

Adapting your home

Services and equipment to
help you stay living at home

Home
& care



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*Our network includes Age Cymru,
Age NI, Age Scotland, Age International
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Every effort has been made to ensure that the information contained in this guide is correct. However, things do change, so it is always a good idea to seek expert advice on your personal situation.

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Contents

Introduction	2
Access to your home	4
Answering the door	6
Moving around your home	8
Getting up and down stairs	9
Getting up and dressed	10
Washing, bathing and using the toilet	12
In the kitchen	15
Telecare	16
Living with sight problems	19
Living with hearing loss	21
Combined hearing and sight loss	21
Living with memory loss	22
I need some help at home – what should I do?	26
Help with the costs of equipment and minor adaptations	28
Disabled Facilities Grants	30
Home Improvement Agencies	31
Gifted Housing	33
Moving to more suitable accommodation	34
Useful organisations	35

Introduction

We all want to stay in our own homes for as long as possible. It's a big part of retaining our independence. But sometimes, as we get older, it can be harder to manage. It may be because of health problems, disability or bereavement. The good news is that by making some simple changes to our homes and the way we live in them, we can stay in them for longer.

This guide looks at some of the changes you can make, the equipment available and how to obtain it. It suggests small practical steps you can take to help you with the tasks you do in and around your home that can make a difference to your quality of life. The guide also looks at some of the newer technologies that are becoming more popular. This type of help is often referred to as telecare. It explains how these can help you maintain your independence and stay living at home safely.

Throughout this guide you will find suggestions for organisations that can offer further information and advice about your options. Their contact details can be found in the 'Useful organisations' section (see pages 35–41). Contact details for organisations near you can usually be found in your local phone book. If you have difficulty finding them, your local Age UK should be able to help.

As far as possible, information in this guide is applicable across the UK.

In this guide, where we refer to a local council social services department in England and Wales, we intend this also to be a reference to a social work department in Scotland and a local health and social care trust in Northern Ireland.

Key



This symbol indicates where information differs for Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland.



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

Access to your home

If you're having difficulty getting in and out of your property, there are ways to make it easier to gain access via your front door and back door, and to access your garden if you have one.

If you find it difficult climbing steps up to the door, you could have a rail installed. This could either be a galvanised rail attached to the ground (usually set into concrete), which may be up to a few metres long, or a smaller grab rail at the door to help you step over the threshold safely. If you have space, shallower steps could be built as well.

If you're a wheelchair user, you may need to have a ramp installed to enable you to reach your front door. This could require some alterations to the porch or front step. Ramps have to meet a number of design standards to ensure that they offer a safe means of access in all weather conditions.

A portable ramp could be used if you have a small step and there is someone else present who can install and then remove it after use.

Sometimes it's not safe or practical to install a ramp, particularly if there isn't much space around the door. A wheelchair lift may be a good alternative.

An outdoor light that automatically switches on from dusk to dawn, or one with a motion detector that lights up the path when you approach your front door will help you get about safely outside after dark. Position it so that if the light is triggered it won't disturb your sleep or annoy your neighbours.

**what
next?**

Contact your local council's social services department to get an assessment and to find out what assistance is available to adapt your home (see page 26). In Northern



Ireland, contact Fold for advice (see page 37). You could also contact your local Home Improvement Agency, which is a not-for-profit organisation that can help you adapt your home (see pages 37-38). (Home Improvement Agencies are not available in Northern Ireland.)

An outdoor light that automatically switches on from dusk to dawn will help you get about safely outside after dark.



Answering the door

If it's difficult to get to the front door when someone calls, there are various options. You could:

- install a door-entry intercom
- get an easy-to-fit wireless doorbell which includes an entry phone you can keep near your chair
- choose a video entry phone which means you'll also be able to see who is at the door. Some video entry phones allow you to press a button to open the door from where you're sitting.

There are other options to allow friends, relatives and carers access without having to answer the door yourself.

Consider getting a key safe, where the key is held in a secure box at the front door that can only be opened by someone who knows the code. Make sure you thoroughly investigate any safety and security issues before getting one.

You can get a Bogus Caller button installed. Pressing it will connect you to a telecare operator who you can talk to if you're concerned about who is at your door. See page 16 for more about telecare options and page 28 for information about help with costs.

See our free guide *Staying safe* for more information about keeping safe and secure in your home.

what next?

You could contact a Disabled Living Centre (sometimes called Centres for Independent Living) to see whether there is any equipment that you might find useful (see page 36). Many DIY and high street retailers stock wireless doorbells and video entry systems too, which a local handyman or family member could fit for you. The Age UK Group offers handyperson schemes to older people in some areas who meet certain criteria, to assist with small repairs and reduce risks in the home. Contact Age UK Advice (see page 35) for information about our handyperson schemes and to see what is available in your area.

