



Direct Payment policy

May 2013 Version 1

Introduction

This policy explains Direct Payments in Somerset. It includes:

- Our principles
- What is a Direct Payment
- Who can have a Direct Payment
- Who cannot have a Direct Payment
- Direct Payments for equipment
- How Direct Payments work

Our Principles

1. We want people to remain in control of their lives, to remain independent and to have the opportunity to make their own choices about their care and support arrangements.
2. We will achieve this by our Direct Payment system being as simple as possible and allowing people true autonomy to meet their care and support needs.

What is a Direct Payment?

A Direct Payment is funding given to a person who has been assessed as being eligible for social care services. It will give them flexibility to arrange and purchase care and support for themselves to meet their personal preferences.

Receiving a Direct Payment will not affect any entitlement to benefits.

Who can have a Direct Payment?

A person can have a Direct Payment if:

- They have the capacity to ask for a Direct Payment, and do so, (or, if they do not have capacity, a request is made on their behalf).
- Their needs meet the Council's eligibility criteria for care and support.
- Their income and capital is below the capital threshold, which will mean that the local authority must contribute to the cost of their care and support.
- They are capable of managing direct payments either by themselves or with whatever help may be available.

If someone doesn't have the capacity to manage a Direct Payment we can arrange for someone to receive the Direct Payment on their behalf, for example, a friend, family member or volunteer.

People may still choose for us to arrange some or all of their care and support. If someone is already receiving care and support from us, they can choose to change to a Direct Payment at any time. Similarly, someone receiving a Direct Payment may choose to cease receiving the payments and have us arrange their care and support.

Who cannot have a Direct Payment?

The law specifically excludes people who are placed under certain conditions by courts relating to drug/alcohol dependencies.

Direct Payments for equipment

At present equipment that has been prescribed by the County Council's Occupational Therapists is ordered directly from a company call Medequip. Our Direct Payment scheme will be extended to cover the purchase of equipment during 2013.

Direct Payments for young people

Financial assessments do not apply to Direct Payments provided to children and young people under the age of eighteen.

The Fair Access to Care rules are only relevant to Adult Social Care, they do not apply to assessments carried out by Children's Social Care

How Direct Payments work

We aim to make setting up and managing Direct Payments as simple as possible. We will provide clear information and advice to support people with a Direct Payment.

Our procedures will be as "light touch" as possible. The procedures we do have are to make sure that we:

- Adhere to the law and national Direct Payment guidance
- Protect Direct Payment users and/or the people who manage a Direct Payment on their behalf, for example, from financial abuse
- Make sure that people's care and support needs are met
- Protect council tax money to make sure it is spent on meeting eligible care and support needs.

We always recommend people obtain independent financial advice.