

Care at home

Support to help you live more
independently at home



Home
& care



Information and advice you need to help you love later life.

We're Age NI, the leading charity for older people in Northern Ireland.

Our society is ageing. More than 350,000 older people live here today.

Age NI believes that living longer should be celebrated and that those who need help should be supported to do so.

As we grow older, we may face challenges like poor health, poverty or loneliness. However, we still want to lead a fulfilling later life - stay healthy, independent and continue to do the things that we love.

Age NI exists to support people to love later life now and in the future.

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Introduction

The Age NI Advice Service receives thousands of calls each year from older people, their family and carers. **Community Care**, also known as **Care at Home**, is one of the most frequent concerns that our advisors deal with. We hear regularly from older people who are being cared for, and from carers themselves who are responsible for an older, disabled or ill family member or friend. Many are concerned or confused by what **Community Care** means and, more specifically, what it means for them.

The caring experience can be overwhelming for older people and also for their carers. The situation may put pressure on finances, relationships and health and wellbeing. Some older people require intensive support for their care needs such as help in the morning or with meal preparation. Others need equipment, aids and adaptations to improve their mobility, enable their independence and increase their confidence at home, yet lots of people don't know about the help that's available.

This booklet raises and answers many of the questions we are frequently asked. We hope that it will help you to understand the complex issue of **Community Care** better.

If you need any further information or advice, the Age NI Advice Service is available to help you on freephone **0808 808 7575**.

Key

what
next?

This symbol indicates who to contact for the next steps you need to take.

What is Community Care?

Community Care describes the services and support which enable people to continue to live independently at home. Your local Health and Social Care Trust (HSC Trust) is responsible for helping you to access these services.

The Department of Health, Social Services and Public Safety (DHSSPS) is responsible for health and personal social services in Northern Ireland. It provides guidance about how care should be delivered. This guidance is the same for every Health Trust area.

Health and Social Care Trusts manage and administer hospitals, health centres, residential homes, day centres and other health and social care facilities.

what
next?

Contact details for individual Health Trusts are available in the Useful organisations section on pages 21-25.

What Community Care support is available?

Assistance is available to support individual personal and practical care needs associated with mental health, learning or physical difficulties, hearing or sight problems, or the challenges associated with getting older.

Every individual has different care needs. To continue living in your own home, you may need help with personal care such as washing and dressing, or practical support with daily living such as making meals. You may benefit from special equipment or adaptations to your home. The range of **Community Care** services available to support you include:

- Domiciliary care (in the form of a care package)
- Equipment aids and home adaptations (grab rails, hand rails or stair lifts)
- Day care (provided in day centres)
- Respite care (non residential).

Who is entitled to Community Care support?

You will be entitled to receive **Community Care** services after your individual needs have been identified by a **Community Care Assessment**. This assessment is carried out by Social Services. These services could help you to remain more active and independent at home if you have additional needs as a result of:

- illness
- physical or mental difficulties
- a long time spent in institutional care and you require support adapting to life within a community setting.

Community Care Assessment

Some people may find it challenging to live independently at home for a number of reasons, for instance, mental health problems, learning and physical difficulties or social isolation and loneliness. It is important that everyone knows how and where to get the right assistance and support.

You may need support for a short period only, for example, following discharge from hospital. Or, you may require longer term care to maintain your independence.

Social Services in your local Health and Social Care Trust can carry out an assessment of your needs. This will outline what help you require and how the Trust can offer you support.

It is important that you provide as much information as possible about your situation at home. Many people find it useful to bring along a family member, a close friend or an independent advocate. You may also find it helpful to think in advance about which services will assist you to live independently at home and be socially active.

How do I obtain a Community Care Assessment?

You may:

- Self refer by contacting the Social Services team in your area
- Be referred by a GP or someone who works for the Health Trust
- Be referred by a voluntary organisation
- Be referred by a family member or informal carer.

What does a Community Care Assessment mean for me?

