

Adapting your home



Services and equipment to
help you stay living at home



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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Date of publication: November 2016. © Age UK 2016

Next review date: November 2018



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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's social services department. It explains how these changes can help you maintain your independence and stay living at home safely.

As far as possible, the 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 refer 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.

If you find it difficult to climb steps up to the door, you could have a rail installed. This could either be a metal 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 if you have one. Outdoor 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 a solution if you only 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 or if it would be too steep. In those cases, 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 when the light is triggered it won't disturb your sleep or annoy your neighbours.

**what
next?**

If you rent, you may need your landlord's permission to make these changes. If you have shared access, you may need your neighbour's consent.

Contact your local council's social services department to get an assessment and to find out what assistance and equipment you could get (see pages 20–21). They should offer you information and advice even if you aren't eligible for their services. There may also be a Home Improvement Agency in your area offering assistance with adaptations

i (see page 33). In Northern Ireland, Home Improvement Agencies are not available, so contact Fold (see page 32) or the Occupational Therapy Department of your local Health and Social Care Trust.

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

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 that comes with an entry phone you can keep near your chair
- choose a video entry phone so you can 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 police-approved 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 consider 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 11–13 for more about telecare options and pages 22–25 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?**

Contact the Disabled Living Foundation to see whether there is any equipment that you might find useful (see page 32). Many DIY shops and high-street retailers stock wireless doorbells and video entry systems, which a family member, handyperson or Home Improvement Agency could fit for you (see page 27 for more information about Home Improvement Agencies and handypersons).

Moving around your home

If you're having difficulty moving around your home, it's important to think about lighting, trip hazards and whether you have space to move around safely.

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 when 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 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 financial help, advice and equipment is available (see pages 20–21). See our free information guide *Home safety checker* or contact the Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (see page 34). 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, an extra banister rail or a stairlift might make it easier.

Different types of stairlifts 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 large pieces of equipment so 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 the Disabled Living Foundation (see page 32) or Rica (see page 33) 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 Trading CIC. Call Handicare free on 0800 228 9609 or visit www.ageukstairlifts.co.uk for more information.

**what
next?**

(i) For more information, see our free guide *Getting help at home and our factsheets Social care assessment, eligibility and care planning and Disability equipment and home adaptations*. Age Cymru and Age Scotland have their own versions of these factsheets.

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Getting up and dressed

Getting in and out of bed, or getting up from a chair, can become difficult 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 equipment, so you may need professional advice if you have complex needs. If you need help getting up and dressed, ask 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 20–21).

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

Simple equipment can make it easier to get dressed – such as a long-handled shoehorn or gadgets to assist with putting on tights or 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 items.

**what
next?**

See our free guide *Getting help at home* for more information about local council assessments. In Scotland, see Age Scotland’s factsheet *Older homeowners: funding repairs, improvements and adaptations*.

Washing, bathing and using the toilet

Loss of mobility and balance can make it difficult to wash and bathe or to use the toilet. However, there's a range of equipment and adaptations that may help such as:

- a battery powered bath lift with a seat or platform that can be lowered to support your weight as you get into the bath and raised to help you get out
- a bath with a side opening so you can get in and out without having to climb over the side
- a 'wet room' or level-access shower
- a wall-mounted sink set at the right height for someone who is using a wheelchair or a mobile shower seat
- a special safety plug that only allows water to reach a certain level
- a flood detector that alerts a monitoring centre if the bath or sink starts to overflow (for more information about telecare see pages 11–13)
- a 'hands-free' toilet with an automatic washing and drying function while you are still seated.

You can also get items to help with washing and bathing if your mobility is limited, such as long-handled sponges or foot-cleaning bath mats to save you bending down.

what next?

See page 20–21 for information on what help you might 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 32). Handicare provides accessible baths and showers in association with the Age UK Trading CIC. 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, but there are lots of adaptations and equipment to make cooking and preparing food easier and safer. You could try:

- a perching stool, which is designed to allow a near-standing position while supporting you at the same time
- spike boards to allow one-handed vegetable cutting or peeling
- kettle tippers if you find the kettle too heavy to tilt up
- wide-handled cutlery
- high rimmed plates and two-handled cups
- assistive tin, bottle and jar openers
- a sturdy trolley to support mobility and help you move food and drink from room to room.

To make your kitchen wheelchair-accessible, install adjustable-height work surfaces and a shallow basin and draining board with space underneath to allow you to carry out tasks while seated. 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 32). For more about telecare see pages 11–13.

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 taking 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 telecare service 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 20–21). Contact your local council for information about its personal alarm scheme

- i or look on www.gov.uk/apply-for-community-alarm (for England and Wales). 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*.

*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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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 motion 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 mattress sensor that can send a message to a carer for assistance if the bed becomes wet
- 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.

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 the results 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.

If you get any medical equipment on loan, you may need to check that it's covered by your home insurance policy, as not all insurance policies will cover loss of or damage to medical equipment that's on loan.

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 32). In Scotland, contact Care Information Scotland for more about telecare (see page 32).