-  In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru to find out if there's a handyperson or HandyVan scheme in your area (see page 35). In Scotland, contact Care and Repair Scotland for details of who can help locally (see page 38).

Moving around your home

If you're having difficulty moving around your home, it's important to think about the risks related to particular floor surfaces, lighting, clutter, and trip hazards such as trailing wires.

Good lighting can help you get about more easily and safely indoors. A remote control light that works with a motion sensor to switch the light on automatically if you get out of bed or enter a room may be useful. Or you may prefer to get a touch lamp that comes on when you touch the base so you don't have to feel for the switch or button.

If you have family or a carer who worry about you being safe when they're not there, they could get a pager alarm that alerts them if, for example, you've got out of bed during the night. This can be useful as well for carers who sleep in a different room or downstairs.

If you use a wheelchair, do you have enough room to manoeuvre around each room and between rooms? It may be possible to widen the door frame or to re-hang the door so that it swings in the opposite direction and does not block your way. In certain circumstances a wall can be taken down or moved to provide a larger turning circle in a room.

If you need all your essential facilities on one floor, you could consider creating an extension to your home. This may require planning permission. Talk to a qualified professional, such as a surveyor or an architect, to confirm the safety and appropriateness of a major adaptation to a property.

**what
next?**

See our free information guide *Home safety checker* or contact the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA) (see page 40).

Getting up and down stairs

If you have trouble getting up and down stairs, it may be possible to fit an extra banister rail or to install a stairlift to make it easier. Different types have features to suit different needs, such as:

- a swivel seat designed to help you get safely on and off
- specially adapted controls, for example to help your grip
- safety features to make sure the stairlift stops if something blocks its movement.

If a second banister rail or a stairlift isn't suitable for you, it may be possible to install a through-floor wheelchair lift. These lifts are generally installed to enable wheelchair users to move between floors. They are large pieces of equipment and may take up quite a lot of space. The size and layout of your home will affect what adaptations are possible.

Contact your local council for an assessment of your needs to see whether you are able to get financial help for a stairlift. You can also buy a stairlift yourself. Contact Rica (see page 38) or the Disabled Living Foundation (see page 37) for information on choosing products for older and disabled people. Handicare provides and manufactures stairlifts specifically for people in later life in association with the Age UK Group. Call Handicare free on 0800 228 9609 or visit www.ageukstairlifts.co.uk for more information.

what next?

Our guide *Care at home* has more information on assessments. For more detailed information, see our free factsheets *Local authority assessment for community care services* and *Funding repairs, improvements and adaptations*.



In Wales and Scotland, you can read the Age Cymru and Age Scotland versions of these free factsheets.

Getting up and dressed

Getting in and out of bed, or up from a chair, can become difficult for many people in later life. The height of a piece of furniture greatly affects how easy it is to get on and off it – the lower it is, the more difficult you may find it.

‘Raisers’ can be fitted to beds and chairs to increase their height. You can also get powered riser-recliner chairs and specialist beds that raise you into a position where you can stand, or lower you to sit or lie down.

There are many different types of this equipment, so you may need to get professional advice if you have more complex needs. If you’re at risk of pressure sores, or other related conditions, ask your GP or district nurse for an assessment.

If you need a carer to help you with turning, repositioning or transferring from one place to another, there’s a variety of equipment that can help. These include hoists, transfer boards and slide sheets. It’s important to get a professional assessment, and training should be provided before this equipment is used, to avoid injury to you or the person moving you.

If you have bladder problems at night, telecare may help. For example, you can get a mattress sensor that sends a message to a carer for assistance if the bed becomes wet.

Simple equipment can make it easier to get dressed – such as a long-handled shoehorn, and gadgets to assist with putting on tights and socks, and assist with doing up buttons. If you find it difficult to bend, easy-reach grabbers can help you safely pick up items that may have fallen to the floor. Your local pharmacy may stock these types of item.

**what
next?**

See page 16 and visit www.ageuk.org.uk/telecare for more information about telecare, what it is and how you can use it to stay independent. Contact your local council's social services department to request an assessment of your needs and for information about sources of assistance in your area (see page 26).

If you find it difficult to bend, easy-reach grabbers can help you safely pick up items that may have fallen to the floor.

Washing, bathing and using the toilet

Loss of mobility and balance can make it increasingly difficult to wash and bathe or to use the toilet. However, there's a range of equipment and adaptations that may help you continue to do these things.

