

3. Personal Budgets – Checking your progress

About this guide

A Personal Budget is money from a local authority that can be used to pay for social care services and support. The money may be managed by the local authority or may be given directly to the person to spend on agreed services and activities. If you are thinking about getting a Personal Budget, or if you already have one, we hope you'll find this information helpful. It's one in a series of three:

1. Is a Personal Budget right for you?
2. Planning your support – how to use your Personal Budget
3. **Personal Budgets – checking your progress**

In creating this guide, we asked 54 people with a **severe mental illness** about what it was like to get and use a **Personal Budget**. We also spoke to 18 family members of people with a mental illness and 30 mental health practitioners. Each group told us the good and the bad things about getting and using Personal Budgets.

For more information about the study see our website www.rethink.org/personalbudgets

There is also a guide for families and people who support someone with a mental illness who has, or would like, a Personal Budget.



This guide talks about how your Personal Budget will be reviewed and how you can keep track of how you use it.

It tells you about:

- How reviews can be helpful for people
- Times when reviews can be difficult
- How reviews happen
- How people get ready for a review
- What people do after their Personal Budget stops

As you read, you can click on the videos to hear about someone who has been in this situation. The words and phrases in **blue** are explained in a glossary on page 8. You can find out more about our study and see more resources on our website.

Why do you need to have a review?

Personal Budgets help you do or achieve the things in your life that are important for your mental health. It's important to make sure that you are making progress towards your goals and checking how things are working. You and your **mental health worker** should meet regularly to talk about your experiences and share views. See our guide: **2. Planning your support – how to use your Personal Budget** if you need help thinking about your goals and your support plan.

There are different reasons for reviewing your Personal Budget:

To check progress towards your goals

It is useful to think about the progress you have made towards the **goals** that appear in your **support plan**. A **review** is also a good opportunity to think about any changes to your needs, goals or circumstances and how you could deal with these in the future – for example needing more or less help.

Andy talks to his mental health workers about his progress with a course that has been paid for with his Personal Budget. As your circumstances change, you might change your goals as well.

Andy: “When they come to visit me to see if I’m all right they often say how is the course going? What sort of things are you studying, how long have you been attending now?”



To check finances

Reviews can also check that you have spent the money on the things that have been agreed. You might have to show receipts and bank statements. It is a good idea to ask your mental health worker what financial records you should keep. For example, Yvonne goes through her bank statements with her mental health worker every three months.

Yvonne: “Once every three months, I show my care coordinator my bank statements and we talk about what the money’s been used for, and she just checks that it’s been used appropriately.”

Arthur: “The reviews are to assess whether what I’m doing is still relevant, and whether I should keep receiving the funding.”

To complete a re-assessment if your Personal Budget is coming to an end

If your money is about to run out, you might need to complete a new **assessment** form See our guide: **1. Is a Personal Budget right for you?** This will help you find out if you need more, less or the same amount of help.



How do reviews work?

Reviews work differently depending on where you live, who your **mental health worker** is and the type of **Personal Budget** you get.

What do reviews look like?

A review might involve a formal meeting with your mental health worker, any other professionals, and your family. Often reviews are quite informal and might be part of your regular meetings with your mental health worker, or you might be required to return some forms.

Frances: “It was a bit sad looking at some things and thinking about the time when I really had no self-worth. But then at the same time this shows how I’ve improved, so I have to put a bit of a positive spin on it.”

Ed: “It’s quite informal, really. Okay, there are forms to fill in. Every four months I just send everything to the council.”

Your involvement

You should have a chance to talk about your progress. Sometimes there are forms that you need to fill in and your mental health worker can probably help you with these. You might even find it difficult to look back and think about the changes in your life. Frances struggled with this, but she focused on the positive improvement that she has made.

Requesting a review

If you feel that things in your life have changed and they affect the help that you need, you have the right to ask your mental health worker for a review. Rebecca felt that she would benefit from her **support plan** being updated to address the changes in her life.

Rebecca: “I think it’s important that people ask their [mental health workers] to do the reviews. If they don’t mention the review when it’s due, to ask for the review.”

Siobhan: “The review might be six months down the line, or three months, or a year. If I wanted to change what I spend the money on, I would have to ask for a review.”

How often do reviews happen?

Among the people we spoke to their reviews happened every three to twelve months. The length of time between reviews depended on their type of Personal Budget and how long they had been using it. You can ask your mental health worker about how often you will have a review.

Questions you may want to ask:

- How often will my Personal Budget be reviewed?
- What will our review meetings look like?
- How will I be involved?
- How much money can you spend?

Preparing for reviews

To make the most of a **review** it may be helpful to think about how things are going. Below we suggest some topics and questions you may ask yourself.

Thinking about your needs

- Have your needs changed?
- Do you need anything that is not in your **support plan** already?
- Have there been changes in your life?
- Are you feeling more or less well than before the **Personal Budget** started?

Thinking about how well your Personal Budget is working

- Are you happy with how things are going?
- What has been good and what has been bad?
- Is there anything you would like to change?

Thinking about the way your Personal Budget is managed

- Do you need anything to be explained?
- Are you aware of what you need to do?
- Do you need help with finances?

