

# Factsheet

## First steps in getting help with your care needs in Scotland

If you're finding it difficult to manage everyday tasks, you may be entitled to help from your local council. The first step is an assessment of your needs.

This factsheet explains how the assessment works and what services you may qualify for. It also explains how you can arrange your own care and manage the payment yourself.

The information in this factsheet applies to Scotland. For the England and Wales version, visit [independentage.org/get-advice/first-steps-getting-help-your-care-needs](https://independentage.org/get-advice/first-steps-getting-help-your-care-needs).



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Thank you to the Scottish Government's Adult Social Care Charging Unit for its expert knowledge during the review of this factsheet.

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# 1. What is a care needs assessment?

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If you need some support to look after yourself, your local council may be able to help. You can ask for a care needs assessment from the council's adult social services department. This is sometimes referred to as a community care assessment.

The assessment looks at how you manage everyday activities without help, such as:

- washing and dressing
- cooking
- carrying out household tasks
- staying in touch with family and friends
- getting out and about.

It will also look at what you'd like to be able to do, and what help you already get from family, friends or other carers.

The assessor will look at whether your support needs meet the eligibility criteria to get help from the council – see [chapter 6](#). If they do, the council will usually look at your finances to work out what you may have to pay towards your care. If you don't qualify for help, the council may direct you to other organisations for support.

The type of support the council recommends will depend on your needs, but might include things like:

- adaptations to your home
- disability equipment
- visits from carers
- residential care.

You have a right to be involved throughout the assessment and must be given a chance to discuss your difficulties and the impact they have on you. Your views should be taken into account.

If you're entitled to receive money from the council towards your care, you have the option to make your own arrangements for the help that you need. This process is known as self-directed support in Scotland.

### **Why should I get a care needs assessment?**

Even if you don't want support from the council, or don't think you'll qualify for support, it's still a good idea to get an assessment. The council can help you identify your care needs and the best support for you.

## 2. Getting a care needs assessment

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When you contact the council to ask for an assessment, they will ask you some basic questions, which could include your:

- name
- age
- address
- doctor's contact details
- next of kin.

You may also be asked questions to check if you need an assessment – for example, about your health and what difficulties you are having. Think in advance about what you want to say. Care needs assessments are carried out in order of priority of need, so you may have to wait longer for your assessment if your needs are not considered urgent.

### Having a screening call

Often the council will have an initial screening process where you'll be asked a few simple questions. This is used to prioritise when people will receive a more detailed assessment. Think about this in advance to make sure you're clear about what you want to say, and give as much detail as possible about your care needs.

If your needs are not complex, this initial screening call may be enough to discuss some solutions. However, if you don't give enough detail, you may be given a lower priority, and a full assessment could be delayed. If you feel that your care needs have not been met, you can complain about the assessment (see [chapter 14](#)).

## How to ask for an assessment

To request a care needs assessment, contact your local council's adult social services department. You can find their contact details at [gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services](https://www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services).

It's also possible for someone else, such as a relative, carer or your GP, to request an assessment for you. They'll need your consent to do this. Some people aren't able to give consent because they don't have mental capacity. In that case, the council may decide that they should carry out an assessment.

### Mental capacity

This is the ability to make and communicate your own decisions at the time when they need to be made. You might lose this because of an illness such as dementia, or if you were unconscious, for example. It's possible to have mental capacity at some times and not at others.



### Good to know

If you'd like help arranging an assessment or expressing your views, an independent advocate could help you through the process. See [chapter 4](#) for more information.

## Who can have an assessment?

Councils have to assess anyone who appears to need support, unless they don't want an assessment. If you've been refused an assessment and don't think you should have been, you could make a complaint (see [chapter 14](#)). In some cases, it may be appropriate to take legal advice – for example, because the council seems to have a policy that wrongly excludes people from getting an assessment.

## Ms Akao

Ms Akao has arthritis and struggles to get around inside and outside. In particular, she finds it difficult to access her bathroom, which is upstairs. She also finds it difficult and painful to wash and dress herself, and it takes her a very long time. She asks the council for a care needs assessment and they arrange one with her, because she seems to need support.

## Mr Blake

Mr Blake has been diagnosed with dementia. For the past year he has been able to continue living independently in his own home. However, he is increasingly forgetful and is beginning to struggle with some tasks. His daughter has found that he has been wearing the same clothes for several days without washing them. He used to enjoy being part of the community and took part in many local events but is no longer able to get out because he quickly becomes disorientated. She worries that he is becoming increasingly withdrawn and isolated. She requests a care needs assessment for him from the council and they agree to carry this out, providing Mr Blake agrees.

