Dear Parent/Carer

I am writing to you as you are currently in receipt of a direct payment to let you know of some changes to the way direct payments are agreed and reviewed.

We are introducing a direct payment panel which will meet every month and look at proposed new direct payment arrangements and those where there has recently been a review of a current arrangement.

The panel will be chaired by myself or another senior manager in children's social care and other panel members will include representatives from our commissioning team, colleagues in health and the Northumberland Communities Together team as well as from the disabled children's social work team and early help services.

The aim of the panel is to ensure that the proposed direct payment or continuation of a direct payment is the best way to meet the outcomes identified for each child or young person and that if there are other additional or different ways in which the outcome could be met that these are considered as well.

When your child’s social worker or social work support assistant is undertaking the review of your child’s current direct payment with you they will explain that if the care team agree that the direct payment needs to continue then they will need to attend the next direct payment panel to get that agreed and there maybe occasions when the panel suggests an alternative way in which your child’s outcomes could be achieved.

If this is the case, then your child’s worker will discuss this with you and your child and possibly others in the care team. If you or your child are in disagreement with this, then the worker would return to the next panel with the reasons for the disagreement. The direct payment would continue whilst this process is ongoing to ensure continuity of support. Any decision to stop a direct payment would be done through setting a clear date for this to happen in agreement with yourself and your child.

If you have any questions in relation to this please don’t hesitate to contact me at [mary.connor@northumberland.gov.uk](mailto:mary.connor@northumberland.gov.uk) or speak to your child’s social worker/social work support assistant.

Mary Connor  
Head of Service Children's Social Care