

Frequently asked questions about self-directed support

1. Who can access self-directed support (SDS)?

SDS is available for anyone with eligible, community-based social care needs.

Legally, you can't use a personal budget to pay for residential placements (apart from short-term respite) or for health needs, so if you need those services, they will be provided in the same way as now.

2. How do I know if I'm eligible for SDS?

Adult Social Care has to give priority to people with the greatest need and, like all councils, we use the national 'Fair Access to Care' framework to decide who is eligible for support. In Leeds, this means only those with critical or substantial needs can access Adult Social Care Services (see www.leeds.gov.uk/Health_and_social_care/Adapting_homes/Care__home_assessment/Fair_access_to_care.aspx for more detail).

If you contact us for help, we will offer you an assessment which will look at your situation and what help you need. We will then discuss with you whether or not you are eligible. If you do have eligible, community-based social care needs, you will be able to access SDS.

3. What if I am in crisis?

SDS is not intended for people in crisis situations. In those cases, we will work to put services in place for you as quickly as possible. Once the crisis is past, though, we will discuss whether you have any ongoing support needs – if you do, you will be able to choose how these could be met through SDS.

4. Will I have to have a personal budget?

If you are an existing customer, we will offer you the option of having a personal budget as part of your annual review. Your social worker will discuss this with you, and you can decide together whether you want a personal budget straight away or not.

If you are a new customer, from July 2010 you will have a personal budget. This will mean different things to different people – SDS allows people to choose how much control they have.

So, if you want to have a direct payment and organise your support yourself, you can. If you'd prefer to have services provided and your budget managed by the council, that's fine too. There are lots of different ways we can organise things to meet your needs – and all of them are 'personal budgets' because they allow you to choose and control your support.

5. What if I'm happy with my current care package and don't want to change?

SDS does not mean you have to change the care you receive. If you are happy with some – or all – of your current support, that's great. You can use your budget to buy the same services you use now. You can also ask the council to manage your budget

for you if that's what you want. But if there are some things you would like to change, you can do that too.

6. What if I'm not sure SDS is suitable for me?

SDS lets people tailor their support to their preferred lifestyle. It does not mean you have to make big changes – and you don't have to manage the money if you don't want to. It is therefore suitable for almost everyone. If you have any questions, please ask your social worker. Or you can speak to people in Leeds who direct their own support already – contact the Personal Budgets Peer Support Group on 0789 1277 495 or visit www.personalbudgetsleeds.org.

7. Social care services haven't worked for me in the past – what's different with SDS?

Members of some communities have, in the past, felt that the services on offer don't work for them. This may be because they don't fit well with their lifestyle, or respect their religious beliefs. SDS lets people design services that suit them and their community. It can, for example, help people:

- recruit assistants who share their first language and come from their community
- set guidelines and rules that fit their religious beliefs
- feel that their voice really matters.

8. What is the difference between a personal budget and a direct payment?

Personal budgets and direct payments are not the same thing.

Everyone on self-directed support will have a personal budget – which means you will:

- know how much money is available to you to meet your social care needs
- have a support plan which says what outcomes you want to achieve with that funding
- be able to choose and control how and when your budget is spent.

Some people will choose to manage their personal budget as a direct payment. However, you can have a personal budget even if you don't want to manage a direct payment. The budget can be managed by a third party, a Trust, a provider or Leeds City Council.

9. What if I don't want – or can't – manage my budget myself?

You don't have to! You can choose how you want to receive and manage your budget. The different ways you can do this are described below. Your social worker will discuss these options with you as part of your support plan, so you can decide which one would work best.

- Direct payment – payments are made directly to you so you can buy services and manage your budget.
- Direct payments to a suitable person – direct payments can be made to a suitable person (such as a family member) in cases where you cannot, or do not want to manage your own direct payments.
- Trusts – direct payments can be made to a group of people who manage them on your behalf. The Trust is usually a small group of people, and can include anyone you agree to, such as members of your family.

- Individual Service Funds – this is where you ask a provider to hold your budget and organise and manage your support.
- Local authority-managed – this is where you ask Leeds City Council to hold your budget and manage your support. If you choose this option, there are some restrictions on where you can buy your support from, for example you cannot use your budget to employ a personal assistant.
- Mixed budget – a combination of the above. For example, you could receive part of your budget as a direct payment, but ask the council to manage another part.

10. Who will do my assessment?

Your needs will be assessed using a self-directed assessment questionnaire. We will encourage you to lead this process wherever possible, with help from your carers, family or friends – after all, you are the expert on your life! However, Adult Social Care staff will work with you throughout the assessment, and provide as much help and support as you need. Even if you are happy to complete most of the questionnaire yourself, we will still need to talk to you to make sure everything has been covered.

11. How does the Resource Allocation System (RAS) work?

Once your self-directed assessment questionnaire is complete, social care staff will input the answers into the RAS. This is a tool that work out how much money is required to meet your needs. Once all the information has been input, the RAS produces an overall indicative budget allocation – in other words, a total amount for your social care budget. You will be told what this is, and can then start support planning.

12. What if I don't think my indicative budget is right?

The indicative budgets will be right in most cases, and you should aim to build your support plan within that amount of money. However, it is only an indicative budget – and the final amount won't be decided until your support plan is approved.

It may be that, as you work through your support plan, you can meet your needs using less money – if so, your overall budget will be reduced. Or, it may be that you feel your needs can only be met by increasing your budget. If that's the case you should discuss this with your social worker – any situations like this will be looked at on a case-by-case basis to make sure your budget allocation is fair and meets your eligible needs.

13. What type of things can I buy, and what can't I buy?

You can propose any service or item as part of your support plan – as long as it meets the eligible community-based social care needs identified in your assessment, and will help you to achieve the outcomes you want. You should make sure that what you are suggesting will work well and is cost-effective. If you are unsure or have any questions, please talk to your social worker, who will discuss your plan with you.

14. What if I'd rather get help from someone independent?

Social care staff can help you all the way through the SDS process, for example with finding out what services are available and putting together your support plan. However, if you would prefer to get help from someone outside the council, you can do this free of charge through the Centre for Integrated Living (CIL), which is an

independent, user-led organisation. Some people may choose to use other brokers, and fund this themselves.

15. What support can I get if I want to employ a personal assistant?

ASIST (0113 214 3599) can provide advice and support if you want to employ a personal assistant. Or you can speak to people in Leeds who are already using a personal budget to employ their own personal assistants. Contact the Personal Budgets Peer Support Group on 0789 1277 495 or visit www.personalbudgetsleeds.org.

A detailed *Guide to Becoming an Employer* is being produced, and further information is available at www.leeds.gov.uk/personal_budgets. Other organisations, such as ACAS (www.acas.org.uk) and BusinessLink (www.businesslink.gov.uk), also offer advice around employment issues.

16. What about my carer?

Carers' assessments will be done, and services provided, as they are now.

17. How will you monitor what I've spent my budget on?

If you receive your personal budget as a direct payment (or as a direct payment to a suitable person, or a Trust) you are responsible for how it is spent. You must be able to show that it has been used to buy the services and support you described in your support plan. Regular reviews will be carried out to make sure that this is the case, and that your needs are being met.

If you are finding it difficult to manage your direct payment, or make a mistake, support and advice is available from the direct payments team on 0113 395 2152, 247 8560 and 247 8504.

In a very small number of cases, people may try to intentionally misuse the money (for example, spending it on something we have not agreed). If this happens, we will discuss this with you to find out what has been happening and why. We may then need to put a different arrangement in place, such as a local authority-managed budget.