## What does the assessment look at?

The assessment focuses on your physical and mental needs. It looks at how you manage everyday activities – such as making a meal or getting around your home safely – and whether you need assistance with certain things. It will also look at what you'd like to be able to do if your health improved.

The care needs assessment must not look at your finances – you will have a separate financial assessment to work out what you may have to pay towards any support you need (see [chapter 9](#)).



## How soon will I have my assessment?

This depends on how urgent your needs are. Government guidance doesn't give timescales, but says that social services should provide assessments within a reasonable time, taking into account how urgent your needs are and whether your needs are likely to fluctuate or change.



### Remember

If you need help urgently, you should tell the council this when you contact them to ask for a needs assessment.

If your needs become urgent while you're waiting for an assessment, tell the council, because they may move you up the waiting list.



### To do

If you think you have been waiting too long for an assessment, ask to speak to the manager of adult social care to find out when the process will be completed. You might also want to make a complaint – see [chapter 14](#) for more information. In some circumstances you may want to get legal advice.

## 3. Types of care needs assessment

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An assessment might involve either a face-to-face visit or a phone call. It may also involve filling in a form.

If your needs are straightforward, a quick screening call over the phone might be enough. If you have more complex needs, you may need a more detailed phone call, or a face-to-face assessment.

### Single Shared Assessments

In Scotland, each local authority may carry out assessments slightly differently. However, all local authorities must use a system called Single Shared Assessments.

In this system, a member of staff from your local authority social work department will be responsible for managing your care. This means the same member of staff who carries out your assessment will also produce your care plan and arrange services for your care (unless you decide to arrange your care yourself – see [chapter 11](#)).

This same member of staff will also speak with other professionals involved in your care – for example, your GP, nurse or care worker – to get more information about your needs.

### Who will carry out the assessment

You will be assessed by someone from your local authority social work department. Depending on what is most suitable for you, this could be:

- a social worker
- a housing worker
- a medical practitioner
- another care professional.



## Remember

If you're unhappy with how your assessment was carried out, you can challenge the decision (see [chapter 14](#)).

## Who can come with me to the assessment?

You can have a relative or friend with you to support you, or to speak on your behalf during the assessment. This could also be an independent advocate (see [chapter 4](#)).

If you have a carer, you may want your assessment to be carried out without them being present. Your council should ask what you'd prefer, but if they don't, you can request it.

If your carer is having an assessment, they can also ask for it to be carried out without you being there.

## How should an assessment be carried out

At your assessment, you'll be asked a number of questions about your care needs. Remember that your thoughts and wishes must be taken into account at all times. The person doing your assessment might suggest things that could help you, but you can choose what works best for you.

Your assessment should:

- look at your care and support needs, including your physical and mental health
- be as simple, quick and informal as possible, while still being thorough
- look at whether you are socially isolated or lonely
- be flexible and accessible, and consider all your needs
- allow you to participate fully and decide what is best for you
- consider the needs of your carer, if you have one.

Your assessment should not:

- ignore your thoughts and wishes
- be influenced by any services that may happen to be available at the time – it should focus on what is best for your care needs
- discriminate against you in any way. If you feel you were discriminated against in your assessment, you may want to complain (see [chapter 14](#)).

For more information about what will be covered at your assessment, see [chapter 5](#).

## Your role at the assessment

You – and your carer, if you have one – have an important role in the assessment process. You're there to say what you think will best meet your needs. For example, you may be having difficulty preparing meals at home in the middle of the day. Two possible options to help with this could be:

- meals on wheels provided to your home
- you attend a day centre where meals are provided.

It will be important in this situation for you and your carer to say which of these services you think is best, and why.

The person doing your assessment should help make you aware of all the available services relevant to your needs, and give you the opportunity to choose which one you would prefer.

## 4. Getting help from an independent advocate

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An independent advocate is a trained person who can be involved in your assessment and care planning. They can help you to understand the process and express your views and wishes. They can also help you to challenge decisions.



### To do

If you'd like to arrange for an advocate, ask your social worker or GP, or speak to the Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance (**0131 510 9410**, [siao.org.uk](https://siao.org.uk)). For more information, see our factsheet [Helping you get your voice heard: Independent advocacy](#).

