The Centre for Independent Living

The Trust has funded an independent support agency - The Centre for Independent Living - to provide Direct Payment recipients and their families with support and advice on employment issues and all other aspects of setting up and operating a Direct Payment.

Contact with the Independent Living Advisor should be made as early as possible once it has been established that you are eligible for services and have agreed to participate in the Direct Payment Scheme. The Independent Living Advisor can offer advice on:-

- Payroll matters e.g. National Insurance, Income Tax and Inland Revenue.
- Budgeting - hourly rates, annual leave
- Recruitment issues e.g. advertising, interviewing, job descriptions, etc.
- Training issues
- Employment issues e.g. employment contracts
- Employment law, health and safety and liability insurance.
- Payroll service.

Contact Details

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This document is available, on request, in accessible formats, including Braille, CD, audio cassette and minority languages.
What are Direct Payments?

Direct Payments were first introduced to Northern Ireland in 2002. Direct Payments provide cash payments to enable you to arrange and pay for your social care instead of having services arranged by the Northern Health and Social Care Trust.

Direct Payments do not effect your entitlement to benefits and do not count as income for your income tax returns. However, your employees may be liable to pay income tax.

People whose needs have been assessed as critical by staff within the Trust will be offered the opportunity to use Direct Payments to buy their own care; these people include older people, disabled adults (including people with physical disabilities, sensory impairments, learning disabilities, and mental health problems), parents of children with a disability and carers.

Many people wish to use Direct Payments because it can provide greater flexibility and choice, and can enable people to employ their own carer, or buy care services directly from a care agency. They allow you more control over who provides the services and when you receive them.

If you need help in managing your Direct Payments, or if you don’t want to manage them yourself, you can ask a member of your family or a friend to manage them for you. We will ask the person who has agreed to manage the Direct Payment to sign a Direct Payment Agreement that sets out the terms and condition of Direct Payments.

How Much You Receive and How this is Paid?

Direct Payments are cash payments paid to individuals. You will receive an amount of money based on the agreed outcome of your assessment. You will be asked to open a bank/building society account, with cheque-book facilities, specifically to receive your Direct Payments and to pay for services using your Direct Payments. This account must be opened in the name of the person responsible for managing the direct payment. Regular payments will be made in advance of the care being provided.

If you receive Direct Payments, you will need to account for the money you spend. The Trust must be satisfied that the critical needs for which it is giving you Direct Payments are being met. Your Social Worker will visit your home twice a year to review how you are operating your Direct Payments.

Quarterly bank statements, detailing to whom the cheques were issued, must be submitted to the Trust’s Finance Department within one month of each quarter end - June, September, December and March.

Employers Liability Insurance

If you are employing a Personal Assistant it is a requirement of the Direct Payments Scheme that Employers Liability Insurance is in place prior to the commencement of employment. This insurance must be renewed annually in a timely manner.

Access NI Checks (Police Checks)

Access NI checks are mandatory for children and adults with a learning disability. Other service users will be provided with the option of carrying out this check on potential employees.