

Direct Payments and Personal Budgets Frequently Asked Questions for Children and Young People

During the current social distancing measures there have been a number of questions fed back to the Council by the Sutton Parent Carer Forum and our short breaks providers regarding the use of Direct Payments and Personal Budgets. This document looks to answer these questions and at how the Council can continue to support you at this time. The Council aims to work flexibly to ensure that you can access support whilst staying home and staying safe. Where the answer refers to Direct Payments it means both a Personal Budget and a Direct Payment.

1. Prior to the current social restrictions being put in place, I was receiving a service that was commissioned by the Council. Due to social distancing measures I can no longer access this service. Can I receive Direct Payments to support me whilst the current restrictions are in place?

ANSWER: Some providers are continuing to deliver services virtually. They are offering group and individual video activities that you can access. If you would like to find out more please contact the Children With Disabilities Team and they can refer you to a service that will support you.

If you wish you can switch to a Direct Payment or personal budget. If you wish to do this please contact the Children With Disabilities Team.

2. If I moved to a Direct Payment, how much would I receive?

ANSWER: This will vary dependant on your child's needs. The usual rate is £10.70 per hour but you may receive more if your child has a higher level of need.

3. If I moved to a Direct Payment would I be able to move back to receiving a Council commissioned service once the current measures are relaxed?

ANSWER: The Council wishes to be as flexible as possible at this time. As things change you can choose which type of support you prefer.

4. How would I receive my Direct Payment money?

ANSWER: If you are currently receiving Direct Payments into a self managed account (personal bank account), your payment will be made into this account.

If you are currently receiving Direct Payments into a Sutton Prepaid Card account, your payment will be made into this account.

If you are a new user to Direct Payments, this payment will be made into a Sutton Prepaid Card account. A member of the Encompass Team will contact you to organise setting up this account.

5. What do I do with the receipts for items purchased with the Direct Payment?

ANSWER: If your Direct Payment is paid into a self managed account (personal bank account), please keep hard copies of these receipts for monitoring purposes. If you have online receipts for any purchases, please forward these to dcf.finance@sutton.gov.uk

If you have a Sutton Prepaid Card account, please upload any receipts to the 'Upload Supporting Documents' section of your account. If you are having difficulties with this process, you can forward receipts to dcf.finance@sutton.gov.uk and request that this is done on your behalf.

6. Whilst the current measures are in place, can I use my Direct Payment to pay someone living in my household to look after my child or take them out to provide me with a break from caring?

ANSWER: The Direct Payment legislation does not allow payment of someone living in the same household to be employed to provide support. You can use the direct payment to pay a family member who does not live with you to provide support as long as the Children With Disabilities Team agrees that this family member will meet your child's needs. In very exceptional circumstances we may consider this if your usual care is not available or there are specific reasons this is required.

7. Is there a maximum weekly expenditure for my Direct Payment or can I use it all to buy one item that will support my family?

ANSWER: We want to be as flexible as possible to support you at this time and have set the following spending bands with levels of approval:

Under £50 - No authorisation required.

Between £50 and £99 - Authorisation from Children With Disabilities Team Finance Officer chrishen.mootoosamy@sutton.gov.uk

Between £100 and £299 - Authorisation from Children With Disabilities Assistant Team Manager or Team Manager and the reason for the spend needs to be clearly stated.

Over £300 - Authorisation from Head of service -All age learning disability and the reason for the spend needs to be clearly stated.

8. Can I use my Direct Payment to buy more expensive equipment such as equipment for the garden to keep children entertained e.g. a trampoline/ slide and swing set etc, sports equipment?

ANSWER: As stated above we want to be as flexible as possible to support you at this time. As with other large single item purchases please contact the Children With Disabilities team to get confirmation that your purchase is valid.

9. Can I use my Direct Payment to buy items to support my child such as sensory equipment, games, cookery ingredients/equipment for specific activities, art and craft activities, seeds etc. for planting

ANSWER: Direct Payments are meant to be for care and support but in these exceptional times we want to support you to provide other activities to keep your child active and entertained.

10. Can I use my Direct Payment for subscriptions to magazines, TV packages e.g. subscription to Netflix

ANSWER: It is important that your child remains stimulated at this time and has access to things that help them throughout the day and which might give you a much needed break. We would support the purchase of these items as long as they are reasonable and the purpose of the purchase is to support your child.

11. Can I use my Direct Payment to purchase a tablet or laptop to allow my family to access online virtual short breaks, other activities and have visual contact with friends and family?

ANSWER: You may be able to get technology support from your child's education provider. Please contact them to see if you are eligible for this support. If you do not qualify for the government scheme please contact the Children With Disabilities team to discuss the identified need for the purchase.

12. If I were to buy an item to support my family is there a value over which I will need to obtain approval from the Children With Disabilities Team?

ANSWER: This would depend on the item you are purchasing. When you speak to the Children With Disabilities team you can discuss the cost of the item. We would advise you to look at different suppliers to obtain the lowest price for the item.

13. Is there a list of things I can purchase with my Direct Payment?

ANSWER: There is not a set list of items that can be purchased with your Direct Payment. This depends on the support that your child requires over the current period. If you have identified something that you would like to purchase please contact the Children With Disabilities team to discuss items that you think will help you at this time.

14. If I cannot spend my Direct Payment because of the current restrictions, will the council take the money back or can I save the money up for when restrictions are eased?

ANSWER: We do not propose to take back any Direct Payment money that you have not spent at present. We will review budgets once the restrictions have been lifted and discuss your plans for using your Direct Payment or Personal Budget.

15. If I have further questions regarding use of my Direct Payment who should I contact?

ANSWER: If your child is under 18 you should contact the Children With Disabilities Team.

If your child is aged 18 to 25 years old you should contact the Encompass Support Service or the Direct Payments team.

Contact details for both areas are given below.

USEFUL CONTACTS

For children and young people **under 18**

Direct Payment team at Sutton: 0208 770 6047

Short Breaks /finance officer in CWD team: Chrishen. Mootosamy

chrishen.mootosamy@sutton.gov.uk

For young people aged **18 to 25 years old**

Encompass Support Service: 0208 915 2395

Direct Payment team at Sutton: 0208 770 6047