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Self Directed Support

There are 3 different forms of support which people can choose from to meet their support/care needs. These areas of support are at the core of the Government's aim of personalising social care services to meet individual needs. They put people in the driving seat of taking control of the support they want. These different forms of support are known as Self Directed Support or Personalisation.

Direct Payments

A Direct Payment is a cash payment for social care support from the council instead of the council providing services directly to you. With this money you can organise your own support. This might include taking on responsibility to employ staff and/or accessing activities or services to support your personal care needs. (A Direct Payment can also form part of a Personal Budget or an Individual Budget).

Personal Budgets

Personal Budgets are an amount of money that can be given after an assessment of your personal care support.

You can either take a Personal Budget as a Direct Payment, or – while still choosing how your care needs are met and by whom – leave the council with the responsibility to commission the services. You can also have a combination of the two.

Individual Budgets

Individual Budgets cover a range of funding services besides social care to make up one package of support for an individual. This area of support is still being developed nationally.

A Direct Payment can either be taken on its own or form part of a Personal Budget or Individual Budget. But what is involved in having a Direct Payment?

Why would you want a Direct Payment?

Direct Payments allow people to have more choice, flexibility and control over their own lives. They enable people to live independently, and make the decisions affecting their own lives. By getting direct payments, you can decide how your needs are met, when, and by whom. You are in control, and decide the best way that your needs can be met.

Who can get Direct Payments?

Direct Payments can only be used by people assessed as being eligible for community care services. This includes children and adults with physical / sensory disabilities, people with learning disabilities, older people, people using mental health services, people with AIDS / HIV. A direct payment can be given to support carers and can also be used for purchasing some forms of equipment.

You must be at least 16 years of age to receive Direct Payments, but parents of disabled children under 16 can receive direct payments for their children.

There is no upper age limit.

You must consent to using Direct Payments

You must be able to manage the Direct Payment, with or without support.

What is meant by 'Consent'?

You have a right to be fully informed about Direct Payments before you provide your consent (choose) to receive a Direct Payment.

Harrow Council has a duty to provide information in a format that is accessible to you.

Consent is often given in a variety of ways. If the way you show consent is very individual to you, you will need to satisfy Harrow Council that you have chosen to use Direct Payments based on an understanding of the benefits that they will give you.

You can withdraw your consent to use Direct Payments at any time.

What is meant by 'able to manage'?

Using Direct Payments involves taking on responsibilities (e.g. being accountable for the money and maybe becoming an employer). Harrow Council needs to make sure that you are able to fulfil these responsibilities with or without help.

It is acceptable for you to receive as much or as little assistance with managing your Direct Payment as you need.

This could be provided by family, friends, or a Support Brokerage Service provided by HAD.org.uk's Direct Support Scheme.

The payment may be made to someone else on your behalf, but you must be in agreement to this.

Are you automatically entitled to Direct Payments?

No. As explained above, you have to meet the criteria for Direct Payments. If one of these requirements is not met, then Direct Payments may be refused. Similarly, if Harrow Council offers you a Direct Payment as a way of meeting your support needs, you do not have to accept it. You can choose to have Harrow Council arrange your community care directly.

Managing Direct Payments is a responsibility. Nearly all disabled people using Direct Payments find they can secure improved services when they manage their own support. However, this does take work, and the Direct Support service at HAD.org.uk is there to help and support you, but the final responsibility for managing the Direct Payment is down to you.

Can I use a mixture of Direct Payments and direct services?

Yes. If you are happy with some of the care you receive through an agency, you can continue to have this and receive Direct Payments for only part of your care package. For example, you may choose to have an agency commissioned by Harrow Council to assist with your personal care in the morning, but use a Direct Payment to employ someone to assist you with activities during the daytime/evening.

How much money will I receive?

Once your needs have been assessed by your Care Manager they will decide how many hours of support you require each week. Harrow Council will then pay you a set amount for these hours.

