

Everything you need to know about Personal Budgets

Introduction

By 2011, the Government expects everyone receiving social care to have a Personal Budget funded by a local authority. It's a key part of what the Department of Health calls the 'personalisation agenda', setting out how social care will be delivered over the next 20 years.

People in Suffolk who receive care from Suffolk County Council are being offered Personal Budgets to give them greater **control** and **flexibility** over the way in which their community care needs are met.

But what are Personal Budgets and what do they mean for customers, voluntary organisations and care agencies in Suffolk?

What are Personal Budgets?

Personal Budgets are simply the amount of money available to a customer from Suffolk County Council to meet their assessed community care needs.

The council has a responsibility to assess people's community care needs and provide services to meet them. It also has a range of duties to protect and act in the best interests of adults who are vulnerable and/or lack capacity - none of this changes.

What has changed is the transparency around making customers aware of how much money they have from the council for care. This includes helping them decide how they want that money to be used, including taking greater control over spending it. Any control that a customer has over how his or her money is spent is still bound within the council's duty of care, and must be safe, legal and meet a customer's assessed needs.

Remember, a Personal Budget is available only **once an individual's immediate needs have been met**. It is about supporting people with their ongoing needs.

Options for managing Personal Budgets

There are three main options available to customers for using their Personal Budgets:

1. The customer would like to continue receiving care arranged by the council
2. The customer takes a **Direct Payment** based on their Personal Budget allocation, which is paid into a bank account for them to manage and pay for their own care. This could be employing a personal assistant to help them around the home, arranging for meals to be provided or helping a customer to stay independent in their home
3. Using a 'mix and match' approach combining options 1 and 2, with the customer managing part of their Personal Budget and the council managing the remainder

"...people want access to support when they need it and they expect it to be available to them quickly, easily and fit into their lives. In social care, this means every person across the spectrum of need, having choice and control over the shape of his or her support, in the most appropriate setting."

From 'Transforming Social Care',
Department of Health,
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