

# ASIST

actively seeking independence  
support team

**Information  
and support  
for  
direct payment  
users  
with mental  
health  
problems**



- Direct payments
- Help with recruitment and employment of personal assistants
- Payroll
- Ongoing support

*helping you control your own support services*

# ASIST is the support team based at Leeds Centre for Integrated Living for people using direct payments

## About direct payments

We can give information on all aspects of direct payments and advise you on how to make an application. Some of the commonly asked questions are given below.

### **What are direct payments?**

Direct payments are for people who are eligible for care services from Leeds Adult Social Care, such as community support services. Instead of receiving a service from the local authority you can choose to receive Direct Payments as a way of meeting your identified care needs. You decide who gives the care, and how and when they work with you. Direct payments mean that you are in charge.

### **Who can have direct payments?**

In order to be eligible for Direct Payments you must have a comprehensive assessment from a Mental Health professional that has produced a care plan.

If you only use a walk-in service, you may not have been assessed for Community Care Services. If you think your needs are not being met you can ask for a Community Care Assessment to see if you are eligible for support from Adult Social Care.

If you are eligible to receive a service from Adult Social Care you may choose to have your needs met by a direct payment.

Other people who may benefit from Direct Payments:

- people looking after a disabled person, who need a service to help them carry on providing care
- parents or guardians of disabled children who need care services
- People looking after a person with a mental health problem

You will also need to be:

- over 16

- willing and able to receive payments and able to give your agreement to this
- able to manage the direct payment. This may be alone or with other people's help.

### **Do I have to have direct payments?**

You do not have to have direct payments - it is completely up to you. If you prefer you can have care provided by Adult Social Care. Or you can choose to have a direct payment for part of your support and have Adult Social Care arrange the rest of it. If you do decide to have direct payments and find it does not work for you, you can change your mind at any time. However, most people who have a direct payment do find that it puts them in control of the way their support is provided.

### **What can I use direct payments for?**

You can use direct payments to pay for any support you have been assessed as needing, to enable you to live independently in the way that you choose.

For example, you can employ people as support workers or personal assistants. Their job could be to assist you with

- Support you in your daily routine
- Help you get out and about, for example accessing services which you might not feel ready to do on your own
- Support you with goals as part of a recovery plan which you might be following
- Vary the type of support they provide depending on how well you are
- Communication support
- Support to access community facilities such as leisure
- Administrative support, to help you with record keeping, paying bills or dealing with correspondence

You can use Direct Payments to pay for support that is identified in your care plan

Alternatively you may be able to pay for care services from an agency rather than employ someone yourself.

You can also use direct payments to pay for respite or short breaks. And you can use direct payments to buy equipment that you are assessed as needing.

### **Is there anything I cannot use direct payments for?**

Direct payments can be used for almost any assistance, but there are some exceptions. Direct payments cannot be used to

pay for

- Permanent residential or nursing care
- Services run by the local authority
- Employment of a close relative or someone else living in the same household, unless in exceptional circumstances agreed by the local authority

### **How does it work?**

Once you have asked for direct payments your assessor will meet with you and together you agree a care plan based on your assessed needs. The local authority will work out how much it will cost to pay for the services in your plan, and once it is approved, will send you money each month to meet these costs. The money will need to go into a separate bank or building society account opened for this purpose. This may be a joint account with another person providing that your name is on the account.

### **What are my responsibilities if I choose to use direct payments?**

You can only use the money to pay for the care needs that have been identified. You will then be in charge of organising your care and paying for it. This means that you will be responsible for things such as:

- Recruiting and employing staff
- Organising and managing your staff's day-to-day tasks
- Keeping records to show how the money is being used
- Keeping to laws and regulations about employing staff

### **Can I get help?**

You can ask another person to help you to manage your direct payment. There is a support team called ASIST which can give you a lot of help with managing direct payments.

However some people, for example, people with learning difficulties or mental health needs, may benefit from extra support or may need other people to manage the payment for them once they have given their consent. Some people have a Trust to manage their direct payments on their behalf. In other cases a more informal arrangement such as a "circle of support" can be set up. Some people develop an advance directive - that is a way of telling your workers what you want them to do if you become ill because of your mental health impairment.

ASIST can help in arranging any of these.

## **Do I have to pay anything?**

Users of Leeds Adult Social Care services may have to pay a contribution towards the cost of their care. This is true whether you get direct payments or get care services from the local authority. Any contribution you are asked to pay will be based on your disposable income, after housing and disability-related costs are taken into account. However, some people under section 117 of the Mental Health Act do not have to pay.

## **Will this affect my benefits?**

No, your eligibility for benefits like Income Support or Disability Living Allowance will be the same. Direct payments are only to pay for care and so are not assessed for income tax.

