

## Direct payments factsheet – 3

### Direct payments: making the right choice about direct payments

Deciding to receive direct payments is an important decision. Using direct payments can help you to take more control and choice over the services you receive. For example, if you are responsible for paying for support, you can have some choice over who supports you, or have more control over how an agency provides support. Direct payments can also help people live more independently and remain in their own home. For example, you can decide what time of day you receive support for activities that you want to do.

It is important to think about the benefits of receiving direct payments and what responsibilities you could take on. The level of responsibility depends on how you decide to meet your needs and the amount of responsibility you would like to hand over.

### Information on direct payments

Information about direct payments can be found in lots of different places. This can sometimes be confusing. Sense's series of factsheets on direct payments and purchasing your own support contain links to recommended information. It is also a good idea to find out what information and support is available locally. You may have to ask for additional information yourself as sometimes people are not automatically offered information.

However, written information will not give you the full picture on whether direct payments are a good choice for you. It may be useful to talk about receiving direct payments with friends and family, local people who already use direct payments, your social worker, your care manager and both national and local organisations that support disabled people. You may find it helpful to ask social services to put in writing any decisions they make about your care and support.

### Questions to ask yourself

When you are deciding about whether to receive direct payments or not, you may want to ask yourself questions about these different areas:

The services you currently receive:

- Are you happy with the service you currently receive from your council?
- If you could receive direct payments, what would you change about the service you currently receive?

### **Your local council and direct payments support service:**

- What are the experiences of people who use direct payments in your local area? How relevant are their experiences?
- How does your council offer direct payments?
- Are there any deafblind people using direct payments locally?
- Will your council award you a sufficient amount of direct payments?

### **Choice and control:**

- Would you like to have more control over choosing the staff who support you?
- Will direct payments enable you to have flexibility over when you receive support?
- Do you think direct payments could help you to be more independent and do more of the activities you'd like to do?
- Could direct payments assist a young person as they go through transition (become an adult) and start to take more control over their lives?

### **Finding staff:**

- Do you already know about staff or services that you would like to use?
- Do you think you will be able to find staff locally?
- Do you think you'd like to employ staff yourself or use self-employed or agency workers?

### **Managing direct payments:**

- What will you have to do to manage your direct payments?
- Are you happy to take on the paperwork involved or would you like to delegate all or some of these responsibilities?
- What kind of support is there in your area for people who use direct payments?

### **What kind of direct payments would you like to receive?**

Direct payments must be used to meet needs that were agreed at your assessment. Direct payments can be used to meet all of your assessed needs or just some of your assessed needs. You are entitled to ask for a mixed package of both direct payments and services. You can also ask for one-off direct payments. Depending on your assessed needs, one-off direct payments can also be used for equipment, short breaks, holidays or minor adaptations.

You should think about what it is you would like to achieve through using direct payments and try to prepare for meetings with social services. It should help you to make sure direct payments will work for you if you have some clear idea on how you would like to spend direct payments to meet your assessed needs.

## **Case studies:**

### **Four examples of different ways that direct payments can be used.**

#### **1. Regular direct payments to pay for support for all assessed needs**

Jane is a deafblind woman who has been assessed as needing 15 hours a week of communicator guide support. Jane is happy to employ a communicator guide herself and wants to have flexibility around when she receives support. Jane decides to accept direct payments and uses them to pay for all the hours of communicator guide support. Her communicator guide supports Jane both at home and outside the home. She assists Jane with household tasks such as cleaning, washing and ironing. She also guides Jane to college, as well as to leisure activities such as concerts and the cinema.

#### **2. Using one-off direct payments to pay for some assessed needs**

Steven is a deafblind man who lives in residential accommodation. His assessment also includes providing computer equipment and attending an art activity (the residential service are not able to provide this service). He has received a one-off direct payment to pay for a computer, webcam and printer. He also received a one-off direct payment to pay for enrolling in a regular art class.

#### **3. One-off direct payments for a carer's assessed needs**

Aisha is the mother of a deafblind child. She is the primary carer when her son is not at school. Aisha has had a carer's assessment and the assessment said she would benefit from a break from caring. She has decided to take a one-off direct payment to pay for a holiday for her son. This enables her to pick a holiday that will meet her son's needs, including appropriate communication and a safe environment.

#### **4. One-off direct payment for a minor adaptation**

Joy is an older deafblind woman who lives in her own home. She has been assessed as needing a grab rail in her bathroom. Due to her visual impairment, it would be better for the handrail to be in a colour that contrasts well with her bathroom wall. Joy knows where she wants to purchase the right handrail from and has decided to take a direct payment to pay for this, instead of social services providing her with their standard handrail. Joy also has the choice to buy a more expensive handrail by adding her own money to the direct payment to pay for this.

### **Alternatives to direct payments**

It is important to remember that direct payments are just one option for you when deciding how to meet your needs. If you are eligible for direct payments, this means you can also ask for your council to provide you with a service. This might be human support and/or equipment, adaptations or other one-off activities.

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## **Resources:**

**A guide to receiving direct payments from your local council, Department of Health, August 2007** (free)

**An easy guide to direct payments: giving you the choice and control, includes audio tape and CD-ROM** (free)

The Department of Health,  
Richmond House,  
79 Whitehall,  
London, SW1A 2NS.  
Telephone: 020 7210 4850  
Email: [dhmail@dh.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:dhmail@dh.gsi.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.dh.gov.uk](http://www.dh.gov.uk)

**A parent's guide to direct payments** (free)

Every Child Matters,  
Department for Children, Schools and Families,  
Sanctuary Buildings,  
Great Smith Street,  
London, SW1P 3BT.  
Telephone: 0870 000 2288  
Textphone: 01928 794274.  
Fax: 01928 794248  
Email: [info@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk](mailto:info@dcsf.gsi.gov.uk)  
Web: [www.everychildmatters.gov.uk](http://www.everychildmatters.gov.uk)

**Keeping Control: Direct Payments Guide for people over 65**

(Brief guide £5.99, complete guide £9.99)

Counsel and Care,  
Twyman House,  
16 Bonny Street,  
London, NW1 9PG.  
Telephone: 0845 300 7585  
Email: [advice@counselandcare.org.uk](mailto:advice@counselandcare.org.uk)  
Web: [www.counselandcare.org.uk](http://www.counselandcare.org.uk)