

# Direct Payments



## Advice on managing your Direct Payment during the Coronavirus pandemic.

October 2020

You can download a copy of this information as an interactive PDF from the Disability Sheffield website: [www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk).



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# Introduction

We wrote to you in May with some short-term guidance to help you manage your Direct Payment during the Coronavirus pandemic.

Now, many of the support services that were closed during the lockdown are re-opening, or finding new ways to provide support to meet people's needs as the pandemic continues.

This information will help you to continue to manage your Direct Payment, and make changes to your support to help you during the next few months.

We appreciate that this may still be a difficult and unsettling time. We know some people feel anxious about changing their Direct Payment to help them manage care support.

We'll continue to do everything we can to support you, while following the Government's rules on social distancing and self-isolating. There's more information about these rules on their website.

[www.gov.uk/coronavirus](https://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

If you have any problems managing your care and support contact your social care team. Contact details are on page 17.

# How can I use my Direct Payment flexibly to meet my needs?

What matters most during the pandemic is that you're able to use your Direct Payment in a way that allows you to stay well and continue to get the care and support you need to achieve your outcomes.

We'll continue to take a flexible approach to the arrangements you, your family and carers will need to make to continue to meet your care and support needs, and maintain your wellbeing during the pandemic.

Where possible, you should keep using your Direct Payment as agreed in your care and support plan. There may be situations where you need to organise your care and support in different ways, as a result of the pandemic. Ideally, you'll have agreed this with your usual social care team, but we understand that this won't be possible every time.

Please continue to use your Direct Payment flexibly and innovatively to meet your eligible care and support needs. When you're struggling to find alternatives or services that can meet your needs, please contact Disability Sheffield or your social care team. Contact details are on page 17.

For additional PA hours, or a replacement PA, check the PA Register. This is a list of available PAs, maintained by Disability Sheffield. The register is on Disability Sheffield's website.

[www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk)

You can also contact other support providers for help.

In an emergency or urgent situation, you can use your Direct Payment to make sure you're safe, or so you can get the care and support you need.

This could mean buying different services to those agreed in your care and support plan.

When buying replacement or additional support:

- first** Use any unspent money in your Direct Payment account.
- then** Use your Direct Payment contingency money.
- then** If you need additional funds, request an emergency payment by contacting your social care team or the Direct Payment Audit Team. Contact details are on page 17.

Here are two examples showing how to use your Direct Payment flexibly. They're not the only options available, but we hope they help you to see how you can use your Direct Payment flexibly to suit your needs and the outcomes identified in your care and support plan.

### Example 1

Joy has a Direct Payment that she uses to fund counselling sessions and activities in the community, to support her mental health. This also helps to reduce her isolation.

As a result of the Coronavirus pandemic Joy couldn't receive counselling or engage in community activities.

Joy contacted our Direct Payment Audit Team saying she felt vulnerable, anxious and isolated living alone because of the pandemic. During the discussion with the team we found out Joy didn't have access to a computer.

Joy thought if she had one, she may be able to have online sessions with her counsellor. She could also communicate with friends through a video call, and this would give Joy

access to more leisure opportunities through the internet.

Together, we drew up a plan for Joy to approach her social care team, proposing that she used her Direct Payment flexibly to buy a laptop.

Joy's social care team agreed this was a good way for her to use her Direct Payment.

Joy also found training to learn how to use her laptop from an online tutorial she found on the internet.

Getting her laptop has changed Joy's life during the lockdown. Her anxiety and stress levels have fallen dramatically, and she has managed to restart her counselling sessions via video call. This was achieved at no additional cost but has changed Joy's life and improved her health and wellbeing.

### Example 2

Miguel has a Direct Payment that he uses to attend a weekly art class at a local community centre. Because of the pandemic lockdown Miguel was informed that his weekly arts class was suspended.

The organisation that usually provides the arts class put some learning materials and ideas on its website, for people to try at home. Miguel felt it would benefit his health and wellbeing to continue doing craft activities at home while the

community classes were suspended. However, he didn't have the materials he needed at home.

Miguel talked to his social care team. With their support he drew up a list of materials to buy. Miguel found an online seller and placed an order.

Having the materials meant Miguel could take part in the online activities. He's continued to develop his skills and maintained his weekly routine. As a result, Miguel has felt less anxious and more confident.

## Things to think about.



**What outcomes in your care and support plan are you no longer able to achieve?**

For Joy in example one, her outcome was to manage and maintain her mental health.

