



Government of **Western Australia**  
Department of **Communities**  
**Disability Services**

# Self-Management Guide

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## **1. What is self-management?**

In Western Australia (WA), self-management refers to funded supports in an individual plan being managed by either a person with disability or a representative acting on the person's behalf.

## **2. What are the benefits of self-management?**

Self-management enables you to maximise the flexibility you have over the supports and services you use. You can plan, design, direct and organise these services and supports to meet your needs and your preferences.

Self-management can also provide an opportunity for you to build your confidence and abilities to manage your supports.

## **3. How do you choose to self-manage?**

If you wish to self-manage some or all of your plan's supports, the Department of Communities (Disability Services) is committed to helping make this happen where possible. Your Local Coordinator will outline the tasks and responsibilities involved with managing your supports as set out in the Self-Management Checklist (see Appendix 1).

Your Local Coordinator can connect you to people and resources who can help you build the skills and knowledge you might need to successfully self-manage.

If you decide you would like to self-manage some or all of your funded supports, you need to complete the Self-Management Checklist with your Local Coordinator.

Your Local Coordinator will need to approve self-management, and you and your Local Coordinator will need to sign the Acceptance of Grant Funds Agreement (see Appendix 2). This is a legal document, so it is important you read all the terms and conditions carefully. The signed Acceptance document will be retained by Communities and you will be given a copy for your records.

## **4. What must you do?**

There are several things you need to do when you self-manage your funded supports. These include:

- a. complying with all relevant legal requirements
- b. managing the funds
- c. purchasing supports and services in your individual plan
- d. engaging and managing support workers (if that's in your plan)
- e. monitoring the safety and quality of your supports.

#### **4a. Complying with all relevant legal requirements**

If you choose to self-manage your supports, there are several legal obligations you need to be aware of and comply with. These obligations relate to how you spend the funds and how you engage your supports and services.

If you are a representative acting on behalf of a person, you have additional obligations under self-management. You will either be acting as the person's agent (taking action on their behalf in accordance with the person's decisions), or be acting in your own capacity (making decisions and taking action based on your understanding of the person's wishes and preferences). You need to understand the legal implications of managing the person's funds and supports. If you are uncertain what the legal implications are, you should seek independent legal advice.

This guide provides you with information about what you need to consider. Your Local Coordinator can suggest other information that will help you, but they cannot give financial or legal advice.

Only a lawyer, an accountant or the Australian Taxation Office are able to consider your specific circumstances and advise you on your legal obligations.

#### **Engaging support workers**

Most people who self-manage engage their own support workers. There are different ways to hire support workers. You can engage someone as an employee, as an independent contractor, or as an employee of their own business.

Your legal obligations may differ depending on whether your support worker is your employee or an independent contractor. If you are uncertain, you should seek your own legal advice.

Laws can change and you will need to stay informed of any changes so that you can meet relevant requirements. You may wish to get more information about these obligations. Western Australia's Individualised Services (WAIIS) has information resources on engaging your own support workers (see **Other Resources** at the end of this guide).

#### **Safety and health**

A person who engages a support worker directly has the duties of an employer under occupational safety and health legislation. These duties include:

- **Providing a safe work environment**
  - Do an environmental assessment to find hazards before they result in injury
  - Make sure that equipment the worker needs to use is in working order, and that the worker know how to use it safely

- Provide gloves, first aid kits and other products that will protect the worker from infection and disease
  - Make sure any vehicle that the worker uses is safe (including their own)
  - Make sure that medications, cleaning products and other chemicals a worker might use are not hazardous or are in their original containers, and that workers know what to do to use them safely.
- **Providing information and training**
    - Tell workers about potential injury hazards and ways to control them (e.g. if the worker needs to get something stored above their head, make sure you provide an appropriate stepladder, tell the worker where it is stored and when to use it)
    - Train workers in techniques that prevent injury (e.g. manual handling)
    - Tell workers about what to do in emergency situations or when they need help
    - Make sure workers know about common communicable diseases (like Hepatitis B) and how to avoid them.

- **Investigating problems**

If your worker tells you about a situation that might cause or has caused injuries or disease, you must investigate the issue and do what you can to fix it.

Worksafe WA is a source of information regarding health and safety obligations for people who engage their own support workers. It is important to remember that your home will be considered a workplace in many instances, and you must make sure it is a safe and healthy environment for your workers.

