



Direct Payments

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Durham County Council Direct Payments Team FAQ

We are currently dealing with a large number of queries. We have listed some common queries below and our responses to these queries. If your query is not answered below or you require further clarity, please contact us.

What is the best way for me to contact the Direct Payments Team?

The best way to contact us at present is by emailing directpayments@durham.gov.uk.

If you do not have access to email you can call us on 03000 268200 and leave a voicemail message. Someone will return your call asap.

In an emergency situation where care is urgently required and usual care arrangements are not possible please call your social worker or Social Care Direct on 03000 267 979 or text message 07537 453 102.

I have decided to self-isolate and do not want my employee/s to work at this time. Can I still pay my employee?

We would advise that you discuss this with your social worker/ social work assistant/ care coordinator. If this is going to be a long-term decision, then the DP may need to be suspended. If this is the case, we advise you get some advice from the legal company attached to your insurance about what notice/ payments are required for your employee.

Fish Insurance – Peninsula telephone 0844 8922 772

Premier Insurance – MSL – 0161 6032167

I would like to temporarily reduce my Direct Payments package to reduce the risk to myself and my employee – Is this ok and what can I pay my PA?

If you feel like you can reduce your package without this being a risk to you then you can decide to do this. You may have family members who are able to help out short term or aspects of the package you would prefer not to access at the moment e.g. social time. You may have discussions with your employees around taking some holiday hours if this is an option.

We always advise when changing an employee's usual working pattern that you get some advice from the legal company attached to your insurance

Fish Insurance – Peninsula telephone 0844 8922 772

Premier Insurance – MSL – 0161 6032167

You should ensure your social worker is aware of this temporary reduction in care as they will need to let us know so we can amend the amount of money you receive.

My employee is displaying symptoms of Covid-19 or lives with someone who is displaying these symptoms and therefore are required to self-isolate. Are they entitled to be paid?

Anyone displaying symptoms of Covid-19 or who lives in a household with someone who is displaying symptoms must self-isolate for 10 days.

We advise that you get some advice from the legal company attached to your insurance

Fish Insurance – Peninsula telephone 0844 8922 772

Premier Insurance – MSL – 0161 6032167

Where advice is that pay is discretionary, you as the employer should make a decision you see as reasonable. In most cases there should be enough in your Direct Payments budget to allow for this. If this is not the case please contact us to discuss this further.

If you want your employee to receive full pay you should mark the usual hours on the timesheet but clearly write 'EMPLOYEE ISOLATING – FULL PAY' beside these hours.

If you want the employee to received statutory Sick pay you should write 'SSP COVID-19 ONLY '

My Employee is unwell but is not displaying symptoms of Covid-19 – what should I do?

You should continue to follow your usual sickness procedure. Please ensure this is marked on the timesheet as 'REGULAR SICK' to ensure the payroll company is aware this is not Covid-19 related.

I am unwell and displaying signs of Covid-19 but I still require care – what should I do?

You should inform your employee/s if you or someone in your household are displaying Covid-19 symptoms. It is very important the employee has adequate Personal Protective Equipment (see question on PPE below) to be able to carry out their role safely. You may be able to temporarily reduce your package to reduce the risk to your employees or a person in your household may be able to provide some care on a short term basis if this would not put you at risk.

Risk assessments templates are available to complete with your PAs these can be requested by contacting the team via email on directpayments@durham.gov.uk or by phone on 03000 268200.

Always ensure you get medical advice where required. You can do this by calling 111 or using the 111 online service <https://111.nhs.uk/>.

For any employment advice remember you can contact the legal company attached to your insurance

Fish Insurance – Peninsula telephone 0844 8922 772

Premier Insurance – MSL – 0161 6032167

My PA has received a letter from the government to shield, what should I do?

We advise that you get some advice from the legal company attached to your insurance

Fish Insurance – Peninsula telephone 0844 8922 772

Premier Insurance – MSL – 0161 6032167

Where advice is that pay is discretionary, you as the employer should make a decision you see as reasonable. In most cases there should be enough in your Direct Payments budget to allow for this. If this is not the case please contact us to discuss this further. If you want your employee to receive full pay you should mark the usual hours on the timesheet but clearly write 'EMPLOYEE SHIELDING – FULL PAY' beside these hours.

My employee cannot come to work and I need alternative care – what can I do?

There are two PA registers with details of people who are looking for work. You can access the register held by Accountability by calling them on 0191 4921222 or the locate register can be found at <https://www.durhamlocate.org.uk/> by selecting care and support and then 'Personal Assistants'.

