



advice and support for older age

**Independent
Age**

Factsheet

Help at home: what may be available in your local area

If you need some support or assistance at home, this factsheet has information about the services that could be available in your local area to help you stay independent and safe.

Last reviewed: July 2016

Next review date: July 2017

Independent Age provides advice to help people claim benefits, access social care and stay independent at home. Our local volunteers provide friendship visits and calls for lonely older people. To find out how Independent Age can help you, call us FREE on **0800 319 6789** or visit **independentage.org**



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The information in this factsheet applies to England only. If you're in Wales, contact Age Cymru (0800 022 3444, agecymru.org.uk) for information and advice. In Scotland, contact Age Scotland (0800 470 8090, agescotland.org.uk). In Northern Ireland, contact Age NI (0808 808 7575, ageni.org).

1. Your first step: getting a care needs assessment

If you need some support at home with personal tasks such as getting washed and dressed or getting around your home and doing daily tasks, there is help available. Start by contacting your local council's adult social services department for a care needs assessment. This looks at how your care needs can be met by services at home, and what services should be arranged for you.

Even if you don't want the council to support you, an assessment can help you identify all of your care needs and work out what support would be best for you. Also, the government is planning to introduce a cap on the amount people pay towards their care costs from April 2020. You will need to know whether you qualify for council support if you want any of what you spend to count towards the care cap. Read our factsheet **What does the Care Act mean for me?** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org) to find out more.

To do...

To contact adult social services, look in your local telephone directory or on the council's website.

You can call them yourself or ask a friend or relative to do so for you.

Some councils may also offer self-assessments on the council website, or telephone assessments - but if your needs are complex, you should ask for a face-to-face assessment in your own home.

Once you've had your assessment, the council will tell you whether your needs are high enough to qualify for support from them. It might be that they will meet some of your needs, but not others.

You'll then have a financial assessment to see whether you will have to pay towards the cost of services. The council may arrange these services for you, or give you any money they are going to contribute towards your care, so that you can arrange the services yourself. This is called a direct payment.

If they are going to support you, they should draw up a care and support plan to show the help you need and explain how your care needs will be met.

For more information, see our factsheet **Assessment and services from your local council** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Carers' assessments

If you have a relative or friend who regularly cares for you, they may wish to ask for an assessment of their own needs to find out what support they might be entitled to. A carer's assessment may be carried out at the same time as your assessment, or separately to yours. See our factsheet **Carers: what support is available** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org) to find out more.

2. Types of home support services

There are lots of different services available to help you to stay independent and safe at home. The following services are available in most local areas, and can often be arranged privately if you do not qualify for support from the local council.

Home care

If you need help with daily tasks such as washing, dressing, going to the toilet, taking medicine and getting into or out of bed, get a care needs assessment (see chapter 1) to see if you qualify for help from your local council. What tasks they can help you with, and how many times a day they visit, will be specified in your care and support plan.

If you're not eligible for home care through the council or you want more help than they will provide, you can arrange your own home care directly through a private home care agency. Agencies may offer personal care, nursing care, live-in carers, and/or domestic help. Make sure you shop around before choosing one to compare prices and services.

To do...

For details of home care agencies in your area, contact the United Kingdom Homecare Association (020 8661 8188, ukhca.co.uk/findcare). Or you can contact the Care Quality Commission (CQC) (0300 061 6161, cqc.org.uk/search/services) who inspects and regulates care services including home care agencies. You can find local agencies and read their latest inspection reports.

For more information, see our factsheet **Care services at home** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Cleaning

If you need help with cleaning your home, think about what you'd like a cleaner to do and how much you can afford to pay. You might want to get them to focus on a few things you find difficult, like vacuuming, changing the bed or cleaning the oven.

To do...

To find a cleaner, ask for recommendations from friends and neighbours. Your council may also keep a list of cleaning agencies. Your local Age

UK may offer cleaning services too (0800 169 6565, ageuk.org.uk).

Meals on wheels

If you can't prepare meals yourself, your council may be able to arrange for you to have hot meals or frozen meals delivered by a meals-on-wheels service. They can usually provide you with food to meet your medical, cultural or religious requirements, such as gluten free, vegetarian or low salt meals.

A charge is usually made for each meal.

To do...

