

MY GUIDE TO...

Direct Payments in Bexley provided by the Children with Disabilities Service

Q1. What is a Direct Payment?

A Direct Payment is a sum of money paid to parents/carers on behalf of their child who has a disability social care need. A Direct Payment is an alternative to receiving a service directly provided by or arranged by the Local Authority. This gives families more choice, control and flexibility in arranging and purchasing services that meet their child's needs. It is a form of a personal budget which is given to parents/carers based on an assessed need of the young person and family circumstance.

Q2. What can a Direct Payment be used for?

A Direct Payment has to be used to meet the needs and outcomes that parents/carers have agreed with their child's Social Worker and is recorded in their child's plan. This might include:

- Providing assistance with personal care by employing your own care workers/ personal assistants
- Contracting with an agency
- Assistance to purchase short breaks (respite)
- Assistance with essential domestic care tasks, which are essential to meet the assessed needs of the child and is evidenced in your child's plan
- Assistance to access facilities or activities to promote social inclusion
- Buying equipment agreed by Social Care

It is accepted that no two children or families are the same and as such the above list is not exhaustive. Parents/carers can speak with their child's social worker if they want to use direct payments for something else not set out in the child's plan. There are two rates for direct payments, one is to pay for activities and the other rate is for employing a carer.

Q3. How do I apply for a direct payment?

You can make a referral to Children's Social Care by calling 02030455440 or by completing the Early Help and Children's Social Care referral form which is available on the Bexley Local Offer. A social worker from the children with disabilities team will visit you to complete your registration, speak with you about your child's needs and also your family circumstances. A decision will be made whether your child's needs require specialist support under the Effective Support for Children and Young People in Bexley. If your child needs specialist support, a social worker will complete a child and family assessment taking into consideration, his or her needs and your family circumstance. A social worker will share the outcome of the assessment with you and will present information about your child's needs to the Short Breaks panel. A decision is made at Panel concerning the amount of hours required to meet your child's needs. A letter will be sent to you within five days, informing you of the outcome of the Short Breaks Panel. Inspire will be informed that direct payments have been agreed for your son or daughter. A member of staff from the Inspire team will contact you to arrange a date to visit you to set up direct payments.

Q4. How many hours of direct payments will I receive?

The amount of direct payments each child or young person receives is determined by the assessed need. The current direct payment rate for activities is £8 an hour and for employers is £11 an hour (as of January 2019).

Q5. How long will the process take?

It is anticipated that the process will take on average two months from the date of referral to receive a direct payment. It takes social workers approximately 45 days to complete a Child and Family Assessment and they will then present the outcome/recommendations of their assessment to the Short Breaks Panel which sits every fortnight. It is advisable to have a carer identified who is ready to be the direct payments worker.

Q6. Who can manage a Direct Payment and what role is played by Inspire?

Parents/carers can manage the Direct Payment on their child's behalf. The London Borough of Bexley has commissioned Inspire Community Trust to help parents/carers understand and manage Direct Payments. This service is free as it is commissioned by the London Borough of Bexley. Inspire offer managed accounts and payroll services which help parents/carers to pay wages, tax and National Insurance. In the event that you want a different provider to manage your child's direct payments, payment for their service will be at your own cost. If parents/carers have any worries or concerns about managing a Direct Payment, they can discuss this with their child or young person's Social Worker.

Disabled young people aged 16 or over can manage Direct Payments themselves, if they want to and have the capacity to do so. Even doing a small part of this for themselves can help them to gain independence.

If it is agreed that a young person can manage their own Direct Payment they will receive as much support as is appropriate. This support can come from their parent/carer, another family member or friend, their allocated Social Worker or from Inspire.

Q7. What do I need to do?

You need to open a separate bank account, keep receipts and invoices to show how direct payments are being spent.

Q8. What role is played by Inspire in setting up and monitoring of direct payments?