A social worker will meet with you and go through all aspects of your daily living. A **Community Care Assessment** will identify the tasks you may need assistance with, for instance, getting in and out of bed, washing, dressing or cooking. This is often referred to as **personal care**. The assessment will also consider your practical care needs such as doing laundry, cleaning and shopping. The assessment should be carried out at a time and a place that suits you.

After the assessment has been carried out, Social Services will draw up a **care plan** tailored to your individual needs. You should be given a copy of your care plan. If you do not agree with your identified needs you should make this clear immediately to the person who carried out the assessment.

The **care plan** will outline your needs and what services the Health Trust can provide to support you. The Health Trust will use **eligibility criteria** to determine which of your assessed needs can be met. However, they must look at a person's individual assessed need. They should not make general statements such as 'we do not provide cleaning or shopping'. It is only after the assessment has taken place that the Health Trust can fully consider their ability to meet your assessed needs. An assessment should review all of your needs even if the Health Trust does not supply these services at present.

Carer's Assessment

You may be caring for your spouse, a family member who lives with you or a friend or relative who lives nearby. You may not necessarily be getting paid for caring. It would be advisable for you to check if you are entitled to benefits and whether a potential claim would affect the benefit entitlement of the person receiving care.

what next?

The Age NI Advice Service provides a free benefits check. Contact an Age NI Advisor in confidence on freephone **0808 808 7575**.

You may also have needs arising through your caring role. You may find it difficult to cope at times, or wish to take regular breaks from caring and may not know where to turn to for support. Social Services can provide you with assistance in your caring role.

Who is entitled to Carer's Assessment?

Carers have a right to an assessment if they ask for one. This is called a **Carer's Assessment**. It is triggered by contacting Social Services in your local Health Trust in the same manner as accessing a Community Care Assessment.

A **Carer's Assessment** will review your needs and assess what support services can be provided for you. You should be given a copy of your assessment to check that all your needs have been identified. It may be useful to think about what would benefit you as a carer. You can request an assessment even if the person for whom you are caring does not wish to be assessed. This assessment can be carried out by a separate **Care Manager** and should consider what would support you in your caring role. This may include training, contact with other carers or emotional support.

After being assessed, the Health Trust must consider what services (if any) can be provided to you as a carer. Health Trusts can make direct payments to carers (including carers aged 16 and 17) for the services that meet their own assessed need.

What support is available for carers?

A **Carer's Assessment** should be straightforward. A social worker should provide all the details you require throughout the process, including information on the following:

- Health & Social Care Trust services and how they can support carers
- Suitable day centres for the person you are caring for
- Types of equipment aids and adaptations which may help
- Additional personal care support (dressing, bathing etc.)
- A regular sitting service which enables you to have personal time
- Respite care
- Emotional support
- Networking opportunities with other carers in your local area.

What happens next?

A **Carer's Assessment** should be provided in writing. This is called a **care plan**. Guidance on the assessment should state that the carer must always receive a copy of their assessment without having to ask for it. Any services provided should also be flexible to suit you and the person you care for. If you are unhappy with any aspect of your **care plan**, talk to the person who carried out the assessment and make sure all your needs have been identified.

**what
next?**

If you are unhappy with any aspect of this process, you can find out how to challenge decisions on page 18.

Direct Payments

Direct Payments are local Health Trust payments for people who have been assessed as needing support from Social Services. If you require personal care services, you could use this payment to employ a personal assistant or to buy services from an agency of your choice. This may be suitable for you if you like to have control over the assistance you get - you choose who works for you, when they work and what they do.

It is important that you get all the information you require before you decide that **Direct Payments** is suitable. You should think about the personal advantages and also the responsibilities you will be taking on. Remember that you can get as much support as necessary to help you manage e.g. your family, a friend or an employee could help you with the paperwork.

You are advised to contact your local Centre for Independent Living NI (see page 25) for assistance when calculating wages.

what next?

It may also be helpful to talk to someone who is already using **Direct Payments**. You should bear in mind that you can have a mixture of **Direct Payments** and services from your local Health Trust e.g. you may retain Trust services that suit you and make your own arrangements for the rest. You can stop **Direct Payments** at any time and return to using a Health Trust service.

