

Part 6

Information that is specific
to North Lincolnshire
Council

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Contents

Self Directed Support	6.3
North Lincolnshire Council Duties and Responsibilities	6.4
Your Responsibilities	6.4
Financial Monitoring of Your Personal Budget ...	6.5
Financially Assessed Contributions and Charges for Services	6.6
How your details are stored by us	6.7

Part 6

Self-Directed Support

Self directed support is about you being in control of the support you need to live as independently as possible. It gives you the chance to decide what kind of support you'd like, and who you'd like to provide it. To be able to use Self Directed Support you must be over the age of 18 and eligible for social care support from North Lincolnshire Council.

We asked you to complete a personal budget questionnaire to give us clear information about what support you need. This helped us work out how much money you are entitled to. We use a resource allocation system (RAS) to work out how much this should be. This allocation of money is called your personal budget.

You agreed a support plan with us that describes what you will need to keep safe, healthy and well. This helps us to make sure that the costs involved are right.

Personal Budgets

You can choose how you spend your personal budget and be creative about what you spend the money on, as long as it helps you achieve the outcomes in your support plan, and it's legal.

Your support plan describes how you want to organise and manage your personal budget. You have chosen to have some or your entire personal budget as a cash payment.

Cash Budgets

A cash budget is a cash payment made to you from the council so that you can buy the support you need. A cash budget is paid straight to a dedicated bank account. You can choose to receive the cash budget yourself, or nominate somebody to receive it for you.

You can use your cash budget flexibly to meet your needs and the outcomes in your support plan. There are some things that you can't spend your cash budget on, such as paying for support from close relatives who live with you, paying your household bills or housing costs or on services usually provided by other statutory agencies such as the health service.

Part 6

North Lincolnshire Council duties and responsibilities

If you choose to have your personal budget through cash budgets this is what you can expect from North Lincolnshire Council

- To provide you with the sum of money indicated in your personal budget and to pay this to you every four weeks (28 days), in advance.
- To assess whether you can afford to make a financial contribution to meeting your support needs. We deduct this amount before we pay you (this is called a net payment). You must pay your assessed financial contribution into your dedicated bank account.
- To keep your records confidential. Unless they are required to audit and monitor how the council spends its funds, or to investigate any misuse of money or in the event that the council is obliged to disclose the records as a matter of law.
- To notify you of any concern the council has about how you are managing your personal budget. If the council has concerns, we will where possible give you opportunity to deal with the problem before making any decision to suspend your payments. However the council may suspend payments immediately where you are not using your personal budget to purchase your support or the council considers that you have acted fraudulently or breached your personal budget agreement.
- To regularly check that you are spending your cash budget as agreed in your support plan.

Your Responsibilities

This is what the council can expect from you:

- To use your cash budget to arrange support to meet the outcomes as detailed in your support plan. Your support plan is flexible and you should contact your self directed support practitioner, agent or chosen decision maker if you wish to change any outcomes detailed in it.
- To have the cash budget paid into a dedicated bank account, which will be used for your support money only. The account may be used for other monies given to you as part of your individual budget.
- To use the cash budget to meet your support needs in a legal way.
- To take responsibility for any bank charges levied on the dedicated bank account.
- To use any interest earned on the account to purchase support.
- To inform the council of any changes to your financial circumstances or support needs immediately or within seven days of the change.
- To comply with all legal obligations when you employ PAs and to be responsible for PAYE arrangements.
- To keep records e.g. bank statements, invoices and records of how the money is spent.

Part 6

Financial monitoring of your personal budget

If you receive your personal budget as a cash payment, we need to know how you are spending it. This is because the money we give you is public money. We also hope that this will help you keep track of your spending. You are in control of your personal budget so you can spend your money on the things that you choose to meet your support needs. Your needs have been identified in your support plan.

We need to be able to see what your money has been spent on and how much is left in your account.

If you do not tell us how you have spent your money in one of these ways then your cash budget will be stopped and we will ask for the money back.

We will check them, and contact you if we need more information. If you have more than eight weeks worth of money in your dedicated account, and you are not saving this for something specific, then we may ask for it back.

You must keep records or evidence of any payments you make, such as receipts, payslips, cheque book stubs or invoices. We do not ask you to send these to us regularly however we can ask to see them at any time.

If you need help
If you have any questions please ring 01724 298071

Part 6

Financially assessed contributions and charges for services

What is a financially assessed contribution?