Electric bath lifts can make it easier for you to get in and out of the bath. They usually consist of a seat or platform that can be lowered to support your weight as you get into the bath and then raised to assist with getting out. There are also baths that have a door as part of their design so you can get in and out without having to climb over the side. Depending on your needs, it may be a better option to remove the bath altogether and install a 'wet room' or level-access shower.

Other items in the bathroom can also be adapted to meet your needs. A wall-mounted sink may allow you to get closer and wash more comfortably if you're a wheelchair user or if you can't stand for very long and have to sit down. This and other items can be set at the right height for someone who is using a wheelchair or a mobile shower seat.

If you worry about forgetting you've turned the taps on, you could get a special safety plug that only allows the water to reach a certain level. Or you can get a flood detector that alerts a monitoring centre if the bath or sink starts to overflow. For more information about different telecare options see page 16.

If you're unable to clean yourself after using the toilet, 'hands-free' toilets are available. These include an automatic washing and drying function while you are still seated. In many houses, toilets are in small, narrow rooms. It may be necessary to move the toilet or make a larger room, usually by removing the partition wall between the toilet and the bathroom, with enough space for you to move around safely and comfortably.

what next?

See page 26 for information on what help you may be able to get from your local council. Contact the Disabled Living Foundation for details of equipment to make life easier in the bathroom and toilet (see page 37). Handicare provides accessible baths and showers in association with the Age UK Group. Call Handicare free on 0800 228 9608 or visit www.ageukbathrooms.co.uk for more information.

‘After I had a fall, I found it difficult to get to the door in time. I asked the local council to assess my needs and, as a result, a door-release intercom has been fitted.’



In the kitchen

Preparing food can be fiddly and potentially risky. If you have difficulty standing at the kitchen counter, you could use a perching stool, which is designed to allow a near-standing position while supporting you at the same time.

If you can only use one hand, or find it hard to grip or carry, there are tools such as spike boards to allow one-handed vegetable peeling, kettle tippers, wide-handled cutlery, tap turners, non-slip table mats, high-rimmed plates, two-handled cups, and assistive tin, bottle and jar openers. A sturdy trolley can provide support for mobility, as well as allowing the safe movement of food and drink from room to room.

If you require a wheelchair-accessible kitchen, you may need to install adjustable-height work surfaces with adequate space underneath to allow you to carry out tasks while seated. A shallow basin and draining board with space underneath can let you carry out kitchen tasks independently from a wheelchair. Cupboards of accessible height with shelves that can be pulled out could also be useful.

To help you stay safe when you're at home on your own you can get telecare gas detectors and carbon monoxide detectors that are linked to a monitoring centre. If the detectors sense unsafe levels of gas or carbon monoxide they raise an audible alarm with a flashing light and also send an alert to staff at the centre who will get help. You can get a telecare smoke detector that works in the same way. Some gas detectors can automatically turn off the gas at the mains as soon as a leak is detected.

**what
next?**

Contact the Disabled Living Foundation for details of equipment and telecare to make life easier in the kitchen (see page 37). For more about telecare see page 16.

Telecare

Telecare services use simple technology to support your wellbeing and help you stay living independently at home for longer. They can offer you and your family and friends reassurance and peace of mind that you're safe, while still maintaining your privacy and independence.

Telecare offers support in a variety of ways. It can either remind you of tasks you need to do, such as take your medication, or it can alert a carer or the emergency services if you might need help, such as after a fall.

The best known example of telecare is a personal alarm. Personal alarms allow you to call for help if you're unwell or have a fall and can't reach a telephone. You press a button on a pendant you wear around your neck or as a wrist band. This will connect you to a call centre, where you can talk to someone who will summon help if necessary.

Many local councils provide personal alarms as part of their range of services (see page 26). Contact your local council for information about its personal alarm scheme. Age UK also provides Personal Alarms*. For more information about Age UK Personal Alarms and the likely costs, call 0800 707 6369. In Northern Ireland, the Age NI Personal Alarm** service is available. Call 0808 100 4545 for more information. For tips on how to prevent a fall, see our free guide *Staying steady*.



Other types of telecare involve sensors installed in your home that automatically detect if something is wrong. For example, a pressure mat on your mattress can tell if you've been out of bed for a long time and automatically send an alert in case you've fallen.

These alerts can go directly to your emergency contact, or to a response centre who will contact someone you have nominated – a carer, warden, friend, family member, or the emergency services.

