
Health, Adults and Community Services

Direct Payments Monitoring Team

London Borough of Tower Hamlets

5 Clove Crescent

Mulberry Place, 4th Floor

London, E14 2BG

Tel: **020 7364 0947**

Email: dp.monitoring@towerhamlets.gov.uk

Re: Advice for direct payments recipients during the coronavirus pandemic, and Quarterly Returns

Dear

I am writing in regards to your direct payment. We hope you are keeping well during this difficult period. We know that many local disabled and older people will be concerned about their own health, and also about maintaining an appropriate package of support during this coronavirus pandemic. We want to reassure you that we will do what we can to help you during this period. We have been working with Real (the local user-led organisation of disabled people) and People Plus (who deliver the direct payments support service) to make sure we can support you as well as we can in these challenging times. This letter covers:

- where to get the latest advice
- extra support we will give you
- monitoring for the quarter ended 31 March 2020.

Getting the latest advice

We have agreed with our partner organisations that the most effective way of getting you easily accessible, up-to-date information is on Real's website. They will hold information that is a central point of resource for local disabled and older people. It will include guidance on topics such as local support, advice on protecting you and your personal assistants/carers, ideas on contingency planning and backup arrangements. You can find this online at

www.real.org.uk/coronavirus

Alternatively you can contact any of our services for further information and support. A table of contact details is provided overleaf.

Extra support we will give you

We know that these are difficult times for everyone. You should have some contingency arrangements in your support plan, but they may not be adequate for these exceptional times. As part of a package of support to help you manage your own care and support arrangements Tower Hamlets Council are:

- giving all recipients of a Tower Hamlets Council direct payment an extra 10% contingency fund on top of your existing payment. The first extra amount should be paid in April, and we will review this on a month by month basis. You can use this

creatively to meet extra costs arising because of the coronavirus pandemic (see below)

- relaxing some of the rules around how you use your direct payments - for example you may be able to temporarily employ a family member, subject to a conversation with People Plus or Tower Hamlets Council
- implementing the London Living Wage uplift due in April 2020
- working with People Plus to provide extra support if you need to implement alternative arrangements, e.g. with different agencies
- providing access to free PPE (personal protective equipment) for direct payments recipients (see contact details for PeoplePlus below for how to get this)
- working with PeoplePlus to provide reference letters for your PAs/carers to show they are key workers for the purposes of travel.

On the Real website you will find lots of extra information such as:

- more information about coronavirus/COVID-19 and how it affects people differently
- advice on spending your contingency creatively, and how to access extra emergency money if you need it
- advice and guidance on getting PPE (personal protective equipment) for your PAs/carers
- lists of approved care agencies who you could approach for backup support
- options for getting food and other shopping, and other community support
- other hints and tips on how you might manage.

Some people will be shielding or social distancing and they may have family members or others supporting them in the meantime. If you temporarily withdraw from receiving services, because you do not want to come in contact with other people, we want to reassure you that we won't use this as evidence that you don't need that support in the future. The most important thing is that you feel you are safe.

Monitoring

Quarter 4 monitoring for the period ended on the 31st March 2020 will soon be due and you would normally need to make your Quarter 4 return for the financial year 2019-2020 covering the months of January, February and March. If you can still manage to do this then we would like to receive this by 20th April 2020. Please ensure you submit your return with bank statements which include any transactions relating to the whole quarter, **(does not apply if you are on Managed account or prepaid card)**.

However, due to the current situation People Plus are not currently holding any drop in sessions until further notice, although they are available by telephone and email if you require additional support.

We also accept bank statements along with evidence of how funds have been spent (where cheque payments have been made) by post and email.

If you have any queries or problems with regards to your returns please feel free to contact the number at the top of the page. You can also contact People Plus or the DP monitoring team for assistance (see contact details below).

If you think you really can't manage to do your monitoring at this current point in time let us know. We can then make a note that you will submit two quarters of monitoring in one go after the next quarter end.

Where you can get information and support

Who	People Plus	Local Link	Tower Hamlets Council helpline for the "extremely vulnerable"	Tower Hamlets Council Direct Payments Monitoring Team
How	0330 123 2815 or ilstowerhamlets@peopleplus.co.uk	(020) 7001 2175 or local-link@real.org.uk or text message to 07305 823646	(020) 7364 3030 (or (020) 7364 4079 outside of standard hours)	(020) 7364 2179 or dp.monitoring@towerhamlets.gov.uk
When	Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm	Monday to Friday 10am to 4pm	Monday – Friday (8am – 8pm), Saturday (10am – 5pm) and Sunday (10am – 4pm)	General Availability: Mon to Fri 9am to 5pm Out of Hours: Mon to Fri 5pm to 8pm, Sat & Sun 9am to 7pm
For what	Support in relation to your direct payments and implementing changes to your support package, and support in relation to monitoring, or accessing free PPE (personal protective equipment)	General information and support in relation to your concerns on coronavirus or other issues (e.g. housing or benefits or targeted crime)	Any urgent care and support requirements or concerns around social isolation, food supplies, access to medication or worries about debt.	Questions in relation to your financial monitoring

If you have recently submitted your returns please disregard this letter and thank you for your co-operation.

Yours sincerely,
Mostak Ahmed

Direct Payments Monitoring Officer