

Direct Payments Policy Consultation – Public Survey

What is the Direct Payments Policy?

Direct Payments are an option for adults aged 18+ who need care and support to help them to live independently. Direct Payments are cash payments made to adults who prefer this method of paying for care and support to meet their needs. It enables the person to take ownership of their own care planning by choosing how and when they receive support instead of the Council arranging services on their behalf.

To receive a Direct Payment, you must meet the eligibility threshold for adults with care and support needs as set out in the Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations 2014. The threshold is based on identifying how a person's needs affect their ability to achieve relevant outcomes, and how these impacts on their wellbeing.

The Direct Payments Policy is a document that provides guidance and rules that everyone who is involved in issuing, using, or managing direct payments provided through Stockport Council needs to follow. This policy is mainly used by employees working in Adult Social Care and all current and future Direct Payment clients and their carers living in Stockport.

Why did we decided to update the policy?

In September 2021 we launched a new Direct Payments Policy, which included a new approach for reviewing and assessing how people could spend their direct payments. Following the launch, some concerns were raised and after reviewing the work that was undertaken, we have recognised that some decisions we made were not right. As a result, we have stopped using the policy and have reinstated support payments for anyone that was negatively affected as part of the changes we made.

We have also reviewed our Direct Payments Policy and identified some areas that needed to change to provide more clarity about how payments can and cannot be spent. We are seeking your views on these changes and on how we can improve the policy to make it clearer and more accessible in the future.

Who is doing this consultation?

This consultation is being held by the Stockport Council Consultation and engagement team.

Will you share the things I tell you?

No, everything you tell us is confidential. The only time this will change is you tell us you or the person you care

for is at risk. We have a duty to report this to our safeguarding colleagues. Only those involved in the project will be able to see your answers. No individual will be identified in any reports that are produced.

What if I need these questions in another format?

If you have any questions about this consultation or require the questionnaire in another format such as Easy read or in another language. Please call or email using the details below.

What if I have any questions?

If you have any questions about this consultation please email using the details below.

Why your views matter

We would like your views on our proposed changes. Before each question we tell you:

The section of the policy the questions in the questionnaire relate to

- An explanation of what the old policy said
- A summary of what the new policy will say
- The reasons why we want to make the changes

Please take a few moments to read each of our proposed changes before making your response. There is room for you to leave comments on our proposed changes. We cannot respond to any individual requests received via this questionnaire. Thank you

Your comments and ideas will directly impact on the finalised Direct Payments Policy. We probably won't be able to do everything you suggest – but everything we do will be influenced by what you tell us.

If you have received an invitation as someone currently in receipt of a Direct Payment, please leave this survey and complete our Direct Payments Consultation Clients and Carers Survey. Thank you

Introductory text

Please take a few moments to consider our proposed changes to the Direct Payments policy before sharing your views. You can read about and make comments on the proposed changes you're interested in and answer as many (or as few) questions as you like below.

1. Unspent funds

Which section of the policy?

Section 6: Calculating the value of a Direct Payment.

What did the old policy say?

You should always have enough money in your Direct Payment account to cover the cost of your care and support. But sometimes you might not spend all of this money, so it will build up in your account, we call this 'unspent funds'. The old policy said that if you build up 8 weeks of 'unspent funds' the Direct Payment Audit Team will claim it back.

What does the new policy say?

We will be more flexible when we look at any unspent funds you have in your Direct Payment account. We will no longer automatically claim back 8 weeks of unspent funds. Instead, we will ask you what your plans are for any unspent funds. For example, you may be planning to spend it later in the year on something we have agreed will meet the outcomes in your support plan. If this is the case, you will be able to keep the money in your account until you need it.

Why do we want to make this change?

We know that sometimes people want to keep money in their Direct Payment account to be used for things later in the year. The changes to the policy mean that there will be more flexibility to do this. We will not automatically claim back unspent funds that have built up unless you agree that you do not need this money.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposed change 1? (Please tick one box only)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please add any comments you have about this proposed change in the space below.

2. Administration of Direct Payments: paying family members

Which section of the policy?

Section 6: Administration support and costs.

What did the old policy say?

If you ask a family member to manage a Direct Payment for you, we may not agree to someone else in your family being paid to provide your support. The old policy also said that we may not agree to you paying a family member living in the same house as you to deliver your support. The policy said that we would only agree to these situations in exceptional circumstances and a manager in Adult Social Care had to approve this.

What does the new policy say?

If we think it is necessary, you will be able to ask a family member to manage your Direct Payment and for another family member to be paid to provide your support. We have also deleted the section that said that a family member living in the same house as you should only be paid to provide your support in exceptional circumstances.

Why do we want to make this change?

The old policy made it difficult to pay people in your family to provide your support, especially if they lived in

the same house as you. We know that sometimes a family member can be the best person to support you, so the new policy is more flexible.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposed change 2? (Please tick one box only)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please add any comments you have about this proposed change in the space below.

3. Paying Direct Payments into bank accounts

Which section of the policy?

Section 7: Payment methods

What did the old policy say?

Direct Payments could not be paid into your personal bank account. They had to be paid into a separate account set up for this purpose.

What does the new policy say?