You may have to pay for an advocate, but some people in Scotland have the right to one. Anyone with a mental health issue, a learning disability, autism or dementia has the right to independent advocacy. You don't have to be in hospital or under any mental health legislation to get advocacy support.

If you have a disability, you can request help from an advocate when applying for benefits. Call Social Security Scotland (**0800 182 2222**) and ask for the Independent Advocacy Service.

## 5. What happens at the assessment?

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Your care needs assessment will usually be carried out by someone from the council's adult social services team. The assessor may not be a social worker, but they must have the right skills and experience to carry out your assessment.

If you have a face-to-face assessment, it may be carried out in your home or, in some cases, you may be assessed in hospital, a GP surgery or at the social services office. The assessor will fill in forms with the information you give and ask you to sign them. You'll be asked to sign a form giving your consent for information to be shared with other professionals.

All aspects of your life – emotional, psychological, social and physical – should be looked at during your care needs assessment.

### Looking at your care needs

The Scottish government uses an eligibility system when looking at your health and deciding whether you qualify for care – this is explained more in [chapter 6](#).

The care professional will talk to you about what matters most to you. They may look at:

- what you have difficulty doing – for example, walking around the house or getting up the stairs
- what you'd like to be able to do
- what help you already get from family, friends or other carers, and whether they're happy to continue providing care
- what your care needs are
- how suitable your home is for your needs
- if you have any particular health or housing needs

- whether you might need to move into a care home or other supported accommodation, if your home is stopping you from getting the care you need
- whether your circumstances may change – for example, if you have a progressive illness – and whether your needs may change
- what your carer's support needs are, if you have one.



### Remember

Your care needs assessment is a chance for you to have your say – you should be in the driving seat. It's important to explain how you feel about your current situation to make sure that your views are heard in the assessment.

## Who can be involved in my care needs assessment?

You can include other people involved in your care. Consider who may be able to add relevant information to the assessment and let the assessor know you want them to be involved. For example, you may have a relative, friend, care worker, sheltered housing warden or GP who knows about your difficulties or what's important to you.

The council may involve other professionals, such as an occupational therapist, to recommend particular equipment or adaptations. If your assessment shows that you may need other kinds of help, such as health treatment or specialist housing, the council may ask other authorities to contribute to your assessment or care planning.

The council should consider whether your condition needs expert insight – for example, if you have dementia.

If you have a learning disability or a mental health illness, you may be entitled to have an independent advocate to help you – see [chapter 4](#).

## Things to remember when having a care needs assessment

- Find out in advance what's going to happen and what you'll be asked, so you can prepare.
- Make sure you mention all your needs – the assessment is your chance to explain what you need help with. Assessors will only take into account needs that come up during the assessment so, if you forget to mention something, you might be assessed as more capable than you really are.
- Write a list beforehand to help you remember everything you need to say. Think about your day and consider what you would and wouldn't be able to do without help, and things you can do but not without difficulties.
- It's useful to keep a diary so that you can tell the assessor what your needs are on a bad day as well as a good day.
- Bear in mind the eligibility criteria (see [chapter 6](#)) and focus on the things that will make a difference as to whether you're assessed as eligible for help or not.
- If you don't think the assessment went well or you forgot to mention something important, contact social services to ask them to look at the assessment again.
- If you're unhappy with the outcome of the assessment, don't give up – you may be able to do something about it. For example, the council may have left out something important or got the law wrong (see [chapter 14](#)).



## 6. Do I qualify for support?

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Your council should use a system called the National Eligibility Framework to work out if you qualify for support. This is a way of categorising your care needs, and deciding what support you need and the level of 'risk' that you are at.

- **Low Risk** – this is when you may have some quality-of-life issues. There is a low risk to your health and wellbeing, and you're able to live independently. There will be very little need for social care support, such as a carer or home adaptations. In the future, there may be some need for more support, and your care needs will be reviewed.
- **Moderate Risk** – there are some risks to your health and wellbeing, and you may struggle to live independently. You may benefit from social care support. If you don't require care services, your care needs will be reviewed in the future to see if your situation has changed.
- **Substantial Risk** – there are significant risks to your independence or health and wellbeing. It is likely you'll need immediate support and care.
- **Critical Risk** – this is the highest priority category. It means your health and wellbeing are at risk, and you require immediate support and care.



### Remember

Each council may interpret these categories in different ways, and may not all work in the same way. Contact your local council to find out more about how they determine support ([mygov.scot/find-your-local-council](https://mygov.scot/find-your-local-council)).



### Good to know

If you've been assessed as being at critical or substantial risk, you should receive care within six weeks.

