

Understanding personal health budgets



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This leaflet will tell you about personal health budgets – what they are, why people in the NHS and the Department of Health think they could make NHS care better, and how to get more information.

The NHS is working on a lot of ideas to try to make it easier for you to get the NHS care that you think will help you. Having a personal health budget is one of those ideas. The box opposite tells you about some of the other work that is going on in the NHS.

You may already know about direct payments and personal budgets for care and support from social services. Many people have said that having more say over how money gets spent on their care and support makes them feel more involved and more positive – and it does not cost any more than providing services in the normal way. So, we are going to try a similar idea in the NHS.



Ways to help you get the NHS care you need

Choice:

Since 1 April 2009, you have the right to choose where to be treated when you are referred for your first outpatient appointment with a service led by a consultant.

Information to support choice:

Giving people good information helps them to understand their health requirements and to make effective choices that are right for them and their families.

Care planning:

Care planning is a discussion that looks at all your needs to make sure you get the most appropriate care. Everyone with a long term condition should have a care plan, if they want one.

We tell you how to find out more about these at the back of this leaflet.

What are personal health budgets?



A personal health budget makes it clear to you and the people who support you how much money is available for your NHS care so you can discuss and agree the best way to spend it. This gives you more say over the care you get.

If you have a personal health budget, you will be able to use it for a range of things to help you meet your health and wellbeing needs. Because very few people have started using them, we do not have very much information about what people will want to buy but we think it will include therapies, personal care, lifestyle advice and self-management courses. You will not be able to pay for emergency care and care you normally get from a family doctor in this way. You would also not be allowed to spend the money on gambling, debt repayment, alcohol or tobacco, or anything unlawful.



We think personal health budgets could work in three ways:

- 1. Notional budget.** No money changes hands. You find out how much money is available and talk to your doctor or care manager about the different ways to spend that money on meeting your needs. They will then arrange the agreed care.
- 2. Real budget held by a third party.** A different organisation or trust holds the money for you, helps you decide what you need and then buys the services you have chosen.
- 3. Direct payment.** You get the cash to buy the services you and your doctor or care manager decide you need. You have to show what you have spent it on, but you buy and manage services yourself.

Options 1 and 2 are possible now. We are also working to change the law so we can test direct payments for healthcare in certain circumstances. This is one part of the Health Bill that is in Parliament at the moment.

A personal health budget in action



Mitchell is 17 years old and likes being outdoors and with his friends. He has very complex health needs that mean he is totally dependent on others. Today, more and more people like Mitchell are living at home instead of having to spend a lot of their lives in hospital.

From 2001, Mitchell's primary care trust was paying for a large package of home care from a team at the local hospital. This was very similar to hospital care. Mitchell's family felt he was 'in hospital, at home' and that they had little or no control over many parts of their lives.

Since September 2008, an organisation has managed a personal health budget that covers a lot of Mitchell's care. His family have chosen other people to form a trust with them to decide how to spend the budget.



This means:

- Mitchell's family have more control over who comes into their home to care for him.
- Mitchell's support workers can get training to support his wider needs, such as supporting him with his visual impairment, not just standard training that may not be relevant to him.
- Mitchell's family can vary his care as needed, so they can take him on holiday, employ staff who share his interests and take a common-sense approach to everyday issues.
- The move from children's to adult services should be easier, with no change in his main support team.

There was no benefit in including some parts of his care in the personal health budget, such as physiotherapy and equipment. These are provided as before.

The main things to know about personal health budgets



Key points

- The NHS stands by its promise that it is there for everyone, based on need not ability to pay.
- The NHS care and support you get should be safe and effective. It should be a positive experience.
- Personal health budgets should help people who may not always get the best out of the NHS to get a better service, not make things worse.
- You will not have to get healthcare in this way if you do not want to.
- You should have as much control over decisions as is appropriate for you.
- NHS and social care organisations should work in partnership with you and with each other.





What is happening?

Personal health budgets will not be the answer for everyone but we do think they could be a good way to help some people to get the NHS care that is right for them.

We wrote **Personal health budgets: first steps**, published on 28 January 2009, to tell the NHS and social services the key points about personal health budgets and to help them work on this idea together. If you want to know more, you can order it from the Department of Health or from the website at the end of this leaflet.

From 2009 until 2012, we are running a “pilot” for personal health budgets. This means testing the idea with a small number of people in some areas of England to see if and how it works. Experts will look at what happens and help us decide what to do next.

Questions about personal health budgets



Here are answers to some questions a lot of people have asked.

If I have a personal health budget, will I be responsible for my own care? What happens if something goes wrong or if my budget runs out?

You will not be left to take care of everything. You and your family and carers will need to agree a care and support plan with the professionals who support you. This sets out your health and wellbeing goals, how you want the personal health budget to work, what you will need help with and how you will use your budget to meet your needs.

In an emergency, you will get NHS care as normal. If your needs change and it's not an emergency, you should be able to agree a new care and support plan and a change in the budget. And if having a personal health budget does not work for you, the local NHS will carry on providing the care you need as it does normally.

Who will have a personal health budget?

A lot of people have told us that people with long-term conditions, people getting NHS continuing healthcare (100% health funding for long-term care) and users of mental health services want this. But we are not telling pilot sites what to do, they will need to decide locally.



Who decides who can have a personal health budget, how big the budget is and what you can spend it on?

If the local NHS is taking part in this work, it will set up local systems for making these decisions. These will depend on which patient groups it is working with and which services are included, so it might be a GP, a community matron, a community psychiatric nurse or another professional.

Can I have a personal health budget as well as a personal budget for care and support?

Yes. If the professionals who help you agree you should try a personal health budget, and you already have a personal budget for care and support from social services, they may also be able to find a way to combine this into one budget for all your needs.

Will this mean means-testing for health?

No. The personal health budget should be enough to meet your needs in the way you have agreed without you having to spend your own money.

More information



What do I do if I want a personal health budget?

Talk to the person who helps you most often with your care – this might be a care manager, a case manager or a care coordinator, or your GP. They should be able to help you find out if personal health budgets are going to be tested in your area. Even if they are not, you can talk to them about other ways to make sure that you get the services that work best for you.

More information

If you have more questions, or would like more information, please:

- talk to your GP, care coordinator or primary care trust,
- go to: www.dh.gov.uk/en/healthcare/Highqualitycare/orall?DH_090018, or
- write to:
Personal Health budgets team
601 Richmond House
79 Whitehall
London SW1A 2NS
personalhealthbudgets@dh.gsi.gov.uk



You can also talk to your local centre for independent living (www.ncil.org.uk/directory.asp).

For more information about the **right to choose** where you get treatment, go to:

[www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/choices/Pages/](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/choices/Pages/Aboutpatientchoice.aspx)

[Aboutpatientchoice.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/NHSEngland/choices/Pages/Aboutpatientchoice.aspx) or

www.dh.gov.uk/en/Healthcare/PatientChoice/index.htm,

or ask your GP or PCT.

NHS Choices helps people find reliable information about treatments, conditions and healthy living, and to comment on their own hospital experience:

[www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/choices/pages/](http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/choices/pages/Aboutpatientchoice.aspx)

[Aboutpatientchoice.aspx](http://www.nhs.uk/nhsengland/choices/pages/Aboutpatientchoice.aspx)

Your health, your way (also called the patients' prospectus) supports people to take a more active role in decisions about their care, control their condition better and have better quality of life:

www.nhs.uk/yourhealth/pages/homepage.aspx

If you find reading difficult, this leaflet is available in Easy Read format (ref./292458).



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Transforming Adult Social Care

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