

Money management for customers requiring assistance



Purpose and Scope

One of the areas in which people with disability and elderly customers are particularly vulnerable to exploitation is with respect to the management of their financial affairs. This policy intends to ensure that where Access4u is responsible for providing a customer 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 customer.

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'.

Responsibilities and delegations

This policy applies to	Governing body/staff/volunteers
Specific responsibilities	Manager Home and Living Options Flexible Support Coordinators Disability service Coordinators and Mentors
Policy approval	Management team

Policy context – this policy relates to:

Standards	AASA Accounting Standards NDIS Practice Standards
Legislation	
Contractual obligations	Service Agreements/ Tenancy Agreements
Organisation policies	Financial Management Policy
Forms, record keeping, other documents	Customers Finance and Banking Folders

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

Scope

This policy applies to all staff and volunteers of Access4u who are directly or indirectly responsible for assisting customers to manage their personal finances. Including assisting customers with their banking, shopping and purchasing event tickets.

Money management for customers requiring assistance



Promoting autonomy

Customers should manage their own funds wherever possible. Staff should not manage or make decisions regarding customers funds where customers are capable of doing so themselves.

Responsibility for assisting a customer with money handling should only be assumed by staff when the customer or their authorised representative has requested and consented to receiving this assistance from Assess4u. An authorised representative may be a legal guardian or an appointed nominee, under the customer's NDIS plan

Assistance, where required, should promote autonomy and choice, and enhance the customer's independence.

Customer consent

Where assistance in managing financial affairs is required, a Consent Form must be obtained from the customer and retained on their file. Customer's money may only be used for the purposes intended by the customer.

The arrangements for supporting customers 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.

Customer cash

It is important for customers 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 customer.

Customers will usually withdraw cash from their personal savings accounts for this purpose. There may be other arrangements by which customers gain access to personal spending money. E.G. Debit Cards or family providing customer with cash amount for a day outing.

Customers will be permitted choice to decide how much assistance they require with their cash. Some customers will choose to retain control with minimal assistance, while others will rely on staff.

When making purchases for a customer, 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 a ledger book, used for recording all cash purchases.

Receipts will be shown to the customer, and once satisfied, the receipts are to be filed, by attaching the receipt to the ledger book. The entry must be signed and dated by the customer and the staff member. Where the customer is unable or chooses not to sign, two members of staff must sign the record.

Customer bank accounts

Many customers receiving supports from Access4u 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.

Customers will be permitted choice to decide how much assistance they require with their bank accounts. Some customers will choose to retain control with minimal assistance while others will rely on staff. This should be documented in the customer's service agreement.

Money management for customers requiring assistance



Mentors / Support Workers may assist customers with transactions into and out of their savings account. Where possible, a witness should be present for the handing over of a customer's personal cash. All monies from a customer'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 Financial Movement Sheet / ledger book.

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

Secure storage

Customers' cash funds and bank books should be held by the customers themselves, where possible. Where this is not possible, they will be stored in a secure place by the Manager of Access4u.

The amount of cash funds should be kept as small as is practicable to minimise risk associated with loss or theft of funds.

Operating rules for staff [and volunteers]

Staff and volunteers must:

- ensure that customers' funds are used only for the benefit of that customer;
- ensure that receipts are obtained for all items purchased when accompanying a customer;
- encourage customers to plan for purchases and discourage customers from carrying large amounts of cash;
- secure customers' personal cash in a safe facility at the premises of Access4u;
- maintain a Financial Record Sheet / ledger book to record all cash issued and spent; and
- retain an invoice or receipt for all transactions involving customer cash;
- report any discrepancies to their supervisor.

Staff and volunteers must not:

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

Responsibilities of managing staff/supervisor

Managing staff/supervisors must:

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

Money management for customers requiring assistance



Continuous improvement

All staff of Access4u 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.

This policy will be reviewed and by CEO every three years to ensure it is up to date with relevant legislation, standards and is responsive to feedback.