

Direct Payments Consultation FAQs

The following are responses to some of the most asked questions gathered during the first two weeks of the Direct Payments Consultation.

Why did the policy change?

The policy was changed because the Council wanted to provide further clarification of the processes and rules around Direct Payments to ensure the appropriate use of Council funds. However, we recognise that some of the changes we made were too restrictive in the way that Direct Payments could be used, and we have now suspended the use of that policy. In our new policy we have tried to keep the clarification that we wanted to introduce but make the rules more flexible.

Why was the previous Direct Payments policy never published?

The Council ensures that all the content on its website is as accessible as possible. Therefore, rather than publishing the policy as a pdf, which can cause difficulty for people using screen reading software, an edited version of our policy was made available on a series of webpages at www.stockport.gov.uk/directpayments. The reason we did this is because we wanted to make it as easy as possible for the public to find and understand the information they needed. The full policy is available on request, and we will add the ability for residents to request this on our website in future.

How will you ensure that those in receipt of benefits are not using Direct Payments to fund things which could be funded from any benefits received?

An initial check will be undertaken by the Brokerage Service and their social worker within the first six weeks of a payment. This is to assure the council that the person responsible for managing the Direct Payment understands their responsibilities and is coping well with the expected administration of the account. A formal audit will be undertaken at four months – this allows time for a pattern of spend to be established and for the first bank statement to arrive. If there are no issues with the first audit, they will be carried out every six months.

FAQ Updated 23 October 2022



Proposal One: Unspent Funds

Will Direct Payments that have been reclaimed due to previous inflexibility around their use be repaid?

We have already carried out over 100 reviews for negatively affected clients to establish if any repayments need to be made. If you haven't already been contacted, then please get in touch with us via 0161 218 1450 or email us at dp.review@stockport.gov.uk

Proposal Two: Administration of Direct Payments: paying family members

Would be inclusive of live in carers? For those who live with the person they care for. (SS to complete)

There will only be exceptional cases where a person living in the same household is paid via a DP as the Care and Support (Direct Payment) Regulations 2014 state a DP cannot be used for this purpose except 'where the local authority feels this is necessary'.

Where the local authority does feel this is necessary and a determination has been made on the hours to be paid for this support etc then the hourly rate would be agreed and calculated as part of the support planning. This would usually be the real living wage of £9.90 per hour, meaning the requested DP rate would be £12.48 (once on costs have been factored in). If support was to be provided overnight, consideration would need to be given re the PA's working hours, rate of pay to ensure these are in line with employment law and working directives.

Proposal Four: Using your Direct Payment for holiday costs

Can Direct Payments be used to travel abroad with family?

If there is a legitimate Care Act established outcome which would be achieved, and a Service Manager agrees it is an appropriate use of the Direct Payment on those grounds then potentially in some circumstances, yes.

Proposal Five: Using your Direct Payment for travel expenses

Will the amended policy allow carers to cover expenses such as mileage and public transport costs accumulated in the caring process?

The council may agree to fund reasonable travel expenses dependent on the person's circumstances and needs.

Can monies be accumulated towards deposit for Motability car?

Motability is funded through Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payments (PIP) mobility component – so no, DLA/PIP should be used for this.

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

What Council services could be purchased?

A Direct Payment may be used to purchase a Day Service, respite or potentially any service if there is a need/identified outcome.

What kind of services outside of the UK might clients want/need to pay for?

An individual may want to visit family outside of the UK and may need to pay for support that has been identified as an outcome of the person's Care Act assessment during that time.

7. Using your Direct Payment to pay for leisure activities

How will you ensure that this proposed change is not abused?

An initial check will be undertaken by the Brokerage Service and their social worker within the first six weeks of a payment. This is to assure the council that the person managing the Direct Payment understands their responsibilities and is coping well with the expected administration of the account. A formal audit will be undertaken at four months – this allows time for a pattern of spend to be established and for the first bank statement to arrive. If there are no issues with the first audit, they will be carried out every six months.

How will you ensure the relevant staff are informed and consistent across this proposal?

We will be updating our Direct Payment procedure and guidance for all staff and we will be providing training to ensure the new ways of working are communicated to all staff.

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