



# Sefton Children's Direct Payments

This leaflet tells you about the Direct Payments Scheme. It explains what Direct Payments are, who is eligible for the scheme, how to use it and what support is available.

## What is a Direct Payment?

A direct payment is an agreed amount of money given to you by the Council to arrange and manage the care and support that your child needs. This is instead of the Council arranging services for you; for example, arranging support with an agency.

Direct Payments help to promote independence, choice and inclusion.

## Who can have a Direct Payment?

A direct payment can be paid if a child or young person has a Children and Families assessment, and they are eligible for social care services.

Direct payments can be made to:

- **Parents or guardians** of a disabled child or young person under 18.
- **Nominated persons:** Someone chosen to manage the payments on behalf of the child or young person.

To receive a direct payment, you need to be able to:

1. **Choose who you want to provide the support:** and know what you can use the direct payment for.
2. **Manage responsibilities:** Oversee the financial and legal aspects of the direct payment.

There are some circumstances where it may not be possible or appropriate to use direct payments. A social worker will be able to tell you about these.

## Using the Direct Payment

You can use direct payments to buy care and support services that are outlined in the child's plan. This may include:

- **Employing a Personal Assistant (PA):** Someone to help with daily support needs.
- **Buying support:** From groups that can provide the necessary care, support and activities.

The details of how you spend the direct payment must be agreed upon and meet the needs detailed in the child's plan.

Important Points to remember:

- **It should not be a replacement:** Direct Payments are not meant to replace the support already provided by family, friends, or voluntary organisations.
- **Restrictions:** You cannot use the money to pay a family member who lives in the child's home.
- **Managing funds:** You will use a prepayment card to manage the direct payment funds.

The Direct Payments Team at Sefton Carers Centre can provide you with further information and support, email [direct.payments@sefton.gov.uk](mailto:direct.payments@sefton.gov.uk) or call 0151 288 6060.



## Considering Direct Payments? Your responsibilities

When considering direct payments, it's important to understand your responsibilities. These include:

- **Signing an agreement:** This outlines the responsibilities between you and the Council.
- **Keeping records:** The direct payment money will be reviewed, and you will need to keep receipts.
- **Spending as agreed:** Ensure the money is used according to the support plan.
- **Employing a PA:** understand that you are an employer and managing a PA.
- **Legal stuff:** PA Tax, National Insurance and Pensions, Employment Law

These steps help ensure that the direct payment is used effectively and responsibly.

## Support available to manage the Direct Payment

Sefton Carers Centre has a dedicated Direct Payments Team to help you with:

- **Setting Up:** Getting your Direct Payment and pre-payment card.
- **Employing PAs:** Recruitment, selection, and training of Personal Assistants.
- **Payroll support:** Help with payslips, DBS checks, HMRC, and pensions.
- **Legal advice:** Contacts for insurance and employment law specialists.

The Council's Self-Directed Support Team can assist with:

- **Managing funds:** support to spend the direct payment money within the plan.
- **Correct funding:** Ensure you get the right amount of money from the Council.
- **Spending records:** Show how you've used the direct payment.
- **Account reviews:** Checking and reporting on your direct payment account.

## Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

### **Q - Will Direct Payments affect my benefits if I manage the account?**

**A** - No, they won't affect your benefits. Direct Payments is not paid to you as an income. They are funds given to you to buy support services for your child or young person.

### **Q – Who can I employ?**

**A** - Anyone you employ must be over 18 and have a clear Enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check before they start working. The Carers Centre will help you with the DBS check.

You cannot employ a close family member who lives in the same house as the child needing the support.

### **Q – Are there any restrictions on what I can spend the money on?**

**A** – You can only use Direct Payments to buy care and support services that are listed in the child's plan. You can't use this money for personal expenses like food, clothing, or household bills.

## How can I apply for a Direct Payment.

If you feel that your child has unmet needs that require an Assessment from Children's Social Care, then you can self-refer by telephoning **Sefton Council's Children's Help and Advice Team (CHAT) on 0151 934 4013**.

Further information is also available on the Sefton Council website by visiting [www.sefton.gov.uk/directpayments](http://www.sefton.gov.uk/directpayments) or by contacting the Direct Payments Team at **Sefton Carers Centre 0151 288 6060**.