

Direct Payments – what they are, who can have one and how do they operate in Bristol

This leaflet provides a summary of Bristol City Council's 2021 policy on Direct Payments. The Council's Policy is called "*Direct Payments - Living your Life with Choice and Control*" and provides more detailed information. The policy can be found here [Direct Payments Policy and Procedure](#).

What are Direct Payments?

A Direct Payment is money to pay for your care and support. Once your care and support needs have been assessed you can choose to use a Direct Payment to meet some or all of your care and support needs. Direct Payments can either be a one-off payment or regular on-going payments.

Section 2 of the Council's Policy explains this in more detail

Who can have Direct Payments?

You can get Direct Payments if we have assessed you as having eligible care and support needs, and you choose to have them. To have a Direct Payment you need to be:

- 18 or over
- a carer
- the parent of a disabled child
- a disabled parent
- authorised to manage payments on behalf of someone who needs care or a carer

If a person is assessed as lacking capacity they can still have a Direct Payment. To do this, they will need to have a named person to help them to manage the Direct Payment.

Sections 6 and 7 of the Council's Policy explain this in more detail

What can you use a Direct Payment for?

You can only use the money to meet your assessed needs, such as:

- employing a personal assistant
- paying an agency to support you

You can't use Direct Payments to pay for long term residential or nursing care.

Section 11 of the Council's Policy explains this in more detail

Is there anything that I can't use a Direct Payment for?

Yes, there are some things that are not allowed, some examples are:

- anything that is not recorded in your support plan
- health care needs
- gambling
- long term care in a care home
- anything that is against the law
- to pay your husband, wife, civil partner or a close relative who lives with you to provide care for you, unless agreed by the Council
- any services provided by the council

Section 12 of the Policy explains this in more detail

Why choose a Direct Payment?

It gives you more choice and control over the care and support you get, who provides the care, and who supports you to be independent - for example you can:

- arrange home care for a time that suits you
- employ a carer you know and trust
- get short term support, for example after being in hospital

- arrange support for daily activities you enjoy

Direct Payments for carers

If you're a carer, you can use Direct Payments to buy the services you need to support you in your caring role. This includes support that may help maintain your own health and wellbeing, such as helping you to take a break from your caring role.

Section 24 of the Policy explains this in more detail

How do we work out the amount of your Direct Payment?

As part of the needs assessment conversation that we will have with you, we'll write a support plan that identifies your needs and how much it will cost. This is known as your Personal Budget.

We will also carry out a financial assessment. This takes into account your weekly income, savings and any other assets you may have. This will help us to work out if you need to pay any contribution towards your Personal Budget and what this contribution will be. This doesn't apply to carers.

If you need to make a contribution we'll pay the Direct Payment to you and take off the contribution amount that you need to pay. You'll be expected to pay your contribution into the account on a regular basis. Failure to pay your contribution could result in recovery action being taken.

If you would like to find out more about whether you would need to make a personal contribution or a guide as to how much this could be then please refer to the online self-assessment financial calculator. It can be found here: [How to calculate your contribution towards your care costs - bristol.gov.uk](https://www.bristol.gov.uk/how-to-calculate-your-contribution-towards-your-care-costs)

Section 10 of the Policy explains this in more detail

How will the Direct Payments be paid to you?

We will make payments directly to you so that you can arrange and pay for your own care and support. You won't be taxed on Direct Payments and they will not affect your benefits.

Bristol City Council's preferred method of managing a Direct Payment is to use the Bristol Direct Payment Account (BDPA), which we set up for you. This account is easy to manage and operates like a normal bank account including its own debit card.

If you decide not to use the Bristol Direct Payment Account, we can discuss an alternative method to receive the money.

Section 16 of the Policy explains this in more detail

Will I have to tell you what I have spent my Direct Payment on?

Yes, you will need to keep records of the money that you have spent. Every so often, the Council will review your Direct Payment account to ensure that it is working well.

Sections 16,17 and 19 of the Policy explain this in more detail

Can I get help to manage my Direct Payment?

Yes. The Council can refer you to a Direct Payment Support Provider who can help you with various responsibilities such as:

- finding support from a home care agency
- employing a personal assistant
- paying your personal assistant / care agency

Section 17 of the Policy explains this in more detail

How do I ask for a Direct Payment or get more information?

You can contact your allocated practitioner, or if you do not have one, contact Bristol City Council Care Direct on 0117 922 2700 or by using the Care Direct contact and referral form to be found here [Contact Form Adult Care Services](#)

For more information on Direct Payments please go to

[Direct payments for social care - bristol.gov.uk](http://bristol.gov.uk)