

Activities Unlimited Short Breaks

PERSONAL BUDGET POLICY

Table of Contents

1.	Background	P2
2.	What is a Personal Budget?	P2
3.	Activities Unlimited (AU) Personal Budgets	P3
3.1	Applying for an AU Personal Budget	P3
3.2	Managing an AU Personal Budget	P3
3.3	What can an AU Personal Budget be spent on?	P4
3.4	What can't I spend the money on?	P4
3.5	What happens if I spend it in the wrong way?	P4

Further Information about Short Break Budgets

Additional information can be found on the Suffolk Local Offer website.

Contact Activities Unlimited on 01473 260026, email info@activities-unlimited.co.uk

1. Background

The Children & Families Act 2014 outlines processes to help children with special educational needs and/or disabilities. The Act includes a duty on the Local Authority (LA) to consider a Personal Budget when requested by a parent or the young person following the completion of an Education, Health & Care (EHC) needs assessment, confirmation that the LA will prepare an EHC Plan, or during an Annual Review.

Before the Act was introduced, Personal Budgets had been limited to Social Care and available to include, but not limited to, personal care, short breaks and social activities. The budgets have been, and still are, available to those without an EHC Plan through various assessment processes.

2. What is a Personal Budget?

A Personal Budget is an amount of money identified by the LA to deliver all or some of the provision set out in an EHC Plan or via an assessment of need by Health or Social Care.

This can be paid in the following ways:

- As a direct payment to individuals to contract, purchase and manage themselves.
- A notional arrangement whereby the LA, school or college retains the funds and commissions the support specified in the plan.
- Using a third party (i.e. an individual or organisation on behalf of the parent or the young person).
- A combination of the above.

**** Personal Budgets are not based on financial circumstances so won't affect any benefits parent carers may be in receipt of.***

**** Recipients have the right to change the way they receive a Personal Budget or end a Personal Budget, at any time by contacting the relevant service.***

Budgets are also available for health services but have been limited to children and young people who meet continuing health care criteria. Now they extend to include children and young people with special educational needs who qualify for EHC Plans to support some health needs (those with continuing care needs from 2014, and those with long term conditions from April 2015).

The LA has a responsibility to monitor how people are spending their Personal Budget to ensure it is spent as agreed by the parent carer, young person and the relevant service. Evidence of spend will be required in the form of receipts, spending records, bank statements, etc.

All Personal Budgets will be subject to a regular review within the Local Authority. Excess funding that may build up because it has not been spent may have to be returned to the LA and the relevant service will discuss this with you. In some services it may not be possible to carry over unspent funds into the next financial year.

3. Activities Unlimited (AU) Personal Budgets

AU delivers a range of Short Break services which includes the offer of a Personal Budget to contribute towards the cost of Short Breaks. AU provides Short Break personal budgets to eligible families with children and young people with special education needs living in Suffolk between the ages of 0 to 18 years. Other Short Break Services such as activities are available up to the age of 25.

3.1 Applying for an AU Personal Budget

The service is accessed by an online portal via the AU section of the Local offer website. This can be completed by a parent carer or by a professional on their behalf. It includes questions about the parent carer needs and questions about the child or young person. It is important to complete the form carefully and accurately to ensure it fully reflects the parent carer and the child's or young person's needs. Following application, a Personal Budget may be allocated, and the family will receive a letter to let them know the outcome. The funds are pro-rated to the month of the application.

The personal budget is available to spend up until the end of the financial year in which it is allocated. Any unspent funds will be returned to the LA via the pre-paid card account.

The Application window closes on 31st of December each year. Any new applications made between 1st January and 31st March will not be accepted.

The personal budgets are renewed on an annual basis subject to appropriate spend and the return of the required paperwork. Amounts payable are subject to change year on year depending on total budget available or local or national policy.

3.2 Managing an AU Personal Budget

A set of short break outcomes guide families on what they can spend the money on, and families receive an easy read guide with a welcome pack.

If families choose the option of a Direct Payment, the Short Break funds will be paid via a pre-payment card account. This can be used in the same way as a debit card account. It does not allow cash withdrawals, but funds can be transferred into a normal bank account if the Parent Carer prefers to manage it this way. AU will then monitor spend by accessing the family's pre-paid account where they will be able to see what the funds are being spent on. If the spend is not clear AU may ask for evidence of spend.

If families decide a Personal Allowance is the better option for them then the provider will invoice AU for payment. Parent carers can call AU to find out the balance of their award.

3.3 What can an AU Personal Budget be spent on?

The AU Personal Budget offers a flexible option on how it can be spent dependent on the child's and families Short Break needs. Any spend must include the child(ren) or Young Person(s) the budget has been allocated for. Examples of appropriate spend are detailed in the AU spending guide.

3.4 What can't I spend the money on?

- Clothing (other than specific clothing needed for an activity, i.e. horse-riding clothes, dance shoes etc)
- Household bills including Gas, Electric, Council Tax etc.
- Everyday household expenses and items, such as maintenance costs, furniture and electrical appliances.
- Parking fines or penalties of any sort.
- Activities that take place during school hours, including school activities during term time.
- Private Education tuition.
- Treatments/therapies, medication that the NHS would not normally fund.
- Medical or OT equipment.
- Restricted items that could cause harm, such as knives, weapons and chemicals.
- Body modifications or cosmetic adjustments.
- Grocery Shopping.
- To pay a family member living with the child or young person for childcare/personal assistants.
- Anything that is illegal.
- Gambling, debt repayment, alcohol, tobacco.
- Emergency, acute, and most primary healthcare services which are already provided on the NHS.
- Purchasing services directly from Suffolk County Council or other statutory agencies.
- Permanent residential care.
- As a substitute for Disabled Facilities Grants.

There may be some exceptions to the above, so it is important to call us if you are unsure.

3.5 What happens if I spend it in the wrong way?

If the AU team notice spend that does not meet the AU Short Break outcomes, they will contact the Parent Carer to discuss this and look at how this can be resolved. If the parent carer doesn't engage this may lead to suspension of the card until the issue has been solved. If it found there has been intentional fraudulent activity the case will be forwarded to Suffolk County Council's Internal Audit and Counter Fraud Department.