Thinking about who can support you

- Do you want someone who knows you well to come to reviews with you, for example, a family member, friend, or **mental health worker**?

Ed: "I usually have a sit down, have a think about what I would like, is there anything I need, anything that I don't need. I write down my priorities, things like that."



Reaching goals and moving on

Personal Budgets are to help you with reaching specific **goals**. See our guide: **2. Planning your support – how to use your Personal Budget**. It is worth thinking about what will happen after you have achieved your goals.



How long will the money last?

You might use your Personal Budget to make a single purchase or you might get a regular monthly payment. This will depend on your needs, your circumstances and the rules in your local area. You should know the amount of money you will get, how often you will get the money and for how long.

Have you reached your goal?

When you have reached your goal, you will probably no longer need the Personal Budget. While this is a great achievement, it can be scary not to have a Personal Budget anymore. If your Personal Budget stops and you feel that you have not achieved your goals, you need to speak to your **mental health worker** to see what other support is available to you.





What next? – keeping things going

When your payments stop, you may not have to give up on what you have been doing. You could consider other activities that you could access free of charge. For example, if you are receiving benefits you may be entitled to certain discounts.

It will not always be possible, but it is worth checking what is available in your local area. Here are some places where you can get more information:

- Voluntary groups
- Your GP and health centre
- Your Community Mental Health Team
- Your local authority website and contact points
- Notice boards in your local library, community centres, church, colleges, or shops
- Clubs or groups of other people interested in the same thing you are

Glossary

Below is a list of terms that appear in this guide that are highlighted in blue. You can find a full list of terms we use in all our guides [here](#).

Assessment

Where information is gathered to help the local authority make decisions about what help you need. Often this involves speaking to a mental health worker about your circumstances using a questionnaire or form to record what is discussed.

Goals

Something that a person decides they want to achieve, or that they want to change in their lives. Goals should be discussed and agreed in a Support Plan so that the Personal Budget can be used to help the person reach them.

Mental health worker

A person who is the main point of contact in social care services. It could be a social worker, Community Psychiatric Nurse, Occupational Therapist, support worker or care coordinator. The person who is responsible for helping you to consider your needs and get a Personal Budget will vary in different places. If you're not sure, ask the person who gives you most support in mental health services and they should be able to tell you if there is someone else you need to speak to.

Personal Budget

An amount of money which the local authority has agreed is enough to help you get the services and support that you need. The money can only be spent on meeting your needs which will be written in your Support Plan. There are different ways to receive and use a Personal Budget: Direct Payment; Indirect Payment; One-off payment; Managed Budget.

Re-assessment

Every now and again, the local authority will check to see if your needs have changed and whether you still need the same services. If your needs or circumstances have changed, this may mean that the amount of money you get changes.

Review

The local authority will look at how you are using the Personal Budget and how well it is working for you. This helps to find out if your needs have changed and whether you need to change the way you are receiving a Personal Budget to help you manage. If you have used a Personal Budget in a way that was not agreed, a review will help the local authority to see that, and it may mean that the Personal Budget is stopped. Reviews usually involve a meeting with a mental health worker. You will normally have to show receipts and bank statements.

Severe mental illness

Severe or serious mental illness including diagnoses such as: major depression, schizophrenia, bipolar disorder, obsessive compulsive disorder (OCD), panic disorder, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and borderline personality disorder.

Support plan

A document that describes how a Personal Budget will be spent to help meet individual's social care needs and achieve what is important to them. A Support Plan includes information about daily life, goals you want to achieve, and how the money will be used to make these happen. Support Plans must be agreed by a local authority before the money is made available.

Where can I find out more?

This resource was developed from the experiences of people who were getting Personal Budgets, their families and their mental health workers. If you would like to hear more of their stories, go to www.rethink.org/personalbudgets.

Your **mental health worker** will often be the best place to get information that is relevant to you. Below are some other resources you might find helpful when thinking about Personal Budgets.

About Personal Budgets and Direct Payments

- www.rethink.org/diagnosis-treatment/treatment-and-support/personalisation-in-community-care/personal-budgets
- www.mind.org.uk/assets/0002/2969/The_Mind_guide_to_Personal_Budgets_for_social_care_2012.pdf

About reviews

- <http://www.in-control.org.uk/media/16729/12.%20seeing%20how%20it%20worked-review%202011%20v1.pdf>
- <http://www.helensandersonassociates.co.uk/media/35773/ofr%20-%20booklet.pdf>

If you disagree with a decision

- <http://www.in-control.org.uk/media/16705/04.%20what%20if%20i%20disagree%202011%20v1b.pdf>
- <http://www.rethink.org/living-with-mental-illness/rights-restrictions/complaining-about-the-nhs-or-social-services>

About this project

This booklet was developed by researchers at The McPin Foundation and Rethink Mental Illness. We conducted interviews with people using Personal Budgets, families and mental health workers in four areas of England.

The project was paid for by the Big Lottery Fund, and supported by King's College London and the University of Birmingham. For information about how this research was done, visit our website: www.rethink.org/personalbudgets



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