Once direct payments have been agreed at Short Breaks Panel, a member of staff from the Children with Disabilities team will inform Inspire. The Direct Payments Coordinator makes contact with the family and arranges a home visit. The purpose of a home visit is to inform parents/ carers that they need to open a separate bank account, have a discussion on what the direct payments can and cannot be used for, ask carers to sign paperwork, advise on employment law and assist in setting up any payroll that may be needed.

Every six months a member of staff from Inspire will review the paperwork to ensure that direct payments are being used for the purpose that have been agreed in the child's care plan.

Q9. Do parent/carers have to become an employer?

You will not need to become an employer if you choose to use the Direct Payments to pay for activities.

You will become an employer when you employ someone to provide support to your child/young person. If you are unsure please seek advice from Inspire Community Trust.

The London borough of Bexley insists that anyone choosing to use their Direct Payments, by employing personal assistants need to have a Disclosure and Barring Check (DBS) check carried out on all carers. DBS checks can be carried out via Inspire. Payment for the DBS will be covered by the London Borough of Bexley.

Q10. Do parents/carers need to financially contribute towards a Direct Payment?

No. Children's Social Care does not financially assess parents/carers before agreeing Direct Payments and Services. Parents/carers may choose to purchase additional services or top up their Direct Payment to additional support

service than their direct payment allows. Parents/carers should speak with their social worker if they are in a position where their direct payment is not able to meet their child's needs.

Q11. What happens if a child/young person's needs or their parent/carer's needs change?

If a child/young person's needs change then parents/carers must discuss the changes with their Social Worker who, if appropriate, will complete a reassessment. Parents/carers of a disabled child up to the age of 18 are entitled to have their needs (re) assessed through a Carer's Assessment at any point that their child is being (re) assessed. However, a Carer's Assessment does not entitle parents/carers to a Direct Payment in their own right, they are entitled to support when a child or young person's needs change and carers have their own needs making it difficult to meet the child or young person's needs.

Q12. Can parents/carers save up Direct Payments?

No. Direct payments need to be used for the assessed need and what has been agreed on the child's care plan.

Q13. Can parents/carers employ a relative?

Only in exceptional circumstances if they do not live in the child's family home and agreement needs to be sought from the child's social worker. Grandparents, aunts, uncles and cousins may provide natural support to a disabled child/young person without payment like they would for any child within their family.

Q14. Can parents/carers spend a Direct Payment on a holiday?

Direct payments should only be used for the assessed need and what is in the child's care plan. If you are in doubt please speak with your child or young person's social worker.

Q15. Can parents/carers use a Direct Payment to pay for an after school club?

Yes if it is outlined in their child's plan that an after school club can be purchased to meet their child's agreed outcomes. The Children with Disabilities Service (CWDS) will not fund the use of after school clubs if parents/carers need to use them for child care to enable them to work.

Q16. Can parents/carers use the Direct Payment to pay for overnight care for their child?

The London Borough of Bexley commission overnight short breaks through Aspens. Overnight short breaks may be met through this service. In exceptional circumstances direct payments can be used to pay for overnight care, if this is an assessed need by a child/young person's Social Worker and is part of the child's plan.

Q17. Can parents/carers use their Direct Payment to pay for a Blue Badge?

No. If a child/young person meets the criteria for a Blue Badge then it is a parent/carers responsibility to apply for this. If you need more information about applying for a blue badge please follow the link below

<http://www.inspirecommunitytrust.org/services/blue-badge-freedom-pass/blue-badge-scheme.html>

Q18. What happens if a child/young person who is receiving a direct payment goes into hospital?

In the event that a child/young person is going to be admitted in hospital for less than 2 weeks the Direct Payment would continue. However, if a child/young person is going to be in hospital for longer then parents/carers should advise their child's Social Worker and a decision will be made to suspend the payment until the child/young person is out of hospital.

Q19. How do CWDS monitor how a Direct Payment is being spent?

