You can also get this information in large print, in Braille and on audio tape.

For more information, please contact the Merton Adult Access Team (MAAT) on 020 8545 4430. A Self-Directed Support Customers Guidance document, containing additional information on this process, is available upon request.

For support planning assistance please contact the Support Planning Service hosted by Merton Vision, Merton Mencap and Age Concern on 020 8417 0942, or Merton Council’s Direct Payments Support Planning Service on 020 8545 3632.

Further resources and customer information on Merton’s Adult Services Transformation Programme at www.merton.gov.uk/tasc

Published Nov 2010
What is Self-Directed Support and Personal Budgets?

Merton Council is committed to supporting all our residents to stay healthy and actively involved in community life for as long as possible.

Self-directed support is the name given to the system the Council is adopting to ensure local people, over eighteen, with ongoing personal care and support needs, have access to the best possible advice and support about how their needs are met.

Self-directed support recognises that you are the expert on your own needs and is the way that you will be able to manage your own care and support, in order to achieve your desired outcomes and improve the quality of your life. It is about making services more individual or personalised to meet your needs and means that you will have more choice, control and independence. It enables you to be at the centre of assessing your own needs and personalising your own care and support.

Where people have ongoing personal care and support needs, we can help by working out with you what your individual needs are and calculating the approximate cost of meeting your needs. In many cases the Council will contribute, either fully or partly to these costs by offering a Personal Budget. The size of this contribution will be dependant on an assessment of your individual financial circumstances.

The idea behind giving every eligible person a Personal Budget, instead of the Council providing services directly, is that we want you to be in the driving seat of how your support is arranged, and to give you maximum control over how the money is spent.

The 7-step process to Self-Directed Support

1. **Identify your needs:** Merton Adult Access Team (MAAT) will help identify your needs. If you are already in contact with us then whoever you are liaising with will ensure you get the right information about what you need to do.
   You will be sent an information leaflet and a Self Assessment Questionnaire for you to complete and return to the council.
   The Council will contact you first to go through your SAQ, and again to do a financial assessment of your circumstances.

2. **Find out your Indicative Allocation:** If you’re eligible for Self-Directed Support, the council will send you a letter advising you of the approximate amount it will cost to meet your eligible needs. This should arrive within four weeks of the Council receiving your completed SAQ and undertaking a financial assessment of your circumstances.

3. **Plan your support:** With this letter you will receive a Support Plan Template to help you develop your own personal support plan. You need to complete this and return it to the Council. There are three ways to get help:
   1. The Support Planning Service: this service is hosted by Merton Vision, Merton Mencap and Age Concern
   2. The Council’s Direct Payments Support Planning Service
   3. A social care practitioner can help you with your support plan

4. **Decide how you will manage your Personal Budget:** You choose how you want to receive your personal budget – as a Direct Payment to yourself or a nominated representative, as Directly Provided Services (the Council will manage your personal budget and arrange services from its contracted providers on your behalf), or a combination of both. See options above for who can assist you with this.

5. **Get your Support Plan agreed:** The Council must validate that your support plan is effective, affordable, lawful and safe. Once this is done, the Council will send you a letter confirming your Personal Budget (allow four weeks from start of support planning until support is arranged).

6. **Arrange your support:** If you have chosen to have a Direct Payment for some or all of your personal budget, someone from the Direct Payments team will contact you to help you arrange your support.
   If you have chosen to have your support directly provided by the Council on your behalf, you will be informed of when your support will commence. Your support should start within four weeks of being told your indicative allocation.

7. **Review:** Within six to eight weeks of you commencing your support package your support planner will contact you to check that your personal budget is working, and your needs are being met.
   The Council will continue to review your circumstances at appropriate intervals during the year.