

Adapting your home

Services and equipment to
help you stay living at home

**Home
& care**



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

We're Age UK and our goal is to enable older people to love later life.

We are passionate about affirming that your later years can be fulfilling years. Whether you're enjoying your later life or going through tough times, we're here to help you make the best of your life.

Our network includes Age Cymru, Age NI, Age Scotland, Age International and more than 160 local partners.

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What this guide is about

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, perhaps 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 independent for longer.

This guide looks at some of the changes you can make, the equipment available and the help you may get from your local council social services department. It explains how these changes can help you maintain your independence and stay living at home safely.

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.

By making some simple changes to our homes and the way we live in them, we can stay independent for longer.

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 to climb 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, you could have shallower steps 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.

Contact your local council's social services department to get an assessment and to find out what assistance and equipment is available to adapt your home (see pages 24–25).

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 Home Improvement Agency, which is a not-for-profit organisation that can help you adapt your home (see page 36). (Home Improvement Agencies are not available in Northern Ireland.) In Northern Ireland, contact Fold for advice (see page 36) or the Occupational Therapy Department in your local Health and Social Care Trust.

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 that 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 pages 13–14 for more about telecare options and pages 26–28 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 the Disabled Living Foundation to see whether there is any equipment that you might find useful (see page 35). Many DIY and high street retailers also stock wireless doorbells and video entry systems too, which a local handyman or family member could fit for you. The Age UK Group offers handyman 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 34) for information about our handyman schemes and to see what is available in your area.

-  In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru to find out if there’s a handyman or HandyVan scheme in your area (see page 34). In Scotland, contact Care and Repair Scotland for details of who can help locally (see page 36).

Moving around your home

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

Good lighting can help you get about 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 and not returned within a certain time. This can also be useful for carers who sleep in a different room or downstairs.

If you use a wheelchair, do you have enough space 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?

Ask your local council's social services department for an assessment of your needs and find out what assistance and equipment are available (see pages 24–25).



See our free information guide *Home safety checker* or contact the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (see page 37). In Scotland, see Age Scotland's factsheet *Older homeowners: funding repairs, improvements and adaptations*.

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 install a stairlift to make it easier. Different types have features to suit different needs, such as:

- a swivel seat 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 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 36) or the Disabled Living Foundation (see page 35) 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 *Getting help at home* has more information on assessments. For more detailed information, see our free factsheets *Social care assessment, eligibility and care planning* and *Disability equipment and home 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 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 need help getting up and dressed, it may be worth asking the council for an assessment of your needs to see if you’re eligible for help. The council can also give you information about sources of assistance in your area (see pages 24–25).

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. This includes hoists, transfer boards and slide sheets. It’s important to get a professional assessment for this, 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, a mattress sensor can send a message to a carer for assistance if the bed becomes wet. See pages 13–14 for more information about telecare.

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 pages 13–14 and visit www.ageuk.org.uk/telecare for more information about telecare, what it is and how you can use it to stay independent. In Scotland, see Age

i Scotland's factsheet *Older homeowners: funding repairs, improvements and adaptations*.

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. See page 24 for information on what help you might be able to get from your local council.

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 pages 13–14.

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?

Contact the Disabled Living Foundation for details of equipment to make life easier in the bathroom and toilet (see page 35). Handicare provides accessible baths and showers in association with the Age UK Group. Call Handicare free on 0800 566 8823 or visit www.ageukbathrooms.co.uk for more information.

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-handed 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 35). For more about telecare see pages 13–14.

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 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, for example 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 pages 24–25). 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, occupational therapist 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.

*Age UK Personal Alarms are provided by Aid-Call Ltd (registered company no. 01488490), a wholly owned subsidiary of Age UK which donates its net profits to that charity. The use of the name and logo 'Age UK' is done so under a licence agreement between Age UK and Aid-Call Ltd.

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Telehealth

Telehealth systems can help you if you're living with a long-term health condition at home. It allows you to monitor your health without having to keep visiting your GP.

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 35). In Scotland, contact Care Information Scotland for more about telecare (see page 35).



Read the NHS information leaflet *Supporting your independence and wellbeing with telehealth and telecare*. Download a free copy by visiting www.nhs.uk or call the orderline on 0300 123 1002.