Other types of telecare services include:

- a discreet fall detector worn around your neck, waist or wrist that automatically detects if you've fallen and alerts your chosen contact
- a movement detector that can tell if you haven't moved about for a long period, or can gradually turn on the lights when you get out of bed
- a sensor that alerts you or your family if the temperature in your home goes up or drops rapidly.

Ask your GP, social worker, or local council for more information about the range of telecare services available and whether any costs apply.

If you're a carer, it's important to make sure the person you care for has their wishes fully taken into account when deciding whether to get a telecare service. This includes understanding the way the telecare service will work and how to use it. Remember, the needs of the person you care for may change, so the type of telecare provided should be reviewed regularly.

Telehealth

There may also be new assistive technology services in your area such as telehealth. Telehealth systems can help you if you're living with a long-term health condition at home.

For example, you can get a monitor that helps you measure your blood pressure or blood sugar levels and sends them directly to your GP. If you use a telehealth system it will always be with the support of a healthcare professional. Ask your GP about what is available in your area.

what next?

See www.ageuk.org.uk/telecare for more information about telecare, what it is and how it may be able to support you. Contact the Disabled Living Foundation for information about their telecare library where you can borrow certain telecare items for a short while to see how you get on with them (see page 37). In Scotland, contact Care Information Scotland for more about telecare (see page 36).



Read the Department of Health's information leaflet called *Supporting your independence and wellbeing with telehealth and telecare*. Download a free copy from the Department of Health website www.3millionlives.co.uk or call their orderline on 0300 123 1002.

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Living with sight problems

Most of us experience some degree of sight loss as we get older. It's important to have your eyes tested regularly to identify any deterioration in their condition as soon as possible.

-  Remember, if you're aged 60 or over, you can have a free NHS eye test (and in Scotland, everyone is entitled to a free test, regardless of age). Some sight loss can't be corrected, but a combination of practical steps and special equipment can help to reduce the impact on your independence.

Trailing wires and loose carpets, broken handrails or general clutter can be a hazard if you can't see them. The Age UK Group offers handyperson schemes to older people in some areas who meet certain criteria, to assist with small repairs and reduce risks in the home, or you could ask family or friends to help you repair and tidy.

-  Contact Age UK Advice (see page 35) for information about our handyperson schemes and to see what's available in your area. In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru to find out if there's a handyperson or HandyVan scheme in your area (see page 35). In Scotland, contact Care and Repair Scotland to find out if there's a handyperson service in your area (see page 38).

Increasing the level of natural light entering your home can help to make the most of your sight. Check whether your artificial lighting is appropriate for your needs too. Could you change the colour scheme in your home to make things easier to see? Coloured tape can help to differentiate the edges of stairs and other borders.

There is a wide range of equipment and new technology available to help people with sight problems. These include for example raised markings for appliance controls, clocks with high-contrast or tactile faces, talking watches and telephones with large, clearly marked buttons. RNIB provides in-depth information on what is available, how to get hold of items and lots of practical advice on living with sight problems.

what next?

Contact RNIB for further information on what you can do to manage the impact of sight loss in your day-to-day life (see page 39). The Thomas Pocklington Trust also provides information, care and support for people with sight loss, including a practical guide on how to improve the lighting in your home (see page 41).

Living with hearing loss

Many of us will experience some degree of hearing loss as we grow older. If you have a hearing loss, there's a wide range of equipment and technology available to help. Devices to alert you, such as flashing door bells and smoke alarms, are particularly important in the home. You may want to get wireless smoke alarms fitted. These connect using radio signals so that if one raises an alarm, they all do. You can buy versions of these that use vibrating pads, which can be put under your pillow at night, to get your attention.

Telephones are an important way of keeping in touch with people and of summoning help in an emergency. There are voice-based and text-based telephone options available for people with hearing loss. You can also get a sounder beacon installed which flashes and makes loud signals when a telephone or any sensor is activated. See page 16 for more information about telecare. What works best for you will depend on your needs.

what next?

Contact [Action on Hearing Loss](#) for information about these and other types of products available for people with hearing loss (see page 36).

Combined hearing and sight loss

Many people in later life experience loss of both sight and hearing. For information on the particular issues raised by combined hearing and sight loss or deafblindness, and suggestions on how to maintain independence, contact [Sense](#) (see page 40).

Living with memory loss

As we get older, we may experience memory problems that can make it more difficult to carry out daily tasks. Here are some suggestions of ways you can use new technologies to help with things such as organising your day and remembering where you've put your belongings. You might find that a family member or carer can help to set up some of these reminders for you.

