



**Your Life
Your Choice**
care and support designed with you



Direct Payments

Buying Services from an Agency or Organisation

If you choose to use all or part of your Direct Payments to buy care and support services from an agency or organisation there are some things you will need to consider.

Before you can begin to receive your Direct Payments, you will need to sign a Direct Payments Agreement which sets out the terms and conditions of receiving Direct Payments and what the Council requires from you.

The amount of money you receive as Direct Payments will depend on the care and support services you have been assessed as needing and you have agreed with your social worker/care coordinator. Depending on your financial circumstances you may be asked to contribute towards the cost of your care and support services.

If you decide to use your Direct Payments to buy services from an agency or care provider, it is important to remember that you are entering into a contract with that organisation as you are paying for their services. You will need to be clear with them about the terms and conditions under which you are buying the service including:

- The type of service
- How much you are paying them
- How payments are made
- Notice periods for ending the contract
- What cover arrangements are in place
- Any extra charges for weekends/bank holidays

You should also check that the agency holds the correct insurance cover to meet your requirements and that it is registered with the Care Quality Commission (if you need personal care). Visit their website www.cqc.org.uk for information.

Your chosen organisation will send you an invoice for the services that you have received, and you should pay this invoice in accordance with Durham County Council's payment schedule. This payment schedule is a timetable of when you will receive your Direct Payments money. We can write to your chosen organisation on your behalf and let them know that they need to send invoices to you. You should retain these invoices for audit purposes.

Sometimes an agency may charge more for the services you need, than the amount that has been agreed for your Direct Payments. In this case you may need to meet the additional costs yourself. The Direct Payments team can advise on this or you may decide to choose a different agency.

You may find Locate useful (www.durhamlocate.org.uk). This is a free online database where you can search for adult social care support services, health and community information on a countrywide, regional and national basis.

For more information about Direct Payments, visit our website:

www.durham.gov.uk/directpayments

Please ask us if you would like this document summarised in another language or format:

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