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.

i Remember, if you're aged 60 or over, you can have a free NHS eye test (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.

i Contact Age UK Advice (see page 34) for information about our handyperson schemes and to see what's available in your area. In Wales and Northern Ireland, contact your local Age Cymru or Age NI to find out if there's a handyperson or HandyVan scheme in your area (see page 34). In Scotland, contact Care and Repair Scotland to find out if there's a handyperson service in your area (see page 36).

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 37). 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 38).

It's important to have your eyes tested regularly to identify any deterioration in their condition as soon as possible.



Living with hearing loss

Many of us 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 pages 13–14 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 35).

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 38).

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

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 for how 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 pages 13–15 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. If you've been diagnosed with early-stage dementia, or if you care for someone with dementia, you may find it useful to read our free information guides *Living with early-stage dementia* and *Caring for someone with dementia*.

You can use new technologies to help with things such as organising your day and remembering where you've put your belongings.

‘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 us both.’



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 any risks. In England, under the new Care Act, the local authority must act to maximise your wellbeing and seek to prevent, reduce and delay any future needs.

The assessor 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. 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, which could, for example, include 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 or looking on the internet. See www.ageuk.org.uk/telecare for more information.

More information about how adaptations may be paid for can be found on pages 26–27.

what next?



Ask for a copy of our free factsheets *Finding help at home* and *Disability equipment and home adaptations*. In Wales, see Age Cymru's versions of these factsheets. See our free factsheet *Personal budgets and direct payments in adult social care* to find out about different ways to arrange your care. In Wales, read Age Cymru's free factsheet *Direct payments for community care services in Wales* (personal budgets are not available in Wales).

Help with the costs of equipment and minor adaptations

- i** In England and Northern Ireland, specialist disability equipment is provided free of charge if it is required to meet your eligible needs following an assessment by your local council. An example of this could 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.

- i** In Scotland, some personal care equipment is free of charge.
- i** 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. This programme is not means tested but you have to be referred to the programme by a health or social care professional. Contact Care and Repair Cymru to find out more (see page 36).

In England, if you've been assessed as needing help from social services (see pages 24–25), and you're eligible for financial support you will be given a personal budget. This is a sum of money that the local authority thinks it will cost to meet your assessed needs. You can choose between having the council arrange your care, or arranging it yourself through direct payments. This is a cash payment you can use to arrange and pay for your care at home, which may include buying equipment to help you at home. See our free factsheet *Personal budgets and direct payments in adult social care* to find out more. In Wales, personal budgets are not available, but you may be eligible for a direct payment. Read Age Cymru's free factsheets *Paying for care and support at home in Wales* and *Direct payments for community care services in Wales* for more information. In Scotland, see Age Scotland's free factsheet *Council assessments for care and support at home*. In Northern Ireland, contact Age NI 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 29). 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, your local authority must still give you information and advice about how to prevent or delay your needs developing. You can also 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 35).

Make sure you check whether you're entitled to any other benefits. Many people who need help with care will qualify for a disability benefit: either Personal Independence Payment or Attendance Allowance depending on their age.

Neither benefit is means-tested so your income and savings won't be taken into account. See our free guides *More money*

i *in your pocket* and *Attendance Allowance* to find out more.

Age Cymru and Age NI have their own versions of *More money in your pocket*. You could also try our online benefits calculator at www.ageuk.org.uk/benefitscheck

what next?

See our free factsheets *Disability equipment and home adaptations* and *Funding repairs, improvements and adaptations* for further information. In Wales, see

i Age Cymru's version of *Disability equipment and home adaptations*. In Northern Ireland, see Age NI's free factsheet *Aids and adaptations*. You could also contact your local council's social services department directly.

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.

- i** 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 get 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.

- i** In Scotland, there is a similar grant available. Contact your local authority to find out more.

what next?

See our free factsheet *Disability equipment and home adaptations*. In Wales, see Age Cymru's version of this factsheet. In Scotland, see Age Scotland's factsheet

- i** *Older homeowners: funding repairs, improvements and adaptations*. Contact your local council's social services department for information about applying for a DFG and to request an assessment. Your local Home Improvement Agency may also be able to help you apply (see page 36). In Northern Ireland, contact Fold for advice (see page 36).

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. 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.

Home Improvement Agency 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 Home Improvement Agencies also run a handy person 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 coordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies in your nation (see page 36). Home Improvement Agencies are not available in Northern Ireland.

If there is no Home Improvement Agency in your area, your local council may run a handy person scheme of its own. The Age UK Group offers handy person 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 34) for information about our handy person schemes and to see what is available in your area. In Wales, contact your local Age Cymru to find out if there's a handy person or HandyVan scheme in your area (see page 34).

