

Personal Budgets for Children & Young People
with Education Health & Care (EHC) Plans

Frequently Asked Questions

In line with the *Children & Families Act 2014*, Bromley would like to offer children and young people with SEN and/or disabilities, and their families **more choice, flexibility and control** over the services that they are assessed as needing from education, social care and health to help achieve their goals.

One way of doing this is through a *Personal Budget*.

Find out more about Personal Budgets
by reading this guide

What is a Personal Budget?

- A Personal Budget is an amount of money that can come from education, health and social care which families can spend on services and support which will be based on the assessed needs of your child/ young person. It is not the sum total of all the resources that are available to support your child.
- A Personal Budget is not additional funding, it is about using the available funding in the best way to meet needs and pre agreed outcomes.
- It can be used for services from both statutory and independent sector providers, mixing and matching what is available from different organisations.
- If a direct payment is used, families can employ staff themselves
- It is a way of giving families more choice about the way they are supported and about who provides the support, helping families to live more independently.
- Eligibility for services are not changed if you have a Personal Budget.

What are the advantages of having a Personal Budget?

A Personal Budget will offer families and young people the freedom to plan how support is delivered to meet agreed outcomes in the child/young person's Education Health & Care (EHC) Plan. Within certain boundaries, families will be able to choose how the money is spent. This allows a more personalised service for disabled children and young people and increases choice, flexibility and control.

A Personal Budget should enable families and young people to have more involvement in creating a plan for how their needs can be met.

A Personal Budget offers choice over how the funding is held and managed. If this is taken as a direct payment the services can be bought and managed directly by the parent/carer or young person.

Families are given help to develop a support plan showing how identified needs and outcomes will be met

How does my child/young person get a Personal Budget?

- The child/young person's parents or the young person themselves - age 16+, if they are able to make their own decisions - can request a Personal Budget through their lead professional/key worker when they have had confirmation that an EHC Plan will be prepared. It will be part of the lead professional's/key worker's tasks to ask whether a Personal Budget is being considered.
- In some cases a Personal Budget may not be available because funding for a child/young person's support needs cannot be paid for in that way, for example where the funding is already tied into existing contracting arrangements.
(In these cases the lead professional/key worker will record that a request was made so

that this information is available when contracts are reviewed and for future contracts).

- A Personal Budget may be used solely for education or health or social care purposes, or any combination of those purposes.

What does ‘block contracts’ mean and why are they important?

Local authorities and health authorities often ‘block’ purchase services for the benefit of a number of children & young people for particular services. This means they are unable to separate out an amount for individual children/young people from the wider block of funding as it pays for the service to be provided to all the children/young people who need it.

How is the Personal Budget decided?

The Personal Budget should reflect the individual needs and the level of support required to meet those needs. The amount must be enough to cover the costs of all the additional support that has been agreed.

What if the Personal Budget is not enough to meet the child/young person’s needs or if your request is declined?

If, after the Personal Budget has been agreed, families are not happy with the allocation, there is an appeals process which can be followed.

What support is provided to help me manage the funding?

Personal Budgets are designed to give children, young people and their families more choice and control and should not be a burden.

There are three ways in which a Personal Budget can be managed:

- *Direct Payment* - the parent/carer/young person receives the money themselves so that they can buy the support needed
- *Individual Service Fund* - the parent/carer/young person is paid to a third party organisation who organises the services and manages the money on their behalf
- *Managed Fund* - Bromley (school, social care or health) manages the money on the family’s behalf

It is possible to have a combination of the above. Some services may be organised by the local authority or health whilst the money to buy other support can be paid to the parent/carer/young person in the form of a direct payment, for example education might be through a managed fund and social care might be through direct payments.

What is involved in receiving a Direct Payment?

- A direct payment is a cash payment which enables the parent/carer/young person to purchase and manage services themselves, or they can nominate someone to manage this for them.
- A separate bank account will be required and invoices and receipts need to be provided which record how the funding has been spent. Monitoring of this expenditure is carried out.
- Information and support will be provided on how to become an employer if funding is used to employ a support worker

What support is provided to help choose appropriate services?

Bromley has an agreement with an organisation, *Vibrance* (www.vibrance.org.uk), who will support families in finding relevant services providers and assist them in completing support plans which set out how outcomes will be achieved.

Are there limitations on what a Personal Budget can be used for?

There are some limitations on how Personal Budgets may be used or spent as there are some national rules as well as local restrictions, for example, funding which has been used on services which have already been commissioned for the whole population means individual funding cannot be released for individuals (see Block Contracts above).

A Personal Budget cannot be given prior to the EHC Plan being completed which means they are not available for assessments which are required as part of the EHC Plan.

The Personal Budget for education will only include the funds needed to buy more specialist or individual support than the school or college is expected to provide. It does not cover the funding for the placement itself.

The Personal Budget for health cannot be used to buy primary health services such as services provided by GPs and surgical procedures.

Across education, health and social care there are too many things to list and it is possible that what is suitable for one child or young person may not be suitable for another. However, as long as national and local restrictions are followed, there can be a great deal of flexibility in the choice of how outcomes can be met.

Do I have to have a Personal Budget?

No. It is up to the parent/carer or young person to decide if they want to accept support in this way. If they decide not to have a Personal Budget, the family or young person will still be entitled to support to meet their child/young person's assessed needs.

Can a young person make their own decisions about having a Personal Budget?

If a young person is aged 16 or over and is able to make their own decisions about how they want services to be managed, then they are entitled to have their own Personal Budget where appropriate.

What happens if my child or young person's needs change?

If you feel that your child's needs/your own needs (age 16 & over) have changed significantly, you should contact your lead professional/key worker as soon as possible so that they can arrange for a re-assessment of your child/young person's needs.

Will a Personal Budget affect any entitlement to welfare benefits?

No. The allocation of a Personal Budget will not affect any welfare benefits that the child or young person are entitled to. It will not be classed as income.

Will any entitlement to welfare benefits affect eligibility for a Personal Budget?

No. There is no link between welfare benefits and personal budgets.

A child, young person or family may be offered a Personal Budget for social care or for health support without having an EHC Plan. Please ask your Social Worker or Health Worker for more information or check the Local Offer website for more information
<http://bromley.gov.uk/localoffer>