

Buying support from a provider or agency



Not everyone who receives a Direct Payment may want to take on the responsibility of employing their own staff or Personal Assistants (PAs). You may choose to use your Direct Payment to buy services from a care/support provider or agency of your choice, for example a home support provider, activity sessions or an agency that provides one-to-one support workers.

Benefits and Disadvantages of using a provider or agency

Benefits	Disadvantages
The provider/agency will employ the staff so you won't have to deal with employment paperwork or issues.	Depending on the provider/agency, you may not have as much choice or control over which staff support you. You may find you have different support workers at different times.
You don't have to deal with any payroll. You will simply pay an invoice after you have received support, which you can pay by setting up a bank transfer or by cheque.	You may not be able to have support at the exact time of the day that you want it, you may have to choose available times/slots from the provider/agency's schedule.
You don't have to worry about covering support staff for absences such as sick leave or holiday as the provider/agency will be responsible for this.	You may not have the opportunity to train and guide the support staff in the same way you would be able to if they worked directly for you.
All providers/agencies should carry out checks with their staff and ensure they have appropriate training to make sure they are suitable	If you have issues or concerns you wish to raise about your care/support, you will need to discuss this with your provider/agency.

How to choose a provider or agency

You can use the Sheffield Directory to search through different providers, agencies, groups and activities and read information about their services, what they have to offer, how much they cost and how to contact them.

The Sheffield Directory can be found online at www.sheffielddirectory.org.uk

Things to think about

When contacting providers or agencies, you are able to ask them more about the services they can offer, but it is also important to ask them if they can meet your needs so that you can be supported in the way you choose.

By speaking to 2 or more providers or agencies you will be able to compare services and prices and decide which provider/agency would best meet your needs and requirements.

You should make sure you have a written agreement in place with a provider/agency to say:

- What support you are purchasing
- The amount of support and when this will take place e.g. days, times
- What their fees/charges are and how you will need to pay
- What you might have to pay if you need to cancel your care at short notice, if you go on holiday or if you go into hospital.
- What notice period you have to give if you are cancelling your arrangement with the provider/agency.

Regulated and Non-regulated Services

In the UK, Care providers are monitored by the Care Quality Commission (CQC). The CQC is responsible for carrying out regular inspections to ensure that providers meet the standards of quality, compassion, effectiveness, and safety of care are met. Any care provider registered with the CQC must adhere to their strict guidelines and procedures at all times.

If a care provider offers any of the following; personal care, showering, dressing, medical care, or anything which requires training - they must be regulated by the CQC.

When deciding on a provider/agency, if they will be providing personal care you can ask to see a copy of their CQC report, or you can search for this online at <https://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services>

Some care providers aren't regulated as they do not offer services that require them to register with the CQC. For example, if a provider only offers services such as household tasks, shopping and cleaning. More often these providers/agencies often act as one-to-one support workers and do not carry out any 'hands-on' care services.

The Council is working with people who have Direct Payments to look at new ways for people to be assured of the quality of different providers/agencies to help them to choose the right support for them.

Direct Payment Support Service

The Direct Payment Support Service provides free information, advice and support about Direct Payments and is open Monday-Friday, 9am-5pm.

You can contact the service by phone, email or post using the information below:

Telephone: **0114 205 6825**

Email: directpaymentsupportservice@sheffield.gov.uk

Postal address: **Direct Payment Support Service
Commissioning & Partnerships
Adult Care & Wellbeing
Floor 1, Howden House
1 Union Street
Sheffield
S1 2SH**

Drop-in sessions

The service also offers an in-person drop-in service on Tuesdays at First Point Howden House, 1 Union Street, S1 2SH.

When visiting the drop-in session you just need to let the First Point reception team know that you would like to speak to the Direct Payment Support Service when you arrive.

More information

You can also find information about Direct Payments on the following webpage: www.sheffield.gov.uk/DirectPayments

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