



Public Health
England

Protecting and improving the nation's health

Coronavirus (COVID-19): Information for direct payment holders and personal assistants

October 2020



Some people get money to pay for care and support. This is called getting direct payments.

A direct payment is 1 way of using a personal budget or personal health budget.

[Read information on direct payments here](#)



A personal budget is money from a local social care team.

[Read information on personal budgets here](#)



A personal health budget is money from a local NHS organisation called a clinical commissioning group. Clinical commissioning groups decide what services are needed in an area. They make sure these services are provided.

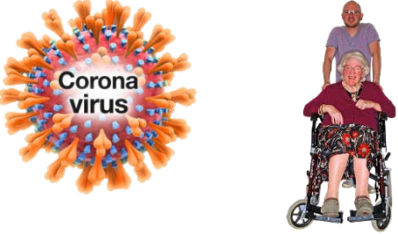








Coronavirus (COVID-19): Specific information for direct payment holders and personal assistants

	<p>Read information on personal health budgets here</p> <p>Read information on clinical commissioning groups here</p>
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Who this guidance is for
















- Children, young people and adults who have direct payments.
- People who are employed through direct payments (like personal assistants).

<h2 style="text-align: center; color: #8B0000;">How you can use your direct payment in different ways during COVID-19</h2>	
	<p>It is important you can get the care and support you need during COVID-19.</p>
	<p>You should try to do what is written in your care plan. If you need to use your direct payment in a different way this is ok.</p>
	<p>You should try to agree this with the council or the clinical commissioning group.</p>
<div style="text-align: center; font-size: 2em; color: green; margin-bottom: 20px;">✓</div> <div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div>	<p>If you can't talk to anyone, you can still use your direct payment in a different way to make sure you still get the care and support you need during COVID-19.</p> <p>Just make sure you keep notes of how you spent your direct payment differently during this time so that the council or clinical commissioning group can understand this.</p>
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-around; align-items: center;"> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> <div style="text-align: center;">  </div> </div>	<p>Your council or clinical commissioning group might have their own guidance on using direct payments during COVID-19.</p>







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	<p>If you can use the internet check their websites for information.</p>
	<p>Find your local council or clinical commissioning group here</p>
	<p>If you have to adapt or change your care and support because of COVID-19, you should:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• make a note of what you have done and why you have done it• keep receipts or evidence of how you have used your direct payments <p>You may need this for future reviews.</p>
<p>Joy's story</p>	
	<p>Joy uses a direct payment to do activities in the community and to pay for counselling.</p>

	<p>Joy's activities and counselling stopped because of COVID-19.</p>
	<p>Joy told her direct payment worker this made her feel lonely and worried.</p>
	<p>They made a plan for how Joy could join in social activities and do counselling online.</p>
	<p>Joy told the social worker she wanted to spend her direct payment in a different way.</p>
	<p>The social worker agreed Joy could use her direct payment to buy a laptop so she can access support online.</p>
	<p>Joy bought a laptop and paid for some online training. Joy is less lonely and anxious now she can talk to her friends and have counselling online.</p>
<p>Zeenat and Eoin's story</p>	

	<p>Zeenat and Eoin go to the pub every day to have their favourite meal for lunch. They pay for this themselves.</p>
	<p>When the pub closed because of COVID-19 Zeenat and Eoin became very concerned and anxious.</p>
	<p>The pub's landlord said he would deliver their favourite meal every day and leave it on their doorstep.</p>
	<p>The direct payments team said Zeenat and Eoin could use their direct payment to pay for the landlord's petrol.</p>
	<p>Zeenat and Eoin can still have their favourite meal every day.</p>
	<p>They feel less anxious and this helps them to stay happy and healthy.</p>
<p style="text-align: center;">Hadid's story</p>	
	<p>Hadid is 13 and lives with his family.</p>

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	<p>Hadid will get very poorly if he gets COVID-19. This means his whole family are staying home and away from other people.</p>
	<p>Hadid usually gets support from his personal assistant. She can't come anymore in case she gives Hadid COVID-19.</p>
	<p>The changes are making Hadid very anxious and he is also missing his friends.</p>
	<p>Hadid's mum talks to the social worker about ways he can keep in touch with his friends.</p>
	<p>The social worker agrees to Hadid using his direct payment to buy a games console.</p>
	<p>Now Hadid can play computer games and talk to his friends when he wants to, he is less anxious.</p>

Using unspent direct payment money and how to get more money in an emergency



You might have unspent direct payment money in your bank.



Your local council or clinical commissioning group might let you use it to pay for extra support.

Find your local council or clinical commissioning group here



If you need to use it make sure you keep a record of what you spent it on.



Tell your council or clinical commissioning group straight away if you do not have enough money to pay for extra things you need.