For Miguel in example two, his outcome was maintaining his health and wellbeing.



**What activity or action are you no longer able to participate in?**

For Joy she was no longer able to have her counselling sessions and she felt vulnerable, anxious and isolated.

For Miguel he felt he could no longer attend his art class and paint. As well as the activity this also meant Miguel lost the social contact from being part of a class.



**Is there an alternative way to help you achieve your outcomes?**

Like a different approach to your care and support, using assistive technology, or an alternative service?

For Joy there was an alternative through online counselling sessions.

For Miguel there was an alternative through the online learning materials and ideas.



**Are there alternatives that could help you maintain your social interaction?**



**How could you access that alternative?  
What barriers stop you from accessing the alternative?**

Joy was able to think about how she could access online sessions, and worked out she needed access to a computer and support to learn how to use it.

Miguel felt he needed access to materials so he could continue to paint. To maintain some social contact Miguel could also have considered if there were ways to take part in conversations with others about art, perhaps through online forums, or sharing photographs of his art with another member of the class and having a phone conversation with them.



**Who could help you identify an alternative?**

Joy talked with the Direct Payment Audit Team and her social care team to discuss how she could achieve the outcomes in her support plan.

Miguel spoke with his social care team to discuss how he might be able to manage the outcomes identified in his support plan.

Where you've been able to use your Direct Payment flexibly, you could reflect on how this supported you, and if other changes are needed.

## **Please note**

If when using your Direct Payment flexibly your support costs more, you can use any surplus in your Direct Payment account, as well as your contingency money.

Please make sure you keep copies of receipts and invoices for any costs to your Direct Payment.

If you're concerned about whether you have enough money in your account to pay for your support, please contact your social care team or the Direct Payment Audit Team. Contact details are on page 17.

# Contingency planning

Making a contingency plan means thinking about what could happen that could affect your safety or the support you need, and identifying things you could do to stop or reduce the impact on you.

We strongly recommend that everybody with a Direct Payment creates a contingency plan.

If you already have a plan, we recommend reviewing it to take account of the changes during the Coronavirus pandemic.

With this information we've included a printed template you can use with prompts to help you think about how to prepare. From Disability Sheffield's website you can download a template you can use with your computer to type into (Microsoft Word and PDF).

[www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk)

The template has prompts to help you plan for problems with workers like PAs and paid carers, as well as options if a relative or unpaid carer is not able to support you. They may not be able to help you because they have to self-isolate, or if they become infected.

It's a good idea to discuss your plan with your paid carers, PAs and any relatives or unpaid carers that help you.

## Things to think about.

- Would different staffing arrangements help you at times when those you employ can't work in their usual way? You may want to consider longer shift patterns and less frequent handovers, for example. When doing this, consider any additional pressures being placed on the people you employ.
- Could you set up different care and support arrangements for times when parts of your care and support can't be delivered (such as attending exercise classes in the community)? There may be other arrangements you can set up for a short time (such as an online class, or booking a video call with a trainer).
- Could you share PAs with someone else? There may be times when sharing the PAs you employ with another person with a Direct Payment will help you both to have the support you need. This can give you flexibility if support from your main PA is interrupted because they're not able to work. It can also help your PAs to know they have work for all the hours they're available. If you're interested in this talk to the Disability Sheffield. Contact details are on page 17.

- Would you be able to call on people in your networks of support? If you have other people who can help, would they be willing and able (such as extended family or friends). Would they need training, or can you share information with them that would help them stay safe while supporting you.
- Could you use assistive technology? There may be a piece of equipment that would help you to maintain your wellbeing and manage your support needs.
- Are there ways to upskill your existing staff? This may not require face-to-face training – it could be through learning from other staff, or learning on the internet.
- Could you set out your care and support plan so that it's easier to follow? Adding detailed information about your support including preferences, medication etc will help later if you need an unfamiliar person to support you.
- Would a list of emergency contacts be handy? Contact details of your PAs and care providers, and family, friends, neighbours, and people in the local community.

You'll find more prompts and suggestions on how to plan in the template we've sent with this information. Or download a template to use with your computer (Microsoft Word or PDF) from Disability Sheffield's website.

**[www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk)**

Once your contingency plan is complete make sure it's kept in a place so it's easy to access. Tell family, unpaid and your paid carers where it's kept and the key details of your plan.

You may have built up funds in your Direct Payment Bank Account. Please continue to use your Direct Payment flexibly and innovatively to meet your eligible care and support needs.