Social care has a responsibility to make sure that families are purchasing services that are safe and meeting the needs of the child/young person. A child/young person's Social Worker will review the child/young person's plan at least every six months through a Child in Need process http://bexley.proceduresonline.com/p_cin_plans_rev.html. This will also monitor how the direct payments are being used and review the difference they are making.

Monitoring is done six monthly, one review per year will be a home visit and the other can be done by post/electronically/in person to Inspire with the appropriate paperwork.

Q20. Can Social Care stop a Direct Payment?

In some circumstances Social Care can stop your Direct Payments but before doing this they will give you four weeks' notice in writing. These circumstances include:

- If parents/carers do not return monitoring forms in a timely way which confirm that direct payments are being used for the assessed need.
- If a social worker assesses a child/young person is no longer eligible to receive a Direct Payment.
- If there is evidence that a family are using the Direct Payment in a fraudulent way or in a way that has not been agreed as part of the child's care plan. In this circumstance a family will be written to giving them two weeks' notice that the Direct Payment will be suspended until further investigation is made. A decision will be made concerning the next steps following investigation. During this process the child/young person's Social Worker will offer alternative services subject to their availability.

Your Direct Payment will be stopped without notice if:

- You move and live outside of Bexley
- You decide you no longer want to receive direct payments.

Q21. What happens when a child/young person reaches 18 years of age and they are no longer being supported by the Children with Disabilities Service?

Direct Payments funded by Children with Disabilities team will stop on the young person's 18th birthday. Inspire will carry out a final monitoring process and any money remaining will be reclaimed by the Children with Disabilities Service. The Preparation for Adulthood social worker completes an assessment from the age of 16 and this is updated at the age of 17 years. A social worker from Adult Social Care will take the case to panel to agree a care package post 18 and this might be a direct payment or other forms of support.

Q22. Do all children/young people supported by the Children with Disabilities Service receive a Direct Payment?

No. Some families choose to receive direct payments following completion of an assessment. There is a range of commissioned services provided by the Children with Disabilities Service that include overnight respite at Falconwood, domiciliary support provided by Crossroads, Saturday and holiday play schemes at SNAP and Saturday play schemes at Aspens. The type and amount of support provided for each child/young person is dependent on assessed need.

Further Information:

Children with Disabilities Service

The Children with Disabilities Service (CWDS) is a specialist team comprising of social workers, social work assistants and an Occupational Therapist. They are responsible for the assessment of children with severe and profound disabilities up to the age of 18 and the provision of information, and the packages of support to meet their assessed needs.

Civic Offices, 2 Watling Street, Bexleyheath, Kent, DA6 7AT

Telephone: 020 3045 3600

Email: childrenwithdisabilitiesservice@bexley.gov.uk

Inspire Community Trust (Inspire)

Inspire provides a range of services for people with physical disabilities and sensory impairments on behalf of the London Borough of Bexley and Bexley NHS CCG. Access to these services is through Bexley Council's referral processes i.e. via the Council's Contact Centre, Adult Social Care Teams and Children with Disabilities Teams.

20 Whitehall Lane, Slade Green, Erith, Kent, DA8 2DH

Telephone: 0203 045 5465

www.inspirecommunitytrust.org/services/direct-payment-support.html

Bexley Local Offer

Bexley LA website offering information for children and young people aged 0-25 with special needs and disabilities.

Telephone: 020 3045 5677

www.bexleylocaloffer.uk/home

Bexley Voice – Parent Carer Forum

Bexley Voice are a voluntary group of parent/carers of children and young people (age 0-25) with special/additional needs and disabilities (SEND) living in the London Borough of Bexley. We provide an opportunity for parent/carers to express their views and input into the planning and delivering of SEND services. We signpost, support and empower families to obtain the best possible care and services.

Email: bexleyvoice@hotmail.co.uk

Telephone: 07512 409936

www.bexleyvoice.org.uk