They should deal with people who need money for emergencies straight away.

If you have not spent all your direct payment money this time, this does not mean you should get less money in the future.

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	Your council or clinical commissioning group should still make sure you have enough money in the future to pay for things you need.
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Paying for extra expenses your personal assistant has because of COVID-19



If your personal assistant has extra expenses because of COVID-19 you can pay them extra for this.



As their boss, you must decide if the expense is good value for money.



If you are not sure or need extra money, talk about this with your council or clinical commissioning group.

Using your direct payment to pay for activities at home instead of in the community



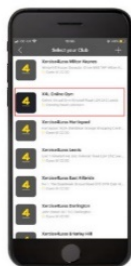
Your usual activities might have stopped because of COVID-19.



You do not have to pay for services you can't use.




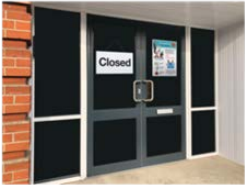


If you have a contract that says you have to pay for something even though you can't use it, tell the council or clinical commissioning group straight away.

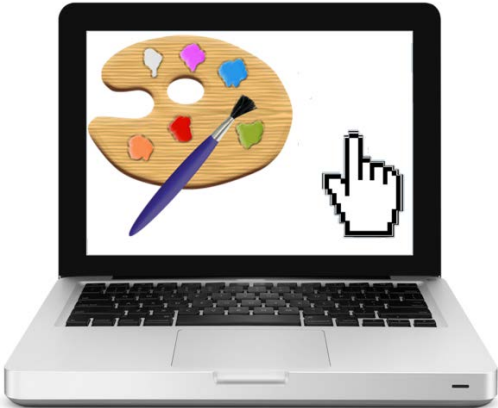


If you can't do your usual activities because of COVID-19, you can spend your direct payment in different ways.









Make sure you make a note of what you have done and why.
Make sure you keep receipts.

	<p>If you want to, you may be able to start doing some of the usual activities you did before. It is important you and the people who care for you feel it is safe.</p> <p>You should speak to your council or clinical commissioning group if you are worried.</p>
<h3>Miguel's story</h3>	
	<p>Miguel usually uses his direct payment to go to an art class in a centre.</p>
	<p>The centre has closed because of COVID-19.</p>
	<p>Staff from the centre have put art activities and ideas online for people to try at home.</p>
	<p>Miguel wants to do art activities at home to help him stay well and happy.</p>

 An illustration of a silver laptop. The screen shows a wooden artist's palette with several colored paint spots (red, blue, green, yellow, purple, orange) and a blue paintbrush. To the right of the palette is a white hand cursor icon with a black outline, pointing towards the screen.	<p>Miguel asks his support service to help him use his direct payment to buy art materials online.</p> <p>Miguel can keep developing his skills and keep his routine. This makes him less anxious and more confident.</p>
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Getting direct payments during COVID-19

	<p>How you get your care and support might change because of coronavirus.</p>
	<p>Councils and clinical commissioning groups must try their hardest to make sure your direct payment carries on.</p>
	<p>You might use technology to get some things at home instead of in the community</p>
	<p>You might get a different amount of money than usual.</p>
	<p>Some councils and clinical commissioning groups are paying 2 months money in one go. Others are providing extra money.</p>
	<p>You will be told about it before something like this happens.</p>

Getting direct payments if you have to stay in hospital



If you have to stay in a hospital your direct payment should carry on as normal.



Usually only hospital staff would be allowed to support you.



If there are some things that only your carer or personal assistant can support you with this may be allowed.

[Read information on who carers are here](#)

[Read information on what a personal assistant is here](#)






Talk about this with the hospital team.




[Read the guidance about family members and carers](#)



If your carer or personal assistant is able to support you in hospital, they **must** follow rules to stop infection spreading.

	<p>Any support you get from your carer or personal assistant must not get in the way of the medical treatment.</p> <p>They must keep to the guidance from government and the hospital.</p>
	<p>Carers and personal assistants will have a very important job to do supporting you when you leave hospital.</p>
	<p>Read the guidance about leaving hospital during COVID-19</p>

Marta's story

	<p>Marta is 20, autistic and has learning disabilities. She lives with her family and is supported by a team of personal assistants.</p>
	<p>Marta doesn't use words to speak and relies on her Mum and personal assistants who really understand her.</p>
	<p>Marta can hurt herself and other people if she is not supported in ways that work for her.</p>

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	<p>Marta becomes poorly and needs an operation. She goes into hospital with her Mum.</p>
	<p>Marta has a healthcare passport which is all about how she likes to communicate and be supported.</p> <p>Read information on healthcare passports here</p>
	<p>The hospital team say 1 of Marta's personal assistants and her Mum can take turns supporting her.</p>
	<p>Marta has the operation and after a few days goes home.</p> <p>The experience was still difficult for Marta, but everyone agrees it is the best it could have been.</p>

<h2>Rights to advocacy support during COVID-19</h2>	
	COVID-19 has made it harder for councils to do all of the things the law says they must do.
	To help councils provide care and support to people who need it the most the Government changed the law.
	The rights to advocacy support are not affected by the change.
	This means you still have a right to advocacy support during COVID-19.
	Easy Read information about advocacy can be found at the National Development Team for Inclusion's website. See the easy read on advocacy support here

Planning for emergencies



Make sure you have a plan for getting the care and support you need during COVID-19.



