**CHILDREN’S SERVICES - DIRECT PAYMENTS (PERSONAL BUDGETS)**

**What is a Direct Payment (Personal Budget)?**

A personal Budget through Social Care is referred to as a Direct Payment. To access such a payment, an assessment by a Social Worker (this is called a Children and Families Assessment – C&F) or a Service Coordinator (this is called an Early Help Assessment - EHA) is required.

Who undertakes the assessment will be determined by the initial referral request and any other presenting factors. Should the assessment determine that it is appropriate to make a Direct Payment to you, **t**his is achieved through [S17](http://fyi.cityoflondon.gov.uk/kb5/cityoflondon/fyi/service.page?id=cRTePmKTQak" \t "_blank" \o "short breaks provision) Child in Need funding.

The Direct payment could pay for additional care within the home or in some cases in the community, if a service or resource is not already available. This is known as ‘respite’ or a ‘short break’, which could support with the physical and social care needs of your child.

The use of a Direct Payment can offer parents/carers more choice, flexibility and control over how the care needs of your child are met.

Who can access a Direct Payment?

A Direct Payment application is open to any Parent / Carer who live in the Tameside Borough and who has parental responsibility for a child with additional needs, has been assessed by a Social Worker / Service Coordinator and it has been identified that a direct payment is an option for the provision of respite/a short break.

How is a Direct Payment used?

The Direct Payment could be used to pay for a Personal Assistant, who could be a family member (not living in the same household), friend, neighbour, Teaching Assistant etc, who you and importantly your child may already have a relationship with. The Direct Payment could also be used to purchase the additional support needed through the use of a private provision either directly or through an agency.

How are Personal Assistants sourced?

If you do not know anyone who could act as a Personal Assistant to your child to offer both you as a carer, and your child the respite, short break or activity that is required, you can contact the Direct Payment Worker and they will advise you of how to seek a Personal Assistant who could work with you and your child.

All Personal Assistants; without exception; have to undergo statutory checks before they can commence work with a family, including an enhanced DBS check.

If your child’s needs mean that training is needed to ensure that their needs can be met safely, when working with a Personal Assistant, then training is available.

This is arranged as and when required, through internal and partner agencies.

**Social Inclusion**

If you feel that your child is socially isolated, you can contact Tameside Early Help Access Point (*contact details are Tel: 0161 342 4260* ) they can signpost you to Tameside’s very comprehensive ‘local offer’ which considers the social needs of children with additional needs and promotes existing activities that can be joined.

Only if none of these activities are appropriate for your child and following an assessment, direct payment may be an option for you to directly source and access alternate social opportunities for your child.

**How are Direct Payments reviewed?**

A Social Worker / CWD Intervention Worker/The Direct Payments Worker will organise the Direct Payment review. This is on a three monthly basis in line with ISCAN service procedures and it will assist in identifying any changing needs of your child and the care he/she requires from you, their family or carers. An earlier review can be requested by you, if you consider that your child’s needs have changed, and that more or less support is required. The Direct Payment worker will also be available for advice and support on managing the Direct Payment and being an Employer. Direct Payment finances are audited annually by Tameside Finance Team in regard to ensuring that the agreed payments/finances are spent and accounted for by way of an agreement between the parent/carer and the local authority and that they are also in line with the outcome of the assessment and therefore being used appropriately.

The review can take place in a variety of places, School, home or an independent location.

You will be supported to know how to manage your Direct Payments or there is an alternate support mechanism to help with this if required.

Safeguarding

Direct Payments come under the Children Act 1989 and therefore should safeguard and promote the welfare of children in the same way as direct services. Any issues regarding safeguarding that come to light would be investigated in line with the Safeguarding Procedures.

Transition to Adult Services

As a standard; and with your consent; all children known to Children’s Social Care and Early Help services will be referred to Adult Services, in order for them to have an understanding and knowledge of how many children will require their support when they reach adulthood.

Whilst aged 14 years may seem a long way from adulthood, the aim of such notification is for Adult Services to be able to project what services will be required in the future and for them to have early discussion with policy makers and service providers to ensure that the right services are available for the time that they are needed.

For a child with a severe and /or complex disability or health needs then it is pertinent to make use of such time to be able to reassess and to access the most appropriate service and for you and your child to have an early understanding of what support will may be available for them as an adult.

For children with simple packages of support/direct payment then the direct involvement may occur at a later date/age but still in good time to make the transition to Adult Services as smooth as possible.

For further information contact the Early Help Access Point via the line below

<https://www.tameside.gov.uk/Early-Help/Parent-Carer/The-early-help-access-point>