



Self-directed support

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Please help us to continue to provide free information to people affected by brain injury by making a donation at www.headway.org.uk/donate. Thank you.

Introduction

This factsheet is intended for anyone who is currently receiving help from social services, or who may require social support in the future. It explains how self-directed support operates and how you can make sure you get the help and support you need.

Local authorities have changed how they offer support to adults. In the past, if you were assessed as needing help, local authorities would offer you a programme of services. Now, under the self-directed support scheme, you will be offered money to choose to fund your own services that suit you best.

However, a brain injury can cause people to lack self-awareness and understanding of their own personal needs. For this reason, it is important that help is sought from others when applying for self-directed support. Friends and family members may be able to help, as well as many of Headway's Groups and Branches. Details of how to contact these and other sources of support are given at the end of this factsheet.

What is self-directed support?

Self-directed support is a relatively new scheme which has been introduced across the United Kingdom. The scheme puts the person at the centre of the support planning process and intends to give people power and control over what their social support is and how it is delivered. It may be referred to as 'personalisation' or 'personal budgets'.

Anyone who is currently receiving support from social services, or may be eligible to do so, will be entitled to apply for care under the scheme via your local social services department. You do not have to use this system and as long as you have made an informed decision, social services can still be fully involved in planning and delivering your support. However, self-directed support does offer people many advantages over the old system. For example, you can arrange to have support staff visit you at times of your choosing and enjoy the flexibility of using your budget to purchase services that meet your needs more creatively than the services provided by your local authority.



Self-directed support will operate slightly differently in different areas depending on how each local authority implements it. This factsheet provides a general overview of how the scheme works in most places.

How can you self-direct your care and support?

There are a number of ways this can be done:

A personal budget – This refers to money allocated to an individual by the local authority in order to fund their assessed social care and support needs.

An individual budget – This combines resources from different funding areas as well as social care funding, such as health care, the Independent Living Fund or Supporting People Funding.

A direct payment – This refers to payments made directly to you so you can arrange your own support. They can be in regular instalments or one-off payments.

A personal health budget – This is an allocation of resources made to a person with an established health or wellbeing need, or to their immediate representative.

How to get self-directed support

First steps

To apply for self-directed support, contact your local social services and ask for an assessment. You may be asked some initial questions about your circumstances, as social services will need to decide whether you are eligible before they can offer you an assessment. Generally, people with a disability or older people are considered to be eligible for an assessment.

If you are already receiving help from social services and would like to change to self-directed support, you should speak to your social worker about this.

Self-assessment form

The next stage is completing a self-assessment form to explain what support you need. Social support must make the form available in an accessible format, for example, in large print or electronically. Some local authorities offer forms that can be completed over the internet.



You can ask for help with filling in the form from a social worker who understands brain injury and its effects, friends, family members or someone who supports you at Headway.

There is no standard form, but it will look at the areas of your life in which you might need support:

- Meeting personal care needs – for example, eating, washing, dressing and shopping
- Relationships – family, friends and people you know
- Being part of the community – for example, using local shops, the library, clubs, community centre, church or other place of worship, helping neighbours and being involved in local organisations
- Work, leisure and learning – having a job, learning new things and enjoying life
- Making decisions – who decides important things like where you live, who supports you and who looks after your money
- Staying safe from harm – for example, taking the bus, using a gas cooker and going down stairs
- Complex needs and risks – can your behaviour be dangerous for you or other people?
- Family carer – if someone in your family supports you, what effect does supporting you have on them?

Under each category you will be asked to tick a box to say whether it applies to you and then explain what your difficulties are. It is important to give as much information as possible, as social services will use this information to estimate how much money will be allocated to pay for your support.

Self-directed support money can also be used to help prevent future difficulties. It is important to think about whether you might experience problems in the future if you don't get help now and it is important that you convey this on the assessment form. For example, you may be a very sociable person and you may feel that without meeting people regularly or attending a support group, you could become isolated.

The form usually ends with a section for you to make additional comments. You should use this section to tell social services any additional information about your support needs



that you have not already included on the form. Try to consider the physical, emotional, behavioural and cognitive effects of your brain injury when completing this section. Do not assume that social services will automatically consider these things as they may not have an understanding of the effects of brain injury.

When you have completed the form, you need to send it back to social services. If the return address isn't clear, contact social services or speak to your social worker to ask.

Deciding how much your budget will be

Social services will review your form to estimate how much money you need for your support. They also take into account how much money the local authority has available for care services.

Social services will contact you to let you know how much your budget will be. This is the money, or 'personal budget', that you will have to buy services, adaptations, support or equipment to meet your needs.

Making a support plan

Once you have been told how much your budget will be, you need to make a support plan indicating how you intend to use the allocated funds. Keep in mind the needs you identified in your self-assessment form. Again, you may find it useful to ask for help from a social worker who understands brain injury and its effects, friends, family members or someone who supports you at Headway.

You can give your support plan to social services in any format, such as in writing, by email, by audio recording, over the telephone or in person. Remember to keep a record of what you have asked for.

The plan can be as detailed or as simple as you would like, as long as it covers each of the elements listed below, otherwise social services will ask for more information:

What is most important to you – This can be people, places and routines, as well as any help you need. For example, it may be that visiting relatives or friends, gardening, getting to a regular social or religious activity, or attending a Headway support group is important to you.

What your goals are and what you want to achieve – The plan should indicate what changes you want to make, what you want to achieve and what you need to make it happen. These goals can include anything at all, as long as they are realistic and



achievable.

How you will be supported – Tell social services what kind of support you want, when you will need that help, how you want it provided and by whom. You also need to explain how you would cope with possible problems. For example, if a family member normally takes you shopping, who will do this when they are unavailable?

