



London Borough
of Hounslow

PUTTING PEOPLE FIRST

Frequently asked questions

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Questions about Putting People First in Hounslow

What is 'Putting People First in Hounslow'?

Putting People First is about giving you much more choice and control over your life. If you are eligible for Council funding, it gives you the opportunity to choose (self direct) your own support using a personal budget. The personal budget is calculated and agreed based on your assessed need. You can decide, with our help if you want, how to spend that money, so that your needs are met.

Whatever your level of need, you should be able to get the right information, advice and support to make decisions about services you may need. The Council is working with its partners to give you access to all services such as transport, leisure and learning, housing, health and opportunities for employment.

Putting People First means thinking about care and support in a very different way. It means starting with you and understanding:-

- What you can do or are good at,
- What sort of things you like doing most
- How you like things to be done with you or for you
- What you want to achieve in life and what your priorities are

This puts you at the centre of identifying your needs and making choices about what, who, how and when you are supported to live your life.

What is Self Directed Support?

Self directed support is a way of organising social care and well-being services that puts you in charge of the support you need.

If you require help to live independently, Community Services will always try and meet your needs, using available services, advice, information, technology or social care services. We will look at offering a personal budget if you require services beyond these.

The self directed support process will enable you to:

- tell us what your needs are;
- tell you what money is available from us to pay for the support you want and need;
- help you to plan your own support; and decide what you want to achieve
- help you to organise and manage your care.

What is a Personal Budget?

A personal budget is social care money given to buy services to meet your social care needs. Other funds can also be included, such as Independent Living Funds, Access to Work, Supporting People Grant or Disabled Facilities Grant. Your circumstances would need to be looked at to see whether you qualify for these different grants and funds.

Your personal budget will be matched to meet your needs. You can choose to manage the budget yourself or not. You will be financially assessed to decide your contribution to the personal budget.

Questions about getting a Personal Budget

How do I get a Personal Budget?

Contact Community Services Adult Access Team
Telephone: 020 8583 3100.

They can tell you how Hounslow are delivering and developing Personal budgets.

How does Self-Directed Support fit with eligibility e.g. Fair Access to Care Services (FACS)?

Fair Access to Care is a national eligibility criteria used to assess whether individuals have sufficient needs to receive social care services.

At present, Hounslow must work with people who are assessed as meeting the eligibility criteria for social care services. This means that services are available to you, if you have a **substantial or critical risk** to your independence.

However Hounslow are now looking at how they can help people before they develop needs that are a substantial or critical risk to their independence.

What is a Resident Led Assessment?

This is an assessment for adults who, under the Fair Access to Care Services threshold, are eligible for social care services. If you are requesting adult social care you will be asked to complete a questionnaire; you can do this yourself, with friends, families or with the help of a care manager.

The amount of information gathered on the questionnaire will be proportionate to your circumstance and needs. All resident led assessments will need to be validated by a care manager, and feed into a "Resource Allocation System" which calculates a budget call a personal budget.

Who can get a Personal Budget?

If you are over 18 and are assessed as meeting the Fair Access to Care Services (FACS) Criteria for Social Care Services, you may be given some money towards a personal budget.

You will be financially assessed to establish your contribution to your personal budget.

If your financial assessment means that you are not entitled to receive a budget from Community Services you will still be entitled to free advice and support in planning and organising your care, either from the Council or, if you prefer from an independent organisation.

How will my Personal Budget be calculated?

Your personal budget is calculated using the information provided in your resident led assessment and from your Social Worker/Care Manager/Occupational Therapist. Your budget will include any contribution you are required to make as a result of your financial assessment.

You will be given an indication of how much your personal budget is, in order for you to decide what services you need to build your support plan.

It will be your choice how the budget is broken down to pay for the services you need to meet outcomes you identified in your support plan. You can do this with assistance from Community Services or from an independent organisation or person. We will provide you with a Budget Planning tool to help you to plan your expenditure.

How and who will work out my money?

The personal budget is worked out by the finance team based on your resident led assessment. Your personal budget is not a state benefit.

It will not affect other allowances or state pensions and is not liable to income tax.

Questions about spending my Personal Budget

What can I spend my Personal Budget on?

Some of the things you can spend it on are:

- employing support workers or personal assistants;
- employing family members or friends;
- buying services from an agency or organisation such as:
 - providers of domiciliary care;
 - membership of clubs; and
 - educational activities;
- paying expenses for unpaid helpers; and
- transport expenses.