You can now have your Direct Payment paid into your personal bank account.

Why do we want to make this change?

You might find it easier to have your Direct Payment paid into your personal bank account. This change will make this possible, if you can provide evidence of how you have spent the money.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposed change 3? (Please tick one box only)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please add any comments you have about this proposed change in the space below.

4. Using your Direct Payment for holiday costs

Which section of the policy?

Section 9: What Direct Payments can be used for.

What did the old policy say?

There was nothing about this in the old policy.

What does the new policy say?

Sometimes Direct Payments are used for respite, this means that you might spend some time away from your carer, or the people you live with. You might choose a traditional form of respite, where support is offered on site. Or you may decide to go on holiday with your Personal Assistant or another family member or friend who doesn't normally care for you. The new policy says that, with our agreement, you can use your Direct Payment to pay towards travel and accommodation costs if you decide to go on holiday for respite.

Why do we want to make this change?

We want to give you more flexibility to choose different types of respite. Direct Payments can be used to fund holiday costs such as travel and accommodation if you would prefer this option to traditional respite.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposed change 4? (Please tick one box only)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please add any comments you have about this proposed change in the space below.

5. Using your Direct Payment for travel expenses

Which section of the policy?

Section 9: What Direct Payments can be used for.

What did the old policy say?

You could not use your Direct Payment to pay for daily travel expenses, unless there were exceptional circumstances.

What does the new policy say?

Direct Payments will not normally be used for daily travel expenses, but we may agree to fund reasonable travel expenses if we feel that you need this because of your individual circumstances.

Why do we want to make this change?

We understand that in some cases there is a need for Direct Payments to cover travel costs. We have changed the policy to say that we will consider your individual circumstances if you feel that you need this.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposed change 5? (Please tick one box only)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please add any comments you have about this proposed change in the space below.

6. Paying for council services and spending your Direct Payment outside of the United Kingdom

Which section of the policy?

Section 9: What Direct Payments can be used for.

What did the old policy say?

You could not use your Direct Payment to pay for services from the council and to pay for things outside of the United Kingdom.

What does the new policy say?

We have removed these from the new policy.

Why do we want to make this change?

There may be times when you want to use your Direct Payment to pay for a council service or for things outside of the United Kingdom. This change will make this possible and give you more flexibility and choice.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposed change 6? (Please tick one box only)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please add any comments you have about this proposed change in the space below.

7. Using your Direct Payment to pay for leisure activities

Which section of the policy?

Section 9: What Direct Payments can be used for.

What did the old policy say?

You could not spend your Direct Payment on leisure activities. For example, things like cinema and concert tickets, football matches and beauty treatments.

What does the new policy say?

We will support you to explore leisure activities that you are interested in and enjoy, which will meet the outcomes included in your support plan. We will not rule out anything, unless the items and activities you are suggesting do not meet the outcomes in your support plan.

Why do we want to make this change?

We want to give you more choice and flexibility when you are considering which activities you would like to do.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposed change 7? (Please tick one box only)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please add any comments you have about this proposed change in the space below.

8. Time spent away from your home

Which section of the policy?

Section 16: Period away from home

What did the old policy say?

You had to let us know if you were planning to spend periods of time away from your home and for how long. We also said that we needed to know how you would receive support during the time you were away from home. If you did not let us know until you returned, we said that we may not agree to cover the costs of any care you received when you were away from home.

What does the new policy say?

You will no longer need to let us know of these plans. We have deleted the section that said you need to let us know about your plans to spend periods of time away from your home.

Why do we want to make this change?

We do not think that you need to tell us about any plans you have to spend time away from your home.

To what extent do you agree or disagree with proposed change 8? (Please tick one box only)

- Strongly Agree
- Agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Disagree
- Strongly disagree

Please add any comments you have about this proposed change in the space below.

9. Closing comments

Please add any comments you have about our proposed changes to the Stockport Council Direct Payments Policy in the space below.

10. Help to take part

Did you get any help to answer our questions?

Yes

No

Prefer not to say

If yes, who helped you to take part?

An advocate

A carer

Friend or family

A member of staff

Prefer not to say

What help did you get?

Someone read the questions out to me, and I answered the question

Someone read the questions out to me, and they answered the questions for me

Someone responded completely on my behalf

11. Join our Direct Payments Question and Answer Session

Come and have your say about our proposed changes. The session will be attended by senior officers from Stockport Council Adult Services who will be glad to answer your questions. Places will be allocated on a first come, first served basis (Max 20 places)

Sessions will last for one hour and will be held at Fred Perry House, Edward Street Stockport on Thursday 27 October 6.30pm – 7.30pm and Monday 31 October 11.30am -12.30pm

See below for details of how to request your place. If you are unable to obtain a place you can still submit your question. Again, we cannot respond to individual requests for service.

Please submit your question to consultation@stockport.gov.uk by no later than 24 October 2022

Request your place

You can request your place in one of two ways. Please do this by no later than two days before the start of each event

Go to <https://rb.gy/umukh6> (Eventbrite UK)

or call 07890 321

Thank you. Please return your completed survey by midnight on **Sunday 6 November** to Consultation and Engagement Team, level 2 Fred Perry House.