If you don't qualify for meals-on-wheels from the council, you could contact a voluntary organisation or private company. Voluntary organisations such as the Royal Voluntary Service (RVS) provide a meals-on-wheels service in many areas (0845 608 0122, royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk).

Garden maintenance schemes

If you need help to maintain your garden, local organisations may be able to provide volunteers to help you.

To do...

Contact your local Age UK (0800 169 6565, ageuk.org.uk) to see if they can help or tell you about local schemes.

Equipment and adaptations at home

If you are struggling at home with specific tasks such as getting up steps or in or out of the bath, special equipment may help you safely move around your home and carry out basic tasks. Small pieces of equipment could include a walking frame, trolley, bath seat or lift, handrails, or a perching stool. You may need larger adaptations to your home such as installing a stair lift or level access shower.

To do...

Contact your local council's adult social services department and ask for an assessment by an occupational therapist (OT). The OT assessment should be done more quickly if you need urgent

help, so make sure that make your circumstances clear when you call.

The OT will recommend the types of equipment and adaptations that would be best for you.

Small pieces of equipment

If the OT recommends a small item or a minor adaptation that costs less than £1000, it will be provided free by your council's adult social services department if your care needs show you're eligible for support. You may be given a voucher or 'prescription' to buy the equipment yourself from specialist shops recommended by your local council. This grant isn't means-tested.

Local councils only provide specific pieces of equipment so you may need to buy other items from high street stores such as large chemists.

To do...

Find out more about different products and suppliers from the Disabled Living Foundation (0300 999 0004, dlf.org.uk).

You can also ask the British Red Cross if they can lend you mobility and other equipment, such as a wheelchair or a commode, if you need it for a short time (0844 871 1111, redcross.org.uk).

Larger adaptations

If the OT recommends an adaptation that costs more than £1000, such as a stairlift or downstairs shower, you may be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) from the local council's housing department. This grant is means-tested.

To do...

If you're considering home adaptations, you can get support from your local Home Improvement Agency (HIA). They can help you to arrange surveys, obtain estimates and apply for grants (including DFGs). To find your local HIA, contact Foundations (0300 124 0315, foundations.uk.com).

For more information about getting equipment and adaptations, see our factsheets **Adapting your home to stay independent** and **Housing: how to pay for the maintenance of your home** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Telecare and telehealth

Telecare and telehealth services use technology to help monitor your personal safety and wellbeing, as well as your medical conditions.

The most well-known example is a community alarm system (see chapter 6). Telecare equipment is linked to a 24-hour monitoring centre, so someone will be alerted and can take action if you need help. Telecare is useful if you're worried about falling when you're on your own, or if you need reminding to do certain tasks.

Examples of telecare and telehealth include:

- bed sensors that can detect if you get out of bed during the night and alert someone if you then don't return
- wearable alarms you can press for assistance if you fall and can't reach the telephone
- alarms which can signal if the gas or a water tap has been left on
- devices to alert you or someone else if the front door has been left open
- devices to monitor your blood pressure or blood sugar levels.

To do...

If you think that you may benefit from having telecare in your home, contact your local council's adult social services department. For telehealth devices, speak to your GP, hospital

consultant, or specialist nurse to find out what is available.

This kind of technology can also be purchased privately. Find out more about different products and suppliers from the Disabled Living Foundation (0300 999 0004, dlf.org.uk). Read our factsheet **Telecare and telehealth: what it is and how to get it** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org) to find out more.

Replacement care or short breaks for carers

Replacement (respite) care gives carers a break from looking after a friend or relative. For short breaks, care workers can come in to provide a 'sitting' service. If the carer needs a longer break, the person they care for can stay in a care home temporarily. This can be arranged on a regular basis, such as every six weeks.

Replacement care can be arranged privately if you can afford it. Otherwise it's usually arranged by your council's adult social services department, although it may also be available through your GP, local hospital or voluntary organisations.

Depending on how the council arranges its replacement care services, they may offer vouchers or a budget to help pay for it. If you're the person needing care, you may be charged something towards the respite service. This will depend on your finances and will be agreed with adult social services.

To do...

Contact your local council or your GP if you're a carer who needs a break. Read our factsheet **Support for carers** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Or you can call the Carers Trust (0844 800 4361, carers.org) for information and advice. They may also provide respite services in your area.