General information on a range of workplace health and safety issues is available here: <https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/worksafe/safety-and-health-topics-0>

#### **4b. Managing the funds**

Self-managed funds are provided to help you meet the goals in your individual plan. The funds have to be spent in ways that align with your plan and comply with relevant laws.

You need to establish and maintain a separate bank account reserved solely for self-managed funds received in advance. For funds received in arrears (reimbursement), it is recommended that you also maintain a separate bank account. Your Local Coordinator will discuss reimbursement with you if this applies to you.

Funds to provide a maximum of 12 weeks support at a time will be put into this account. The amount paid may vary depending on:

- the total value of funded supports in your plan - if it's a small amount, the funds may be advanced in one payment

- the timing of the supports - if you are buying a support or service at a particular time, such as workers' compensation insurance for the year, the funds may be advanced in the regular payment before the planned purchase
- how well you have been able to self-manage in the past - if you have had challenges with self-management, smaller amounts may be advanced to you until you are able and feel confident to manage larger sums.

Your Local Coordinator will introduce you to your Operations Support Officer, who is responsible for managing funding acquittals and releasing funds. The Operations Support Officer will provide you with support to acquit the self-managed funds.

#### **4c. Purchasing supports in your plan**

It is your responsibility to spend the self-managed funds on supports and services as agreed in your plan, and to keep proper records of these purchases or payments.

##### **Using funds as agreed**

Your plan will be reviewed at least every 12 months. The self-management of funded supports will be reviewed as part of the overall plan review.

If you use the funds to purchase things that don't align with your plan's strategies and goals, you may be asked to repay those funds. The approval for you to continue self-managing may also be withdrawn. You, your Local Coordinator and your Operations Support Officer will all monitor how the funds are used.

##### **Accounting for the funds**

It is your responsibility to make sure you have records to show the funds have been used for the agreed purpose. These records will usually include:

- signed documentation by the person or organisation providing the support showing that they have provided the support and been paid for it
- receipts for goods or services that have been purchased.

The Operations Support Officer cannot release any funds when there are receipts outstanding for two previous advances.

#### **4d. Engaging and managing support workers**

Many plans will include a provision for you to engage support workers to assist you to achieve your goals. Self-managed funds cannot be used to engage family members to act as support workers.

If you are engaging support workers, the funds provided for this will enable you to:

- recruit and engage support workers to provide the support identified in your individual plan

- pay your support workers a reasonable wage
- meet your support workers' leave and other entitlements, if they are employees
- pay someone to support you when your usual support workers are sick or away
- provide suitable training for your support workers, if required
- purchase any professional services and resources you might need to assist you with self-managing your funding (e.g. book-keeping).

### **Advertising for support workers**

The first step in engaging support workers is advertising the position(s) in a way that attracts a good pool of applicants. The following questions will help you identify some key things to include in your advertisement:

- What goals in your plan will your workers support you to achieve?
- What are the main things potential workers should know about you? For example, what is important to you and what do you love doing?
- What personality traits are you most looking for?
- What activities do you imagine them doing when they are with you?
- What values, skills, knowledge, abilities and experience do they need in order to support you?

Your answers to these questions will help you identify your 'selection criteria' – the factors you will use to decide the most suitable applicant for you at this time.

If you've never employed people directly before, you may wish to get some help writing your first advertisement. Your Local Coordinator can connect you to people who can assist you with this.

### **Interviews**

Once you have received some job applications, you need to decide which applicants seem to be the most suitable based on your selection criteria. You then need to meet these people to decide which of them will be the most suitable. Formal or informal interviews are one common way that employers meet job applicants.

In an interview, you can ask questions that help you to find out who will be a good match. Be aware that in interviews, people **talk** about what they do – but you don't get to see what they do **in practice**. Sometimes, people say they do things one way when in fact they do things differently. Doing the pre-employment checks below is one way of addressing this risk. Your Local Coordinator can also connect you to experienced people who can assist you with this.

### **Pre-employment checks**

It is important that the people you hire to support you are suitable and able to work with you in ways that are respectful, safe and effective. Whilst no procedure can guarantee that

the person you hire will be suitable, there are some checks that should be undertaken **before** a person starts working with you:

- The **National Police Certificate** lists a person's criminal and WA traffic court convictions and any charges before the court at the time the National Police Certificate is requested. For more information, see the [Western Australian Police website \(www.police.wa.gov.au > National Police Certificates\)](http://www.police.wa.gov.au)
- Where the support worker will be working with a child, the worker must have been issued with a **Working With Children Card**. This is a legal requirement. For more information, see the [Working with Children Check website](#).

