Equipment for daily living

Age Scotland Information and Advice
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1 Equipment to make life easier

You might be starting to need help for different reasons because you:
- are unable to climb in and out of the bath;
- have difficulty in turning taps;
- take a long time to get into and out of bed;
- struggle to go up or down stairs;
- find it awkward to stand up or sit down to use the toilet.

Equipment is available to help you manage daily tasks around the home and to assist with your walking and mobility needs. Responsibility for providing such equipment and minor adaptations is split between your local council, and the NHS, although these two organisations should work closely together.

1.1 Equipment for daily living

If you feel you need help and would benefit from equipment or adaptations, you can contact your local council’s social work department. They will usually arrange for you to be assessed in your home by an Occupational Therapist (OT).

This service should be arranged as soon as possible, although in some areas there may be a long wait either for an OT assessment or before actually receiving the equipment. Social work departments have to provide disability equipment by law\(^1\) if it is agreed that you need this.

You do not need a letter from your doctor before you apply, although this can sometimes help the OT to understand how your medical condition affects your daily needs. Once you have been assessed and it is agreed that you meet local rules (known as ‘eligibility criteria’) you have a right to receive the equipment or adaptations which will meet your needs, although your local council is able to consider its budget when deciding what it can provide.

Some examples of daily equipment are listed below, but not all councils will be able to provide all items:
- help for you to use the bath or toilet such as shower chairs, grab rails, bath boards, raised toilet seats etc.;
- help with food preparation such as lever taps and adapted kitchen utensils;

\(^1\) Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (CSDP)
• help with the use of beds and chairs, e.g. bed raisers

There is no legal time limit for disability equipment to be provided but you should not have to wait longer than is reasonable, and excessive delays can be challenged. Each council’s social work department must have a complaints procedure which you can use to complain about the service or the assessment of your needs.

1.2 Cost of Equipment

Where equipment relates to personal care (such as movement sensors to help prevent people with dementia from wandering) this should be free of charge.

Where equipment and minor adaptations are provided by the social work department to support you when you return home from hospital, this should also be free if supplied and fitted within a 4 week period, according to guidance.2

Local councils are able to charge for other equipment they provide, and they can decide their own rules for this.

Large and expensive items, for example a bath hoist, may be classed as an adaptation, which would be the responsibility of either the housing or social work department of the council.

See the Age Scotland Factsheet Older home owners: financial help with repairs and adaptations for more information.

1.3 Self-Directed Support

Self-Directed Support can be used to buy equipment or adaptations for your needs that would otherwise have been provided by the social work department. It is very important that you take advice to ensure that the equipment you are buying is safe, appropriate and cost effective.

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www.show.scot.nhs.uk/sehd/publications/Ccd2_01/ccd2-00.htm
Once you have bought the equipment, you will become the owner, you should check with the council whether you or the council is responsible for maintaining the equipment.

1.4 **Equipment to meet health needs**

Some types of equipment, such as a commode or walking aids, are arranged by the NHS. You should contact your GP or community nurse if you need one of these items.

If you have mobility problems, walking equipment can be provided after an assessment by a physiotherapist. A physiotherapist will be able to recommend the most appropriate walking aid and ensure you know how to use it safely. The Disabled Living Foundation has produced a range of factsheets, including Choosing Walking Equipment.

If you have some hearing loss and would like to try a hearing aid, you should visit your GP. Your GP will check if there is a medical reason for your hearing loss and they may refer you to your local hospital for a hearing test. If it is agreed that a hearing aid will help you, the NHS can issue you with a hearing aid on loan, (batteries, repairs and replacements are free). For further information contact Action on Hearing Loss Scotland at Empire House, 131 West Nile Street, Glasgow, G1 2RX.

Textphone: 0141 341 5347. Voice helpline Tel: 0808 808 0123 (free call).

http://www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk/

If you have some visual impairment there are aids available such as magnifiers which may be able to help you. The NHS can provide these aids on loan and they are mainly available from hospital eye departments. For further information contact the Royal National Institute for Blind People (RNIB) on 08457 669 999 or on their website http://www.rnib.org.uk/livingwithsightloss/Pages/sight_loss.aspx

Your local social work department may also provide support services or employ specialist social workers to help people with sight or hearing loss.