Who is eligible for Direct Payments?

To receive **Direct Payments**, you will have to contact your local Health Trust and ask them to assess your needs. They are normally available if you:

- have a disability and are aged 16 or over
- are a carer aged 16 or over, including people with parental responsibility for a child with disabilities
- are an older person.

Your local Health Trust is obliged to offer you the option of **Direct Payments** in place of the services you currently receive. There are limited circumstances where you are not given this choice, and your local Trust will be able to tell you about these. If your local Health Trust has decided that you do not need help from Social Services, you will not be offered **Direct Payments**.

However, if you think your needs or circumstances have changed, contact your local Health Trust for a new assessment.

Managing Direct Payments

You may find the prospect of becoming an employer somewhat daunting, however with the right support it can be done without any great difficulty. Please contact the Centre for Independent Living NI (see page 25) if you require advice or training on any aspect of becoming an employer.

Carers and Direct Payments

If you are a carer aged 16 or over, including people with parental responsibility for a child with disabilities, you may be eligible for **Direct Payments**. However, you cannot use these to buy services for the person you care for. They can only be spent on getting the support you, as a carer, has been assessed as needing.

Effect of Direct Payments on other benefit

Direct Payments are not a replacement for income and, therefore, do not affect any other benefits you may be receiving.

Self Directed Support

Self Directed Support promotes independence by enabling you and your family or carer to have greater choice, control, and flexibility over the way your assessed care and support needs are met. Payment options to receive this support will be taken from your personal budget as:

- a Direct Payment
- a managed budget (the Trust may hold the budget but you will have control over how it's spent)
- the Trust can arrange a service, or
- you can choose a mixture of these options.

You can discuss the options with your key health or social worker.

what next?

For more information about the availability of this scheme in your local area, call the Age NI Advice Service on freephone **0808 808 7575**.

Aids and Adaptations

Occupational Therapy promotes the health and wellbeing of people by providing aids and adaptations so they can continue to live independently at home and lead a more active life.

Your local Health Trust may provide equipment aids and adaptations to help with daily tasks such as cooking, dressing and bathing through its Occupational Therapy Department. These may include:

- grab rails
- stair lifts
- blocks to make chairs and beds higher
- raised toilet and bath seats.

An Occupational Therapist will carry out an assessment of your needs and may visit you to provide expert advice on particular equipment aids that will suit you. Alternatively they may ask you to attend a centre where they can assess you. The Health Trust uses **eligibility criteria** to decide the provision of equipment. You may be at risk if you do not have the right equipment to support you to live independently, therefore you may have a greater chance of qualifying for help.

what next?

Some specialist equipment aids (such as continence equipment and commodes) can be provided through the NHS. Contact your local GP surgery to find out more about accessing these aids.

Adapting your home

If it is necessary to have your home adapted to support you to live more independently at home, an Occupational Therapist will assess you to identify which adaptations will best meet your needs. An Occupational Therapist's report is necessary to determine eligibility for a means-tested **Disabled Facilities Grant** (DFG).

A DFG is available to home owners and those in the private rented sector to make adaptations to their home.

what next?

Social housing tenants living in Housing Executive or Housing Association accommodation should contact their local office to request help with adaptations.

Sometimes it is complicated to make decisions on major home adaptations and this process may take some time to complete. Support may be obtained from Staying Put, a service provided by FOLD Housing Group. See page 24 for contact details.

If the Occupational Therapist agrees that your current accommodation is unsuitable, you can apply to the Housing Executive to be re-housed as you will be deemed homeless, even though you remain in your current accommodation.

This applies to both home owners and private tenants.

what next?

For more information, read our free [Housing options guide](#) at or contact the [Age NI Advice Service](#) on freephone **0808 808 7575**.

What if I need Community Care support urgently?

Social Services should help you by providing support for any urgent needs while awaiting the outcome of a full assessment.