You should also seek written or verbal references for any people you are thinking about hiring as support workers. Wherever possible, it is useful to get references from their current or former employers.

### **Getting new support workers started**

It is good practice to have 'induction training' to teach new support workers what they need to know in their role. You can provide information and direction about you, your supports and your preferences.

If you have particular needs, such as how to manage seizures, the worker may need thorough training on all aspects of supporting you well with these needs. It is especially important that their training includes what to do if something goes wrong.

With full-time or part-time employees, it can be worthwhile to establish things like probation periods and review dates. It can be very helpful for both parties to have a clear expectation from the start that the first few months will be a 'probation' period. Typically, this can be between three to six months. A probation period allows you to determine whether your new worker is suitable and competent and allows the worker to determine if the job is a good fit for them.

It is suggested that you regularly discuss your worker's progress with them throughout the probation period (at least monthly). Discussions about things that may not be working so well should support the worker to learn and succeed.

More information about probation periods is available from:

<https://www.commerce.wa.gov.au/labour-relations/types-employment-arrangements-1>.

### **Ongoing supervision and training**

Providing regular feedback to your support workers about how well they are doing their job is important to establishing and maintaining a positive working relationship. Scheduling regular one-to-one meetings with each support worker enables you to discuss and solve any issues or concerns either of you might have as they arise.



It is recommended that you develop a very clear statement of the outcomes you want the support worker to achieve, or to help you achieve. Discussing these outcomes enables you to agree together what tasks they need to perform to achieve those outcomes. You might also identify and agree on any training or other support they might need to be effective in their role.

#### **4e. Monitoring safety and quality**

You are responsible for the quality of the supports and services you purchase when you self-manage your funded supports.

All providers registered with Communities are required to meet the [National Standards for Disability Services](#). Under self-management, you can choose to engage providers and/or individuals who are not registered, as long as you take all reasonable steps to ensure the supports and services provided to you reflect the National Standards.

The six National Standards are:

1. **Rights:** The service promotes individual rights to freedom of expression, self-determination and decision-making and actively prevents abuse, harm, neglect and violence.
2. **Participation and Inclusion:** The service works with individuals and families, friends and carers to promote opportunities for meaningful participation and active inclusion in society.
3. **Individual Outcomes:** Services and supports are assessed, planned, delivered and reviewed to build on individual strengths and enable individuals to reach their goals.
4. **Feedback and Complaints:** Regular feedback is sought and used to inform individual and organisation-wide service reviews and improvement.
5. **Service Access:** The service manages access, commencement and leaving a service in a transparent, fair, equal and responsive way.
6. **Service Management:** The service has effective and accountable service management and leadership to maximise outcomes for individuals.

There are also [Indicators of Practice](#) that provide a description of the key elements of practice for each Standard. If you recognise these indicators in the supports you self-manage, this is a strong sign that the supports are of good quality.

As part of the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), a new [Quality and Safeguarding Framework](#) for disability services is being developed. The Framework includes some strategies to consider in relation to promoting quality and safeguarding in services and empowering people with disability. You can find a summary of the Framework here: <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers/programs-services/for-people-with-disability/summary-of-the-ndis-quality-and-safeguarding-framework>

## **Checking the quality of supports and services**

You are the best person to decide if you are receiving quality supports and services. If you are self-managing on behalf of a person with disability, the person receiving the support is the best source of information on how satisfied they are with the supports being provided.

Some questions to think about:

- Effectiveness – are the supports helping you to reach the goals in your plan?
- Safety – are the supports being provided in a way that keeps you and your workers safe?
- Individual - do you feel that the support is focused on meeting your needs? Is the support clearly discussed with you? Is it as flexible as you would like?
- Interactions – are you being treated with respect and dignity? To what extent do you have a say in how the supports are being delivered?
- In what ways are the supports helping you to participate in your community?
- What are you doing to develop your support worker's ability to keep you safe and to deliver the services you need?
- Do your support worker and you both know what to do if things go wrong?

## **Other ways to check quality**

If you are representing a person who has limited ability to verbally communicate how they feel about their care and supports, he or she may be very vulnerable to experiencing abuse and neglect.

It is important to closely observe what the person is communicating non-verbally, such as through their gestures, facial expressions, behaviours and reactions to particular people.

If possible, you should also try to regularly observe the service being provided, as part of assessing the quality of the service and the safeguarding measures in place.

Building a strong support network around a person with disability is another way of decreasing the person's vulnerability.

