



Getting the support you need

Buying from agencies and care providers

Once you've decided to receive Direct Payments, you can choose whether to buy the services you need from:

- ✓ an established provider, such as a day care centre;
- ✓ a dedicated care agency who could provide you with a Personal Assistant;
- ✓ a mix of these two.

You can also use Direct Payments to employ a Personal Assistant directly. Find out more about this option in the SILC FastFacts sheet 4 'Recruiting a Personal Assistant'.

How do I choose a provider or agency?

- The first job is to ensure that the provider can meet your needs. This means not only checking out what they can provide, but ensuring that it's of a sufficiently high and consistent quality - SILC can help with this.
- All Care Agencies and providers of residential respite care must be registered with the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) and should be able to produce a Certificate of Registration - SILC can help you check this and print out a copy of their latest CSCI inspection report.

How will I pay for the support I buy?

- The provider you use will invoice you on a regular basis (weekly or monthly) for the services you receive from them - SILC can help you negotiate the cost of the services you need.
- You will pay these invoices by cheque or direct transfer from your Direct Payments bank account - SILC can help you with this.


What should I do first?

If you are considering using an agency, start by making a list of the tasks you are expecting agency staff to do, just as you would if you were recruiting your own PA. Next, spend some time thinking about what's important to you about the way those tasks are done.

To get the best from a care agency, ask some of the following questions before making a decision about whether or not to use them:

- What services do they provide?
- What charges will be made?
- Is the price all inclusive, or are there any extras, for example VAT, National Insurance or travelling expenses?
- Is there a minimum service that has to be bought? Number of hours?
- Is it possible for you to choose the person who provides the care needed?
- Can you expect to see the same person on a regular basis?
- What if the regular person is sick or on holiday?
- Can the organisation be contacted at all times when care is being provided?
- What are the out-of-hours emergency service arrangements? Is there an extra charge for this?
- If you are not happy, how can you complain about the service received?
- What obligations (e.g. financial) will you be under if you cancel the service?
- Does the organisation have full Employer's Liability Insurance?
- Does the organisation work to a recognised code of practice?
- How are agency staff recruited? Are they required to give references? What training are they given?
- What evidence is there that employees have had police checks?

Employment agencies are required to meet certain minimum standards designed to protect their workers and those hiring them. Details can be obtained from the Department for Business, Enterprise and Regulatory Reform employment agency standards helpline on 0845 9555 105. Further information is also available at: www.berr.gov.uk/employment/employment-agencies



SILC is a voluntary organisation run by and for disabled people. To find out more about the help we can offer you with your Direct Payments call 01483 458111 or email admin@surreyilc.org.uk Surrey Independent Living Council (SILC) registered charity number 1088220