## **What happens if the money is not enough?**

The amount you get in direct payments may go up if your assessed needs increase. It can also go down if you don't need as much support. If you think your care needs have changed, let your care manager know.

## **How long do I get Direct Payments for?**

Your care package will be reviewed with your Care Co-ordinator on a regular basis. Direct Payments will be reviewed in line with this.

# **Employing your own personal assistants**

Most people use direct payments to employ people as support workers, usually called personal assistants. When someone becomes an employer they have responsibilities. These include things like managing the personal assistant, keeping records, and paying the personal assistant for the work they do. Our role at ASIST is to help you through all the different stages of being an employer. We can provide assistance with:

- **Recruitment**

We can advise you on how to advertise for personal assistants (PAs) and provide a secure return postal address for returned application forms. We can help you plan an interview and have rooms where you can interview people you might employ. We can help you plan the induction and training of your new PA.

- **Administration**  
We have examples of job descriptions, application forms, reference letters, contracts etc. and can help you adapt these to suit your own requirements.
- **Record keeping**  
We can help you set up your own system for keeping employment records such as attendance, sickness, wages records and records required by the direct payments scheme such as income and expenditure records and filing of bank statements. We will make sure that you know what records you need to keep and what they are for.
- **Paying your Personal Assistant**  
ASIST offers a payroll support service to direct payments users. This means we work with you to provide the right information to pay your employees and the Inland Revenue. ASIST is registered with a firm of accountants who are able to support this service.
- ASIST can ensure that any costs you have to pay as an employer are included in your direct payment.

## Ongoing support and advice

Once you have started to use direct payments and are employing your own workers, ASIST is here to offer ongoing support if this is needed and to help and advise if unforeseen problems occur.

We can provide information on legal matters relating to employment law such as disciplinary procedures.

### **What happens if things go wrong?**

Sometimes problems arise, for a number of different reasons. We have many years experience of supporting direct payment users as employers, and may be able to help you identify what is needed to make things work.

If your support arrangement breaks down for any reason, for example a PA leaving or being off sick, Leeds Adult Social Care will provide the care services required until you are able to make your own arrangements again.

## What happens next?

If you and your care manager decide to request a direct payment, the care manager will present the care plan to the budget holder for approval. If it is approved, the ASIST advisor will help you to set up your direct payment.

## How can I find out more?

- If a mental health professional /care manager is already working with you then it is usually a good idea to speak to them first. This is because they will be able to start the assessment and application process themselves or put you in touch with someone who can.
- Or you can call the Contact Centre on 0845 1245113 and refer yourself, making it clear that it is a Community Care Direct Payment you are interested in.
- Or if you are not sure what to do and need advice then contact ASIST on 2143654

## Useful contacts

### **ASIST**

Leeds Centre for Integrated Living  
Armley Grange Drive  
Leeds  
LS12 3QH

Tel: 0113 214 3654  
Fax: 0113 214 3595  
Minicom: 0113 2143598  
Email: [asist@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:asist@leeds.gov.uk)

### **Social Care Contact Centre**

Phone 0845 125 4113  
Minicom 0845 127 1113

### **National Centre for Independent Living (NCIL)**

A resource on independent living and Direct Payments for disabled people and others working in the field.

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

NCIL  
4th Floor, Hampton House  
Albert Embankment  
London SE1 7TJ

Tel: 0207 587 1663  
Fax: 0207 582 2469  
Text: 0207 587 1177  
Email: [info@ncil.org.uk](mailto:info@ncil.org.uk)

# ASIST

For more information and to speak to the support team, contact ASIST at:

Leeds Centre for  
Integrated Living  
Armley Grange Drive  
Leeds LS12 3QH

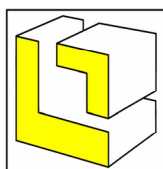
Telephone 0113 214 3654  
Minicom 0113 214 3598  
Fax 0113 214 3595  
Email [asist@leeds.gov.uk](mailto:asist@leeds.gov.uk)

## About ASIST and Leeds Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL)

LCIL opened in 1998. A Management Committee of disabled people working in partnership with Leeds City Council's Department of Social Services runs LCIL. A staff team of about fifteen disabled and non-disabled people carry out the work of the Centre.

LCIL is one of several CILs in the UK. CILs assist disabled people to take part in mainstream society. They do this by providing their own services and by other work aimed at making general facilities and services accessible. We work to ensure that disabled people are able to make the same choices as everyone else about where they live, who lives with them and what they do in their daily lives.

LCIL services are available for all disabled people in Leeds. Services include ASIST (direct payment support), disability equality training and accessible meeting rooms.



Leeds Centre for Integrated Living

*Choice and control for disabled people*

**If you would like this document in Braille, Large Print, on tape or in electronic format, or in a language other than English please contact us on 0113 214 3599**

**April 08**