

Information sheet C6 – Care and support planning

This information sheet is about how we will work with you to plan your care and support, if a needs assessment confirms that this is necessary.

Information sheets C1 and C2 explain what a needs assessment is, when it may be beneficial for you, and what questions we will ask during a needs assessment. This information sheet explains what will happen after a needs assessment, if you have needs which are eligible for publicly-funded support. (Information sheet C3 explains how we decide whether your needs are eligible.)

This sheet is about care and support that we arrange or pay for -- but if you are making your own arrangements privately, we will also offer you any advice and assistance that you need to do that.

■ The stages of care and support planning

There are a number of stages to care and support planning:

- First, we will estimate how much care and support from paid care workers you will require to meet your eligible needs, after taking account of any support you will be getting from carers (family members or friends).
- Based on this we will calculate an “indicative personal budget” – an estimate of how much it might cost you to pay care workers to meet your needs. We will also work out what you can afford to pay yourself towards the cost of your care and support. Information Sheet C8 explains how we work out what people will have to contribute towards the costs themselves.
- You will then have a choice about whether you want to control the funding for your care and support directly (which we recommend), or whether you prefer us to make arrangements for you.
- If you choose to control the funding yourself, we will give you any help you need to plan your arrangements. The indicative personal budget will act as a guide to what is a reasonable cost, but we will agree with you an actual personal budget which may be more or less than this amount.
- If you ask us to arrange your care and support, we will still try to make sure that you have as much choice and control as you can, and we will still tell you what the personal budget is that we are spending on your behalf.

■ Controlling the funding yourself (direct payments)

The advantage of controlling the funding yourself as a “direct payment” is that you can make more flexible arrangements, to suit the way you want to live and the needs of your carers. You don't have to deal with complicated paperwork yourself – there are companies which can deal with all the administrative aspects of employing care workers on your behalf, and you can pay for this from your direct payment. If you aren't able to make all of the decisions about your support arrangements yourself, we may be able to make the payments to someone else, such as a family member.

Information Sheet C7 has more information about direct payments.

■ Asking us to arrange your care and support

You can ask us to arrange either all of your care and support services or just some of them. If you are happy to deal directly with the people providing some elements of your care and support, we recommend that you take a direct payment for those parts of your care and support plan, even if you prefer us to arrange the rest.

How we will arrange care and support depends on what it is that you need:

- If you need help in your own home, we will usually arrange this from the home care agency which we have a contract with to provide this service in your area. The advantage of this is that this agency has a substantial number of staff in your area, and should be able to ensure reliable cover if your usual care workers are not available. If you have a specific preference for a different agency, we will try to meet this, though we will usually not pay more than our contracted agency would charge us. You can also use a direct payment to give you more flexibility.
- If you need a short break in a care home, we can arrange this with any care home that accepts our contract. This includes nearly all care homes in Northumberland, and many care homes in other areas – though we will not pay for a more expensive level of care than you need. You can also book directly using a direct payment, and you may be able to use a more expensive care home if someone is willing to pay a "top up" to cover the difference in fees.
- If you need to move into a care home permanently, you can't at present do this with a direct payment, but otherwise you have the same range of choices as for a short break.
- If you need other kinds of service, such as support to enable you to get out of the house, we will explain what services we think would meet your needs, offering a choice of options wherever possible. Direct payments are particularly useful for this kind of service.

■ Your care and support plan

However you choose for your care and support to be arranged, we will work with you to draw up a written care and support plan describing how each of your needs will be met. This will be based on your needs assessment, but with detail added of the care and support you need and how this will be provided.

If you decide that you do not want to take control yourself of any of the funding for your care and support, we may give you your needs assessment and your care and support plan at the same time. We will still include in this both a figure for your actual personal budget (the amount the services are costing us) and an indicative personal budget figure that we would use as a starting point if you later changed your mind and decided you would like a direct payment. The indicative personal budget figure may be less than your actual personal budget, since it is often more expensive for us to arrange care and support than it would be for you to employ care workers yourself. The actual amount of the direct payment would depend on the revised plan that we agreed with you.

We will usually give a copy of your care and support plan to each of the organisations that will be providing your care and support services. If you want some information to be kept confidential from these organisations, you can tell us this. We may need to discuss with you whether this will affect their ability to provide care and support.