Some items such as wigs or fabric supports may be issued on an NHS prescription. If you get certain means-tested benefits you should get free dental treatment, travel costs to hospital, and help towards glasses. Some people also qualify for help because they are on a low income.
See the Age Scotland factsheet *NHS services and older people* for more information.

If you have a complaint about equipment provided by the NHS you should use the NHS complaints procedure. You should first complain to the person or organisation which you had been dealing with but if you would prefer not to do so, most Health Boards should have a complaints officer you can approach instead.

If you would like to speak to someone for advice on making a complaint, you can contact the Patient Advice and Support Service through your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

## 2 Wheelchairs

If you need a wheelchair on a temporary basis it may be possible to hire or borrow one on short-term loan from the British Red Cross Medical Loan Service. If you need a wheelchair on a more permanent basis the NHS can provide these on free long-term loan. Your GP, hospital consultant, or social work staff can refer you to your local NHS wheelchair service which will assess whether you are eligible for a wheelchair. The wheelchair service can then help you to choose a suitable chair.

There may not be much choice of wheelchairs. If you are assessed as requiring one, the NHS can provide a powered wheelchair suitable for indoor and occasional outdoor use. Any wheelchair provided will officially belong to the NHS and be loaned to you for as long as required. The NHS can pay for servicing or repairs.

It may also be possible to get charitable help in purchasing a wheelchair. Charity Search may be able to advise you about sources of charitable funding. The Disabled Living Foundation produces factsheets with information about wheelchairs and scooters.
3 Community Alarms and Telecare

Community alarms enable you to call for help in an emergency. The alarms usually operate either by a button on your telephone, a pull cord in your room or a pendant which you wear round your neck - or possibly a combination of these. These alarms link you to a central service staffed 24 hours a day. Staff there can speak to you, find out the problem, offer advice or summon help for you. If you are unable to speak they will ensure that someone gets to your home as soon as possible.

Your local social work department should be able to give you details of community alarm services in your area.

The Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (Ricability) and the Disabled Living Foundation produce information about choosing personal alarms. Action on Hearing Loss has information about alerting systems for people who have hearing loss.

Community alarms are often considered as part of Telecare. Telecare can assist you to live independently at home using different types of technology, for example, fall detectors, sensors for people with epilepsy, flood detectors, gas leak valve shut-off sensors and door exit sensors.

There are also ‘Telehealth’ products which can specifically monitor your health at home, for example, by providing the correct daily dose of tablets, which can be pre-set and monitored. Some of these types of telecare and telehealth systems may be recommended and arranged as part of your assessment for care at home by the local social work department.

4 Equipment and support needed for employment

If you are about to start work or self-employment, and need equipment or support relating to your disability to enable you to do your job, there may be help available to fund this. The Government runs a Disability Employment Service which provides Disability Employment Advisers who operate in all parts of Scotland. You can contact your local Jobcentre Plus to speak to your local Disability Employment Adviser for information.
There is also a scheme known as Access to Work, run by the Disability Employment Service, which deals with applications for financial support for assistance and equipment from people in Scotland. If you are already in a paid job, it can provide you and your employer with the necessary advice about arranging the appropriate support and equipment you need, and how your employer can recover their costs. Your Disability Employment adviser will be able to put you in touch with an Access to Work Adviser. For further information, ask at the local Jobcentre Plus, or see https://www.gov.uk/access-to-work

5 Things to consider when choosing equipment

If you need or choose to purchase your own equipment always asks for independent or professional advice. Occupational therapists (OTs) or physiotherapists from a hospital, social work department or employed by a Disabled Living Centre or Centre for Integrated Living should be able to help. They will be able to advise you on equipment which is likely to be suitable for you and what is available.

You can obtain information from the Disabled Living Foundation’s Living Made Easy website - www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk You can also use their AskSARA website - www.asksara.org.uk - which provides an easy-to-use self-help guide that is particularly useful if you are not sure what items might help you.