In addition to this money, if you employ a personal assistant you may also receive Start Up money which is to pay for advertising, liability Insurance, a payroll service, initial training for staff, protective clothing i.e. gloves or aprons, and reasonable stationery costs, for example a

receipt book or photocopying. You are also entitled to claim Maintenance money every year to cover these expenses.

What does this payment cover?

The payment is intended to cover all the costs you will have in meeting your personal assistance needs. If you were to employ someone directly, then you should pay them at a rate at which you could meet all your tax and national insurance obligations, holiday pay and statutory sick pay. Direct Support Services can provide full support on the whole range of issues including working out how much to pay personal assistants.

Will Direct Payments affect my benefits?

No. A Direct Payment is not a benefit. It is not extra income to spend as you please, and is not counted as income for the purposes of social security benefits (and will therefore not affect your benefits). Direct Payments are not assessed for income tax.

Can I stop using Direct Payments?

Yes. If Direct Payments are offered to you, you have the right to refuse. You can also stop using them at any time. Harrow Council would then arrange to meet your needs in the normal way.

What can you spend your Direct Payment on?

The money is for you to arrange and pay for the services required to meet your support / care needs. e.g:

Employing a personal assistant (carer)

Using an agency

Paying for services and/or activities e.g. a day centre, attending a gym, attending art classes etc. to meet your social, emotional, physical needs.

What can't you spend your Direct Payment on?

Paying for long-term residential care (generally more than 4 weeks)

Employing anyone (including family) who lives in the same household as you (except in exceptional circumstances).

How much flexibility will you have?

You will be assessed as needing a certain number of hours of support per week. With Direct Payments this does not mean that you have to use exactly that number of hours of support each week, or at the times talked about at your assessment. e.g. depending on your needs, you might need more one week, and less the next.

Who can help you manage the Direct Payment?

HAD.org.uk's Direct Support Service was set up to assist and support people to use and manage Direct Payments. The type of support the service can offer can be tailored to your needs. Everybody will need different levels of support to manage their payments, or perhaps no support at all. You could also get your family or friends to help you.

What will my responsibilities be?

You will have the responsibility for and control over:

- Arranging your care through an agency and/or recruiting and employing your own staff and complying with employment law.
- Making sure you have liability insurance cover.
- Organising and managing your own day to day care arrangements.
- Paying your staff/agency using a separate bank account opened specifically to receive your Direct Payment. Depending on your staff's circumstances, you would also be responsible for ensuring that Tax and National Insurance contributions are paid, as well as Employer's National Insurance to HM Revenue and Customs.
- Keeping records and all relevant documents and financial information for the council to show you have been spending this money appropriately.

What help will I get?

The Direct Support Scheme here at [HAD.org.uk](https://www.had.org.uk) has been set up specifically to give support, information and advice with all aspects of Direct Payments and Self Directed Support. Their role is to take you through the Direct Payment process and give you as much help as you need, and to work with the council to ensure the arrangements work well for you.

Do you need further help?

**Please contact [HAD.org.uk](https://www.had.org.uk) on 020 8861 9920,
Or visit us at The Wealdstone Centre,
38-40 High Street, Wealdstone, Harrow, HA3 7AE.**

This fact sheet is one of a series, providing information and advice on a number of topics.

HAD.ORG.UK FACTSHEETS:

- Access to Shops, Cafes and Everyday Services
- Accessible Public Transport
- Aids and Adaptations
- Blue Badge Scheme
- Concessionary Travel
- Dial-a-Ride and Taxicard Schemes
- Education and Learning
- Holidays
- Leisure at Home
- Motoring
- Performing Arts
- Self Directed Support
- Sports
- The Care Act 2014
- Universal Credit
- Utilities
- Visiting Places of Interest
- Voluntary Transport
- Welfare Benefits
- Wheelchairs

HOUSING MATTERS:

- A General Guide to Housing Benefit
- A Guide to Housing Benefit for Disabled Students
- Applying as Homeless (Priority Need)
- Homelessness (Out of Hours) Emergencies
- Private Tenants: smoke and carbon monoxide alarms
- Rent Increases : Assured Shorthold Tenancies
- The Right to Rent
- 10 Rights of Private Tenants