You can contact the Direct Payments team for recruitment support or to get the documents required to register a new employee. We can also advertise on your behalf if this is required. You may also wish to consider if you have a friend or family member who could provide care, even on a temporary basis via Direct Payments.

You could also look for a care agency to provide support. You can find details of care agencies in your area by going to <https://www.durhamlocate.org.uk/> and selecting care and support and then selecting 'find care and support' and then 'Home/Domiciliary care.' You should make contact with the agency to see if they have capacity to provide care that can meet your needs.

We advise that you get some advice from the legal company attached to your insurance

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Premier Insurance – MSL – 0161 6032167

Where advice is that pay is discretionary, you as the employer should make a decision you see as reasonable. In most cases there should be enough in your Direct Payments budget to allow for this. If this is not the case please contact us to discuss this further. If you want your employee to receive full pay you should mark the usual hours on the timesheet but clearly write 'EMPLOYEE SHIELDING – FULL PAY' beside these hours.

My Employee does not want to come to work but has not received advice from the government to shield, what should I do?

You should discuss with your employee what PPE you have made available to ensure they can work in a safe way and what risk assessments are in place. If you need a risk assessment template you can request one of these by emailing directpayments@durham.gov.uk or calling 03000 268200 and leaving a voicemail. You may also discuss with your employee if you can be flexible with any visits that may not be essential at this time. You may want to agree some holiday hours if this is an option. If you do not come to an agreement with your employee we advise that you get some advice from the legal company attached to your insurance

Fish Insurance – Peninsula telephone 0844 8922 772

Premier Insurance – MSL – 0161 6032167.

If your employee wishes to get further advice you should recommend they contact ACAS.

I usually use a day care provider, but they are unable to provide support at present. Do I still pay them?

If the agency is not providing you with a service they should not be producing an invoice. The agency can contact us for clarity on this. Some agencies may be offering an amended or virtual service and if this is the case you should decide if you wish to access this service and discuss with your social worker to ensure they agree this will still meet your needs.

I received my money to pay my day care provider in one lump sum payment but some of this is now not required, what do I do with the money?

Please contact us if you received money up front that will now not be required. We will communicate with you to let you know if the money will be returned to us or if it may be deducted from a future payment. It may take us some time to deal with this so please bear with us and leave the money in the bank account for now.

I am not receiving a service from my day care provider and have no other services; do I need to pay my client contribution?

No, you do not need to pay your client contribution at this time. Contact us by email or phone with the details so we can check if this has been processed correctly for you.

I need to provide my employees with keyworker letters as evidence they are required to work at this time, can you help?

Yes, please contact us and tell us how many employees you have and that you require key worker letters and we can send you templates to use. When you receive these, you should complete the details required and give them to your employee/s.

Should I be providing my employees with Personal Protective Equipment?

Yes, you should ensure your employees have the correct PPE to carry out their role safely (gloves, aprons and masks where required). You should try to purchase this yourself and money can be reimbursed from the Direct Payments account (ensure you keep your receipts for audit). If you have a managed account, you should send the receipts to the payroll company who can arrange for the money to be reimbursed. Ordering of PPE requirements for your employees should now have returned to the normal availability levels from your usual provider, If you need additional PPE due to Covid please contact us by emailing directpayments@durham.gov.uk or by phone on 03000 268 200.

It is also essential that you insist on good hygiene and ensure facilities are available for employees to regularly wash their hands with soap for at least 20 seconds.

To view the document “What PPE to wear and when – an illustrative guide” please visit:

https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/925605/PHE_PPE_illustrated_guide_for_community_and_social_care_settings_OCT_2020.pdf

To view the document “COVID-19: personal protective equipment use for non-aerosol generating procedures” please visit:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-use-for-non-aerosol-generating-procedures>

Is my PA entitled to a flu jab?

PAs working for someone on Direct Payments are now included on the list of those eligible to receive a free flu jab. You should ask your PA to contact their local

Pharmacy or doctor's surgery for further advice around this. The Direct Payments Team can provide a template to be used as proof of entitlement if this is required.

Where can I get further advice?

The Direct Payments Team now has a Facebook Page. We will use this page to communicate information to you and provide important updates. You can also use this page to share any good employment practices that you have that you feel other employers could benefit from and communicate with other employers about their experiences. To join; search on Facebook for 'Care Academy' You will then find our 'Direct Payments' page under 'Groups' and then click 'Join', you will be asked to confirm your identity so we can ensure this is a closed group only for those receiving Direct Payments in Durham. Please note this group is not for PAs.

We recommend <https://www.acas.org.uk/coronavirus> as a useful website to get further information.

Use the following link to visit the Durham County Council Direct Payments Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/groups/2779960922289189/>