- If you have a mobile phone, use the calendar in it as a memory aid. For example, you can add that you have an appointment on a certain day and choose when you want to be reminded. Your phone will beep to remind you.
- Use an item locator so you can easily find things such as your keys or purse. You attach small tags to the things you want to be able to find then, if you lose them, you press a button on the locator and the item will beep, or its whereabouts can be shown on a small display.
- Get a digital speech recorder and player to remind you about things you need to do at the time you need to do them. For example, you could set it to remind you that there are sandwiches in the fridge for you at lunchtime.

- If you tend to forget what day of the week it is, consider getting a calendar clock that shows you the day, date and time.
- A talking photo album could help if you enjoy looking at photos but sometimes forget the occasion. You record a short message about each photo that plays for you when you press a button for that photo in the album.
- If you want to let someone you trust know you've gone out and where you are if you're worried about getting lost, consider getting a personal locator. These are devices that use GPS technologies to tell a trusted person your exact location. It can be linked to your mobile phone or you can carry a separate device with you.

See page 16 for more information about assistive technologies such as telecare and telehealth.

If you feel that your memory loss is becoming more problematic, contact your GP.

**what
next?**

Visit www.atdementia.org.uk for more information about products that can help people live independently.

‘Recently I’ve found there are some things I can’t do as well as I used to. We’ve been looking at equipment to make things easier for both of us.’



Carol is the main carer for her husband Fred.

‘Recently I’ve found there are some things I can’t do as well as I used to, which is a worry as I care for my husband. My daughter suggested that we visit a local centre that demonstrates equipment to make life easier and help people manage for themselves. There were lots of useful things there. I’d been having trouble lifting the kettle to pour water from it – now I’ve bought a kettle tipper so I can tip it up without taking the weight.

‘We’ve also been looking at equipment to make things easier for both of us. I can’t really help to support Fred’s weight any more as he gets in and out of the bath. We asked the local council if we qualified for any help and they sent an occupational therapist round. She was very helpful and has suggested we get some grab rails and a bath seat. The local council is going to provide these and they should be fitted next month.

‘I registered for a telecare personal alarm as well because my daughter was worried about what would happen if I fell over. It gives me and my daughter peace of mind that if anything happens, there will be someone I can contact for help.’



I need some help at home – what should I do?

If you think you could benefit from some adaptations to your home and want support from social services, then contact the adult social services department of your local council. Explain you need some help at home and ask for a care assessment (also known as a needs assessment) to assess your needs. There's no charge for a care assessment and you're entitled to one regardless of your income and savings. Even if you find out you're not eligible for help, it's useful to get an assessment to find out what equipment is best for you.

You will be assessed either by a social worker (often called a care manager) or an occupational therapist (OT), depending on the level of your needs. The person who assesses you should look at the emotional and social side of your life, your skills, abilities, views, cultural background and support network, as well as any physical difficulties you may experience, or risks to your independence and wellbeing. They should take into account any health or housing requirements and contact any other health and social care professionals who need to be involved in your assessment and care. The assessment should reflect your needs and wishes and, if you have a carer, their needs and opinions should also be taken into account. After the assessment a care plan should be agreed on, written out and a copy given to you.

Your local council uses criteria to assess your level of needs, the help they should provide and whether you're eligible for services. This may include specialist equipment, home adaptations, support with domestic tasks, personal care and your wider wellbeing needs; all intended to help you carry on living independently and safely in your home for as long as possible. Specialist equipment and home adaptations may be provided as part of a package of care, for example, including regular visits from home carers.

If you find out that you're not eligible for help, you may want to buy equipment yourself. Some high street retailers and pharmacies also sell a range of products to make living at home a bit easier. Prices will vary so it's worth shopping around. See www.ageuk.org.uk/telecare for more information.

More information about how adaptations may be paid for can be found on pages 28 to 29.

what next?

Ask for a copy of our free factsheets *Finding help at home* and *Disability equipment and how to get it*. In Wales, see Age Cymru's versions of these factsheets. See our free guide

- ① *Personal budgets in social care* to find out about different ways to arrange your care. In Wales, read Age Cymru's free
- ① *factsheet Self-directed support: direct payments in Wales* (personal budgets are not available in Wales).

Help with the costs of equipment and minor adaptations

In England, all specialist disability equipment is provided free of charge as part of meeting your eligible needs following an assessment by your local council. An example of this may be the provision of a mobile hoist to enable safe, assisted transfers in and out of bed.

Adaptations that cost less than £1,000 are also provided and fitted free of charge, if your local council has assessed you as needing them.

Small adaptations include fitting a grab rail, short ramp, dropped curb, lever taps or external lighting. Their main benefit is that they can be installed relatively promptly, unlike other grant-funded adaptations, which can take several months to process and complete.

