

Direct payments – an overview

What is a direct payment?

A direct payment is money paid to you by the council so you can arrange your own care and support.

It gives you more choice and control. Instead of the council arranging services for you, you decide how your support is provided, in a way that works for your life.

Why people choose direct payments

People choose direct payments because they want more flexibility and control.

With a direct payment, you can:

- choose who supports you and when
- arrange support in a way that fits around your daily life
- use different types of support if this works better for you
- change arrangements if something is not working.

You can choose to take some, all, or none of your personal budget as a direct payment.

Who can have a direct payment?

Most people aged 16 or over who are eligible for council funded care and support can choose to have a direct payment.

This includes:

- adults with care and support needs
- carers with support needs.

To have a direct payment, you need to be willing to receive it and able to manage it, either on your own or with help.

In some situations, a direct payment can be managed by someone else on your behalf.

There are a few situations where the law says we cannot offer direct payments. We will explain if this applies to you.

We work out whether you qualify for council funded support as part of the process below.

How to get a direct payment

Getting a direct payment is part of the adult social care process.

- You talk with a social care worker about what matters to you and any support you may need.
- We use this to work out whether you are eligible for council-funded care and support.
- If you are eligible, we agree a care and support plan. We also work out how much money is needed to meet your social care needs. This is your personal budget.
- You will usually have a financial assessment to see if you need to pay towards your support.
- You can then choose to receive some or all of your personal budget as a direct payment.

We will explain each step clearly and support you to make decisions that are right for you.

You can read more about assessments, care and support planning and personal budgets in the **Adult social care: an overview** booklet.

Using a direct payment

You must use your direct payment to pay for the support described in your care and support plan. You must not use it for anything else.

There is not a single list of what you can spend your direct payment on, and this will depend on what has been agreed in your care and support plan.

Many people use direct payments to:

- employ a personal assistant
- pay a care agency
- pay for support and other services that help them stay independent and take part in community life.

If you are using an independent care provider to buy a regulated care service, such as personal care, you must use a provider that is registered with the Care Quality Commission. If you are unsure if this applies to you, speak to your social care worker.

If you spend your direct payment on things that are not agreed in your care and support plan, we may ask you to pay that money back.

Important things to know

A direct payment is public money. This means you must use it safely and legally, and only for what is agreed.

Before you start, you will sign a direct payment agreement. This sets out what you can expect from us and what we expect from you.

We will check in with you to make sure your direct payment is being used in the agreed way and that your support is working.

We usually load your personal budget onto a prepaid card. You can find out more in our **Prepaid cards for direct payments** factsheet.

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 online on the [How to get adult social care page](#) of 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.