How you will spend your personal budget – You need to explain how you will use your budget to pay for this support. You will be able to decide which services, adaptations, equipment or support you want that best meets your needs and goals. Some examples of how you might use this money include:

- Services such as those provided by a Headway Group or Branch
- Employing personal assistants/carers to help with washing, dressing, cleaning, shopping, travelling or participating in leisure activities
- Equipment such as communication or mobility aids
- Memory aids such as pagers and personal digital assistants, smart phones, tablets or laptop computers
- Alterations to your home
- Money for transport or to reimburse relatives who regularly drive you places
- A break away
- Anything you think would help meet your needs

How you would like your money to be paid – You can choose any or a mix of the following:

- **A direct payment** – These are usually paid in monthly instalments or as one-off payments. Direct payments are a good option if you want to be responsible for managing and spending the money yourself.
- **An indirect payment** – These are usually paid to a relative or person known to you. Indirect payments are a good option if you do not want the responsibility of handling the money yourself.



- **An indirect payment to a trust** – A trust can be set up whereby three or more people are able to manage your money for you. For example, three relatives might share the job of managing the money.
- **As a care managed package** – Social services can look after the money for you.
- **As an individual service fund** – A sum of money can be managed by a service provider on behalf of an individual. The money is restricted for use on providing care and support services for that individual which meet the criteria set out in their support plan. It can include services purchased from other providers.
- **As a broker managed fund** – A brokerage service can manage the money for you (see section ‘Brokerage services’).

How your support will be managed – You need to explain how your support will be organised day-to-day and how the money will be managed. For example, you may organise the care for yourself or someone else might arrange this for you. If you are going to employ a personal assistant or carer, social services will need to know that you understand your responsibilities as an employer, and they will inform you who can advise and support you with this.

How you will stay in control of your life – Social services want to ensure you are making the decisions about your support. You should explain that the decisions are your own and if others help you, explain how they involve you with decisions. You should also indicate when you would like your support plan to be reviewed.

What you are going to do to make the plan work – This is an action plan where you set out what will happen and when. For example, if you have asked for money towards a computer and software, you could say when and where you are going to buy it, as well as how you will learn to use it. Social services need to make sure that you have thought through the practicalities of getting and using the support you ask for.

Getting the plan agreed

If your social worker is happy that your plan will meet your needs and that you can get what you have asked for within your budget, they will sign it off. If they need any more information from you to make their decision, they will contact you.

Organising the money

Once your plan is agreed, social services will arrange for the money to be paid, either to



you or to whomever will manage your money. See the section 'How you will spend your personal budget' for more information.

Organising the support

The recipient of the money is then responsible for organising the help needed. This may be buying equipment, employing a personal assistant or carer, arranging trips, or any other help and assistance required.

Social services will put you (or the person receiving the money on your behalf) in touch with local voluntary and community organisations who can advise on anything related to organising the support. For example, advice on employment issues, insurance or taxes, or more general support if needed.

Will you have to make a contribution?

You may be asked to make a contribution towards your budget depending on your savings and income. You will be asked to complete a form explaining how much money you have saved and what your income is from earnings, benefits, pensions and investments. This is sometimes called a 'means test'.

Brokerage services

Brokerage services are independent organisations that help you to find and organise the support you need. A brokerage service may also help you manage your individual budget, find carers, personal assistants and support groups, and help you with your duties as an employer, such as employment contracts, tax and National Insurance contributions. There is normally a charge for brokerage services, but this should be built into your individual budget.

The availability and type of brokerage services varies across the United Kingdom. Your social services department or social worker will be able to provide you with details of local services.

Monitoring and review

You can ask for your self-directed support package to be reviewed at any time. A review should be carried out at least once a year and social services will normally contact you to arrange this. If you have not heard from them or if you would like a review sooner, you can contact social services yourself to request this.



The review should cover how the help is working, consider any difficulties that have arisen and any additional help or changes you would like. You can also use the review to think about and plan for future needs.

Can my carer still receive support?

A carer who provides assistance to you is entitled to a carer's assessment. Some local authorities include the carer's assessment as part of the self-assessment form. You can complete the form together and return it to social services.

Some carers may want a separate assessment, often due to pressure they feel from caring. If so, your carer can request his or her own assessment from social services, which may reveal that they are also entitled to a personal budget.

What to do if you disagree with a decision

If you disagree with the decisions that social services make at any stage of the process, you have a right to challenge the decision. For example, you may be unhappy that:

- They did not allow you to fill in the self-assessment form because they did not believe you will be eligible for help; or
- They had too much influence and you did not have enough choice; or
- They will not sign off your support plan even though you feel it meets the outcomes you want and addresses all necessary points; or
- They are not giving you enough money to get the support you need

You can ask social services to look at their decision again informally. However, if this does not change the decision and you want to challenge the decision more formally, you can make an official complaint.

Contact your local authority for details of their complaints procedure, or contact the Headway helpline for more information and to discuss your situation.

Your local Headway Group or Branch and your Headway Regional Co-ordinator may be able to support you to contest a decision.



Sources of further support

For more information about brain injury and its effects, visit our website at www.headway.org.uk/information-library.

For further information about self-directed support, contact **In Control**. This is a national charity set up to assist local authorities in delivering personalisation. Their website contains a range of information about self-directed support, including a number of freely downloadable factsheets. Visit www.in-control.org.uk or call **01564 821 650**.

For information specific to self-directed support in Scotland, visit the Scottish Government's self-directed support website at www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk.

To discuss any issues raised in this factsheet, or to find details of our Groups and Branches, please contact the Headway helpline free of charge on 0808 800 2244 (Monday – Friday, 9am-5pm) or by email at helpline@headway.org.uk.

You can also find more information and contact details of Groups and Branches on our website at www.headway.org.uk/supporting-you.

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