

# Self-directed support

## Personal budgets and older people

Just because you are older and need support it doesn't mean that you should lose control of your life, your independence and everything that is important to you.

If you are helping a relative who is older and needs support it doesn't mean you have to do everything for them as their carer.

This fact sheet explains how self-directed support and personal budgets can help older people have choice and control over their lives.



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## The basic facts

Self-directed support is about people being in control of the support they need to live their life as they choose. One way of doing this is through a personal budget.

Personal budgets are available to older people. Having choice and control over support may include choosing the time of day you want your support, who gives you this support and what equipment would make your life easier. It could also include looking at ways to stay in your own home rather than go into residential care.

It is all about you, your life and what is important to you.

## More information

Self-directed support is the new way social care will run in England. It will mean that people who are eligible for support from the council will know up-front how much money they will have allocated for their support (see the factsheet on self-directed support for more details).

The process is the same for people of all ages and it works in the following way:

- To see if the person is eligible for support under Fair Access to Care a check will be done, usually on referral over the telephone (see factsheet on Fair Access to Care). If you are in hospital this could be done face-to-face although you may be offered a free reablement service first (see fact sheet on reablement). If you are already receiving support, this could be discussed at your review.



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- Someone from the council will come out and see you, such as a social worker or social work assistant from the social services older persons' team. At this visit they will do an assessment of need and as part of this process you will be supported to complete a self-rating questionnaire or self-assessment questionnaire. This will establish what you think your needs are so the assessment from the council and your own assessment match. Doing this will help the council to establish how much money you will need for your support.
- You will then be assessed on your ability to pay or contribute to the support you need. This is called a financial assessment and will look into any money you have, what pension you may receive and what other benefits you may be entitled to. Some people don't like other people knowing about their money, but this process isn't about being nosy, it is designed to make sure you get everything you're entitled to and you only pay what you can afford. If you refuse to go through this process, the council may decide that you have to pay the maximum cost for your support, which you may not be able to afford.
- Once you have gone through this process it will be decided how much your personal budget is (if you qualify) and how much your contribution will be. It will be then clear how much money you have for your support – your personal budget – so you can begin to plan.
- A support plan needs to be made which describes how your money is spent and what you want to achieve. This may be things like staying in your own home. There are lots of people who can help you to do your support plan. It could be a social worker, someone from a voluntary organisation like Age Concern or Age UK, or a member of your family – you can choose (see the factsheet on how to do a support plan and who can help).
- Once the support plan is completed you need to get it approved by the council.
- Then, once it has been agreed, you can start to live your life.



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## More details

Before you do a support plan, have a think about what would work best for you or the person you care for.

### Perhaps consider these points:

- Would you prefer people coming into your own home to provide support or would you want to move somewhere else where the support is provided?
- What is important about the type of people who support you?
- What will help you keep healthy, safe and well?
- Who is the best person to make decisions?  
(See factsheet on the Mental Capacity Act.)
- Is going out important to you? Consider where you go and what sort of things you like to do or would need support to do. This may include things like going to church, being part of a social group, shopping, gardening or meeting friends etc.
- Do you have any family and friends who can help and, if so, how will supporting you impact on their lives?
- Do you want a particular agency or organisation to support you?
- Would you want to employ your own staff?
- Would you want to carry on receiving support from the council in the same way? For example, at the same day centre?
- Is continuity of staff important to you?
- What are the things that work for you and what are the things that don't work for you?

Self-directed support is not about fixing things that are not broken, but is about working out how you can spend your personal budget to achieve a good life for you.



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## An example

Mary is 74 and in the past two years has lost her sight and her mobility. Mary had been going to the day centre two days per week for the past year. Mary had a review of her needs and the social worker discussed with her the new idea of personal budgets and how Mary could look at the support she currently received, what worked and what didn't work.

Mary told her social worker how going to the day centre on a Tuesday was great because her good friend Sylvia was there and they could catch up and have a good chat. However, on Thursdays she described it as boring as she didn't really know many people and didn't have a lot in common with them. She described how she was always house proud and really worried about the state of her house and, in particular, the bathroom tiles. What Mary said she would like to do was to give up going to the day centre on a Thursday and instead get a cleaner in who she got along with who could ensure her house was clean and that she was leaving no tripping hazards about. The social worker helped to develop Mary's support plan and they decided to keep Tuesdays at the day centre and the money being used to go to the day centre on a Thursday was instead used to pay for a cleaner for a couple of hours on Thursdays and Mondays. While the cleaner was working, she helped Mary with her lunch and kept an eye on her, in fact at her next review she told the social worker how her cleaner introduced her to some local people and they all go on the Ring and Ride shopping every Friday.



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**There is a lot more information on the In Control website:  
[www.in-control.org.uk](http://www.in-control.org.uk)**

**Further information can also be found at:**

**Age UK**

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

Helpline 0800 169 6565

**Counsel and Care**

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

Helpline 0845 300 7585



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#### **About the In Control and Me project**

A three-year project to produce accessible information for everyone who wants to direct their own support, funded by the National Lottery through the BIG Lottery Fund. You can find out more at [www.mencap.org.uk/incontrol](http://www.mencap.org.uk/incontrol) or [www.in-control.org.uk/icandme](http://www.in-control.org.uk/icandme)