## 7. Preparing well for your assessment

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Here's a checklist of things you can do to help your assessment go smoothly and to get the outcome you want.

- Find out in advance what's going to happen and what you'll be asked, so you can prepare. The council should give you information about the assessment process, and in an accessible format if you need it – for example, in large print. This should include information on:
  - the assessment format – for example, over the phone or face to face
  - how long the assessment will take
  - how to get an independent advocate
  - how to make a complaint.
- Don't forget to tell the council if you need any adjustments to be made for you at your assessment – for example, your council may need to provide a translation service if you require it.
- Tell the council if you want anyone else to be involved in your assessment. If you need help understanding the assessment process and expressing your views and wishes, think about whether an advocate would be right for you (see [chapter 4](#)).
- You can record that you have taken these actions and more by downloading our checklist [Preparing for your care needs assessment](#), or call our Helpline to ask for a copy ([0800 319 6789](tel:08003196789)).

- Write a list beforehand to help you remember everything you need to say. Think about your day and consider what you would and wouldn't be able to do without help, and things you can do but not without difficulties. It's useful to keep a diary so that you can tell the assessor what your needs are on a bad day as well as a good day.
- Make sure you think about all your needs – the assessment is your chance to explain what you need help with. Assessors will only take into account needs that come up during the assessment so, if you forget to mention something, you might be assessed as more capable than you really are.
- Bear in mind the eligibility criteria (see [chapter 6](#)) and focus on the things that will make a difference as to whether you're assessed as eligible for help or not.
- Think about anything you want to ask on the day – you could download our checklist [Preparing for your care needs assessment](#).

## 8. After your assessment

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Social services should give you a written record of your care assessment – ask if you don't get one. Check that it's accurate and that everything relevant has been taken into account.

You should be told about what you'll receive and the length of time you may have to wait before receiving any of the services you've been assessed as needing.

You might not receive all the help you've been assessed as needing right away, because it's allocated in order of priority of need. If your needs change while you're waiting, get back in touch with your local social care department.

### If you qualify for support

If your assessment finds your care needs meet your council's eligibility criteria, the council must decide how your needs should be met (see [chapter 10](#)). This applies whether you'll be receiving care at home or in a care home.

You should be involved in this process as much as possible, to make sure you're comfortable with your care arrangements and so that you can express your views. You may prefer to have an independent advocate, to help you express yourself – see [chapter 4](#).

You may need to have a financial assessment to decide how much you should contribute towards the cost of your support (see [chapter 9](#)).

### If you don't qualify for support

If your assessment shows your care needs don't meet your council's criteria, you won't usually receive support services from the council. However, the council should still help you find information and advice about what can be done to meet your needs.

If you disagree with the outcome of your assessment, you can ask for another discussion of your needs. If you have a complaint about the way the assessment was carried out, you should use the social care department's complaints procedure (see [chapter 14](#)).

If you're choosing home care services yourself, see our factsheet [Arranging home care](#) for more information. If you're choosing a care home, see our guides [How to find the right care home](#) and [Paying care home fees in Scotland](#).

## 9. How much will I have to pay for my care and support?

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Personal and nursing care are free in Scotland. Examples of personal care include:

- help with dressing
- help with washing
- help with eating or drinking.

Nursing care is medical care that involves a nurse, such as:

- helping with medication, perhaps through an injection
- controlling pain and sores.

If you're assessed as needing services that have a charge – such as care home accommodation fees, or domestic assistance – the council will carry out a financial assessment. This is to decide how much you need to contribute towards the cost of your care and support.

### What happens at a financial assessment

Your financial assessment will be different depending on whether you need care at home, or in a care home.

Your local council will look at your income and your total capital, such as savings, investments or property. They will then decide how much you can afford to contribute towards your care, based on your financial situation.

There are different rules about the cost of care, depending on whether you'll be receiving care at home or moving to a care home.

For more information about the financial assessment for care in your own home, read our guide [Paying for care at home in Scotland](#).

For information about the financial assessment for care in a care home, read our guide [Paying care home fees in Scotland](#).

## Disability benefits and expenses

When looking at how much you should pay for your care, your council will want to know about any benefits you receive. These may include:

- Adult Disability Payment
- Personal Independence Payment
- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance.

Councils should also take into account any extra costs that you have because of your condition or disability, such as a community alarm, or any special diet you need. You should explain these costs when you are being assessed.