3. Getting out and about

Spending time with other people is important not just for our emotional wellbeing but also our physical health. If you find your social contact is becoming more limited, there are many things you can do to meet new people. Below are some ideas to get you started. Read our factsheet **How to stay socially connected** and our Wise Guide **Healthy, happy, connected** for more ideas (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Befriending services

Befriending services match volunteers with older people who would like more social contact. The volunteer may visit you once a week for a cup of tea and a chat, call you on a regular basis for a catch up, or accompany you out for walks or a trip to a local café, for example.

To do...

Call Independent Age on 0800 319 6789 to find out about getting regular calls or visits from a befriender.

To find out about other befriending services in your area, you may want to contact organisations such as:

- your local Age UK (0800 169 65 65, ageuk.org.uk)
- Contact the Elderly (0800 716543, contact-the-elderly.org.uk)
- Friends of the Elderly (020 7330 8263, fote.org.uk)
- Silverline (0800 470 8090, thesilverline.org.uk)

You may also be able to find details of local schemes from your council's adult social care department.

Local groups

There may be social groups or lunch clubs in your local area which could help you meet new people, take part in activities you enjoy, or get some emotional support – for example, if you're a carer. You may find a local walking group, yoga class, adult education class or volunteering opportunity, for instance.

To do...

Contact your council or visit their online directory of local services for details of activities and social groups in your area.

Day centres

Local day centres can give you the opportunity to socialise, take part in activities and have a hot meal. Activities may include anything from art classes and bingo to dancing and fitness classes. Many day centres can provide transport to and from the centre. Some provide support for people with particular disabilities or illnesses, such as Parkinson's or dementia. You will normally need to be assessed by your local council's adult social services team to confirm your suitability for attending a day centre, and there may be a waiting list. In some areas, day centres are free but in others a charge will be made, and there may be separate charges for services like transport or meals.

To do...

If you're not able to get this support through the council, ask them for the details of local day centres. You can then contact them directly to see if they have space for you, and find out what activities they offer.

The Elderly Accommodation Counsel (0800 377 7070, eac.org.uk) can also provide you with information about day centres in your area.

Help with transport

If you can't use public transport because of a disability or there isn't a good service in your area, there are various options available to help you get out more.

Motability scheme

If you claim a disability benefit, the Motability scheme allows you to exchange your higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance or the enhanced rate mobility component of Personal Independence Payment to rent or buy a specially adapted car, scooter or motorised wheelchair.

There is no mobility component to Attendance Allowance, the disability benefit awarded to people aged 65 years and over.

If you decide to rent a vehicle, the mobility package includes servicing, maintenance, repairs and full breakdown assistance.

Contact Motability (0845 456 4566, motability.co.uk) to find your nearest car dealer operating the scheme.

Shopmobility

The National Federation of Shopmobility (01933 229644, nfsuk.org) is a charity that rents out wheelchairs, powered wheelchairs and powered scooters to disabled people so they can shop and visit leisure facilities in their local area. Each area has a slightly different scheme with different charges. Shopmobility can provide you with training on how to use the wheelchairs and scooters and they may have volunteers to escort you.

Older person's bus pass

If you're over State Pension age, you're entitled to free off-peak bus travel. London's Freedom Pass allows you free travel on most services (buses, tube, national rail and trams), but check for any time limitations which are in place. Contact your local council to find out how to apply for a pass.

Specialist transport schemes

Dial-a-ride schemes provide door-to-door accessible transport for older or disabled people who cannot use public transport. The service may be free or you may need to pay a small charge.

Some councils also offer reduced taxi fares to people with mobility problems. This may be known as a concessions fare, taxi voucher or taxicard scheme.

Contact your local council to find out about dial-a-ride and taxi voucher schemes in your area.

Car schemes

Some areas have schemes where volunteer drivers arrange lifts for older or disabled people. Charges are usually minimal and based on mileage. Contact your local Age UK (0800 169 6565, ageuk.org.uk) or RVS (0845 608 0122, royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk) to see if there is a scheme near you.

Holidays

If you need a break, ask your council's adult social services team if they can offer any help. If you are receiving council-funded care, your care and support plan might show that you have a need for an annual break. They may also be able to provide information about suitable holiday venues or transport. There are also charities that can provide or fund holidays for disabled people.