**what
next?**

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

Equity release

Equity release is a way for older homeowners to release cash from their home without having to move. You borrow money against the value of your home, but pay nothing back until after your home is sold – either after your death or when you go into long-term care. Alternatively, you can raise money by selling your home, or part of it, but continue to live in it until you die or go into long-term care.

Equity release can be a way to release some spare cash or to fund repairs or adaptations. However, it's a big decision and you are strongly advised to consider all your options before deciding. You should also take independent financial advice.

**what
next?**

See our free guide *Equity release* for more information.

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 the Age UK Gifted Housing Service on 0800 389 5295 or visit www.ageuk.org.uk/gifted-housing

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, going into residential care 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

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.

Tel: 0808 808 0123

Textphone: 0808 808 9000

Email: information.line@hearingloss.org.uk

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Care Information Scotland

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

Tel: 0800 011 3200

www.careinfoscotland.co.uk

College of Occupational Therapists (COT)

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

Tel: 020 7357 6480

www.cot.co.uk

Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

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

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.

Tel: 028 9042 8314

Email: info@foldgroup.co.uk

www.foldgroup.co.uk/stayingput

Home Improvement Agencies

Help older homeowners and private tenants organise repairs, improvements and adaptations to their home.

In England, contact **Foundations**

Tel: 0300 124 0315

Email: info@foundations.uk.com

www.foundations.uk.com

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

Tel: 0300 111 3333

www.careandrepair.org.uk

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

Tel: 0141 221 9879

www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk

Rica

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

Tel: 020 7427 2460

www.rica.org.uk

Royal National Institute of Blind People (RNIB)

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

Tel: 0303 123 9999

Email: helpline@rnib.org.uk

www.rnib.org.uk

In Wales, contact **RNIB Cymru**

Tel: 029 2082 8500

Email: cymru@rnib.org.uk

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

Tel: 028 9032 9373

Email: rnibni@rnib.org.uk

In Scotland, contact **RNIB Scotland**

Tel: 0131 652 3146

Email: rnibscotland@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.

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).

Tel: 0300 330 9256

Textphone: 0300 330 9256

Email: info@sense.org.uk

www.sense.org.uk

In Wales, contact **Sense Cymru**

Tel: 0300 330 9280

Email: cymruenquiries@sense.org.uk

In Northern Ireland, contact **Sense NI**

Tel: 028 9083 3430

Email: nienquiries@sense.org.uk

In Scotland, contact **Sense Scotland**

Tel: 0300 330 9292

Email: info@sensescotland.org.uk

www.sensescotland.org.uk

Thomas Pocklington Trust

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

Tel: 020 8995 0880

Email: info@pocklington-trust.org.uk

www.pocklington-trust.org.uk

Can you help Age UK?

Please complete the donation form below with a gift of whatever you can afford and return to: 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:
Address: _____ _____		
Postcode: _____		
Tel:	Email:	

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

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



The Age UK Group may use the information you have supplied to tell you about our other charitable services or to ask you to support our work. Age UK (registered charity no 1128267) comprises the Charity, its group of companies and national partners (Age Cymru, Age Scotland & Age NI). If you would prefer not to hear from us do let us know by phoning 0800 107 8977 or by writing to us at our registered address. The registered address is Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA.

Supporting the work of Age UK

Age UK aims to enable all older people to love later life. We provide vital services, support, information and advice to thousands of older people across the UK.

In order to offer free information guides like this one, Age UK relies on the generosity of its supporters. If you would like to help us, here are a few ways you could get involved:

1 Make a donation
To make a donation to Age UK, simply complete the enclosed donation form, call us on **0800 169 8787** or visit **www.ageuk.org.uk/get-involved**

2 Donate items to our shops
By donating an unwanted item to one of our shops, you can help generate vital funds to support our work. To find your nearest Age UK shop, visit **www.ageuk.org.uk** and enter your postcode into the ‘What does Age UK do in your area?’ search function. Alternatively, call us on **0800 169 8787**

3 Leave a gift in your will
Nearly half the money we receive from supporters come from gifts left in wills. To find out more about how you could help in this way, please call the Age UK legacy team on **020 3033 1421** or email **legacies@ageuk.org.uk**



**Thank
you!**

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:

- *Getting help at home*
- *Home safety checker*
- *Living with early-stage dementia*

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**.

