

# Everything you need to know about direct payments

## What is a direct payment ?

A direct payment is money made available by the council to individuals assessed as eligible for social care support. You can choose to take a direct payment instead of the traditional support package from the council. The aim of a direct payment is to give more flexibility in how services are provided. It also means you will have greater choice and control over how your support is delivered.

## Why choose a direct payment?

A direct payment gives you more choice, control and flexibility in relation to your support. You can choose who delivers your support. For example this could be a family member, friend or neighbour. You can choose when you receive support. For example, many people find local authority or agency support is not available at times when they need it. Under a direct payment, you receive your support exactly when you choose.

## Who can have a direct payment?

You can only get a direct payment if you have been assessed by the council as needing care and support services or you are the carer of someone receiving those services. A direct payment is available for people of any age. You may also be able to take up a direct payment if you receive a Personal Health Budget from the CCG or have an Education, Health and Care Plan.

## **How do I get a direct payment?**

You should ask the council for an assessment to see if you are eligible for social care support. During this assessment you can ask for a direct payment. If you already receive a council managed service, you can ask at any time for this to be changed to a direct payment.

## **How much money will I get?**

The direct payment budget you are offered will be based on your own individual needs. A social worker will do an assessment of your needs. This will identify what is important in your life, what you can do for yourself and what you are unable to do without support. Other professionals such as an Occupational Therapist may be involved if necessary. Any informal care you receive from family and friends may also be taken into account. The social worker will identify your care needs, work out how much time these activities will take and base your support plan on this.

## **What can I use my direct payment for?**

You may be able to use your direct payment to employ a Personal Assistant, to pay for services from an agency, day centre, therapy or even buy equipment. Whatever option you choose must meet your care and support needs as identified in your support plan. If you want to use your direct payment for anything not agreed in your support plan, you must speak to your social worker first.

## **What are my responsibilities?**

You will need to sign a direct payment agreement with the council or CCG. If you employ a Personal Assistant you will also have responsibilities as an employer. These can include arranging Employer's Liability Insurance, pensions, registering with HMRC, understanding employee entitlements and being a good employer.