



Glasgow Centre
for Inclusive Living



GCIL SUPPORT

**Booklet 1:
Thinking About Self-Directed Support**

Who this booklet is for

This booklet is the first of two booklets about Self-Directed Support (SDS). It is for people who are thinking about using SDS or who have been told they need to go through an assessment for social care support.

It is designed to explain what SDS is, how the assessment and support planning process works, and what kinds of choices may come later.

It does not try to cover everything at once. Some information only becomes relevant after an assessment has taken place and a budget has been agreed. That information is provided later.

What Self-Directed Support is

Self-Directed Support, often called SDS, is the way social care support is arranged in Scotland.

At its core, SDS is about choice and control. Instead of support being designed entirely by services or organisations, SDS starts with the person and their life.

This means thinking about:

- what matters to you day to day
- what is difficult just now
- what you would like to change or maintain
- what support would help you live the life you want

Support is then planned around these things, rather than around what support services already exist.

You may have heard the term direct payments used when people talk about social care support. Direct payments are one way Self-Directed Support can work, but they are not the only way.

SDS is the overall approach to how support is planned and arranged. Within that, there are 4 different options for how support can be managed.

Different people experience SDS in very different ways. Some find it empowering and flexible, others find it confusing or frustrating at first. Both of these experiences are common.

Who SDS is for and how to get started

SDS is available to people who are assessed as eligible for social care support.

People arrive at the SDS process in lots of different ways. Some are referred by a social worker. Others are told by social work that SDS is now “how things are done”.



Some people or families contact organisations like GCIL to ask for information or support.

People come into this process with different levels of understanding. Some already have experience of social care systems, while others may be encountering them for the first time. It is common to feel unsure, anxious or overwhelmed at this stage.

GCIL can provide information and support before and during assessment, helping you understand what SDS is and what to expect.

GCIL can also advise you about carers budgets and the Independent Living Fund (ILF) and how these fit with SDS, and can support carers with information relevant to their situation.

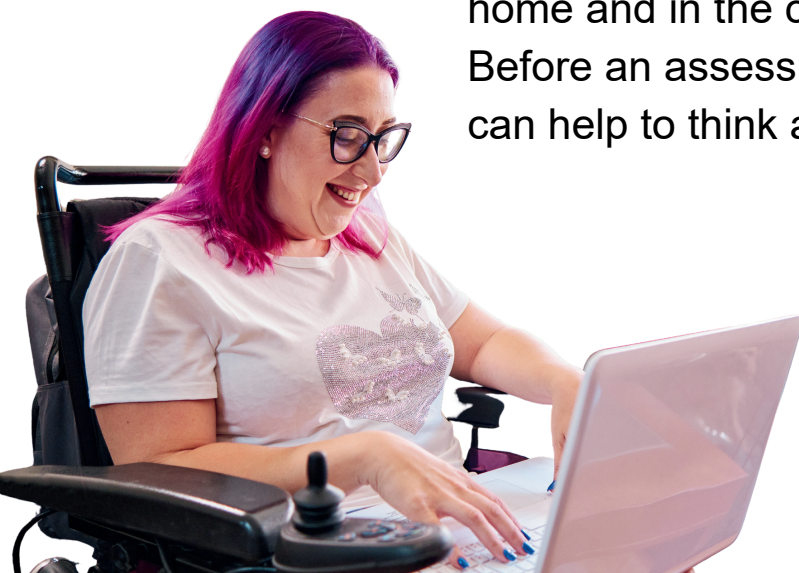
Preparing for an assessment

An assessment is a conversation with social work about your life, your needs and the support that may help. The purpose of an assessment is to understand:

- What support you need
- Why you need it
- What outcomes support will help you achieve

Assessments can feel very personal. You may be asked about daily activities, health, safety, relationships, routines and how you manage at home and in the community.

Before an assessment, it can help to think about:



- What a good day looks like for you
- What makes things harder on a bad day
- What support you already have, and where there are gaps
- What you want support to change or make possible

You do not need to have the “right” answers. An SDS assessment is not a test, and it is normal for your thoughts to develop as conversations continue. An assessment may also not be a one-off event, it is more of a process. You should also expect to be reassessed, often yearly, to see if your needs have changed.

