

14 October 2024

Direct Payments - Children with Disabilities

I am writing to request information regarding the process and waiting times for obtaining direct payments for health and social care services within the Belfast Health Trust. Specifically, I would like to request the following details:

- 1. Average Waiting Time for Direct Payment Assessments for Disabled Children: What is the average waiting time across all Trust areas, including Northern Ireland, for an assessment to determine eligibility for direct payments for health and social care services for disabled children?**

There are currently 46 families awaiting Initial Assessment. The current longest wait for initial Social Work assessment is 236 days.

- 2. Number of Child Disability Social Workers in the Trust Area: How many child disability social workers are there within the Trust's area?**

The Community Children with Disabilities Team are commissioned for 21 Social Work posts, which includes Social Workers (Band 5/6) and Senior Practitioners (Band 7).

There are currently 5.4 vacancies, which include posts of a permanent and temporary nature.

- 3. Prioritisation or Triage Process for Child Disability Needs Assessments: What is the process for prioritising or triaging a child disability needs assessment?**

Each family are contacted, at the point of referral to the Children with Disabilities Service, by a Social Worker to obtain more information on the family circumstances. This information is then screened by Social Worker / Senior Social Worker / Principal Social Worker at referral panel each week and the case is added to the waiting list for Initial Assessment. Allocation for assessment to Social Workers is prioritised based on need and risk.

- 4. Direct Payment Application Process: What is the exact process for applying for direct payments for South Eastern health and social care services?**

While this question references South Eastern Trust, we presume this is a typo and have answered for Belfast Trust.

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Please see below the following steps undertaken:

- Assessment of need by Social Worker undertaken. Assessment reviewed by Senior Social Worker for the Team.
- Presentation to Belfast Trust Allocation and Resource Panel. Recommendation reviewed and parents / carers notified of outcome.
- If approved, further review with parents to discuss expectations / roles / responsibilities within Direct Payments. Scheme Agreement signed by parents / carers.
- Parents need to identify service / PA (if using Direct Payments for a PA). ACCESS NI to be completed and PA can only commence work once this is returned to parent / carer and shown to Social Worker to determine suitability.
- Separate bank account set up by parent / carer.
- Commissioning and banking forms sent to the Direct Payments Team.
- Direct Payments commence on a date agreed by parent / carer.