## 10. Self-directed support: Your care and support plan

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The government wants all social care support to be ‘personalised’. Personalisation is about making sure that social care services work for each person. Rather than having care and support arranged for you by the council, you can be involved in deciding how it is to be spent. You can also manage the money and spend it yourself.

In Scotland, this is known as self-directed support.

### Your care and support plan

A care and support plan sets out how your needs will be met. The council must develop a written care and support plan with you if it is going to arrange your care and support, or pay you a direct payment so you can do so yourself. For more information on Direct Payments, see [chapter 11](#).

You must be fully involved in putting this plan together. The council should also involve your carer. You may want to consider using an independent advocate (see [chapter 4](#)).



### Good to know

Councils must ignore any help you receive from friends, relatives or local voluntary organisations when working out whether you qualify for support. However, this help is taken into account at the care and support planning stage, provided these people and organisations are willing and able to provide that care. The council looks at which of your care and support needs are already being met by someone else, and which the council has to meet.



## What should be in your plan

The care and support plan should include the following (you may want to take this page with you to make notes):

- the support you will get
- who will be providing this support to you
- when you will receive this support
- how this support should help you
- a date for when your assessment and care plan will be reviewed, and details about how you can apply for a review
- contact information in case you have any problems.

In some cases, you may have someone responsible for making sure you receive the support you need. This is known as a care manager. If so, your care plan should include information about them.

The plan will normally be in writing if a continuing service is to be provided. But in any case, the local authority should supply a written statement if you or your care worker ask for it.

## Putting together your care and support plan: Finding out what services are available

The types of solutions recommended will depend on your needs, but might include:

- moving into sheltered housing or extra care housing
- moving into a care home
- telecare, such as pendant alarms or movement sensors
- disability equipment, such as walkers, bath seats or handrails
- making adaptations to your home, such as installing ramps or stairlifts or widening doors to make rooms wheelchair accessible

- home care – for example, care workers visiting to help you with washing, dressing, eating or taking medication
- attending a day centre.

Support services may be provided directly by social services, or social services may commission other organisations – for example, private home care agencies or charities – to provide them. You could also receive money to arrange your own support services (see [chapter 11](#)).

If your care plan is not meeting your eligible needs as identified in your care needs assessment, contact social services as soon as possible. They must sort out the problem. This may include carrying out a review (see [chapter 12](#)) or taking urgent action if necessary.

## 11. Self-directed support: Managing your care

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Once the cost of your care has been worked out, there are four options for managing your care budget:

1. You manage your own budget. You can take responsibility for it all.
2. You choose the care provider and the council arranges and manages your care.
3. The council chooses the care provider and arranges and manages your care.
4. A mixture of these options.

Remember that with self-directed support, you have choice and control over your care and how the budget is managed. Think about which option works best for you.

For more information about managing your own care, see our factsheet [Direct payments](#).

## 12. Reviewing your care needs

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Even if you feel that nothing has changed, social services should review your care and support plan to make sure everything is working as it should and that you are safe. Your plan should be reviewed at least once a year.

Social services must involve you, any carers you have and anyone else you'd like to be involved. You may be entitled to an independent advocate to help you (see [chapter 4](#)).

Your review might be carried out face to face, over the phone or as a self-review. The council should agree this with you. A review should be suited to your situation; it may make some small changes to your care or it may identify that you need a full reassessment of your care needs.

You should be told in advance what areas your review will cover, but the areas below should be included.

- Have your circumstances or needs changed?
- Are your direct payments still enough to meet your needs?
- Are there new goals you would like to achieve?
- Are you and your carer (if you have one) satisfied with your care plan?

A review must not simply be used as a reason to reduce your care package, unless there has been a corresponding change to your needs or circumstances.

If you are unhappy with your review, speak to social services to see if any changes can be made. If this doesn't resolve the problem, you can make a complaint (see [chapter 14](#)).

## 13. Refusing services

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Social services may recommend support that you don't want to receive – for example, you may not want to go to a day centre or have care staff visit you at home. You can discuss your concerns with social services during the care planning stage and try to find another way to meet your needs. If you don't think they have assessed your needs properly in the first place, you may want to ask for a reassessment.

You do have the right to refuse services, as long as you have mental capacity to understand the decision you're making. Social services cannot force you to receive help. However, this may mean that you won't receive enough support to live safely and comfortably at home. Social services may have a duty to act if there is a safeguarding concern.

If you're in a situation where you want to use different support to what the council has offered, you may want to consider using direct payments so that you can organise your own care. This can give you more control over which services you receive and when you receive them (see [chapter 11](#)).