-  In Scotland, certain personal care equipment is free of charge.
-  In Wales, depending on your circumstances, you may be charged for equipment and adaptations that you have been assessed as needing. Alternatively, you might be referred to the Rapid Response Adaptations Programme. Through this programme you can get adaptations up to the value of £350 that include small ramps, rails, hand grips, level paths and personal alarms. These alterations allow you to continue living at home independently, or help you return home after a stay in hospital. Contact Care and Repair Cymru to find out more (see page 38).

In England, if you've been assessed as needing help from social services (see page 26), you may be eligible for a personal budget. The money you receive must be used to meet the needs identified in your assessment, which may include buying equipment to help you at home. See our free guide *Personal budgets in social care* to find out more.

i Personal budgets are not available in Wales, but you may be eligible for a direct payment – money received from social services to arrange your own care services. Read Age Cymru's free factsheet *Self-directed support: direct payments in Wales* for more information.

For larger adaptations and equipment, you can contact your local council to see whether you can apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant, or a loan to help you meet the cost (see page 30). The housing department will be involved in agreeing any major adaptations along with the social services department in your local council.

If you don't qualify for assistance from your local council, or prefer not to use them, ask private agencies or local voluntary organisations what they offer. If you want to get advice from a private occupational therapist, contact the College of Occupational Therapists (see page 36). Some high street retailers and pharmacies also sell a range of products to make living at home easier. It's worth shopping around to make sure you get the best price.

what next?

See our free factsheets *Disability equipment and how to get it* and *Funding repairs, improvements and adaptations for further information*. In Wales, see Age Cymru's version

i of *Disability equipment and how to get it*. In Northern Ireland, see Age NI's free factsheet *Aids and adaptations*. You could also contact your local council's social services department directly (see page 26 for details).

Disabled Facilities Grants

For larger adaptations, you may qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). DFGs are the main source of public financial assistance in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. They can be used to cover a wide range of adaptation works that enable you to get in and out of your home, move around and use your facilities.

-  A DFG is administered and paid by your local council's housing department (in Northern Ireland, the Northern Ireland Housing Executive), but you may be advised to contact social services first for an assessment of your needs. You can usually only get a DFG for work that your local council has assessed you as needing. The application must be approved by the housing department too. Your local council has a legal duty to provide DFG funding for an adaptation in certain circumstances.

Both homeowners and tenants can apply for a DFG. It is means-tested, so your income and capital may affect how much funding you are awarded. There is also an upper limit on the amount you can get, although local authorities may agree to top this up in some circumstances.

-  In Scotland, there is a similar grant available. Contact your local authority to see what financial assistance is available to help you with the cost of repairs and adaptations.

what next?

Ask for a copy of our free factsheet *Funding repairs, improvements and adaptations* for further information. You could also contact your local council's social services department for information about applying for a DFG and to request an assessment – see page 26 to find out more about assessments. Your local Home Improvement Agency may be able to help you apply (see pages 37-38). (Home

-  Improvement Agencies are not available in Northern Ireland.)

Home Improvement Agencies

Home Improvement Agencies (HIAs) (sometimes called Care and Repair) are not-for-profit organisations that help people who are older, disabled or on low incomes to repair, improve or adapt their homes. They assist homeowners and private tenants. In England, the Government has plans over the next two years to open HIAs up further to include more people who fund their own care needs. If you're a council tenant or housing association tenant, contact your local housing office to request an adaptation or to report a maintenance issue.

 HIA schemes usually offer practical help with tasks, such as arranging a survey, getting estimates for the work, applying for local authority assistance (including Disabled Facilities Grants or equivalent grants available for disabled people in Scotland, and loans), and supervising the work to completion.

Some HIAs also run a handyperson scheme that provides help with small repairs. These can reduce risk in the home – for example, fitting rails to prevent falls – and improve safety, security and energy efficiency. Even if you can afford to pay for the work yourself, you can take a lot of the worry out of organising it by using an HIA. To find out whether there is an HIA in your area, contact your local council's housing department or the national co-ordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies in your nation (see pages 37-38).

 (Home Improvement Agencies are not available in Northern Ireland.)

If there is no HIA in your area, your local council may run a handyperson scheme of its own. The Age UK Group offers handyperson schemes to older people in some areas who meet certain criteria, to assist with small repairs and reduce risks in the home. Contact Age UK Advice (see page 35) for information about our handyperson schemes and to see what is available in your area. In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru to find out if there's a handyperson or HandyVan scheme in your area (see page 35).