Waiting times are determined by priority. You will be given priority if you are:

- coming out of hospital and at risk
- living alone and at risk
- living with a carer who is older or disabled
- terminally ill.

If you are a priority:

- your assessment will start within two weeks of being referred to your Health and Social Care Trust or unit of management
- your Occupational Therapist will recommend the equipment or minor adaptations you need within a further week
- if your Occupational Therapist is already familiar with your needs, they will recommend any major adaptations to your home within two months of your referral
- if your disabilities are not known the Occupational Therapist will make a recommendation within six months (where possible).

If you are not a priority:

- your assessment will start within three months of being referred to your Health and Social Care Trust or unit of management.

Challenging Community Care decisions

If your assessment demonstrates that **Community Care** services will assist and support you to live independently at home, a decision will be taken on the provision and delivery of the services. These services should be provided within a reasonable length of time. Although there is no statutory timescale by which services must be provided, the definition of 'reasonable' will be dependent on individual circumstance, for instance, if the lack of service is causing particular hardship or a person's human rights are being affected due to a delay in service.

You will be assigned a **Care Manager** who is responsible for organising a package of services called a **care plan** which will be tailored to your individual needs. Your care plan should be given to you in writing and include the names and contact details of the service providers. You should also be provided with your **Care Manager's** name and contact details in the event that you have any questions. You may find that the level of care you are offered does not support the needs which you consider you have. In this circumstance, it is useful to consider further evidence to support your case, for example, a doctor may feel that your needs are not being addressed. If you do have any additional evidence, put it in writing and keep a copy. If you speak to someone on the telephone, make a note of their name and contact details, including the time, date and nature of your conversation. You may wish to look for further information, advice or support from an independent advocate.

What if my care needs change over time?

Your **Care Manager** must review your needs regularly. You can ask for a reassessment at any time if you feel your circumstances have changed. Your **Care Manager** will then organise a more suitable package of services to support any change to your circumstances. Services provided to you cannot be altered or withdrawn without a reassessment of your needs. Services should also be flexible enough to suit you, for example, if your normal bedtime is 10.30pm, the Health Trust should not recommend a service to put you to bed at 8pm.

Financial Implications

Health Trusts take into account the resources available to them when setting **eligibility criteria**. They are divided into categories of ‘critical,’ ‘substantial’, ‘moderate’ and ‘low’.

Once it has been agreed that you need services, they must be provided regardless of resources. Appropriate care services will be provided if the needs assessment identifies critical or substantial risk to independence and support cannot be sourced elsewhere.

Health Trust staff should not suggest that you use Disability Living Allowance (DLA), Attendance Allowance or Personal Independence Payments to pay for your care privately.

what next?

You can raise any concerns formally or informally. Health Service Complaint Managers can provide you with information about how to make a complaint. Your complaint will be acknowledged within 2-3 working days of receipt. You will receive a full response within a set number of days. If you are still dissatisfied, you can refer your complaint to the Northern Ireland Ombudsman. You can also contact the Age NI Advice Service at any stage of the complaints process.

Contact details can be found in the 'Useful organisations' section on pages 21-25.

Useful organisations

Age NI

Age NI offers independent and confidential advice, information and support to older people, their families and carers on a range of issues in later life including money, care, housing and health.

3 Lower Crescent
Belfast
BT7 1NR

Freephone **0808 808 7575**

Phone lines are open 365 days a year from 8am - 7pm

E: **advice@ageni.org**

www.ageni.org

Law Centre NI

The Law Centre operates a daily, community care law advice line service from 9.30am - 5pm

3rd Floor, Middleton Building
10-12 High Street
Belfast
BT1 2BA

Tel: **028 9024 4401**

E: **admin.belfast@lawcentreni.org**

www.lawcentreni.org

Patient and Client Council

Ormeau Baths
18 Ormeau Road
Belfast
BT1 8HS

Freephone **0800 917 0222**

E: **info.pcc@hscni.net**

www.patientclientcouncil.hscni.net

The Commissioner for Older People for Northern Ireland (COPNI)