### Mental capacity and refusing services

If you refuse services, but don't have the mental capacity to make this decision, the council will have to decide whether it's in your best interests to receive the services. If they do, they can make the decision to provide the service to you. However, the council can only do this if you don't have someone to make these decisions for you, such as a family member or welfare attorney.



#### Good to know

If you would like help with expressing your views, it may be best to look for an independent advocate (see [chapter 4](#)).

Contact our Helpline for more advice about refusing services ([0800 319 6789](tel:08003196789), [advice@independentage.org](mailto:advice@independentage.org)).

## 14. What can you do if something goes wrong?

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It's important to speak up if:

- you have been refused a care needs assessment
- you're not satisfied with your care needs assessment or care and support plan
- you have experienced delays in getting an assessment
- you don't think your personal budget or direct payments are enough to meet your needs
- you don't think what you are being charged is correct
- you're concerned about the quality of the services you're receiving.

Often problems can be sorted out by talking to the social worker or their manager. But, if this doesn't work, there are two main ways of trying to resolve disagreements:

- making a complaint
- using a solicitor to pursue a legal case.

### **Time limits for making complaints**

There is a time limit for using each of these procedures. It is important not to miss it because you're trying to sort things out directly with the social worker.

- A complaint should be made within six months of the problem occurring or of you becoming aware of it, but usually it's better to start the complaint as soon as possible.
- If you decide to pursue a legal case, the time limit is much shorter. If it becomes necessary to start court proceedings, it's likely to be a judicial review. Judicial review proceedings must be started within three months of the date when there were first grounds for a legal challenge.

It is sometimes, but not always, possible to pursue a late complaint or a late legal challenge.

For more information, including about how the time limits work, see our factsheet [Complaints about social care services](#).

## Where to complain

If you're arranging your own care, and want to make a complaint about the service provider, you should start by raising the concern directly with the provider. If you're not happy with the outcome, you can ask the Care Inspectorate to investigate your complaint (**0345 600 9527**, [careinspectorate.com/index.php/complaints](https://careinspectorate.com/index.php/complaints)).

If your complaint still hasn't been settled – and you've been through the complaints procedures of the NHS, the local council or the Care Inspectorate – you can complain to the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (**0800 377 7330**, [spsso.org.uk/how-to-complain-about-public-service](https://spsso.org.uk/how-to-complain-about-public-service)).



### To do

If you need support to make a complaint or communicate your views to staff, you may want to ask for help from an independent advocate – see [chapter 4](#).

Alternatively, you can find a solicitor in your area through:

- the Law Society of Scotland ([lawscot.org.uk](http://lawscot.org.uk), **0131 226 7411**)
- Solicitors for Older People Scotland (**0800 152 2037**, [solicitorsforolderpeoplescotland.co.uk](http://solicitorsforolderpeoplescotland.co.uk)).



## 15. Summary

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- A care needs assessment is a chance for you to talk to a professional from your local council's adult social services team about things you have difficulty doing because of your care needs. They will ask you questions to work out what you struggle with, and what support could help you.
- To request a care needs assessment, contact your local council's adult social services department (see [chapter 2](#)).
- Your assessment could be face to face, over the phone or a self-review. The council should consider what would be best for you, and you can let them know what you would prefer.
- If you need help understanding the assessment process and expressing your views and wishes, you might be able to get support from an advocate (see [chapter 4](#)).
- There are things you can do to prepare for your assessment, such as keeping a diary to record your care needs over a period of time (see [chapter 7](#)).
- The council uses eligibility criteria to work out if you qualify for support (see [chapter 6](#)).
- Personal and nursing care are free in Scotland. If you qualify for other support, your financial assessment works out how much the council can contribute towards your care needs (see [chapter 9](#)).
- The council must develop a care and support plan with you. This sets out how your needs will be met. You must be fully involved in putting this plan together, and there are a number of things that should be included (see [chapter 10](#)).
- You can choose to arrange your care yourself, even if the council is contributing towards the costs (see [chapter 11](#)).

- Social services should review your care needs to make sure things are going as planned. If your needs have changed since your assessment, you can request a review (see [chapter 12](#)).
- If you have had problems with parts of the care assessment process, you might want to make a complaint. In some circumstances, you may want to get legal advice (see [chapter 14](#)).

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Independent Age would like to thank those who shared their experiences as this information was being developed, and those who reviewed the information for us.

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