**what
next?**

Our free guide *Home safety checker* can help you become more aware of risks around your home.

We all want to stay in our own homes for as long as possible. It's a big part of retaining our independence.



Gifted Housing

If you own your home and are having problems managing it but do not want to move, you may want to consider the Age UK Gifted Housing scheme. Under this scheme, you donate your property to Age UK and, in return, Age UK takes responsibility for maintaining the property, and pays Council Tax, water charges and property insurance. The Gifted Housing Service also provides a Care Co-ordinator and Housing Manager who will give you support, help you to arrange care and support at home if you need it, and help you decide on future care and housing options. This established service gives an alternative to people in later life who may not have close family and want to remain in their own homes for as long as possible.

Make sure that you take professional, independent advice first, and consider what would happen if there was a change in your personal circumstances.

 This service is not available in Scotland or Northern Ireland.

**what
next?**

For more information, contact [Age UK Gifted Housing](#) (see page 35).

Moving to more suitable accommodation

If you're finding it difficult to manage at home and it isn't possible to make adaptations, you may need to consider moving to a more suitable home. There are different options, but your choices may be determined by your current housing or financial situation. If you're a council or housing association tenant, you may apply for a transfer to more suitable accommodation, such as sheltered housing. If you're a homeowner, you may consider selling your home and simply downsizing or purchasing specialist accommodation.

Talk to friends and family about your plans and get independent advice if you need it. If you have a disability, ask your local council for an assessment to help you with your re-housing needs. An occupational therapist will usually visit your property, then write a report with specific recommendations for your re-housing needs. The report will be for your use and also, if appropriate, for the use of the local council or housing association.

what
next?

See our free guide *Housing options* for more information.

Useful organisations

Age UK

We provide advice and information for people in later life through our Age UK Advice line, publications and online.

Age UK Advice: 0800 169 65 65

Lines are open seven days a week from 8am to 7pm.

www.ageuk.org.uk

Call Age UK Advice to find out whether there is a local Age UK near you, and to order free copies of our information guides and factsheets.

In Wales, contact

Age Cymru: 0800 022 3444

www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact

Age NI: 0808 808 7575

www.ageni.org

In Scotland, contact **Age Scotland** by calling Silver Line Scotland: 0800 470 8090 (This line is provided jointly by Silver Line Scotland and Age Scotland)

www.agescotland.org.uk

Age UK Gifted Housing

FREEPOST (SWB 10997)

Bath BA2 3ZZ

Tel: 01225 447 800

Email: GHS@ageuk.org.uk

AT Dementia

Provides information on assistive technology that can help people with memory problems and dementia live more independently.

www.atdementia.org.uk

Action on Hearing Loss

National organisation offering information and support to people who are deaf or hard of hearing.

19–23 Featherstone Street
London EC1Y 8SL

Tel: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

Email: informationline@hearingloss.org.uk

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Care Information Scotland

Provides information about care services for older people in Scotland, including telecare services.

Tel: 08456 001 001

www.careinfoscotland.co.uk

College of Occupational Therapists (COT)

Can help you find an occupational therapist (OT) and advise you on home adaptations or equipment.

Tel: 020 7357 6480

Email: reception@cot.co.uk

www.cot.co.uk

Disabled Living Centres

Provide advice, information and demonstrations of a range of disability equipment at local showrooms. To find your nearest centre, contact Assist UK.

Redbank House
4 St Chad's Street
Manchester M8 8QA

Tel: 0161 832 9757

Email: general.info@assist-uk.org

www.assist-uk.org

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

Runs an equipment demonstration centre and provides information about equipment for daily living.

Ground Floor
Landmark House
Hammersmith Bridge Road
London W6 9EJ

Tel: 0300 999 0004
Email: helpline@dlf.org.uk
www.dlf.org.uk

Fold

Provides free support and advice for people in Northern Ireland applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant.

3–7 Redburn Square
Holywood BT18 9HZ

Tel: 028 9042 8314
Email: info@foldgroup.co.uk
www.foldgroup.co.uk/stayingput

Foundations

National body for improvement agencies, with a website where you can find your nearest Home Improvement Agency.

Bleaklow House
Howard Town Mill
Glossop
Derbyshire SK13 8HT

Tel: 08458 645 210
Email: info@foundations.uk.com
www.foundations.uk.com

In Scotland, contact **Care and Repair Scotland**

135 Buchanan Street

Suite 2.5

Glasgow G1 2JA

Tel: 0141 221 9879

www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk

In Wales, contact **Care and Repair Cymru**

2 Ocean Way

Cardiff CF24 5TG

Tel: 02920 674 830

Email: enquiries@careandrepair.org.uk

www.careandrepair.org.uk

Rica

National research charity providing independent information to older and disabled consumers.

