

FOI 3615

26th February 2026

FREEDOM OF INFORMATION ACT 2000 – INFORMATION REQUEST

I am writing to you under the Freedom of Information Act 2000 to request the following information from SHSCT Children’s Disability Social Work Team(s). Please may you provide me with the below information around direct payments for care as outlined on ‘<https://www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/direct-payments-care>’

1) Eligibility criteria for direct payments for ‘short breaks’, and policy on how much and how often these can be had

Response:

Families are eligible for direct payments from the Southern Health and Social Care Trust (SHSCT) Children with Disabilities service (CWD), once a child has met the criteria for a social work service. An initial assessment of need will have been completed via the UNOCINI framework and services may be introduced as part of the assessment and planning process. The assessment is completed in partnership with parents to explore existing resources, informal family supports and community networks. Individual assessments are regularly reviewed and support services modified depending on emerging need and will inform the level of direct payments required to meet need. Direct Payment is only one of the options available to meet the assessed needs of a child with a disability and provide a short break for the young person and family. Overnight short breaks are provided either through a family based service or residential overnight support.

2) Eligibility criteria for direct payments for ‘after-school or holiday care to help you stay in work’ including ‘employing someone to support your child’ as outlined on the aforementioned nidirect webpage

Response:

The eligibility criteria is exactly the same as above. Direct payments are covered under Self Directed Support (SDS) which is an umbrella term to let people know that they have a choice in how care and support can be offered or arranged. This means a parent can chose to have a personal budget to purchase social care and support rather than the Trust arranging it for them. The personal budget is a sum of money to be used to meet the assessed need for an individual (in this case a child with a disability).

A Direct Payment is not used for the purpose of purchasing care for the child while the parent(s) is in employment. Other options are available to fund childcare costs through a mix of government-supported schemes.

Email: foi.team@southerntrust.hscni.net