

Direct Payments explained

This information is for people thinking about receiving a Direct Payment or already receiving one.

What is a Direct Payment?

If we agree to help meet your care and support needs, you will receive a personal budget. This is the amount needed to meet your assessed needs.

Anyone who is eligible for long-term social care support and receives a personal budget can request a Direct Payment.

You can choose to receive your personal budget in 1 of 3 ways:

- **Managed Personal Budget** – we arrange and pay for your care and support
- **Direct Payment** – we give you the money so you can arrange and pay for your own care and support
- **Mixed Package** – we arrange some services and you arrange others using a Direct Payment

Benefits of Direct Payments

A Direct Payment gives you more choice and control over how your needs are met.

You can:

- choose the providers you want to use
- decide when you receive support
- employ a Personal Assistant
- buy services or items that help meet your assessed needs

Any support you buy must be agreed in your care and support plan.

What a Direct Payment can be used for

After assessing your needs, your social care worker will help you develop a care and support plan.

The plan explains:

- the outcomes you want to achieve
- what support you need
- how your needs will be met

You can use a Direct Payment to:

- employ a Personal Assistant
- buy support from a care provider
- access activities and services that help meet your assessed needs
- buy agreed items that help you achieve the outcomes in your care and support plan

Direct Payments can be used flexibly if they meet your assessed needs and are included in your care and support plan.

What a Direct Payment cannot be used for

Direct Payments cannot be used:

- for anything illegal
- for anything not agreed in your care and support plan

Some situations may require special agreement.

For example, you would not normally pay a close family member who lives with you to act as a Personal Assistant.

If someone cannot manage a Direct Payment themselves

Some people cannot make decisions about a Direct Payment because they cannot understand, remember or use the information needed to decide. For example, because they have dementia or a learning disability.

In these situations, someone else can request and manage the Direct Payment for them.

This person is known as the **authorised person**.

The authorised person takes responsibility for managing the Direct Payment and making sure it is used correctly.

We must agree that this is an appropriate way to meet the person's assessed care and support needs.

Getting help to manage a Direct Payment

Managing a Direct Payment involves responsibilities such as:

- managing a dedicated bank account
- paying care and support providers
- keeping financial records

Support can be provided by:

- a family member
- a friend
- a Direct Payment Support Service

If a family member or friend helps manage your Direct Payment, they may be known as a nominated person.

Direct Payment Support Services can also help you employ a Personal Assistant, including with:

- payroll
- payslips

- tax and National Insurance arrangements

Your social care worker can advise you about the support available. For more information, read the:

[Direct Payment Support Services factsheet](#)

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/direct-payment-support-services

How Direct Payments are paid

Direct Payments are paid every 4 weeks in advance.

Payments can be made to:

- your dedicated Direct Payment account
- your prepaid card account
- a Direct Payment Support Service that manages payments on your behalf

For information about using a prepaid card, read:

[Direct Payments and prepaid cards factsheet](#)

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/direct-payments-prepaid-cards

Your Direct Payment Agreement

Before your Direct Payment starts, you must sign a Direct Payment Agreement.

This explains everyone's roles and responsibilities.

Read the agreement carefully and ask your social care worker if anything is unclear.

As part of the agreement, you must:

- open a dedicated bank account or use a prepaid card
- keep records such as receipts, invoices and payslips
- provide financial records when requested for audit purposes

Direct Payment audits

Audits are routine checks carried out for everyone who receives a Direct Payment.

Audits help us make sure the money is being used in line with your care and support plan and the Direct Payment Agreement.

We may contact you if we request audit information and it is not provided.

If you use a prepaid card or a Direct Payment Support Service, we can often access the information we need directly.

For detailed information about audits, what records may be requested and what happens if information is not provided, read the:

[Direct Payment audits factsheet](#)

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/direct-payment-audits

What happens if a Direct Payment is misused?

If an audit shows that your Direct Payment has been used for things that were not agreed in your care and support plan, you may be asked to repay that money.

We will also review whether a Direct Payment remains the best way of meeting your needs.

Examples of how Direct Payments can be used

These examples show how Direct Payments can help people achieve the outcomes in their care and support plans.

Example 1: Using Direct Payments to employ Personal Assistants (Mavis)

Mavis has assessed needs related to a physical disability.

In her care and support plan, Mavis said she wanted to have a shower each morning, choose her own clothes and continue doing her own food shopping.

Mavis receives a personal budget of £250 per week as a Direct Payment. She employs 2 Personal Assistants who provide support for 21 hours each week. They help with personal care, meals, medication and preparing for bed.

Mavis arranges her support directly and can make changes when needed. She uses a prepaid card and a Direct Payment Support Service to help with payroll, tax and recruitment.

Example 2: Activities and life skills (Hannah)

Hannah is 18 years old and has Asperger's Syndrome.

In her care and support plan, Hannah said she wanted to make new friends and learn life skills.

Hannah receives a personal budget of £30 per week as a Direct Payment. Her social care worker identified an outdoor activity centre that could help meet these goals.

Hannah attends the centre twice a week. This has helped her develop new skills, increase her confidence and build friendships.

Example 3: Equipment and technology (John)

John is 50 years old and experiences high levels of social anxiety.

He found it difficult to do his food shopping.

Rather than employing a Personal Assistant, it was agreed that a tablet device could help meet his needs. The tablet was purchased through a one-off Direct Payment.

John now uses the tablet to order groceries online and stay in touch with family and friends.

More information

For more information and support, visit:

[Direct Payments support area](#)

www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/direct-payments-support

Contact us

Direct Payment Enquiries Team

- Telephone: 0115 804 4945
- Email: dpenquiries@nottsc.gov.uk

Customer Service Centre

For help, information, or to request this document in another format:

- Telephone: 0300 500 8080 (standard call rates apply)
- [Contact us online](#)
www.nottinghamshire.gov.uk/contactus

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