Try to get your council or clinical commissioning group to agree to your plan and then use it when you think you have to.



Include things like:

- what you will do if your paid supporters can't work in the usual way.
- what you will do if you can't access your usual activities

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The collage contains several icons: at the top, three people (two men and one woman) standing together; below that, a man in a blue shirt sitting at a desk with a laptop; to the left, a smartphone displaying a numeric keypad with the number 123 4567; to the right, a group of four people standing in front of a large building; and at the bottom, a laptop with the word 'click' and a hand cursor icon on its screen.

- what extra support you might be able to get from friends and family
- what extra training or support your staff might need.
- someone in the council or the clinical commissioning group you can contact in an emergency.

[See an example plan here](#)

Personal protective equipment



If your personal assistant **does not** live in your home with you they may need to wear more personal protective equipment than normal.

You and your personal assistant should make sure they have the personal protective equipment they need.

This could include:

- Plastic aprons
- Masks
- Eye protection
- Gloves

Your personal assistant should wear personal protective equipment if they:

- support you with personal care
- support you in a way that means they are less than 2 metres away from you
- you have received a letter to say that you are in the shielding group
- are in your home, but not less than 2 metres from you



New gloves and aprons should be used each time your personal assistant supports you.

Eye protection and some face masks can be used more than once.

Unpaid carers and family members who live with you should not wear more personal protective equipment than usual. They should not provide direct care to you if they have symptoms of coronavirus.


If they don't live with you and provide care and support they should follow the same guidance as personal assistants who don't live with you.

Read information about personal protective equipment and when it should be worn here




People who care for you whilst using personal protective equipment may feel too hot.

It may take them longer to do things. They may get more tired quickly.

Try to keep the room cool by opening the windows. Make sure

	<p>the person caring for you can take a break and has water to drink.</p>
	<p>If the person caring for you is wearing a mask, you might find it harder to understand what they are saying.</p> <p>The mask makes sure you and the person caring for you can both stay safe.</p> <p>If you find it very difficult to understand what the person caring for you is saying, you should speak to them about this.</p> <p>They may be able to wear a different type of mask or find ways to make it easier for you to understand.</p>
Barnaby's story	
 An illustration showing two people standing inside a simple black outline of a house. The person on the left is wearing a pink shirt and dark trousers, and the person on the right is wearing a blue shirt and dark trousers. The person on the right is wearing a light blue face mask.	<p>Barnaby lives with his mum and receives support from personal assistants.</p> <p>He relies on lip reading. This means he needs to be able to see a person's lips to understand what they are saying.</p>

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	<p>Barnaby's personal assistants have started wearing masks to keep him and them safe.</p> <p>But, as he cannot see their lips, Barnaby finds it hard to understand what his personal assistants are saying. This makes him feel upset.</p>
	<p>Barnaby's mum found out Barnaby's personal assistants can wear a different type of mask that means Barnaby can still see their lips.</p>
	<p>Barnaby feels happier now he can understand what his personal assistants are saying again.</p>

Getting and paying for personal protective equipment for personal assistants



You do not need to pay if your personal assistant needs to wear personal protective equipment to keep you safe from COVID-19.



Your council or local resilience forum will help you get the personal protective equipment your personal assistant needs to keep you and them safe.

If you can't get personal protective equipment or don't know who to contact to get personal protective equipment, speak to your council or clinical commissioning group.

They must support you to get the personal protective equipment that is needed.



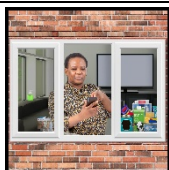
Remember personal protective equipment is only safe if it is used properly.

[Read information on stopping the spread of infection here](#)



[Watch a video about how to use your personal protective equipment safely](#)

Employment of individuals



There are times when your personal assistant should stay at home and not visit you (**self isolate**):

- If they show symptoms of coronavirus
- If they have been told that they have been close to someone who has coronavirus

If this happens you are allowed to arrange emergency care for a short time (for example 4 weeks).

If you arrange emergency care you will need to show why it was needed.

In an emergency you may be able to use your direct payment to pay a relative who is providing more care and support than usual.