If you are choosing equipment for yourself you should:

- Avoid being pressurised into buying equipment until you are sure it is right for you
- Carefully check the terms of any leasing agreement or credit agreement
- Check that it complies with British Standards and has a “Kitemark”.
- Check that it is comfortable and easy to use. If possible, try it out before you buy.
- Make sure the equipment is in good condition and suitable for the task you need it for.
- Check that the equipment is easy for you to use without help, and has clear instructions for use
- Think about how you will transport the equipment (such as a wheelchair); how easy will it be to transport in a car or taxi? Where will you store it at home?
• Think about repair and maintenance of the equipment. Where could you get parts and who could repair it? Does the equipment need to be serviced regularly and what would this cost? Is there a guarantee?
• Think about insuring the equipment? What would this cost through any insurance you already have or as a separate insurance policy?

A number of private companies sell disability equipment, through mail order catalogues, shops and online. Some large high street chemists stock smaller items of daily living equipment and may have catalogues of other equipment.

6 Problems with equipment you have purchased

If you are not happy with the equipment you have purchased, get in touch with the supplier as soon as possible. If equipment is faulty then you should be able to have it repaired, replaced or obtain a refund.

For advice about your consumer rights call the Citizens Advice Consumer helpline on 0345 4 04 05 06.

The supplier of your equipment may be a member of a trade association such as the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA). If your supplier is a member of the BHTA and you are not happy with its service you can complain to the BHTA. The contact details are: British Healthcare Trades Association, New Loom House, Suite 4.06, 101 Back Church Lane, London E1 1LU, Tel: 020 7702 2141. www.bhta.com

The Disabled Living Foundation produces a factsheet about making a complaint.

7 Buying second-hand

Second-hand equipment is advertised in a number of places, including:
• Disability Now, a newspaper published by Scope: a major disability organisation in the field of cerebral palsy; items for sale may be viewed at www.disabilitynow.org.uk;
• The Disabled Living Foundation produces a factsheet listing journals that carry advertisements for second-hand equipment
7.1 Loans of equipment

In addition to the NHS, the local Red Cross can often loan wheelchairs and some other equipment for short periods, for example for the visit of a relative or in the case of a temporary injury. You can find details in the phone book under Red Cross, or on the website www.redcross.org.uk

Shop mobility schemes lend manual and powered wheelchairs and powered scooters to people who need them to shop and use other facilities in town centres. There are schemes throughout Scotland. For more information contact www.shopmobilityuk.org.uk

Integrated Living centres, Disability Living Centres or DIALs may be able to provide you with information about wheelchair hire services or Shopmobility schemes locally. Also, some Councils for Voluntary Service (often called a CVS or Voluntary Action) may have local schemes.

7.2 VAT

There is no VAT charged when purchasing some types of equipment which are specifically designed or adapted to help someone who has a long-term illness or disability, and who needs the equipment for their daily use. In addition, there may be no VAT payable on the costs of servicing or maintaining these types of equipment.

You should ask about this VAT exemption when buying or ordering equipment from the supplier to confirm whether it will apply to your purchase. You will need to sign a form declaring that you have a long-term illness or disability.

Further information on VAT exemption is provided on the HMRC website at http://customs.hmrc.gov.uk/channelsPortalWebApp/channelsPortalWebApp.portal?_nfpb=true&_pageLabel=pageImport_ShowContent&id=HMCE_CL_000184&propertyType=document

Copies of this leaflet and further advice should also be available from your local VAT office; see under ‘HM Customs and Excise’ in your local telephone directory, or call their helpline: 0845 302 0203 (local call rate).
8 Sources of funding

Some charities may be able to help with the cost of purchasing equipment. You can find more information from:

Charity Search
This charity provides free advice for older people to link them with established charities which may be able to help with funds. It does not itself give grants to individuals.