For more information about help from charities, see our factsheet **Grants from charities for**

people on a low income (0800 319 6789,
independentage.org).

4. Paying for services

If the council is arranging your services, they are likely to charge you for at least some of the cost.

To decide how much you should contribute towards the cost of your home care or other support services, your local council's adult social care team will carry out a financial assessment of your income and savings. They cannot assess the value of your home whilst you are living in it. The council cannot charge anyone else, such as your partner or somebody that you live with, for any home care services that you receive.

Any home care charges should be 'reasonable' and should not take your income below £189 as an individual or £286.56 as a couple.

If you have savings of more than £23,250, you may be charged in full for any home care services that you receive from the council. Find out more about the financial assessment in our factsheet **Assessment and care services from your local council** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Benefits to help you at home

Whether you are getting support from the council, or paying for all your services yourself, it's important to make sure you're getting all the benefits you're entitled to. They may help towards any home care charges. Call the Independent Age Helpline for a free benefits check on 0800 319 6789.

Below is a summary of the benefits you may be entitled to.

Pension Credit

Pension Credit tops up your income to a minimum level set by the government. How much you could get depends on whether you're single or a couple, disabled, a carer or if you have any mortgage costs.

To apply for Pension Credit, contact the Pension Service (0800 99 1234, gov.uk/pension-credit). For more information, see our factsheet Pension Credit (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Disability benefits

Attendance Allowance (AA) and Personal Independence Payment (PIP) are benefits for people who need regular personal care or

supervision because of an illness or disability. AA is paid to people aged 65 and over while PIP is paid to people under 65.

These benefits are not means-tested, so your income and savings aren't taken into account.

To claim AA, call the Attendance Allowance helpline on 0345 605 6055. To claim PIP, call the PIP helpline on 0800 917 2222.

For more information, see our factsheets **Disability benefits: Attendance Allowance**, and **Disability benefits: Personal Independence Payment and Disability Living Allowance** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Housing Benefit and Council Tax Reduction

Housing Benefit can help you pay your rent. There are several schemes to help reduce the amount of council tax you pay if you're on a low income.

Contact your local council to see if you qualify for any support to pay your rent or council tax. For more information, see our factsheet Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Carer's Allowance

If a friend or relative provides you with 35 or more hours of care per week and earns less than £110 per week, they may be eligible for Carer's Allowance.

The rules about Carer's Allowance are complicated and claiming it may affect other benefits that you or the person you care for receives. Speak to an advice service like Independent Age (0800 319 6789) or Carers UK (0808 808 7777, carersuk.org) before claiming.

To claim Carer's Allowance, call the Carer's Allowance Unit on 0345 608 4321.

For more information, see our factsheet Carer's Allowance (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

The Social Fund and local welfare assistance

You can apply to the Social Fund for a grant or loan in an emergency or to pay for essential items. The help you get may be means-tested or depend on any benefits you get. Contact your local council to find out more. For more information, see our factsheet **Local welfare**

assistance schemes and the Social Fund (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

5. If you're unhappy with your services

If you're unhappy with any of the services you receive at home, start by talking to whoever provides it – such as your local council or the service manager.

If this doesn't resolve things, you can consider making a formal complaint. Ask the service provider for their complaints procedure. If your service was arranged or funded by the council, you can also make a complaint to the council. When making a complaint, you may want the support of an independent advocate who can speak to the professionals involved on your behalf. Ask your council about local advocacy services, or find an independent advocate by visiting the Older People's Advocacy Alliance website (opaal.org.uk). To find out more, see our factsheet **Independent advocacy**.

For more information about making a complaint, see our factsheet **Complaints about care and health services in England** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

6. Safety in your home

There are simple steps you can take to feel more safe and secure at home.

Community alarms

There are different types of community alarm. The most common type is a pendant or wrist alarm you can press if you fall, are taken ill, or feel unsafe at home. The call centre linked to the alarm will take action, which could be alerting a named friend or neighbour or calling the emergency services. Alarms can be provided as part of an assessment (see chapter 3) or you can buy one privately.

To find out more about community alarms, ask the Disabled Living Foundation (0300 999 0004, dlf.org.uk).