Support planning and outcomes

As part of the assessment process, a support plan is written. It includes your outcomes, the things support will help you achieve.

Outcomes are about impact, not just tasks. For example, an outcome might be about staying safe at home, maintaining relationships, getting out into the community, or having more control over daily routines.

Support plans are not all written in the same way. Sometimes they are written mainly by a social worker, sometimes they are co-written with you. Some plans are detailed, others are brief. You are entitled to see and keep and copy of your assessment and support plan.

What matters is that the plan reflects your life and priorities, and that it makes sense to you. It is reasonable to ask questions if something in the plan does not feel right or does not reflect what you discussed.

You don't have to go through this process alone. Family members, friends, or

representatives can be involved in assessment conversations, support planning, and decision-making.

The four SDS options, overview

Once assessment and support planning are underway, SDS offers four options for how support can be arranged.

- Option 1** You receive the budget directly and arrange your own support. This is known as a Direct Payment.
- Option 2** You choose a provider, and the local authority arranges and pays for the support.
- Option 3** The local authority arranges support on your behalf.
- Option 4** A mix of the other options.



At this stage, the aim is not to choose an option, but to understand the types of choice that exist. Many people do not decide on an option until later, and many use a mix of options.

What SDS can usually be used for

There are limits on what SDS funding can be used for. SDS funding is intended to pay for support that helps meet the outcomes agreed in your support plan. This means the funding should be used for things that directly help you achieve those outcomes, rather than for general living costs or things that are not related to your support needs. This often includes things like:

- Support with daily living
- Personal care
- Getting out and about
- Social activities
- Education or training
- Support to live safely and independently

What is and isn't allowed is influenced by social care rules and local authority guidance, and this can vary across Scotland. If something feels unclear, it's always better to ask rather than assume.

What happens after assessment

Once the assessment and support planning process are complete, social work will decide whether you are eligible for funded support and, if so, what budget may be available to help meet your outcomes.

Not everyone who goes through an assessment is offered a budget. Eligibility criteria can be strict, and these criteria are becoming tighter as local authorities face increasing pressure on their finances. This can be difficult or disappointing, particularly if the assessment process



has felt demanding or personal.

Even where needs are recognised, the level of funding offered may be less than you hoped for, or different from what you expected.

Decisions are influenced by eligibility rules, professional judgement and local authority guidance, not just by the outcomes described in the support plan.

If a budget is not agreed, or if the decision feels unclear or unfair, it is important to know that support and advice are still available.

Asking questions, seeking clarification and exploring other forms of support can all be part of the next steps.

Contributions towards care costs

In many local authorities, adults are asked to contribute towards the cost of some types of social care support.

In Scotland, personal care is free, so people are not charged for support classed as personal care. Personal care is defined as any support of a personal or intimate nature needed to help with daily living. This includes assistance with personal hygiene (washing, dressing), managing continence, eating, taking medication, and mobility support.

Other types of adult support may be means-tested, depending on local authority rules and individual circumstances. Whether a contribution applies, and how it is worked out, is considered later in the process. This can come as a surprise to people, so it's helpful to be aware of it early on.

More detailed information about contributions and financial assessments is provided if and when a budget is agreed.

How GCIL can help

Our role is to support informed decision-making at each stage. Our support continues once decisions about eligibility and budgets are known.

At the initial stage GCIL can support you to:

- understand SDS and the assessment process
- prepare for assessment conversations
- think through outcomes and options
- ask questions and make sense of information
- understand how to use your budget in practice

Detailed guidance on managing support arrangements, employment responsibilities or payroll is available, if and when someone chooses those routes.

Information not covered in this booklet

This booklet does not cover:

- detailed finance arrangements
- employer responsibilities in depth
- recruitment
- payroll or insurance

For more detail about arranging your support and using your budget, see GCIL's Booklet 2, "Next Steps with your Self-Directed Support Budget", or contact GCIL for advice.

Contact Information



Contact us at your local office to find out more about your options for Self-directed support and how GCIL can help.

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