

ASSESSING YOUR PERSONAL ASSISTANCE NEEDS

A guide to think about the help you need

The purpose of Direct Payments is to support Independent Living

Independent Living means having Choice and Control over how you live your life.

When you plan how to use your Direct Payments, it is important to think about:

- What you want to do in your life
- What help you need to be able to achieve this
- How Direct Payments can make it possible to get this help

Before you assess your own needs, it will help if you think about your own goals in life. Here are a few ideas to get you started:

- Get my own place
- Stay in my own home
- Look after my kids
- Give my disabled child similar opportunities/experiences to non-disabled children
- Get a job or do voluntary work
- Go to college or university
- Do a leisure activity of my choice

You might want some help with your Self Assessment. You could ask a family member, friend or key-worker to help you. The Direct Payments Advisor can also give you some help with this.

Social Services Assessment

Your Care Manager or Social Worker will decide whether Social Services can provide some or all the help you have identified in your Self Assessment. They may not be able to agree to everything. There are guidelines called Fair Access to Care which governs how care managers carry out their assessments and what they can agree to. However, doing a Self Assessment is really helpful in getting the best support and in getting started to think through how you will use the help you get.

Assessing your own Personal Assistance needs

Whether you are thinking about employing your own Personal Assistant or using a Care Agency, you will need to work out your personal assistance needs. The easiest way is to keep a checklist or diary, over a 4 week period, of everything that you need assistance with. It should be a 24 hour record if you require overnight assistance.

There are three main areas you may wish to consider:

- a) **Personal Needs** – getting up and going to bed, washing, eating, bowel and bladder care etc.
- b) **Domestic Needs** – shopping, laundry, child care, pet care, household tasks etc.
- c) **Social Needs** – going to work, studying, having fun, going to meetings, travelling etc.

For every activity you should record:

- what assistance you need
- at what time
- for how long
- how often (hourly, daily, weekly, monthly)

It is important not to underestimate the amount or type of assistance that you need. In particular, you should make sure you include **everything** that family and friends are currently doing for you.

You should also include all the things that you would like to do but are unable to do because, you either cannot get assistance or you do not like asking a family member or friends to do them for you.

Personal assistance is about choice and control so your checklist should state **your** needs, what **you** want to do and **when** you want to do it.

Once you have written down the assistance you are receiving at present and the assistance you wish to receive in the future, you can begin to identify your personal assistance needs:

1. what times of the day do you need assistance – just during the day, or only at night, morning and/or evening?
2. do you need assistance around the clock?
3. do you need assistance every day, weekdays only or odd days for specific activities?
4. do you only need assistance in your home or wherever you are?
5. do you always need assistance for the same specific set of tasks, such as getting up and going to bed, or do you need assistance for a wide range of tasks?
6. could some things be done more easily with the right equipment?

Activities can be done by different people or in different ways. You may decide that you need a Personal Assistant in the mornings and evenings, a cleaner coming in for 1 day a week and that your shopping will be done once every weekday afternoon. Please remember that all activity to be paid for using Direct Payments must be approved and authorised by your Care Manager or Social Worker.

2 The Lifestyle you want

If you are about to introduce Personal Assistants into your home, it might be a good idea to lay down 'guidelines' or 'house rules' at the start to prevent any problems arising in the future.

- is privacy important to you?
- would you prefer a male or female as your Personal Assistant?
- does it matter if your Personal Assistant smokes?
- is a tidy home important to you?
- do you like your home to be quiet?
- are there programmes on TV you must watch?
- is religion important to you?
- are you willing/able to delegate some tasks?

- do you prefer to have a set routine?
- do you always want to get up at the same time?
- do you like planning meals?
- do you object to meat eating?
- do you usually prefer to eat on your own?
- do you enjoy choosing what you wear?
- is your personal appearance important to you?
- do you mind other people using your personal items?
- do you want to entertain at home?
- do you want friends to stay overnight?

This is not an exhaustive list but a few ideas to start you off. Add your own thoughts to the checklist.

3 Job Outline

Once you have identified your personal assistance needs and have thought about the ways you want to live your life, you will be in a position to put together a job outline for prospective Personal Assistants.

An example of what you may like to include in your Job Outline follows:

I am a disabled person. I am able to do some things around the house but I do require assistance with most aspects of daily living.

I always require someone to be available during the morning and evening but, depending on my personal activities, may not always need someone to be around in the afternoon.

I use an electric wheelchair for which I need assistance getting in and out of, but can control unaided. I have a Possum environmental control system in my home which enables me to use and control a variety of electrical equipment.

I would prefer my personal needs to be met by a female Personal Assistant and I need them to be reliable, flexible and to respect my privacy. I need to take medication at regular intervals throughout the day but this is usually in tablet form and requires no special techniques to administer.

4 Your next steps

Having identified your support needs, you should now decide whom you wish to provide the services you require.

If you decide to employ directly, you may wish to request our series of Factsheets on Choosing Your Support – Directly Employing a Personal Assistant. If you are thinking of using an agency, you may find our Factsheet no. 5a entitled Using an Agency useful.

Other tools to help you with self-assessment

Person Centred Planning

If you are a person with a learning difficulty, your Care Manager can help you put together a Person Centred Plan. This should look at the sort of things you want to do with your life and the sort of help you need to achieve these things.

A good Person Centred Plan is helpful if you are thinking about Direct Payments. For more information, contact Andrew Slegg, Person Centred Planning Co-Ordinator at Croydon Council on 020 8688 9305.

For further information, there is a DVD called “What’s Right For Me?” helps people with learning difficulties work out what they want and understand how Direct Payments can help.

It is available from:

Speak Out in Hounslow

Centre for Independent Living

121 High Street

Brentford

Middlesex

TW8 8AT

Telephone: 020 8758 2048 / Extension 6

Fax: 020 8759 2014

Book: Journey to Independence – How to Run Your Life with Direct Payments (ring-bound)

Authors: Stacey Gramlich, Gordon McBride, Natasha Snelham, Brian Myers, Val Williams, Ken Simons

Price: £25.00 + £1.99pp from Amazon (www.amazon.co.uk)

This 'Easy Read' guide helps people with learning difficulties work out what they want and how to use Direct Payments to help them. It contains 'Easy Read' paperwork to help with choosing, appointing and managing staff.

Copies of the above are also available from the Direct Payments Support Service.