



**Your Life
Your Choice**
care and support designed with you

Frequently Asked Questions - Providers

How can a person access social care services?

A person can apply for help with care and support by completing a Self Directed Support Questionnaire. The questionnaire collects information about a person and their needs. Further information is available at www.durham.gov.uk/yourlifeyourchoice. Some people will continue to access social care services via other methods depending upon their needs.

Can a current service provider support people to complete an SDSQ?

Anyone can assist an individual to complete their questionnaire – the person themselves can choose if they want to do it on their own, or with a carer, friends or family, or with support from a service provider. If the person wants the council to arrange for support to complete the form an agreement will be made with them who and how this is done.

If a current service provider assists someone with their SDSQ how is it ensured that they do not influence the assessment?

The SDSQ is the first part of the assessment process. Provider staff will be able to support service users to complete the form but can not influence the responses. Responses provided will be verified by a social worker/care co-ordinator. They will visit each person to talk through the needs that have been outlined in their questionnaire and to discuss fully the answers given to reach a final agreement about their eligibility for services. Eligibility criteria for social care services will still be applied.

If the provider supports an individual to choose services how is the service user going to get a truly independent choice?

We are working with the market to support the development of a range of care and support brokerage services which will be available where required to assist an individual to identify services and arrange and co-ordinate support needed to meet the outcomes as set out in their care and support plan. As the programme rolls out more people will have outcome focussed care plans and develop support plans which set out the choices they have made for services which will support them to meet their agreed outcomes. It is expected that a good provider will facilitate choice and control as part of their ethos.



What happens if service users' needs fluctuate or change?

There is no change to the current practice. Where a service users needs are likely to change from time to time this will be taken account of as part of the overall assessment process and development of their care and support plan. If a persons needs change they do not have to wait for their review and can contact the council at anytime. A social worker or care co-ordinator will review the care and support plan with the service user to assess the changes which may result in a change to their Personal Budget.

Who will keep the completed SDSQs?

The completed and agreed questionnaire will form part of the overall assessment process and currently social workers/care co-ordinators will keep all completed questionnaires on file. There has been no change to sharing information and individuals can ask for copies of their assessment and social workers and care co-ordinators will continue to share assessments and care plans with Providers. Under the Data Protection Act there is a question in the SDSQ that asks a person if they wish for their information to be shared. IT developments are currently underway which will help support access to information.

Will service users still have to pay a contribution towards the cost of their care and support?

Depending on a person's financial circumstances, they may be asked to make a contribution towards the cost of their care and support. They may be asked to undertake a financial assessment completed by the council's financial assessment team.

What is the role of care and support providers in Personalisation?

The role of care and support providers in Personalisation is to provide outcome based safe, high quality, flexible services, to recognise the role of service users and carers as equals in the planning of service delivery (co-producers or co-designers) and so facilitate choice and control for individuals.

Will the requirements for provider registrations and staff skills need to change?

As a general rule there will be no changes to the levels of skills and registrations required for staff or services contracted by the council and there will still be a requirement for organisations that provide personal care to register with the Care Quality Commission. As providers begin to develop and deliver more varied and flexible services they will need to take into account the different types of skills staff will need to support these changes. Work is on-going to look at these developments including working with other local authorities in the region to develop standards for personal assistants.

How will services provided under Self Directed Support be monitored to ensure service quality?

All services provided must be **safe, legal and meet care outcomes** and this is achieved by using a range of processes and options depending upon the how the individual chooses to manage their Personal Budget. A regional Quality Assessment Framework is currently being piloted which will help support this work. All current safeguarding arrangements will still apply. The Council is increasingly discriminating about which services it is prepared to commission, selecting only the best that are on offer.

Will existing block contracts be reviewed?

Yes all block contracts for care and support will be reviewed in a timely and structured way to support the introduction of Self Directed Support.

What can a provider charge for home care services to someone who is managing their Personal Budget as a Direct Payment?

Individual organisations can set their own charges for services they provide to the public and those in receipt of a Direct Payment. Providers need to be aware that the Direct Payments Team advises service users that the current hourly rate paid by Durham County Council is £11.35 per hour and that this rate includes all overheads, training, annual leave, sickness etc and is designed to produce a service in line with the specification agreed.

Individuals can choose to pay a different rate for their services as long as they are safe, legal and meet their outcomes as set out in their agreed care and support plan. The package of services will need to be affordable to them, either within the amount of their personal budget or 'topped up' by the service user.

FAQ Providers/ Version 1/ 16th August 2010