When you're struggling to find alternatives or services that can meet your needs, please contact Disability Sheffield or your social care team.

Please keep a record so that this can be identified later when we monitor your Direct Payment.

There may also be times when you need to request additional funding in an emergency, because you don't have enough money to cover additional support needed during the pandemic.

Please contact your social care team or the Direct Payment Audit Team. Contact details are on page 17.

## What if I'm self-isolating?

If you, or a family member you live with, needs to self-isolate due to Coronavirus symptoms, you can continue to pay your PA while they're not supporting you.

If you have symptoms and can't manage without your PAs, and the PA is willing to continue, you'll need to provide Personal Protective Equipment (PPE). Get up-to-date Government PPE advice.

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe](https://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe)

Please contact Disability Sheffield for more information about PPE, and to request PPE.

Online: [www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](https://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk)

Email: [directpayments@disabilitysheffield.org.uk](mailto:directpayments@disabilitysheffield.org.uk)

Call: **0114 253 6750**.

If your PA doesn't want to continue to provide support whilst you're self-isolating, contact Disability Sheffield for advice. Disability Sheffield has a PA Register with details of people who may be able to provide short-term support. Or you can contact other support providers for help.

If you need help to arrange alternative support please contact your social care team.

If your PA is self-isolating, there is information about this on page 12.

The Government website has up-to-date advice on shielding and protecting people who are clinically extremely vulnerable.

[www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/guidance-on-shielding-and-protecting-extremely-vulnerable-persons-from-covid-19)

# What should I do if I employ Personal Assistants (PAs)?

## If your PA is unwell or self-isolating

The Government classes PAs as Key Workers.

As part of Government's changes during the pandemic, Statutory Sick Pay will be paid from day one of sickness to support those affected by the Coronavirus.

This means a Personal Assistant who is ill or needs to self-isolate can take time off from caring to prevent transmission of the virus.

If your PA is off sick or self-isolating due to Coronavirus, you can pay them four weeks of full pay, and then Statutory Sick Pay.

If your PA is entitled to Statutory Sick Pay, your payroll provider should apply for this for the PA as a part of their wage. The sick pay payments can be recovered from Statutory Sick Pay.

Fit notes are not needed from PAs who are self-isolating. If your PA says they're self-isolating, they won't be able to go to their doctor, and they're being asked not to call NHS 111 unless they really need to.

You do not need evidence from your PA to be able to claim Statutory Sick Pay for them. If your PA is self-isolating and then becomes sick, they should let you know (by telephone, not in person).

If your PA is self-isolating, they may be able to get a £500 payment. Government advice on financial support.

**[www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/test-and-trace-support-payment-scheme-claiming-financial-support)**

Even if your PA does not get any state benefits, they can apply for a discretionary award.

The Council website has details of who can apply and the application form.

**[www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/your-city-council/coronavirus-hub/support-for-people](https://www.sheffield.gov.uk/home/your-city-council/coronavirus-hub/support-for-people)**

If your PA is unwell or self-isolating, you may need alternative support. We understand a replacement will be an additional cost. You can use any surplus in your Direct Payment Bank Account, and your contingency money. If you're still concerned about having enough money in your account, please contact your social care team or the Direct Payment Audit Team for advice. Contact details are on page 17.

Here's an example of how this could work.

### Example 3

<p>Tahmina employs a PA, Rebecca, through her Direct Payment to help with some daily tasks. One morning Tahmina gets a call from Rebecca, who tells her that a member of Rebecca's household has symptoms of Coronavirus. After reading advice on GOV.UK, they agree that Rebecca needs to self-isolate.</p> <p>Tahmina also gets support from another PA, Stuart, for a few days each week.</p>	<p>Stuart is familiar with Tahmina's needs and care and support plan, although he's not Tahmina's main PA. Tahmina asks Stuart if he can increase the number of hours he works for her. Stuart says he can do this on a short-term basis.</p> <p>Tahmina applies for Statutory Sick Pay for Rebecca for the time she is off ill, while paying Stuart a full wage until Rebecca can return.</p>
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## Quarantine following a trip abroad

If you travel abroad, you may need to self-isolate on your return.

If you need support from PAs, you should provide PPE during your self-isolation.

If your PA is travelling to a country that requires self-isolation when they return, then you'll need to agree with them how they take this time off. This time could be taken as annual leave or unpaid leave.

Before agreeing to the time off for annual leave you'll need to consider what support you can arrange to cover both the annual leave and period of self-isolation.

