

Directorate of Children's Services

Help with Direct Payments

Making all the arrangements for your direct payments is not complicated and there is support from A4e to help you. Here are some guidelines to get you started.

1. **How often will the money be paid?**

The money will be paid 4 weekly in advance. The first payment to the end of the current 4 weekly cycle will include an extra week's money for contingencies.

2. **What is included in the direct payments monies?**

- 2.1 The hourly rate should provide enough money to purchase a service privately from some domiciliary agencies or to employ a personal assistant.
- 2.2 If you choose to employ a personal assistant(s) the rate should cover, 4 weeks holiday pay, eight bank holidays, tax and National Insurance. This means it is high so that these things can be saved up for.
- 2.3 A4e can help you to calculate what you can afford to pay your staff and provide a payroll service funded by Children's Services but free of charge to those who receive direct payments,
- 2.4 Start up costs can be paid for initial advertising insurance, CRB checks and training if required. All other costs, which may be to replace staff, should be paid through the hourly rate. Sometimes there may be problems for example, if there are a lot of new staff to employ. A risk of the account running into deficit due.

3. **Will I need to keep any financial records?**

Yes Dudley MBC will send you quarterly returns to be completed and returned together with your bank statements for the quarter. **A4e can assist with the completion of these returns.** In addition, a member of staff from the Council's Accountancy Section will contact you after a year to complete a full audit and return, for further audits on a regular programme. They will need to see proof of all outgoings from your care account, including Bank statements, cheque books and paying in books,

financial records of income and expenditure, summary of care provided and any daily diary sheets/signed, timesheets, invoices and receipts, PAYE, National Insurance and any other payroll records.

All records should be kept for 6 years

4. Under what circumstances could my direct payment be increased or reduced?

4.1 The amount of your direct payment may be either increased or reduced if your care needs have changed. This would happen following any reassessment or review when a social worker will visit to check that your needs are being met through direct payments and that the money is spent properly. Your child's care arrangements will be reviewed after 3 months and then yearly.

4.2 You are obliged to notify your social worker of any admissions to hospital or periods when your need for help changes. It is expected that your Personal Assistant will be paid 75% of their normal wages as a retainer during hospital admissions but must still be available for work. Your Social Worker will make contact after 4 weeks to check that the situation has not changed. Any money which may have built up in your account due to a temporary suspension or reduction in your support package may have to be returned to the Council this would happen after an audit.

5. Under what circumstances would I have to repay any part of the direct Payments?

5.1 At annual audit, any funds which have built up in the care account equivalent to more than 12 weeks direct payment will be need to be repaid to the Council, unless there is good reason (for example accumulation of funds for short breaks or some outstanding bills to pay). If lots of money builds up in your account, it may indicate that the assessed care needs are not being met or that the original assessment was incorrect.

5.2 Your direct payments will be suspended if any money has been misspent or you have not purchased a service which would achieve the outcomes identified in your child's care plan. Money will have to be repaid to the council even if this has been spent incorrectly over a long period of time.

6. What if my care arrangements break down?

We encourage everyone to make arrangements in case of emergencies but there may be situations when someone receiving direct payments is unable to find a way of getting their needs met. In these circumstances, alternative care arrangements to meet the needs which are most critical will be made by Children's' Services but they

may not be met in the same way as they were with the direct payment. Direct Payments will not be paid for the period that care is provided by the Children's Services.

REMEMBER

Once you start your Direct Payment A4e staff, your social worker or nurse will try to help you sort out any "teething problems". If this seems a lot to think about, don't worry. Help is available every step of the way including help to keep the direct payments flowing so the support from A4e will be ongoing.

Remember why you chose direct payments:

- **So you could choose who provides the help you need, when they provide and what they do**
- **To have more flexibility**
- **To be imaginative!**

Date of Production 7 June 2005

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