You should talk about this with your council or clinical commissioning group.

If you think you might have to do this you should put this in your emergency plan.



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	You can also pay a personal assistant who used to work for you in the past.
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Financial or employment support for direct payment holders



You should continue to get the same amount of money as usual.

The government might pay for sick pay for your personal assistant if they can't support you because of COVID-19.

If your personal assistant can't get sick pay, they might be able to get **Universal Credit** or **Employment and Support Allowance**. These are 2 other types of benefits.

[Read more information on financial support here](#)

Testing



Anyone who has a direct payment and has symptoms can refer themselves for a test.

[Get a test here](#)

Keeping Safe



If your personal assistant thinks they have coronavirus they must stay home and get tested for the virus. They must not give you ANY face to face support.

You should contact your council or clinical commissioning group straightaway if your personal assistant has symptoms and wants to come to work, or if you are worried your personal assistant is not wearing the right personal protective equipment.

Your insurance company might be able to give you information and advice too.

ACAS respond and advise on issues like this. They can be contacted at **0300 123 1100**.

If you are worried your personal assistant is not following the rules about keeping safe talk to them and write down what you said and what was agreed.

If your personal assistant does not do what was agreed, you might not want them to work for you anymore.



Your personal assistant might not want to come to work because they are worried they can't keep their distance.

Talk to them and tell them the things you are doing to keep safe. Talk to them about how they can support you safely.

There are some things like personal care that can't happen at a distance.

Personal assistants who help with personal care must wear the right personal protective equipment and make sure they follow the rules about stopping the virus spreading.

Talk to your local council or clinical commissioning group if you are worried.

Supporting your personal assistant



How you use your direct payment money may be different to before.

For example, your usual personal assistant may not have been looking after you.

You may have got care and support from someone else instead, for example a different personal assistant or your family.



Your usual personal assistant may now be able to come back to work.

But, they may be feeling worried about coming back to work. Make sure you speak with them to see how you can help them feel more confident.


Check they have got all the personal protective equipment they need.




Remember to tell your personal assistant they can now get a free **winter flu vaccination**. This means they should not get the **flu** this winter. Or, if they do, they should not become too poorly. Remember they SHOULD NOT

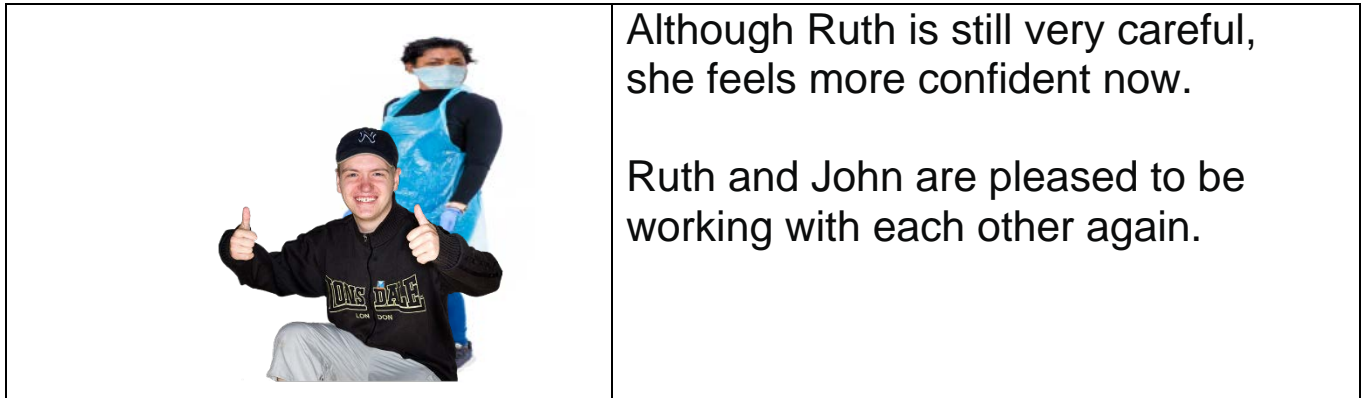
	<p>provide care to you if they are unwell.</p> <p>If your personal assistant needs more help, speak to your council or clinical commissioning group.</p>
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Ruth's story

	<p>John's personal assistant is called Ruth.</p> <p>In April, Ruth was asked to stay at home and not work. This was because she could become very poorly if she got coronavirus.</p> <p>John's family have been looking after him until Ruth could come back to work.</p>
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	<p>Ruth can now come back to work. But, she is still very worried about getting coronavirus.</p> <p>John and his family spoke to Ruth. They wrote down how they were going to make sure Ruth was safe.</p> <p>They made sure they had all the personal protective equipment Ruth needed and told her she can get a free winter flu vaccination.</p>
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