

Embec Care Ltd The Wise Choice

Fact sheet

Information about Direct Payments

Direct payments are made by the local council. They're for people who are assessed as needing help from social services, and prefer to arrange and pay for their own care and support services. This is instead of receiving them directly from the local council.

You must be able to give your consent to receive direct payments. You must be able to manage them even if you need help to do this on a day-to-day basis.

Eligibility

If you already receive social services

Your local council must offer you the option of direct payments in place of the services you currently receive. There are some limited circumstances where you are not given this choice. Your council will be able to tell you about these.

If you are not receiving social services

To get direct payments, you need to contact your local council to ask them to assess your needs. Social services - and therefore direct payments - are normally available if you are:

- disabled and aged 16 or over
- a carer aged 16 or over, including people with parental responsibility for a disabled child
- an older person

If you have been refused social services

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

How much you can get

The amount you receive will depend on the assessment your council makes of your needs.

How it is paid

Direct payments are made directly into your bank, building society, Post Office or National Savings account.

If you need someone who cares for you to collect your money, or you are registered blind, payment can be made by sending a cheque. This can be cashed at the Post Office.

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How to apply for direct payments

If you already get services, ask your local council about direct payments.

If you're applying for services for the first time, your social worker should discuss *direct payments with you when they assess your care needs*.

What you can use direct payments for

The money is to pay for the services and equipment which will meet your needs, as assessed by your local council.

Generally, councils should let you to choose how best to meet your assessed needs. This is as long as they are satisfied that agreed support arrangements are being met.

What you cannot use direct payments for

You cannot use direct payments to pay for permanent residential accommodation. But you may use direct payments to pay for occasional short periods in residential accommodation, if your council agrees that is what you need.

Unless your council decides that exceptional circumstances make it necessary, you cannot use direct payments to pay for a service from:

- your spouse (husband or wife)
- your civil partner
- a partner with whom you live as a couple
- a close relative with whom you live, or the spouse or partner of that close relative

Record keeping

If you receive direct payments, you will need to account for the money you spend. Your council will tell you what records you need to keep and what information you will be expected to provide. Examples include timesheets signed by personal assistants, or receipts for services from agencies.

The council has to be satisfied that the needs for which it is giving you direct payments are being met. They should tell you how they will go about this. This may involve a visit to your home.

Effect on other benefits

Direct payments are not a replacement of income and therefore do not affect any other benefits you may be receiving.