

18. Personal Budgets and EHCPs

A Personal Budget is money that may be available to help meet the needs set out in your child's Education, Health and Care Plan (EHCP). It gives families more choice and control over how support is provided.

Personal Budgets are a different way of using funding to meet your child's needs, giving you more flexibility and choice about how services help your child to meet their outcomes (targets) with either education, health and/or social care.

It's not extra money - it's part of the funding already allocated to support your child's needs.

What Can a Personal Budget Be Used For?

It can pay for services and support to help meet the identified needs/outcomes in the EHCP including:

- Care and support – this may include a personal assistant (PA) for help with self-care
- Help with joining in with society – such as sports, clubs, cultural activities
- Support with equipment to help with communication aids or learning which is not provided by the NHS or education
- Specialist teaching and specific therapy.

If the Personal Budget is to be used to fund provision or services that take place in school or college, then the permission and agreement of the school/college must be sought and agreed.

What Can a Personal Budget Not Be Used For?

- School or college placement fees (unless agreed in exceptional circumstances)
- General household expenses (e.g. rent, food, bills)
- Services or items not linked to EHCP outcomes (targets)
- Anything illegal, unsafe, or not in the child's best interests.

Who is Eligible for a Personal Budget?

Anyone who has an EHCP aged 0-25 years

Should I Request a Personal Budget?

Normally, the local authority will provide the support your child requires in relation to education, health or social care support (such as schools or services like speech and language). However, you have the right to request a Personal Budget, if you think the EHCP clearly shows a need for one.



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Remember – Personal Budgets are optional.

When Can I Request a Personal Budget?

You can ask for a Personal Budget:

- When you receive a draft EHCP (after an EHC needs assessment or reassessment)
- During an Annual Review of the EHCP

Usually, the parent/carer requests a Personal Budget, but the young person could do this themselves if aged 16-25 years.

When requesting a Personal Budget:

- **Be clear about your child's needs:** The Personal Budget must be linked to the outcomes and provisions outlined in the EHCP. Think about what support your child needs and why a Personal Budget would be the best way to deliver it.
- **Specify what you want to fund:** Be specific, for example, you might want a Personal Budget for a particular type of therapy, a specific piece of equipment, or a support assistant.
- **Put it in writing:** Always make your request for a Personal Budget in writing. This creates a clear record of your request. You can use email or a letter.
- **Ask for the “indicative budget”:** The local authority should, upon request, provide you with an “indicative budget.” This is a draft figure of the amount of money they think is available for your child's support. This helps you understand what you might be working with.

The local authority does not have to consider a Personal Budget at other times, but if you ask, there must be good reason why they will not consider it.

What is the Difference Between a Personal Budget and a Direct Payment?

- **Personal Budget** – Shows what money has been made available for the provision of services defined in the EHCP, but to be procured by the parents or young person themselves.
- **Direct Payment** – The payment sent to the parents or young person, as defined in the Personal Budget, to be used to arrange the provision specified, and to meet the outcomes described in the EHCP.

A Personal Budget may not necessarily include a direct payment.

How Will the Payments Be Managed?

There are four ways to manage a Personal Budget:

1. **Direct Payments** – You receive the money and arrange the support yourself.



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2. **Local Authority Managed Budget** – The local authority keeps the money and arranges the services for you (sometimes called an arrangement or notional budget).
3. **Third-Party Arrangement** – An organisation manages the money and services on your behalf.
4. **Combination** – You use a mix of the above options.

You can choose the option that works best for your family.

When Can the Local Authority Decline a Personal Budget?

Sometimes, the local authority might not be able to offer a Personal Budget. This can happen if:

- The support your child needs is already provided by part of a larger contract (for example, speech therapy is provided by the NHS for lots of children)
- The funding can't be separated out just for your child.

In these cases, the local authority can say no, but they should explain why.

What Must the Local Authority and I do When Using a Personal Budget?

- The budget will be monitored by the local authority and must be used **only** for support agreed in the EHCP
- Families must keep records of how the money is spent
- Direct Payments cannot be used to pay close relatives living in the same household unless specifically agreed by the local authority.

Important Things to Remember

- A Personal Budget is simply a way of delivering the support in the plan; it does not change the legal obligation of the local authority to provide that support.
- If a local authority agrees that a Personal Budget is the best way to deliver support, they must offer one.
- A Personal Budget must be a suitable and effective way to meet your child's needs as outlined in the EHCP. The local authority can refuse a Personal Budget if they have a valid reason, for example, if it's not a cost-effective way to meet the needs.
- If a Personal Budget is agreed, the local authority will write this in section J of the EHCP and are agreeing that this money is needed to help deliver the support in the EHCP.



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Where Can I Find Out More?

You can find more information from IPSEA: [Personal budgets and direct payments | \(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice](#).

You can also contact Doncaster [SENDIAS Service](#) by calling [01302 736920](tel:01302736920) or email sendias@doncaster.gov.uk.



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