

Factsheet A16: A Guide to Direct Payments

What are Direct Payments?

If you choose to receive money from the council to arrange your own support this is called Direct Payments.

To receive Direct Payments you will need to have been assessed as eligible for social care services by Norfolk County Council Social Services. For more information on this you can contact Norfolk County Council on 0344 800 8020.

Direct Payments can give you more choice and control over how your support needs are met, helping you live more independently.

Rosa's Story

Rosa is the mother of two children, Josh and Annie. Josh has autism and needs a lot of care. Annie would like to be able to attend a drama club, but has not been able to go as Rosa cannot leave Josh at home alone, and cannot take him to the club as he has been known to exhibit challenging behaviour in unfamiliar environments. Rosa's partner works late into the evening so is unable to stay at home with Josh. With Josh's direct payments, Rosa has been able to employ a personal assistant who can come and sit with Josh while Rosa takes Annie to drama.

Thinking about the support you need

Before you receive Direct Payments you will need to think about the support you might need to manage them. This support can come from many places, including



your friends and family. You can also receive support from Equal Lives.

The amount of support you will need might depend on how you choose to use your Direct Payments. For example, you might need a lot more advice and support if you decide to employ your own Personal Assistants.

Before you receive Direct Payments you should think about anything that might go wrong, or anything you might struggle with. You can then think about who might be able to support you with these things, or whether you can arrange them better from the start.

Thinking about how to meet your needs

Some people choose to use their Direct Payments to employ their own Personal Assistants, as this gives them more control over how their needs are met, by whom and when. If you take on Personal Assistants then you become their employer and this brings with it certain responsibilities. You can find more advice on becoming an employer in the Advice Sheet called 'Employing with your Direct Payments'.

Another option is to use a care agency or self-employed workers. You can find more information about this in the booklet called 'Using a service provider or self-employed workers'. If you arrange your support in this way then you do not become an employer.

Getting the money

You have a choice as to how you receive your money. But remember that whichever option you choose, you are still responsible for this money and how it is spent. The first option is to open your own bank account which has no other



money going in or out of it.

The other option is to use Equal Lives' Supported Account service. If you choose to use this service, the money is paid into an account we hold on your behalf, but you are still responsible for this money and how it is spent. For more information please see the 'Equal Lives Supported Account Service' factsheet.

You can change your mind and move from managing your money yourself to using Equal Lives' supported account service or vice versa at anytime. For further information or advice you can contact your Equal Lives Adviser.

Putting things in place

If you have chosen to use your Direct Payments to employ your own staff, you may need to recruit your Personal Assistants. You can find more advice on this in the booklet called 'Employing with your Direct Payments'. Alternatively, you may already know the person who you are going to employ.

Keeping Records

One of the conditions of using Direct Payments is that you keep records of how you have spent the money. You will also need to complete some forms for the Norfolk County Council Direct Payments Team every four weeks to show how you have spent the money. These are called financial monitoring forms and you should receive some copies of these from the council, once your Direct Payments start. Equal Lives can provide you with advice and support to complete your first set of monitoring forms if you wish.

If you choose to use Equal Lives' supported Accounts service then we will provide the council with these records on your behalf.



What if I run out of money?

You may be able to access some additional funds for emergencies and unexpected costs. Any requests for additional funding need to be made via Children's Services. If you have a supported account at Equal Lives, your adviser can support you to do this.

Instances where you may be able to access contingency funding include covering unforeseen employment costs; initial insurance costs; or high advertising costs. There may be times when you are refused contingency funding, for example, when:

- You are paying your staff wages above the guideline rate;
- You are paying for more hours than agreed in your assessment;
- You have spent the money on something other than your assessed support; or
- You have not kept records, or have not sent them to the Norfolk County Council Direct Payments Team (if you are using Equal Lives' supported account service we will do this for you).

For more information on how to access contingency funding you can speak to your social worker, or the Access Team on 01603 692455.

If you require further information or would like this factsheet in an alternative format you can contact us by calling: 01508 491210, by emailing: info@equallives.org.uk, or by writing to: Equal Lives, 15 Manor Farm Barns, Fox Road, Framingham Pigot, Norfolk, NR14 7PZ.