FREEPOST (BS6610), Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 9TW.
Tel: 0117 982 4060.
www.charitysearch.org.uk

9 Sources of further advice and information

DIAL UK
DIAL (the Disablement Information and Advice Line) is a network of local groups throughout the country providing information and advice to disabled people on a range of issues. DIAL UK should be able to tell you if there is a group in your local area or you can contact them centrally at:
DIAL UK
St Catherine’s
Tickhill Road
Doncaster
South Yorkshire
DN4 8QN
Tel: 01302 310123
Textphone: 01302 310123
www.dialuk.info

Disability Rights UK
Disability Rights UK provides information about services and entitlements to disabled people and their families. They produce and update annually the Disability Rights Handbook. They are based at:
12 City Forum
250 City Road
London
EC1V 8AF
Tel: 020 7250 3222
www.disabilityrightsuk.org

The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)
The DLF provides advice and information on disability equipment and assisted products. It has factsheets on a variety of subjects, including choosing wheelchairs or other equipment. A full list of publications is available from:
Disabled Living Foundation
380-384 Harrow Road
London
W9 2HU
Helpline tel: 0845 130 9177 (local call rate).
Textphone: 020 7432 8009
www.dlf.org.uk

Grapevine
Grapevine Disability Information Service is an information service providing information to people in Edinburgh, East Lothian and Midlothian on a range of disability matters, including equipment. It can be contacted via:
Lothian Centre for Integrated Living (LCIL)
Norton Park
57 Albion Road
Edinburgh
EH7 5QY
Tel: 0131 0131 475 2370
Fax: 0131 475 2392.
Textphone: 0131 475 2463.
www.lothiancil.org.uk

Glasgow Centre for Inclusive Living
Glasgow Centre for Inclusive living is a Glasgow based organisation providing information and services to support disabled people in independent living. They publish a very useful leaflet on equipment and adaptations for disabled people in Glasgow. It can be obtained from:
GCIL
117 - 127 Brook Street
Glasgow
G40 3AP
Tel: 0141 550 4455
Textphone: 0141 554 6482.
Motability
Motability is a national charity which assists disabled people with mobility needs. They may be able to offer financial help towards the cost of a suitable car, adaptations, driving lessons or a wheelchair accessible vehicle. In addition, Motability also administers the Government scheme of the same name to enable people to buy an adapted wheelchair-accessible vehicle. They also provide a service for equipment purchase such as for wheelchairs, and scooters. For further information contact:
Motability Operations
City Gate House
22 Southwark Bridge Road
London, SE1 9HB
Tel: 0845 456 4566 (local call rate)
Textphone: 0845 675 0009.
www.motability.co.uk

Disability Information Scotland
Disability Information Scotland is a national charity in Scotland providing information for disabled people. It has information regarding companies that manufacture and sell equipment in Scotland. It provides advice and may be able to provide lists of organisations in your area that can undertake funding searches for you.

They can be contacted on 0300 323 9961 or see www.disabilityscot.org.uk

10 Guidance on Equipment and Adaptations
A ‘good practice guide’ for equipment provision is available from the Scottish Government. To see the guide in full see
www.scotland.gov.uk/Topics/Health/care/EandA/GoodPracticeGuide

or

call the Scottish Government on 0131 244 3748.
11 Further Information

These other Age Scotland factsheets may be of use:

Factsheet 13s  Older home owners – funding repairs, improvements & adaptations

Factsheet 44s  NHS services for older people

You can call us on 0800 4 70 80 90 for a copy of our publications list or download copies from our website at www.agescotland.org.uk.

Silver Line Scotland 0800 4 70 80 90

Silver Line Scotland provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers. The helpline is open 24 hours a day, every day of the year.

0800 4 70 80 90 (from a landline)

0300 4 70 80 90 (from a mobile)

You can also contact us by textphone on 0333 323 2451.

If you need an interpreter call 0800 4 70 80 90 and simply state the language you need e.g. Hindi. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Silver Line Scotland staff will do the rest.

Support our work

Every year, thousands of older people across Scotland benefit from the vital information and advice Age Scotland provides. If you would like to support this work and help improve the lives of older people in Scotland you can donate by:

- Giving us a call on 0333 323 2400 and ask for the fundraising team.
- Visit our website at www.agescotland.org.uk/donate.
- Complete the donation page over the page and return in an envelope to Age Scotland, Causewayside House, 160 Causewayside, Edinburgh, EH9 1PR.

Across the UK

For information and advice in the rest of the UK:

In England contact Age UK Advice on 0800 169 65 65
www.ageuk.org.uk

In Wales contact Age Cymru on 0800 169 65 65
www.agecymru.org.uk

In Northern Ireland contact Age NI on 0808 808 7575
www.ageni.org.uk
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160 Causewayside
Edinburgh
EH9 1PR

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