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Factsheet G6 Direct Payments

People who are eligible for services from Hertfordshire County Council can now have cash equal to the cost of services (a 'direct payment'), with which to buy their own support services if they prefer. Direct payments are available to people over 16 in their own right, to parents of a disabled child and to carers. A direct payment to carers comes in the form of a carers grant resulting from a carers assessment - see factsheet G3.

A direct payment to the person cared for aims to give people choice, flexibility and control over the support they receive. It allows them to choose whether to have all or part of their care package paid for by direct payments, or to continue to receive services directly provided by the county council as before.

Who is eligible for a direct payment?

The person must be:

- eligible for services from the County Council
- not restricted by Department of Health guidance (see 'Exclusions')
- willing and able to be in control of decisions about care and be able to manage direct payments, either alone or with assistance (if direct payments are for a child, the person with parental responsibility should manage them on the child's behalf)

Exclusions

Anyone who has given Power of Attorney to someone else, and that Power has been registered with the Court of Protection, cannot have direct payments from the date of registration. Certain people under Mental Health legislation are also excluded:

- People subject to a Guardianship order
- People covered by a supervised discharge from hospital
- People detained under mental health legislation, or on leave of absence from hospital
- Anyone conditionally discharged from hospital under home office restrictions
- Anyone receiving aftercare from hospital where there has been a compulsory court order for the care
- Any offender who as part of the treatment has to undergo treatment for a mental health condition or drug or alcohol programme
- Offenders released on licence and part of the licence is to undergo treatment

How to get a direct payment

Anyone already receiving services from the county council should contact their social worker to discuss the option of changing to direct payments. If care services are not yet in place, or there is no named social worker, contact Hertfordshire County Council (phone numbers below) to request an assessment or re-assessment, explaining that you are interested in direct payments.

How much will a direct payment be?

This is normally equivalent to the cost of the services that would be directly provided by the county council. Depending on the age of the person receiving the direct payment, and their income / savings, they may have to contribute towards the costs of their support. In this case the direct payment will be reduced by this amount.

The information contained on this sheet is correct at the time of issue.

Carers in Hertfordshire takes no responsibility for any inaccuracy in facts supplied to them

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What can I use a direct payment for?

The social worker carrying out the assessment can give guidance on how to use the money. Examples of how direct payments have been used in the past include employing personal assistants, home carers, befrienders, paying for practical assistance in the home, buying day service activities or respite care. Direct Payments cannot be used to purchase local authority services, permanent residential and nursing care or for housing & NHS services.

Independent Living Fund (ILF)

The ILF is a trust set up by the government to provide cash payments to disabled adults, which they can use to purchase personal assistance. To find out if you qualify for the ILF, you should contact your social worker.

Where can I go for further information and support?

If you would like to be sent a copy of a useful guide to direct payments, please contact us, stating whether you would like the version for parents of children with disabilities, or for adults receiving direct payments in their own right.

Organisations to provide you with information and advice about direct payments:

Hertfordshire County Council Adult Care Services 01438 737400
Hertfordshire County Council Children, Schools and Families 01438 737500
www.hertsdirect.org

National Centre for Independent Living (for information on direct payments)
Tel: 020 7587 1663 Website: www.ncil.org.uk

Leonard Cheshire Direct Payments Support Scheme
(provide support in managing direct payments, including recruiting staff)
Tel: 01462 439002 Fax: 01462 423245 Website: www.directpayments.info

The Department of Health (for guidance and policy updates)
Tel: 020 7210 4580 Website: www.dh.gov.uk

Nannytax (Payroll Services for Parents and Nannies)
Tel: 0845 226 2203 Website: www.nannytax.co.uk

The Rowan Organisation – Information Services for Disabled People
Tel: 01827 718972 Website: www.therowan.org

Disability Alliance (for advice on benefits and direct payments)
Tel: 020 7247 8776 Website: www.disabilityalliance.org

Independent Living Fund (Provides information and advice on the ILF)
Tel: 0845 601 8815 Website: www.ilf.org.uk

Carers in Hertfordshire has an information video about direct payments for parents of children with disabilities which can be loaned to parents free of charge. If you would like to borrow a copy, please call us.