.

If you don't spend all of the money

Your personal budget will be set at the amount needed to meet your eligible social care needs. You should regularly spend the full amount on purchasing your support.

If we agree this with you, you can build up money in your personal budget to make sure you can cover planned future costs and unexpected expenses.

If you have more than eight weeks of your personal budget which you have not spent, we will look into the reasons why this has happened and may reclaim the money.

Keep some basic records

You will need to keep records of what you spend the money on. This can include invoices or receipts, timesheets or wage slips (if you employ a personal assistant). This helps show the money is being used in the agreed way.

Tell us about changes

Tell us if:

- your needs change
- your support arrangements are not working
- you are finding it difficult to manage the direct payment.

If you employ a personal assistant

If you use your direct payment to employ a personal assistant, you must follow employment rules (for example contracts, tax and insurance).

Support is available to help you understand what you need to do (see "Getting help to manage your direct payment" below).

Paying towards the cost of your support

You will usually have a financial assessment to see if you need to pay towards your support.

If you do need to pay towards the cost, we will explain what you need to do and when.

How you receive and use your direct payment

We usually pay direct payments onto a prepaid card, which you use to pay for the support agreed in your care and support plan.

You can find out more in the **Prepaid cards for direct payments** factsheet.

Keeping in touch and checks (monitoring)

We will check in with you from time to time, as set out in your direct payment agreement.

This helps to make sure:

- you are able to manage the direct payment
- the money is being used in the agreed way
- your support is working for you.

Monitoring helps to protect you and to make sure public money is used properly.

If you are finding it hard to manage

If you are struggling, tell your social care worker as soon as you can.

We can:

- talk through what is not working
- look at what extra support may help
- review your care and support plan if needed.

Help, advice, and support

Your social care worker can talk with you about whether direct payments are right for you, explain the process and tell you what happens next.

Speak with your social care worker or contact Adults' CarePoint by phone on 01243 642121 or the [How to get adult social care support page](#) on the West Sussex County Council website. For calls using Relay UK: 18001 01243 642121 (for deaf callers from a textphone or the BT Relay UK app).

We have a contract with **Independent Lives** to provide advice, information, guidance and practical support for people who receive direct payments. This can include help with employing a personal assistant, payroll, insurance and day-to-day questions. Contact Independent Lives by phone on 01903 219482 or email at info@independentlives.org.