Government guidance on Coronavirus travel corridors.

[www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors](https://www.gov.uk/guidance/coronavirus-covid-19-travel-corridors)

## PAs returning to work

If your PA is well but doesn't want to come to work, talk to your PA about their reasoning behind this. Work with your PA to complete the Risk Tool. This will help you to put things in place to provide reassurance for you and your PA.

Download a copy of the PA Risk Tool template from Disability Sheffield's website.

[www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk)

If your PA tells you they can't support you because of carer or childcare responsibilities you may need to buy additional support.

**first**

Use any unspent money in your Direct Payment account.

**then**

Use your Direct Payment contingency money.

**then**

If you need additional funds, request an emergency payment by contacting your social care team or the Direct Payment Audit Team. Contact details are on page 17.

If you need to pay for a taxi for your PA to get to work so that they avoid using public transport you can do this. It may provide reassurance for your PA to provide PPE if required, and you can use the money in your account to buy this.

## Employing PAs and PPE

Your safety, and those who provide care and support to you, is vital. That's why you should be able to access the appropriate Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) and testing for those who provide care and support for you.

If your PA does not live with you permanently Public Health England has guidance on what PPE is appropriate to wear for PAs who do not live in the same accommodation as the person requiring care.

Public Health England has produced resources that explain how PPE can be safely used to reduce the spread of infection. It's important that PAs take off PPE in the recommended order. This helps to prevent self-contamination. The guidance explains how to put on and take off PPE safely.

They also have videos on how to put on, and take off, PPE safely.

[www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/secondary-care/infection-control/ppe](http://www.england.nhs.uk/coronavirus/secondary-care/infection-control/ppe)

All unpaid carers and family members looking after others should continue to follow the general hygiene guidance provided by the Government. This includes washing their hands and cleaning frequently used surfaces. Government hygiene advice.

[www.gov.uk/coronavirus](http://www.gov.uk/coronavirus)

Disability Sheffield is taking requests for PPE for PAs (and social care workers etc working with people who have PAs) on behalf of the Council.

Disability Sheffield can provide PPE for anyone with a Direct Payment, whether this has been arranged with the Council or with NHS Sheffield. If you're a self-funder and arrange and pay for all your support, they may also be able to help.

To request PPE contact Disability Sheffield. Contact details are on page 17.

If you're symptomatic and getting support from an unpaid carer who does not live with you, they can access PPE through Disability Sheffield.

If family members who provide you with care and support live with you permanently, Public Health England does not recommend using more PPE than would normally be used.

If the family member is not living in the same accommodation and their care and support requires PPE, they should be able to access and use this PPE

## **Testing for your PAs**

The national Coronavirus Testing Programme now includes other frontline workers. This includes personal care assistants and Personal Assistants who have to self-isolate due to Coronavirus-like symptoms, or because a member of their household has symptoms.

If your PA, or someone they live with, has Coronavirus symptoms, that person and anyone in their household can be tested. Get more details from Disability Sheffield's website.

[www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk)

The Government considers PAs as essential workers and therefore applications for tests can be made on GOV.UK. Alternatively, you can refer your PA for a test yourself. You can do this using the employer referral portal on the GOV.UK website.

<https://www.coronavirus-invite-testing.service.gov.uk>

## **Suggest your PA gets a Flu jab**

Frontline health or social care workers including PAs are eligible for the Flu Vaccine, and should contact their GP to arrange this.

[www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine](http://www.nhs.uk/conditions/vaccinations/flu-influenza-vaccine)

# Family members as PAs

During the pandemic short-term emergency changes may be needed.

You may ask family or close friends to provide support beyond any unpaid care and support they may already be willing and able to provide.

They may be willing to provide additional support on a voluntary basis for a short period of time, for example, while your PA recovers from sickness.

If you need less support because a family member is supporting you, please tell the services you use – and continue to pay them.

If you feel it's necessary for family members to become your paid care and support workers on a permanent or longer-term basis, talk to your social care team about this.

If you don't need this now but think it may be required later, it's a good idea to include this in your contingency plan.

Things to think about.

- You'll need to follow the normal employment and payroll processes, including agreeing hours and pay rates.
- Will you need to provide additional training or assessment of competence for the support you require.
- What additional costs does this create, for example if your existing PAs are entitled to ongoing pay.
- If family members take on paid care and support work, will this impact on any benefits they receive.
- How will this impact family members if they're already providing significant levels of care and support. Consider any impact on their health and wellbeing, and whether an unreasonable strain is being put on them.
- If the family member is also the Direct Payment recipient and the employer, there can be a conflict of interest. In a case like this employing them through an agency or third party may be a solution.
- Could this affect your relationship with the family member if they're also your employee.

