

Direct Payments for care in North Somerset

Fact sheet 3

Using a direct payment to pay an agency

A direct payment (also called a DP) is a sum of money from the council to use to arrange and pay for your care and support.

The aim is to give you greater flexibility, more choice and control over the support you get. If you get a direct payment, you can decide how your needs will be met, by whom, and when. Many people find that employing a personal assistant can give them more autonomy over their care (see fact sheet 2). A direct payment can be used to employ a personal assistant, an agency or other services that will meet your outcomes. You can also use a combination of any of the options.

This fact sheet explains how to use your direct payment if you choose to employ an agency.

Employing an agency

You may already know which agency you would like to use if not, the DP Support Team can point you to care agencies or a directory of agencies. It is then your choice which you use, depending on availability.

The amount of your direct payment reflects the level of cost that the council could reasonably be expected to pay to meet your eligible needs – your personal budget. Some agencies charge more than others. It is important that you understand what the agency charges and whether it can be met within your personal budget.



If you find an agency that you wish to use and it is within your personal budget then you can go ahead and use your direct payment to pay the agency. You will need to keep your invoices and receipts.

If a care agency you wish to use charge you more than your direct payment, then please tell your social care worker or direct payment support team. In these circumstances it may be preferable for the council to commission the agency on your behalf as the council can sometimes buy the service at a set rate.

If you are unable to find any provider, then please tell your social care worker. The council will work with you to find a solution. This may involve the council arranging a service whilst you continue to look, or you may decide to ask the council to arrange the support longer term.

Topping up your direct payment

We advise using a provider which meets your identified support needs within the amount of your direct payment.

However, if you decide that you wish to proceed with having a direct payment to purchase a provider costing more than your direct payment amount then you would be required to pay the difference in cost yourself.

For example, if your direct payment was £150 per week but the care agency you want would charge you £250 per week you would need to pay the difference of £100 per week out of your own money, this would be in addition to your assessed contribution. Think carefully about the financial commitment involved before you do this to ensure that it is affordable in the long term.

There may be exceptional circumstances where the council would consider paying a higher amount for your direct payment to enable you to purchase a more expensive provider directly. Exceptions would only be considered if there were significantly better outcomes for you using a direct payment to exercise your own choice, compared to the council commissioning a care agency for you.

You can change your mind at any time and ask the council to commission the care on your behalf. You would be required to repay any unused part of your direct payment.

How to contact North Somerset social services:

Care connect is the first point of contact for all social services adult care general enquiries.

Care Connect

Town Hall

Walliscotte Grove Road

Weston-super-Mare

BS23 1UJ

Telephone: 01275 888 801

email: careconnect@n-somerset.gov.uk

Council documents can be made available in large print, audio, easy read and other formats. Documents on our website can also be emailed to you as plain text files. Help is also available for people who require council information in languages other than English. Contact Jennifer.monks@n-somerset.gov.uk