Equality House
7-9 Shaftesbury Square
Belfast
BT2 7DP

Tel: **028 9089 0892**

E: **info@copni.org**

www.copni.org

Carers Northern Ireland

58 Howard Street
Belfast
BT1 6PJ

Tel: **028 9043 9843**

E: **info@carersni.org**

www.carersni.org

Health and Social Care Board

Headquarters
12-22 Linenhall Street
Belfast
BT2 8BS

Tel: **028 9032 1313**

www.hscboard.hscni.net

Belfast Health and Social Care Trust

Trust Headquarters
A Floor
Belfast City Hospital
Lisburn Road
Belfast
BT9 7AB

Tel: **028 9504 0100**

E: **info@belfasttrust.hscni.net**

www.belfasttrust.hscni.net

Northern Health and Social Care Trust

Trust Headquarters
Bretten Hall
Antrim Area Hospital Site
Bush Road
Antrim
BT41 2RL

Tel: **028 9442 4000**

E: **info@northerntrust.hscni.net**

www.northerntrust.hscni.net

South Eastern Health & Social Care Trust

Trust Headquarters
Ulster Hospital
Upper Newtownards Road
Dundonald
Belfast
BT16 1RH

Tel: **028 9055 3100**

www.setrust.hscni.net

Southern Health and Social Care Trust

Trust Headquarters Southern Area
College of Nursing
Craigavon Area Hospital
68 Lurgan Road
Portadown
BT63 5QQ

Tel: **028 3833 4444**

E: **corporate.hq@southerntrust.hscni.net**

www.southerntrust.hscni.net

Western Health and Social Care Trust

Trust Headquarters
MDEC Building
Altnagelvin Area Hospital
Glenshane Road
Londonderry
BT47 6SB

Tel: **028 7134 5171**

E: **info.enquiry@westerntrust.hscni.net**

www.westerntrust.hscni.net

Fold Housing

Staying Put
3-7 Redburn Square
Holywood
BT18 9HZ

Tel: **028 9042 8314**

E: **www.foldgroup.co.uk**

Northern Ireland Ombudsman

Progressive House
33 Wellington Place
Belfast BT1 6HN
Tel: **028 9023 3821**
E: **ombudsman@niombudsman.org.uk**
www.ni-ombudsman.org.uk