Unit G03

The Wenlock

50–52 Wharf Road

London N1 7EU

Tel: 020 7427 2460

Textphone: 020 7427 2469

Email: mail@rica.org.uk

www.ricability.org.uk

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

National organisation offering information and support to people who are blind or partially sighted.

105 Judd Street
London WC1H 9NE

Tel: 0303 123 9999
Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk
www.rnib.org.uk

In Scotland, contact **Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB) Scotland**

12–14 Hillside Crescent
Edinburgh EH7 5EA
Tel: 0131 652 3140
Email: rnibscotland@rnib.org.uk

In Wales, contact **RNIB Cymru**

Trident Court
East Moors Road
Cardiff CF24 5TD
Tel: 029 2045 0440
Email: cymruevents@rnib.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact **RNIB Northern Ireland**

40 Linenhall Street
Belfast BT2 8BA
Tel: 028 9032 9373
Fax: 028 9027 8119
Email: rnibni@rnib.org.uk

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

A charity dedicated to saving lives and preventing injuries. RoSPA also has offices in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales – details are on the website.

RoSPA House
28 Calthorpe Road
Edgbaston
Birmingham B15 1RP

Tel: 0121 248 2000
Email: help@rospa.com
www.rospa.com

Sense

National organisation offering information and support to people who have combined hearing and sight loss (deafblindness). The head office can put you in touch with your regional office.

101 Pentonville Road
London N1 9LG

Tel: 0845 127 0060
Textphone: 0845 127 0062
Email: info@sense.org.uk
www.sense.org.uk

In Wales, contact **Sense Cymru**

Ty Penderyn
26 High Street
Merthyr Tydfil CF47 8DP
Tel: 0300 330 9280
Email: cymruenquiries@sense.org.uk

Thomas Pocklington Trust

National organisation that provides information, care and support to people with sight loss in the UK.

Pier House
90 Strand on the Green
London W4 3NN

Tel: 020 8995 0880

Email: info@pocklington-trust.org.uk

www.pocklington-trust.org.uk

COMODAL
Consumer MODEls for Assisted Living

hdti

ageUK
Love later life

Grandparents
plus

years ahead
partnership
ageing redefined

SEHTA
improving health
increasing wealth

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Can you help Age UK?

Please complete the donation form below with a gift of whatever you can afford and return to: RSXZ-KTTS-KSHT, Age UK, Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, LONDON WC1H 9NA. Alternatively, you can phone 0800 169 87 87 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/donate. If you prefer, you can donate directly to one of our national or local partners. Thank you.

Personal details

Title:	Initials:	Surname:
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Address:
Postcode:

Tel:	Email:
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By providing your email address and/or mobile number you are agreeing to us contacting you in these ways. You may contact us at any time to unsubscribe from our communications.

Your gift

I would like to make a gift of: £

I enclose a cheque/postal order made payable to Age UK

Card payment

I wish to pay by (please tick) MasterCard Visa CAF CharityCard
 Maestro American Express

(Maestro only)

<input type="text"/>	Signature X					
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Expiry date / Issue no. (Maestro only)

Gift aid declaration

(please tick) Yes, I want Age UK and its partner organisations* to treat all donations I have made for the four years prior to this year, and all donations I make from the date of this declaration until I notify you otherwise, as gift aid donations. I confirm I pay an amount of income tax and/or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that the charity will reclaim on my donations in the tax year. Date: ___/___/___ (please complete). *Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI



We will use the information you have supplied to communicate with you according to data protection guidelines. Age UK (registered charity number 1128267) comprises the charity, its group of companies and national partners (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI). If you would prefer not to hear from them or carefully selected third parties, let us know by phoning 0800 107 8977.

You may be interested in other guides in this range

- Advice for carers
- Care at home
- Care home checklist
- Care homes
- Home safety checker
- Housing options
- Personal budgets
- Staying safe



To order any of our **free** publications, please call Age UK Advice free on:

0800 169 65 65

www.ageuk.org.uk/homeandcare

What should I do now?

For more information on the issues covered in this guide, or to order any of our publications, please call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65** or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/homeandcare

Our publications are also available in large print and audio formats.

The following Age UK information guides may be useful:

- *Care at home*
- *Save energy, pay less*
- *Staying safe*

The Age UK Group offers a wide range of products and services specially designed for people in later life. For more information, please call **0800 169 18 19**.

If contact details for your local Age UK are not in the box below, call Age UK Advice free on **0800 169 65 65**.

