**Personal Health Budgets - What you need to know**

A personal health budget is an amount of money that is spent on meeting the healthcare and wellbeing needs of people, generally those with a long-term illness or disability.

The aim of a personal health budget is to give people more choice and control over the money spent on meeting their healthcare needs. This means that the individual selects services that meet their needs in a way that is most appropriate for them.

The Department of Health believes this approach will increase people’s satisfaction with the care they receive, while helping to improve their health. Personal health budgets are one way of helping people to be more involved in discussions and decisions about their care.

NHS values still hold – no one will pay their own money to get the services they need or be denied essential treatment as a result of having a personal health budget.

Having a personal health budget does not entitle someone to more services, more expensive services, or preferential access to NHS services.

Services should be safe and effective. Using them should be a positive experience.

Personal health budgets should help people get a service from the NHS that best suits them.

The individual should have as much control over decisions as is appropriate. Support is available for people to enable them to make choices and decisions regarding their health and wellbeing.

No one will have to get their services through a personal health budget if they do not want to.

**Support planning**

If an individual decides to request a personal health budget, then together a support plan is created that is personal to the individual and shows how the budget can be spent.

The plan will describe the care and support needed to meet the assessed health needs. It must be individual to the person and talk about how the person wants to be cared for and supported and what is important to them. It will also show how the plan will be implemented.

The support plan will have to be lawful, effective and affordable.

**Personal health budgets can work in three ways:**

**1. Virtual budget**

The individual has more say over the care they get but no money changes hands. The NHS retains responsibility for organising and paying for the services received. The individual does not have to manage a bank account, keep invoices or receipts.

The individual will not be able to employ anyone directly to provide care and support; however they can have care provided by an agency.
2. Direct payments

A direct payment is where the Trust pays money directly to the individual and/or their representative.

The money will be paid into a bank account set up for this purpose every four weeks.

If the individual has received a direct payment from social care in the past then it will be possible to use the same bank account for the personal health budget.

The individual and/or their representative will buy and manage chosen services and will be accountable for showing what the money has been spent on. It is therefore very important to record all the income and expenditure and to keep receipts, invoices and bank statements.

3. Managed account

A managed account is where the Trust pays money directly to a third party who will manage all financial aspects of the personal health budget. They will receive your personal health budget and make payments on behalf of the individual in a way that has been agreed in the support plan. The third party will have responsibility for making sure that the invoices are paid on time, that anyone who the individual has chosen to employ is paid correctly and that their tax and national insurance is paid.

More important information about direct payments and managed accounts

- The individual will have on-going support to manage the money in their personal health budget.

- The individual can employ a relative as long as they are not living with you. In normal circumstances you cannot employ family members living in the same house as you.

The personal health budget will cover all the additional costs of employing someone i.e. employers and public liability insurance, employers national insurance, holiday pay etc.

- If the individual chooses to employ someone directly to provide care and support, they will have responsibility for making sure that they are paid correctly and on time, as well as paying their tax and national insurance contributions to the government. The individual must also comply with employment legislation.

- If money has been spent in a way that has not been agreed in the support plan it may need to be repaid.
• A direct payment can be stopped if anyone is found to be using the money dishonestly.

**Frequently asked questions**

**If I have a personal health budget, will I be responsible for my own care?**

You will not be left to take care of everything. You and your family and carers will need to agree a care and support plan with the healthcare manager supporting you. A care and support plan sets out your health and well-being goals, how the personal health budget will work to help you reach them and keep you healthy and safe. You can review and update your care plan with your healthcare manager when you need to. For example, if your health changes or something in your plan is not working for you.

**What happens in an emergency?**

In an emergency you will receive NHS care as normal.

**Who decides who can have a personal health budget, how big the budget is and what it can be spent on?**

Anyone receiving NHS continuing healthcare funding can choose to have a personal health budget. The size of the budget will depend on the amount of care and type of support that you need.

**Who decides what you need following assessment?**

If you choose to have a personal health budget, a healthcare manager will carry out an assessment of your needs. They or a support broker will then work with you to develop a care and support plan.

The plan will clearly set out how much your personal health budget is and what services can be bought with this money.

**What happens if the budget runs out?**

Your personal health budget should be enough to meet your needs in the way you have agreed. It is your responsibility to manage your budget. The budget is set on the amount of care and support you need and if you stick to this you should be ok.

However there is always someone to talk to if you have concerns that your budget isn’t going to be enough to pay for your care.

**Is there anything I cannot spend my budget on?**

A personal health budget must be used to meet agreed health and wellbeing outcomes; it cannot be spent on any illegal activities or gambling. In most cases it cannot be used to pay someone who lives with you.