## **If things are not going as planned**

If you think that supports and services are not being delivered the way you expected, you should first speak directly with the person providing the support or service. You can have a family member, friend or an advocate assist you in this conversation if you need to, and you can also contact your Local Coordinator for support or advice.

If you or the person you are representing experience abuse, violence or neglect, or feel at risk of experiencing abuse, violence or neglect, you must make yourself and/or the person safe immediately.

The situation should be discussed with WA Police, the Department of Communities (Child Protection and Family Support) for matters relating to children, and/or relevant agencies such as the local hospital or a disability advocacy organisation (see below). You should also speak to your Local Coordinator for support as soon as you can. Communities will respond to safeguarding issues or concerns in accordance with its organisational policies.

Useful contacts in **urgent** situations:

- Western Australia Police: 131 444 (24 hours)
- Sexual Assault Resource Centre: 9340 1828 / 1800 199 888 (24 hours)
- Crisis Care Helpline: 9223 1111(metro), 1800 199 008 (country)
- Mental Health Emergency Response Line (after hours): 1300 555 788 (metro), 1800 676 822 (Peel), Rurallink 1800 552 002 (rural and remote)
- Healthdirect Australia: 1800 022 222
- National After Hours GP Helpline: 1800 022 222.

Other Useful Contacts:

- Department of Communities (Child Protection and Family Support): 9222 2555 (metro), 1800 622 258 (country) (Monday to Friday)
- Office of the Public Advocate: 1300 858 455 (Monday to Friday)
- Disability advocacy finder:  
<https://disabilityadvocacyfinder.dss.gov.au/disability/ndap/>

### **Other resources**

There are a range of resources available to help people, family and carers with engaging support workers:

- Carers WA: 'A Guide for Family Carers about Getting Supports' (2012) covers topics such as advertising, interviewing and legal responsibilities. This and other booklets are available on the [Carers WA website](http://www.carerswa.asn.au) (www.carerswa.asn.au > Publications > Publications & videos)
- My Place (WA): '[A Guide to Engaging your own Support Workers](#)' covers topics such as preparing a budget, weekly plan and rosters, advertising, training and managing support workers. This is available on the My Place (WA) website (www.myplace.org.au > You can do it all yourself)
- WAiS: 'Engaging Your Own Supports' includes information about responsibilities of employing workers. This guide is available from WAiS – [www.waindividualisedservices.org.au](http://www.waindividualisedservices.org.au)

## **5. What if you change your mind?**

As with all parts of your individual plan, if the self-management of funded supports is not working for you, you can speak with your Local Coordinator who will help you to make alternative arrangements.

## APPENDIX 1: Self-Management Checklist

This document confirms that \_\_\_\_\_ and \_\_\_\_\_  
[Name of Person/Representative] [Name of Local Coordinator]

have discussed the responsibilities of self-management.

\_\_\_\_\_  
[Name of Person/Representative]

- has read and understood the Self-Management Guide, and other relevant documents such as the National Standards for Disability Services
- can comply with all applicable legal requirements
- can meet legal responsibilities when engaging individuals as employees or independent contractors
- will maintain a dedicated bank account reserved solely for the purpose of self-managed funds (where funds are paid in advance)
- will take all reasonable steps to ensure that self-managed supports and services reflect the National Standards for Disability Services
- can source supports to undertake self-management, as well as specialist advice, training and development, if required
- will ensure that self-managed supports are consistent with the strategies and goals in their individual plan
- will ensure that accurate and up-to-date records will be kept
- will submit acquittal reports within agreed timeframes
- will have appropriate safeguarding measures in place
- is not currently subject to bankruptcy proceedings or bankrupt or insolvent under administration\*
- has not been convicted of fraud or similar offences\*

Additional responsibilities for the Representative only:

As the representative for \_\_\_\_\_, \_\_\_\_\_ can:  
[Name of Supported Person] [Name of Representative]

- support decisions that reflect the Supported Person's choices and preferences, and act in their best interests
- hold funds on trust for the benefit of the Supported Person

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of Local Coordinator

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

\*Being subject to bankruptcy proceedings may not preclude a person from undertaking self-management, but will be considered as part of the approval process. If a person is currently bankrupt or insolvent under administration, or has been convicted of fraud or similar offences, self-management will not be approved.

## APPENDIX 2: Acceptance of Grant Funds Agreement – Person

### Self-management of funded supports

These are the terms and conditions for the provision of funds by the Department of Communities (Disability Services) in relation to the supports and services agreed in the plan for [Name of Person].