The Government assumes that councils will raise some money towards the cost of providing support by asking people who receive support from them to contribute towards its cost. We do not ask people to make a contribution if they cannot afford to pay. A financial assessment is completed to tell us what you can afford to contribute towards the cost of your support.

What is a financial assessment and what is involved?

Completing a financial assessment enables us to calculate what your contribution will be. A member of the Advice Assessment and Affairs team will contact you and may arrange a visit. They will ask you to provide information about your income, such as any benefits or pensions you receive. They won't ask for information about earnings from employment.

If you live at home with your partner, they'll provide both a single assessment (using only your details) and a couple's assessment (combining your details together) to identify which is the better option for your financial circumstances.

What financial evidence will I be asked to provide?

You will be asked to provide evidence of your savings by showing your bank or building society accounts, national savings or share certificates and the amount of cash you have. You will also be asked to provide evidence of your household expenses such as fuel bills, council tax, and rent or mortgage payments.

If you receive disability related benefits, such as Disability Living Allowance or Attendance Allowance, you'll also need to provide evidence of your disability related expenses, for example receipts, invoices or bills etc. These may offset against your income and reduce your contribution.

If you want us to complete a benefit check for you and your spouse/partner, you will also need to provide details of their savings and income to the Advice Assessment and Affairs team on: 01724 298071.

What if I decide not to disclose my financial details?
If you choose not to disclose your financial details, the assessor will assume you can afford to pay the maximum cost of whatever support you receive.

What if you don't agree with the amount you're asked to pay?

If you don't agree with the calculation of your assessed contribution, you can

- Appeal and request your assessment be reviewed.
- Discuss with your self directed support practitioner.

Remember!

- You will only be asked to contribute what we think you can afford to pay.
- You shouldn't be caused hardship, or denied access to a service if you can't afford to pay
- If your contribution causes hardship, you have a right to ask for the charge to be reduced or dropped

Part 6

How your details are stored by us

Why we collect information about you?

We collect information about you to help us see if we can offer you support, and to make sure you receive the best possible support. It also helps us plan and develop future services.

Recording your information helps us remember what we have talked about and agreed with you.

The records may include:

- Your name, address, date of birth, gender and ethnicity
- Details about your needs and the plans agreed with you for providing your support
- Your GP (doctor) details and any medical information that may help in providing your support
- Your financial circumstances to see if you need to pay towards the cost of your support
- Relevant information from other people who know you.
- Your bank account number to enable us to pay your cash payments

How we use information about you

We use your records to make sure:

- We have accurate, up-to-date information so we can plan with you the best support to meet your needs
- We can monitor and review your needs to make sure you continue to get the right support
- Any concerns you may have can be properly investigated
- We can develop and improve our services for the future

Who is able to see information we keep about you?

North Lincolnshire Council staff and the people that work closely with our staff to help you may need to see part or all of your records. These people may include health services staff.

Because of the type of information we provide, some of the information we record is personal and sensitive. Under the Data Protection Act 1998, all staff has a duty to protect your records and keep what you tell us safe. Our staff, and people who work closely with us, value your right to keep things confidential and know they must only let other professionals have access to the information when they have a clear need to know as part of their job.

In some circumstances we are obliged to show information to others. This would include when a person or organisation has a legal right to the information.

Part 6

Can I see my personal information?

Yes. The Data Protection Act 1998 gives you the right to ask us what information we have recorded about you.

Is there anything I can't see?

We always try to show you all information we hold. Sometimes we may be unable to do this or we may need to ask someone else's permission first. For example, your records may contain information about someone else, or relate to legal proceedings. If we can't share the whole of your record we'll explain why.

How do I get to see my records?

If you want to see the information we hold about you please write to:

Judy Morgan
Brumby Resource Centre
Ashby House
East Common Lane
Scunthorpe
North Lincolnshire
DN16 1QQ
email:
receptionbrumbyresourcecentre@northlincs.gov.uk or
Tel 01724 297979

We'll write back to you to say we've received your request. We always aim to respond within 40 days from receipt of a written request although if you've asked for a specific item of information it may be possible to find this quickly.

You can also authorise someone else to get personal information for you. They must produce clear evidence that they are authorised to make a request on your behalf.

If you're not happy with our response to your request you can make a complaint by contacting our Complaints and Representation Manager - Julie Pointon
Tel 01724 296487