The things you cannot spend your money on are:

- things that do not meet the outcomes in your support plan;
- health needs and services the NHS provides;
- illegal activities;
- things not agreed or identified in your support plan.

What are the spending restrictions?

Your personal budget can be used to meet the outcomes identified in your support plan. Your support plan will have to be agreed by the Council, who will be looking to ensure your plan meets four criteria, that it is effective, lawful, safe and cost effective.

Can I use part of the money on other services I need?

A personal budget can be used in a way you think best meets your needs for social care. Personal budgets cannot be used to meet needs that would ordinarily be met by the National Health Service.

Will I really be allowed to spend my Personal Budget flexibly?

It is very important that you are allowed to spend your money flexibly.

One role of the council is to agree with you who is the best person to control the personal budget. Often this will be yourself or someone close to you that you trust. Sometimes it may be a professional.

Once this is agreed with the Council, it follows that the person managing your personal budget is the best person to decide how the budget is spent. They must be free to spend the money in the way that will make the most sense for the person who needs support.

In exceptional circumstances, the Council may have reason to think it may be right to agree a specific restriction on how someone's money is spent.

How will payments be made to Personal Assistants?

Everyone eligible for social care will eventually have a personal budget. If you choose to receive help from a personal assistant to support you with your shopping or home care needs for example, there are three options for managing your personal budget.

1. If you choose to manage your own budget, you will be responsible for paying your personal assistant. Most people find it easiest to do this through a payroll service.
2. If you would like the Council to manage your budget on your behalf the council will organise payment.
3. If you have your budget managed by an Independent Support Broker, they will be responsible for organising payments.

Questions about support to manage my budget

How will I be supported by Community Services to manage my Personal Budget?

Staff will be available to help and assist you with all aspects of personal budgets, from the assessment of needs to the management of expenditure. The amount of help you want will be up to you.

Can my family and friends be involved in helping me to manage my own support?

Everyone can have control over their support. Some people can do it themselves, but some people need help.

If you do need help to plan and manage your support, you may choose your family and friends to help. If you have good networks of family and friends, this is a common way of organising things because we often turn to those we trust with things that are very personal.

Not everybody makes this choice. Some people like to get help from people they pay or with whom they have a more independent relationship.

If you do not have good networks or family and friends it does not mean you cannot be in control. If you do not have these networks, you can use other options. These include:

- other people with disabilities (peer supporters);
- paid independent brokers;

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- people who work for free community advocacy or advice services;
- service providers;
- care managers or social workers;
- intermediary organisations.

Hounslow will make sure you know about all these options and help you to access the option you prefer. Some people will help as part of their job or you may want to buy other help with a part of your personal budget.

A good support plan is likely to help you make or keep a network of friends.

Questions about my Support Plan

Is a 'Support Plan' just another name for a Care Plan?

A Care Plan presumes you need to be provided for or looked after. It is most usually put together by professionals and describes how they believe care is best provided following an assessment of your needs. It usually comprises a mix of services selected from a list set up for older or disabled people with social care needs.

A support plan is a plan that recognises that you are the person that knows what is important to you and what your priorities are. It assumes that you know what you want from life. A support plan, therefore, says things about you, who you are and what you want from life. It goes on to say how you might practically go about making your plan real over a period of time.

How flexible can I be with my agreed Support Plan?

You should have flexibility to spend the resources allocated to meet your needs in ways which reflect your own priorities. Any risks identified in your plan will have to be addressed.

Will my Support Plan be reviewed once a year?

All support plans will have a review at least once a year. We will also review it if there is a change in your circumstances or where there are concerns about risk.

Questions about monitoring my Personal Budget

How will my expenditure be monitored?

Your expenditure will be monitored half way (August) and at the end of the financial year (March).

Hounslow hope to introduce SMART cards, which will help us to monitor what is being spent.

What if I spend the money on things not in my Support Plan?

A personal budget would be allocated to you because you have eligible social care needs. In effect it then becomes your responsibility.

It is, however reasonable that the council asks whether the (public) money is doing its job - whether those needs are being met or not.

If your needs are not being met, then you may need extra help to think about what needs to change. This might happen as part of the review process or before the review is due.

If you do not want to manage the personal budget, or find that you cannot manage it, the local authority must find another person to act as your representative.

Questions about my current services

Can I continue with my current care package when I change to a Personal Budget?

Yes, you can choose to keep existing services or your direct payment.