If you have any questions on this please contact your social care team for advice. Contact details are on page 17.

# **What do I do about my contribution now that my services are restarting**

Most types of support and services should have resumed to some extent by now, even if they're not being delivered in the same way as they were before Coronavirus pandemic began.

Therefore, if you stopped paying your contributions during the lockdown, you'll need to make sure you start paying them again from the day that your services restart.

This is because your personal contributions are used first when paying for your support. If your support costs more than this the Council pays the remainder.

If you have any concerns about the amount you pay towards your care and support talk to your social care team.

If you have any questions about your contributions now that your services have restarted, please contact the Direct Payment Audit Team. Contact details are on page 17.

You're not required to pay any services you're now not able to attend, unless this is clearly stated in the contract you have with the service.

If this is the case, and you're required to make payments even though you don't receive the service talk to your social care team. There may be alternative support or a way to agree a change to the contract you have. Contact details are on page 17.

# What should I do if my day centre has to close or reduce its services?

The Government guidance on social distancing includes care and support settings.

Day services are exempt from the Rule of Six (where it's against the law for people to gather in a group of more than six, indoors or outdoors). This would include, for example, day centres and other organised support activities.

Day services are working hard to adapt so that people can return. You should have heard from your day service to talk about options for you to return. If you can't attend on all the days that you used to, you can use your Direct Payment flexibly to set up alternative support. You'll need to pay for the days that you attend the day service.

You do not need to pay a care provider if you're not getting a service. Please use this money flexibly to seek alternative support.

If you don't attend your day service because you're self-isolating, you should continue to pay your provider.

Ask your provider if they can offer support or activities remotely, for example catch-ups and social contact using an app like Zoom or Skype.

Even if your day service can't offer alternatives, continue to pay them for the sessions you're missing. This is so you can hold your place while you're away. You should use your Direct Payment to pay for this.

If you need to arrange alternative day services or additional support.

**first** Use any unspent money in your Direct Payment account.

**then** Use your Direct Payment contingency money.

**then** If you need additional funds, request an emergency payment by contacting your social care team or the Direct Payment Audit Team. Contact details are on page 17.

## Where can I get a short-term emergency payment?

Please contact the Direct Payment Audit Team. Contact details are on page 17.

# Useful contacts

## GOVERNMENT INFORMATION

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- Statutory Sick Pay. [www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay](http://www.gov.uk/statutory-sick-pay)

Please note Statutory Sick Pay for self-isolation is from day 1 of self-isolation.

- Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).

[www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe](http://www.gov.uk/government/collections/coronavirus-covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-ppe)

## SHEFFIELD CITY COUNCIL

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- Direct Payment Audit Team

Call **0114 273 5397**. Email [DPUaudits@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:DPUaudits@sheffield.gov.uk)

- Social Care

Call **0114 273 4567**.

Choose option 4 for Children's Services. Choose option 5 for Adult Social Care.

## NHS SHEFFIELD

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- Clinical Commissioning Group

Call **0114 305 1000**. Email [sheCCG.sheffieldCCG@nhs.net](mailto:sheCCG.sheffieldCCG@nhs.net)

- Continuing Health Care

Call **0114 305 1700**. Email [sheCCG.sheffieldCCG@nhs.net](mailto:sheCCG.sheffieldCCG@nhs.net)

- Mental Health Services

Single Point of Access. Call **0114 226 3636**.

North Sheffield recovery service: Northlands. Call **0114 271 6217**.

South Sheffield recovery service: Eastglade. Call **0114 271 6451**.

## DISABILITY SHEFFIELD Centre for Independent Living

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Call **0114 253 6750**. Text Only Number **07541 937 169**.

Email [directpayments@disabilitysheffield.org.uk](mailto:directpayments@disabilitysheffield.org.uk)

Website [www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk](http://www.disabilitysheffield.org.uk)

On the website you can access the PA Register, get details about key worker testing. and download templates for the PA Risk Plan and the Contingency Plan.

## ABOUT THIS DOCUMENT

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Written in October 2020. This information is based on national guidance, tailored for people in Sheffield. We're grateful for the help Disability Sheffield has provided to help us develop this information. You can download this information as an interactive guide from Disability Sheffield's website.