

What are Direct Payments?

Factsheet 8 – 12 April 2010 (2 Pages)

These are payments made to individuals by Social Care departments to enable them to buy services that they have been assessed as needing. Providing money in place of social care services gives people greater choice and control over their lives. It enables them to make their own decisions about how their care is delivered.

Who can get Direct Payments?

Most people who have been assessed as needing a social care service and have capital and / or savings of **less than £23,250** (excluding the home you live in). This includes people with physical or sensory impairment, learning difficulties, mental health problems, a long term illness or those who need help because of the effects of growing older.

You can also receive Direct Payments if you are a carer who has been assessed as needing support in your own right, or a parent of a disabled child for the services that support you in bringing up your child.

You can ask for Direct Payments if you wish to be in control of the services you need, and you are able to arrange and manage these services yourself or with help. You do not have to be able to do everything yourself. As long as you stay in charge of what happens, you can have as much help as you need to manage Direct Payments. Specialist staff are available to provide information, advice and support .

What can Direct Payments be used for?

Direct Payments can be used to arrange support designed to meet your individual needs. You decide what sort of help you need, how you want the help provided, and the times when you want the help. Direct Payments must **only** be used to meet the needs that we have agreed together. You can employ your own support staff, buy services from private care agencies or pay for daytime opportunities.

Direct Payments can also be used for one-off or intermittent services – such as, buying short periods of respite care or buying equipment to help you remain independent.

You do not have to take full control straight away. You can continue to have some services arranged by us while you arrange only part of your support package. In this way, you only have to do what you feel confident about, giving you time to develop the skills you need to completely manage your care services.

Is there anything I can't use direct payments for?

Direct Payments are not extra money to spend as you wish, they cannot be used to buy long-term residential or nursing care, or to buy a service that is managed by us – such as, our in-house home care service. Unless exceptional circumstances apply, you cannot pay a relative or partner to live with you for the support they provide.

You can employ live-in personal assistants. What is important is that the relationship between you and your personal assistant is contractual rather than personal.

The advantages of Direct Payments

You are in control and can choose who supports you, how and when. People who use Direct Payments enjoy the flexibility and choice that they can bring, and frequently comment on how they have gained greater self-esteem, confidence, and control over how they live their lives.

How much will I get?

Before you can access Direct Payments you will need an assessment in the same way as you would for any social care service. You will be offered a payment equivalent to our estimate of the cost that you would incur to buy the service you need. If you choose to employ your own support staff, the level of payment will include allowances for meeting all your statutory responsibilities as an employer. For further information on assessment, see our factsheet, ***FS1 Assessment and Fair Access to Care.***

You will usually have to contribute to the cost of your services. The exact amount depends on your income and savings, but it will be the same amount as you would be charged for services had Devon County Council provided them directly.

See our factsheets, ***FS2a Charges for Home Care, Day Centres and Community Meals*** and ***FS2b Charges for Residential and Nursing Care.***

How is the money paid?

You must open a separate bank account for Direct Payments. Payments will be made four-weekly in advance into your account. You will have to provide records of how you have used the money to pay for the help you need. You will be provided with simple forms for this and can have help to complete the forms.

You will be required to refund to Devon County Council any monies in excess of the maximum account surplus held within the Direct Payments account. You will be notified in writing if you are required to make a repayment.

Will my benefits be affected? Will I be liable for tax?

No, Direct Payments are to be used only for meeting your care needs and are not counted as extra income. The payments will not be taken into account by the Benefits Agency. The payments cannot be assessed as income on which you have to pay tax.

If Direct Payments no longer work for you

You simply tell us you no longer wish to have Direct Payments and we will arrange to provide services to meet your needs.

For more information contact **Care Direct** on **0845 1551 007**

Further factsheets can be found online at www.devon.gov.uk/factsheets

A large print version of this factsheet is available on www.devon.gov.uk/largeprint-factsheets but if you would like it in a different format such as Braille or tape, or in a different language, please contact our Customer Service Centre on 0845 155 1015 or email customer@devon.gov.uk.