Security

Although it is unlikely that you will be a victim of crime, it's important to take precautions. Don't let anyone into your home without identification, especially if they don't have a pre-arranged appointment. If you're uncertain, don't answer the door. You can ask the caller to return on a day when you can arrange to have someone with you. You could also contact the agency they say

they are with (such as the electricity company) to check whether they have arranged for someone to visit you. If the caller is genuine, they will welcome you taking these precautions. If they don't have suitable identification and won't leave your doorstep, contact the police.

To do...

For more advice about keeping your home secure and avoiding scams, contact the crime prevention officer at your local police station. They may refer you to local schemes that provide low-cost security improvements, such as window locks, door locks and spy-holes. You may benefit from a bogus caller alarm which you can use to call for assistance if someone tries to force their way into your home. To find out more, ask the Disabled Living Foundation (0300 999 0004, dlf.org.uk).

If you need help to make security improvements to your home, see if your local Age UK (0800 169 65 65, ageuk.org.uk) or Home Improvement Agency (0300 124 0315, foundations.uk.com) has a handyperson service. The handyperson can carry out small repairs, install security equipment such as door chains and window locks, or install safety devices like smoke alarms. Handyperson

staff are qualified, experienced and police checked.

Fire safety

It's vital to have smoke detectors fitted in your home. Make sure you have carbon monoxide detectors if you have any gas appliances.

You can get specially adapted fire detectors if you have a hearing impairment. They trigger a vibrating pad or flashing light.

To do...

Ask your local fire and rescue service for a free home fire safety check. They can check for any dangerous appliances and other hazards in your home, and install alarms if you need them. Check in your local phone book for contact details, or ask your local council.

7. Moving to more suitable housing

If your current housing has become unsuitable for you and can't be adapted, you may want to consider moving to sheltered accommodation, extra care housing, a retirement village or a care home.

Sheltered accommodation schemes have alarm systems and a scheme manager in case you need help or someone to check you're okay. You'll have a private flat and there are usually also communal areas, such as a shared lounge, laundry room and garden. For more information, see our factsheet **Housing options in later life** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Extra care housing has similar facilities to sheltered housing, but has care staff on site 24 hours a day. Extra care housing may be suitable if you need a higher level of care. For more information, see our factsheet **Extra care housing** (0800 319 6789, independentage.org).

Your local council may recommend you move to a care home following your needs assessment. You don't have to move to a care home if you don't want to, although you may want to have a trial stay before deciding. For more information

about choosing a care home and funding a place, see our Wise Guide **Choosing a care home**. Call 0800 319 6789 to order your free copy, or order online (independentage.org).

To do...

Contact your local council's housing department for information and advice on moving to more suitable accommodation.

Homeshare

In certain areas of England, there is a scheme called Homeshare (sharedlivesplus.org.uk/homeshare). It matches older people with a younger person known as the 'homesharer'. The homesharer moves in with the older person and provides companionship and help with domestic tasks. In return, they get their accommodation at a cheaper rate. The older person and homesharer are carefully matched to ensure they will get on.

To do...

Contact SharedLivesPlus for details of individual schemes (0151 227 3499, sharedlivesplus.org.uk).

8. Useful contact details

- Age UK (0800 169 6565, ageuk.org.uk)

Age UK provide local services across the UK and can provide you with information about where to go in your local area for services such as befriending, lunch clubs and day centres. They also provide benefits advice.

- Carers UK (0808 808 7777, carersuk.org)

Carers UK give advice to people caring for a friend or relative, including information about benefits and other money matters.

- Disabled Living Foundation (0300 999 0004, dlf.org.uk)

The Disabled Living Foundation can provide information and advice about living with a disability or mobility problems. This includes information about telecare devices, equipment and adaptations, as well as transport options.

- United Kingdom Homecare Association (020 8661 8188, ukhca.co.uk)

The United Kingdom Homecare Association represents home care providers across the UK, and gives advice about how to choose an agency.

This factsheet has been put together by Independent Age's expert advisers. It is not a full explanation of the law and is aimed at people aged over 60.

If you need this information in an alternative format (such as large-print or audio cd), call us on 0800 319 6789 or email advice@independentage.org.

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- remember Independent Age in your will and benefit from our Free Wills offer to supporters.

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