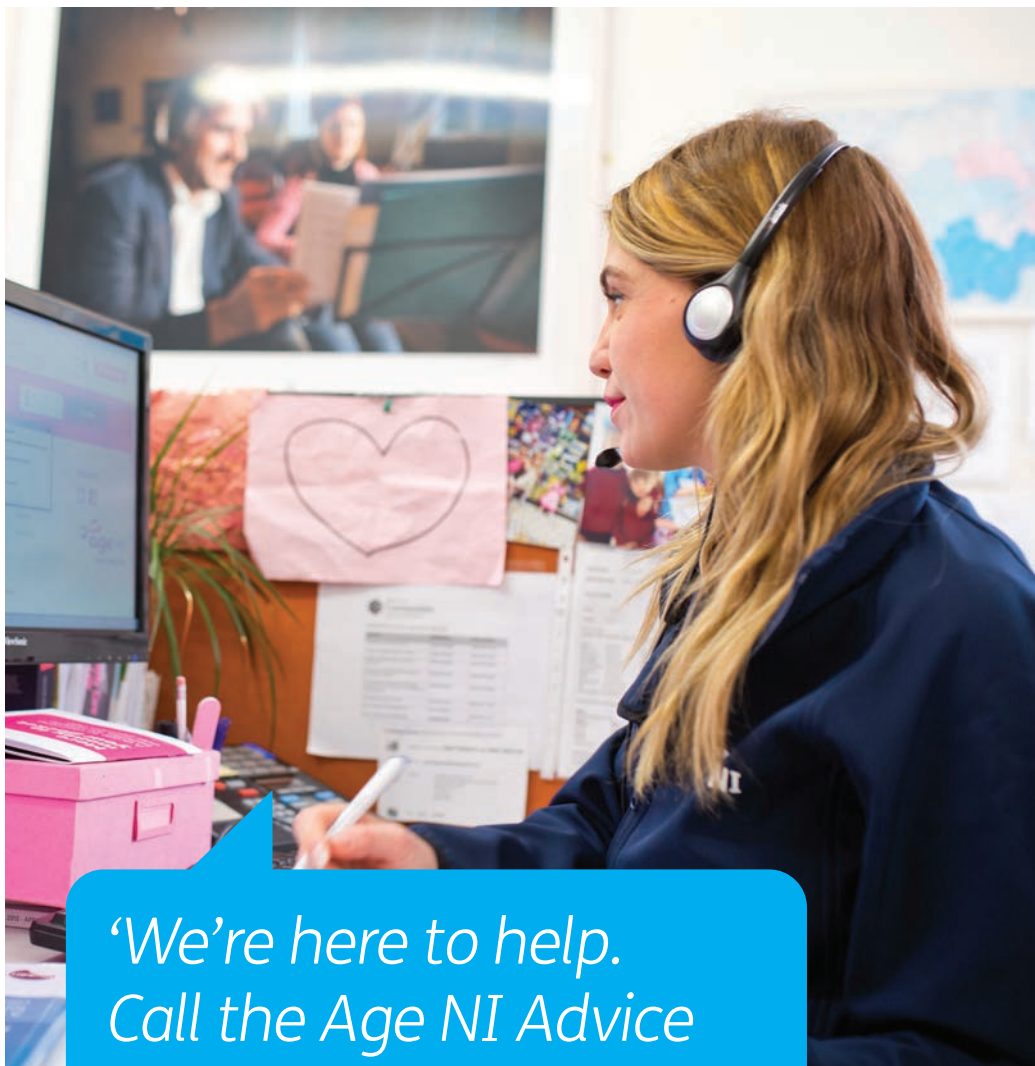
Centre for Independent Living NI

Beechill Business Park
96 Beechill Road
Belfast
BT8 7QN

Tel: **028 9064 8546**
Text Phone **028 9064 0598**
E: **info@cilbelfast.org**
www.cilbelfast.org

**Department of Health,
Social Services & Public Safety**
www.dhsspsni.gov.uk

Encyclopaedia of Rights
www.lawcentreni.org



*'We're here to help.
Call the Age NI Advice
Service on freephone
0808 808 7575.'*

**Deborah,
Age NI Advisor**

Donate today!

Age NI relies on donations to ensure that we continue to support people in Northern Ireland to love later life. Please complete and return the form to Age NI, Freepost RRTU-HSZY-LTHZ, 3 Lower Crescent, Belfast, BT7 1NR. Alternatively call 028 9024 5729 or visit www.ageni.org/donate

Every donation makes a difference. Thank you.

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I would like to make a gift of: £

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Age NI.

I wish to donate by credit/debit card (please tick)

Card no.

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I prefer not to receive a thank you for this donation

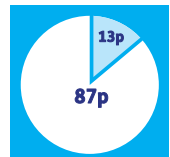
Please send me information on giving regularly by direct debit

We'd like to keep in touch to let you know about the vital work we do for older people, our products, services and how you can support us. If you would like us to contact you about ways you can support our work, please select your preferred method(s) of communication below:

Post Email Telephone

For every £1 you donate, 87p directly benefits older people.*

By leaving a gift in your will to Age NI, you'll help us be here for everyone who needs us ageni.org/giftsinwills



Contact Age NI

For more information on the issues covered in this guide, please contact the Age NI Advice Service on freephone **0808 808 7575** or email **advice@ageni.org**

Age NI also offers free, independent and confidential advice to older people, their families and carers on a range of issues including care, health, housing and money.

3 Lower Crescent, Belfast BT7 1NR
Tel: **028 9024 5729** E: **info@ageni.org**
www.ageni.org