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In accepting these funds, I confirm that I have discussed the following terms and conditions with the Local Coordinator or Operations Support Officer, and I agree that:

- I have read and understood the Self-Management Guide and I have completed the Self-Management Checklist with the Local Coordinator. I acknowledge that I am ultimately responsible for deciding who I engage to support me and for meeting the legal obligations associated with engaging individuals as either employees or independent contractors. Communities is not responsible in any way for the decisions that I make in this regard.
- I acknowledge that the funds must only be used for the purposes as identified in my plan. Funds paid in advance must be paid into a dedicated account reserved solely for the purposes of self-managed funds. I will discuss with the Local Coordinator any funds that are not required within the period of my plan.
- I will be required to repay to Communities any funds not spent in accordance with my plan.
- I will keep receipts and records of how the funds are spent and will provide them to Communities within the timeframe agreed with the Local Coordinator. I understand that Communities may undertake an audit and will take appropriate action for any misuse of funds.
- I will notify the Local Coordinator immediately of any material change in circumstances that may affect my plan or my capacity to self-manage funded supports.
- I understand that approval for self-management of funds may be suspended or withdrawn if concerns or allegations arise in relation to my capacity to self-manage, or about the quality of the services being provided to me.
- I am not currently subject to bankruptcy proceedings or bankrupt or insolvent under administration. I have not been convicted of fraud or similar offences. I will notify Communities immediately if this changes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Person's name  
(receiving the funds)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date:

I acknowledge that I have determined that [Name of Person] may self-manage funded supports as agreed in their plan.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Local Coordinator/Area Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date:

## Acceptance of Grant Funds Agreement – Representative

### Representative management of funded supports

These are the terms and conditions for the provision of funds by the Department of Communities (Disability Services) in relation to the supports and services agreed in the plan for the Supported Person [Name of Supported Person].

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In accepting these funds, I confirm that as the Representative for the Supported Person I have discussed the following terms and conditions with the Local Coordinator or Operations Support Officer, and I agree that:

- I have read and understood the Self-Management Guide and I have completed the Self-Management Checklist with the Local Coordinator. I acknowledge that as Representative I may act as the agent of the Supported Person or in my own capacity, and that I am either partially or wholly responsible for deciding who I engage to support the Supported Person and for meeting the legal obligations associated with engaging individuals as either employees or independent contractors. Communities is not responsible in any way for the decisions that I make in this regard.
- When I enter into contracts for the benefit of the Supported Person I must make it clear to the service provider whether I am acting in my capacity as the agent of the Supported Person or whether I am doing so in my own capacity. I understand I may be wholly or partially responsible for meeting relevant contractual obligations.
- I understand my responsibility to take all reasonable steps to protect the safety and wellbeing of the Supported Person. I must notify Communities immediately if the safety or wellbeing of the Supported Person is compromised or threatened.
- I acknowledge that in my capacity as Representative, I must endeavour to reflect the Supported Person's choices and preferences, and must act in the best interests of the Supported Person at all times.
- I will notify the Local Coordinator immediately of any material change in circumstances that may affect the plan for the Supported Person, or my capacity to manage funded supports.
- I acknowledge that I will hold the funds on trust for the benefit of the Supported Person. Funds paid in advance must be paid into a dedicated account reserved solely for the purposes of managed funds.

- I acknowledge that the funds must only be used for the purposes as identified in the plan for the Supported Person. I will discuss with the Local Coordinator any funds that are not required within the period of the plan for the Supported Person.
- I will be required to repay to Communities any funds not spent in accordance with the plan for the Supported Person.
- I will keep receipts and records of how the funds are spent and will provide them to Communities within the timeframe agreed with the Local Coordinator. I understand that Communities may undertake an audit and will take appropriate action for any misuse of funds.
- I understand that approval for management of funds may be suspended or withdrawn if concerns or allegations arise in relation to either my capacity as Representative of the Supported Person to manage funds on behalf of the Supported Person, or the quality of the services being provided to the Supported Person, or Communities forms the view that the management arrangement is no longer in the interests of the Supported Person generally.
- I am not currently subject to bankruptcy proceedings or bankrupt or insolvent under administration. I have not been convicted of fraud or similar offences. I will notify Communities immediately if this changes.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Representative's name  
(receiving the funds)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date:

I acknowledge that I have determined that [Name of Representative] may manage funded supports on behalf of [Name of Supported Person] as agreed in the plan for [Name of Supported Person].

\_\_\_\_\_  
Local Coordinator/Area Manager

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

Date: