Support through a Personal Budget

Information for parents and carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) in Harrow

What is a personal budget?

- From September 2014, families of children, and young people with the most complex special educational needs (SEN) and/or disabilities who have an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan will have the right to request a personal budget.

- A personal budget is an allocation of funding that is available from the council and/or the health service to pay for support. This can give you more choice, flexibility and control about the way support is provided and who provides this support.

- A personal budget is a defined amount of money allocated by a service or services. In Harrow Council currently only social care services offer the option of a personal budget through direct payments.

Who can have a Personal Budget?

Children and young people who may be eligible for a personal budget are: residents of Harrow who are aged from birth to 25 years, are eligible for specialist services from the children’s disability team, or support through health service continuing care and have special educational needs and/or disability.

In some cases an EHC plan may not result in a child or young person having a personal budget because the support needed cannot be paid for in that way.

Direct payments do not count as income so they do not affect tax or benefits.

If parents do not want a personal budget, services will be delivered in the usual way.
Children and young people who do not have an Education, Health and Care plan

A child, young person or family may be offered a personal budget for social care or for health support without having an EHC plan.

Personal budgets can be used to support early intervention, recovery, family crisis, exclusion from school, and for long-term health conditions or other circumstances identified through an assessment.

Personal budgets are well established in adults social care services, but within the education and health field, personal budgets are very new. Recent changes in the law mean the health service can now give direct payments for a personal health budget to those with long-term health issues.

What can you use a personal budget for?

- The availability of a personal budget will always be based on the support needs of a child or young person in order to achieve a pre-agreed set of outcomes.
- Outcomes are what we set out to achieve for the child or young person and their family through the EHC plan and are the basis for identifying what support is needed. They will help us all know how well the plan and the personal budget has helped the child and young person and family achieve the agreed goals.

Personal budgets and social care

Some children with special educational needs or a disability do access support for social care through a personal budget also known as a direct payment.

Personal budgets and adults social care

Some young people may still require support when they are over 18 and qualify for adult social care services. An assessment will establish what sort of help and support they need.

Adult services have been offering people personal budgets to fund additional support for many years. This approach is called 'personalisation' and this way
of working gives people and their carers more control, choice and flexibility over how they plan and manage their social care support.

In Harrow it has been recognised that this approach works really well and we now want to work closely with adult’s social care in helping us to develop this way of working in children’s services.

**Personal budgets and health**

Some children and young people need additional support from the health service because they have a complex, long-term and/or life limiting condition. They are referred to as having ‘continuing care needs’ and may have a ‘continuing care assessment’.

The continuing care assessment helps decide which additional services they need and these will be included in the EHC plan.

Children who have a service provided because they have a continuing care need have the right to have this provided as a personal budget from October 2014.

Personal health budgets (PHB) are the allocation of health service funding to support a person’s health and wellbeing. A PHB can be spent on anything that is set out in a health support plan and agreed with the local health service team.

Families may choose to have the service provided or may prefer to manage the money for the provision of support themselves.

**Personal budgets and education**

Many children with special educational needs or a disability attend school or college and are supported by the resources available and do not need additional support. However there are some children who do need additional support.

There are currently some particular and limited areas where personal budgets might be used instead to provide a budget to a family to organise additional support themselves.

For example where an EHC plan includes transport to and from school, the family may prefer not to have the service provided by the local authority
transport service but may decide to request a personal budget to organise the transport themselves.

What you cannot spend your personal budget on

It sounds obvious, but personal budgets cannot be spent on anything that would put a child/young person at risk of harm or on anything that would not benefit the child/young person.

It cannot be used to buy services from a local authority.

As a general rule, a personal budget cannot be used to employ a family member who lives with the child.

Process for agreeing a personal budget

From September 2014 it is likely that allocation of personal budgets will be determined as part of the co-ordinated assessment and planning pathway developed to deliver EHC plans.

We recognise that we are at the early stages of the personal budget process however we are committed to increasing choice and control over time, thorough a wider range of budget areas being available for personal budgets.

In line with the SEND Reforms we want more families to consider more ‘personalised’ services and we will be exploring how Personal Budgets can be used.