

CARERS FACT SHEET 6e

Direct Payments

As a result of the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000, you are now entitled to receive Direct Payments yourself to purchase help if services are agreed following your carers assessment, and the option is also available to the parents of children with special needs up to the age of 18.

The Guide to Residential Care and the Guide to Care at Home both contain much more information about paying for care services for adults.

Direct Payments is a scheme, run by the Local Authority, whereby the person you care for is paid an agreed amount of money to buy their own care. This only applies once they have had an assessment and it is clear that they qualify for help from Health and Community Care or Children's Services.

The scheme does allow greater flexibility in finding and paying for the right kind of care, which may include breaks for you as a carer.

Receiving Direct Payments means that the person is able to choose who provides them with services, but they have to make the arrangements themselves. Services can be purchased from a close relative living nearby, or in the same household if the local authority is satisfied that this meets the clients need for that service.

Direct Payments are not taken into account for the purpose of assessing for social security benefits and are not liable for tax.

Direct Payments cannot be used to purchase long term residential care or direct services provided by the Health and Community Department, but they can be used to purchase short stays in care homes (but for no more than 4 weeks in any 12 month period).

Services directly provided by social care departments cannot be purchased using direct payments but can be accessed if you have part Direct Payments and part direct services.

The most important thing to remember is that it costs absolutely nothing to enquire about help and support. If you don't ask, you will never know the range of options available to you. For more information contact any of the following:

Carers Together Southampton or
Carers Together in Hampshire 01794 519495
Health and Community Care Department 023 8083 4567
Southampton Centre for Independent Living 023 8033 0982

Frequently asked Questions about Direct Payments

Applying for Direct Payments

Q What are direct payments?

A Direct payments enable you to buy services that meet your assessed needs instead of receiving services directly provided by your local council. You choose how you organise the help you need in a flexible way.

Q What do I have to do to get direct payments?

A Your social worker should discuss this option with you when they assess your care needs. If they do not, or if you already receive services, ask about direct payments.

Q What if the local council has not previously assessed my needs?

A To access direct payments you need an assessment in the same way as you would for any social care service. Contact your local council to ask them to assess your needs.

Q What if I am already receiving social care services arranged by my local council?

A The majority of people who receive social care services from the council have a right to direct payments. Your local council is obliged to offer you direct payments in place of the services you currently receive.

Q What if my local council has assessed my needs before but has not arranged services for me?

A If your local council concluded that you did not need social care services, then it will not offer you direct payments. If you think your needs or circumstances have now changed, ask your local council for a new assessment.

Q If I am entitled to social care services, am I automatically entitled to direct payments?

A Yes, most people who get social services have a right to direct payments. There are some limited circumstances where direct payments are not given and your council will be able to tell you about these.

Using direct payments

Q What can I spend my direct payments on?

A The money is for you to use to arrange the services (including equipment) which the local council has assessed you as needing. Your local council social services department will explain what the money can and cannot be spent on.

Q Can I purchase residential care with my direct payments?

A Direct payments are intended to support adults in independent living, so you cannot use them to pay for permanent residential accommodation. You may be able to use direct payments to secure occasional short periods in residential accommodation, if your local council agrees that is what is needed.

Q Can I use direct payments to employ my relatives?

A Direct payments are not intended to replace existing support networks within families and communities. For this reason, you may not normally use direct payments to secure a service from: your spouse or partner, close relatives or anyone who lives in the same household as you (unless that person is someone who you have specifically recruited to be a live-in employee). You should discuss your situation with the local council if you think that any person you would like to employ or purchase services from might fall into one of these categories. In exceptional circumstances, your local council may be prepared to consider allowing you to use direct payments to pay a close relative or a friend.