

Pol_136	Money and Property management for participants requiring assistance
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One of the areas in which people with disability and elderly participants are particularly vulnerable to exploitation is with respect to the management of their financial affairs. This policy intends to ensure that where Life Choice is responsible for providing a participant with assistance in managing their money or making a purchase, this is done in an honest and accountable manner, and in the best interests of the participant.

This policy:

- supports empowerment, independence and autonomy for Life Choice participants to take control of their lives and continuous quality improvement towards that goal, including the right to manage their own money or have someone else manage it for them;
- intends to ensure that where Life Choice is responsible for providing a participant with assistance in managing their money or making a purchase, that this is done in an honest and accountable manner, and in the best interests of the participant.
- outlines the processes for managing funds within Life Choice services. It provides principles in relation to distribution, monitoring and documenting use of funds with the purpose of protecting individuals' funds and that Life Choice is accountable for the money it handles on behalf of participants.
- establishes guidelines when authorised to manage participants property

This policy is made in accordance with the **NDIS Practice Standards Module 4 - Provision of Supports, Participant Money and Property**: 'participant money and property is secure, and each participant uses their own money and property as they determine'

Record of policy development		
Version	Date approved	Date for review
2020/1	August 2022	August 2024

Responsibilities and delegations	
This policy applies to	All staff who are directly or indirectly responsible for assisting participants to manage their personal finances
Policy approval	Quality & Risk Committee

Policy context – this policy relates to:	
Standards	NDIS Practice Standards and Quality Indicators
Legislation	Privacy Act

	Human Services Standards
References	Yooralla National Disability Services
Organisation policies	Code of Conduct Privacy Policy
Forms, record keeping, other documents	Consent form Participant Service Agreement

Definitions

Financial abuse: any act which involves misusing the money or property of a vulnerable person without their full knowledge and consent. This includes theft of money, pension cheques or property as well as misuse of a power of attorney.

Procedures

Promoting autonomy

Participants should manage their own funds wherever possible. Staff should not manage or make decisions regarding participants' funds where they are capable of doing so themselves.

Responsibility for assisting a participant with money handling should only be assumed by staff when the participant or their authorised representative has requested and consented to receiving this assistance from Life Choice. An authorised representative may be a legal guardian or an appointed nominee, under the participant's NDIS plan.

Assistance, where required, should promote autonomy and choice, and enhance the participants independence.

Participant consent

Participants will decide how much assistance they require with their cash and bank accounts. Some participants will choose to retain control with minimal assistance, while others will rely on staff.

Where assistance in managing financial affairs is required, a Consent Form must be obtained from the participant (or their decision maker) and retained on their file. Participants' money may only be used for the purposes intended by the participant.

The arrangements for supporting participants to manage their finances must also be clearly set out in their NDIS Service Agreement and Support Plan, which are to be reviewed on at least an annual basis.

Participant cash

It is important for participants to have ready access to their own cash to purchase personal items and for day to day expenses which are for the direct benefit of the participant.

Participants will usually withdraw cash from their personal savings accounts for this purpose. There may be other arrangements by which participants gain access to personal spending money.

When making purchases for a participant, staff members must keep all receipts as proof of purchase.

On completion of shopping, details of the purchase made and the change received are to be recorded in the participant's ledger book, used for recording all cash purchases.

Receipts will be shown to the participant, and once satisfied, the receipts are to be filed, by attaching the receipt to the ledger book (in Supported Independent Living SIL houses). The entry must be signed and dated by the participant and the staff member. Where the participant is unable or chooses not to sign, two members of staff must sign the record, if possible.

Participant bank accounts

Many participants receiving supports from Life Choice will have a personal savings account. Payments made into this account may include government pensions and payments from families. Withdrawals from this account may include debits or cash withdrawals to meet personal expenses.

Support workers may assist participants with transactions into and out of their savings account. Where possible, a witness should be present for the handing over of a participant's personal cash. All monies from a participant's personal savings account must be applied to the direct benefit of that person.

Records of all these transactions must also be entered in the ledger book (in SIL houses).

The entry must be signed and dated by the participant and the staff member. Where the service user is unable or chooses not to sign, two members of staff must sign the record, if possible.

Secure storage

Participants cash funds and bank books should be held by the participant themselves, where possible. Where this is not possible, they will be stored in a secure filing cabinet on the premises

The amount of cash funds should be kept as small as is practicable to minimise risk associated with loss or theft of funds with no more than \$500 to be kept on the premises.

Property

All Life Choice staff and volunteers are responsible to record the details of participants property/valuables that they are asked to handle, manage and utilize on behalf of participants as part of their duty.

A record of the participants property that is used should be listed in the participant's asset register

Operating rules for staff

Staff must:

- ensure that participants' funds are used only for the benefit of that participant;
- encourage participants to plan for purchases and discourage them from carrying large amounts of cash;
- ensure that receipts are obtained for all items purchased when accompanying a participant;
- maintain a ledger book method to record all cash issued and spent; and
- always count money carefully in front of participant
- report any discrepancies to their supervisor.

Staff must not:

- make a personal purchase with money from a participant's funds;
- borrow money from any participant;
- pay for a participant expense with the staff member's own finances;
- give participants investment advice; or
- transfer petty cash between participants.

Suspected financial abuse

Staff are trained to look for signs of financial abuse when working with participants. Staff are also trained to discuss preventative measures with participants, including:

- Ensuring they are aware of their rights to confidentiality and privacy
- Encouraging them to have networks beyond their family circle
- Informing them not to relinquish control of their finances, if they can manage them themselves
- Advising them not to make significant financial decisions following a major event, e.g. loss of a partner
- Ensuring that they are aware of their right to refuse people access to their funds
- Encouraging them to make plans in advance, while they are still independent
- Encouraging them to ask for help if they are overwhelmed, confused, or feel they are being taken advantage of.

If any staff member suspects that a participant is being financially abused, then the following steps are to be taken:

1. Staff member to gather evidence and record in participant's notes.
2. Staff member to contact their manager to discuss evidence gathered.
3. The manager will gather the details of the abuse and author a report of the situation.
4. The manager will inform the relevant authorities and obtain support for the participant.

Should Life Choice employees violate their duty of care and/or be involved in any kind of financial abuse that could possibly constitute an act of misconduct, Life Choice has the right to cease their employment and/or put it under investigation to protect participants and prevent further abuse to participants.

Responsibilities of managing staff/supervisor

Managing staff/supervisors must:

- regularly check the receipts, cash counts and adequacy of cash holding;
- on a monthly basis, check and sign the ledger books certifying that they have been reviewed;
- immediately report any discrepancies to senior managers.

Continuous improvement

All staff of Life Choice are encouraged to provide feedback on this procedure, to ensure that it remains relevant and continues to reflect the actual manner in which activities are undertaken.

End of document

Acknowledgement of Understanding

I, _____ have read this **PoL_136 Money and Property Management for Participants requiring assistance** and agree to abide by all elements in this document.

Signed: _____

Date: _____