However, you would be required to develop a support plan to reflect what outcomes you would like in order to continue to meet your social care needs.

The outcomes you want may mean that some of your existing services need to change or be more flexible and costs may vary.

What happens if I already receive care services from the council?

If you already receive social care services, this will not change immediately.

The council aims to move everyone currently receiving a social care package to self directed support by 2011. So, when your care manager visits to review your care plan, you will be asked to say what your needs are and a personal budget will be calculated for you.

You will then have the opportunity to organise your support and manage it yourself or with help from your care manager, as described in this leaflet.

Other Questions

How are Personal Budgets different from Direct Payments?

Personal budgets and direct payments are not the same thing, nor are they competing ideas. In a system of self-directed support everybody is given a personal budget and some people decide to manage their personal budget as a direct payment.

Someone has a direct payment when their local authority provides them with cash instead of a service; the person then purchases their own support directly. A direct payment, in other words is a way of managing your social care money. There are rules about how the money can be spent and regular monitoring by the local authority

A personal budget is more than this. You have a personal budget when you know how much money you can spend, you know what outcomes you are aiming to achieve, and can decide exactly how and when that money is spent.

You cannot spend your budget on things that are not agreed in a support plan, on health related needs or on illegal activities.

Will there be a pack and support for self-funders?

The council will ensure help and assistance is provided to meet the needs of self-funders. Printed literature will be available as well as a Website.

How long after assessment will I wait for funding for my care?

We aim to organise personal budgets within a four week period for most people.

If you are in urgent need of support, we can arrange something in the meantime.

To begin with we will arrange social care services to help you with your independence. If at the end of this time you still need support we aim to organise your personal budget and support plan to be in place by the end of that four weeks. In some circumstances this may take longer.

'Where does the money come from?'

There is no new money to go into personal budgets. The amount of money available is the same as is available now and it comes from that money which social services are already spending on social care.

However, this approach should also help you identify and use other sources of funding (e.g. the Independent Living Fund, Benefits, Employment, Community Services, Health, Education and Grants).

Will People become more isolated and at extra risk of abuse?

There is no reason to think that by being in control of your personal budget that you will be less safe than when using traditional services. Nor is there is any reason to think that you would be isolated as there will be many options available to support you in mixing with others. Being known to many people in a local community can be the best safeguard for vulnerable people.

The Putting People First Programme is being organised to minimise the risk of abuse by:

- putting the person in control of their life;
- making sure people who love the person are enabled to be part of the person's life;
- designing an agreed system of support and safeguards that fit the person's preferred lifestyle;
- supporting people to make decisions about the risks in their life and how to manage them;

- developing a Risk Enablement Panel for people who are vulnerable to abuse to support their right to independence but at the same time ensuring that they are safe; and
- developing approval systems for all support plan to ensure plans meet essential needs, manage risks and addresses safeguarding issues.

Will this work for people from black and minority ethnic communities?

Members of some communities sometimes complain that the services on offer exclude them in different ways:

- it's hard to find information about them;
- the kinds of help on offer don't fit well with their lifestyle; or
- services can fail to respect people's religious beliefs.

For these and many other reasons, it is often felt that the current system discriminates against people from black and minority ethnic communities.

Self-directed support does not discriminate in this way. Instead it lets you design services that suit you and your community. There are already many practical examples of how self-directed support helps:

- it helps you recruit supporters who share your first language and come from your community;
- it helps you set guidelines and rules that fit your religious beliefs; and
- it helps you feel that your voice really matters.

How can I get support from a Broker who is not part of the Council?

Currently the Council is looking for voluntary sector organisations to offer brokerage services that can be independent of the Council. The Council is also looking to tender for an organisation or organisations to provide this service.

When will the pilot finish and how will findings be reported?

The self-directed support pilot is currently underway and will hopefully be finished by the end of October.

Everyone who has been involved in the pilot will be interviewed to discuss their experiences and our findings will be reported to the Transformation Board and posted on the Putting People First pages in Hounslow Website.

What happens to organisations who provide services who may want to offer support planning and brokerage too - isn't there a conflict of interests?

Organisations are able to offer support planning, brokerage and services. What is important is to understand that it will be your choice about whether you wish to go to one provider and there may be good reasons for this.

However the Council will provide some minimum standards for brokerage which will address conflict of interest issues. The Council is also responsible for agreeing all support plans and reviewing with you whether the services you have purchased are meeting your chosen outcomes.