Read the information on the NHS website on telecare at www.nhs.uk/Conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/Pages/telecare-alarms.aspx

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 as soon as possible.

- i** 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.

Increasing the level of natural light entering your home can help to make the most of your sight. Check whether 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.

Trailing wires and loose carpets, broken handrails or general clutter can be a hazard. If you need help with repairs or removing risks in your home contact a Home Improvement Agency or a handyperson service (see page 33).

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

what next?

Contact the RNIB for information on how to manage the impact of sight loss in your day-to-day life (see page 33). The Thomas Pocklington Trust also provides information and support for people with sight loss, including advice on how to improve the lighting in your home (see page 34).

Living with hearing loss

Many of us experience some degree of hearing loss as we grow older. If you have hearing loss, there's a wide range of equipment and technology available to help. Devices to alert you visually to things you may not be able to hear, such as door bells and smoke alarms that flash, are particularly important in the home. You may want to get wireless smoke alarms fitted. These connect using radio signals so that if one goes off, 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. For expert advice on alarms, contact your local Fire and Rescue service.

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 options available. You can also get a sounder beacon installed which flashes and makes loud signals when a telephone or any sensor is activated. See pages 11–13 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 32).

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 your independence, contact Sense (see page 34).

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 tag will beep and flash to help you find the missing item.
- 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 on which occasions they were taken. 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 worry about getting lost and you want to let someone you trust know you've gone out and where you are, 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 11–13 for more information about assistive technologies such as telecare and telehealth.

If you feel that your memory loss is becoming more of a problem, 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 *At home with dementia*, *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.

My story

Carol and Fred have found equipment to make their lives easier.

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.'



‘We asked the
local council if we
qualified for any
help and they sent
an **occupational
therapist** round.’

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, contact the adult social services department of your local council. Explain that 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 age or your income and savings.

You will be assessed by either 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 Care Act, your local authority must act to maximise your wellbeing and seek to prevent, reduce and delay any future needs.

They should ask you what outcomes you want and try to

- (i) meet them where possible. In Wales, local authorities have very similar duties under the Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act.

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 as well as considering any support which would prevent you from needing more significant help in the future. 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 a set of criteria to assess your level of needs. If your needs are considered ‘eligible’, the council will have a duty to offer you help and support. 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.

Even if you find out that you’re not eligible for help from the council, they still have a duty to give you information and advice about services or equipment that could help you. If you want to buy equipment yourself, some high street retailers and pharmacies 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. The Disabled Living Foundation is a good source of information on mobility products or other types of daily living equipment for older and disabled people. They also have a helpline (see page 32).

More information about how adaptations may be paid for can be found on pages 22–25.

what next?



Read 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 *Social care assessments for older people with care needs in Wales* and *Direct payments for community care services in Wales*.

Paying for equipment and adaptations

If you need some equipment or adaptations to your home, you may be concerned about how to pay for them. Some equipment and adaptations may be provided by your local council and you could be eligible for a Disabled Facilities Grant for larger adaptations. Equity release could also be a consideration if you don't qualify for other help.

Free equipment and minor adaptations from your local authority

Once you have had your care needs assessment (see page 20), the local authority will make recommendations on what equipment, adaptations, care and support you need.

In England, specialist disability equipment is provided free of charge if it is recommended by the local authority after your assessment. An example of this could be the provision of a mobile hoist to enable safe assisted transfers in and out of bed.

If the local authority recommends that you need minor adaptations to your home that cost less than £1,000, these are also provided and fitted free of charge. They might include grab rails, short ramps, dropped curbs, lever taps or external lighting.

See our free factsheet *Disability equipment and home adaptations* for further information.

If the local authority decides after your care assessment that you don't have any eligible needs, they won't provide you with any equipment or adaptations. However, your local authority must still give you free information and advice, for example, about where to buy equipment. 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 32).

- i** In Wales, you'll have a financial assessment to decide if you will have to contribute towards the cost of equipment and adaptations. If you don't qualify for free equipment, your local authority must still give you information and advice. You may also be able to get help from the Government's Rapid Response Adaptations Programme (administered by Care & Repair Cymru – see page 33). For more information, read Age Cymru's free factsheets *Paying for care and support at home in Wales* and *Obtaining disability equipment and home adaptations in Wales*.
- i** In Scotland, some personal-care equipment is free of charge, including essential equipment and adaptations that cost less than £1,500. See Age Scotland's free factsheet *Care and support at home: assessment and funding*.
- i** In Northern Ireland, you may need to contribute towards the costs of a minor adaptation or equipment. Contact Age NI for more information or see Age NI's free guide *Care at home*.

Disabled Facilities Grants to help with major adaptations

For larger adaptations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, you may qualify for a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). They can be used to cover a wide range of adaptations 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 can usually only get a DFG for work that your local council has assessed you as needing. 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's means-tested and there's an upper limit on the amount you can get, although local authorities may agree to top this up in some circumstances. If you're a council tenant, the council should pay for major adaptations that you've been assessed as needing.

Contact your local council's social services department or see our free factsheet *Disability equipment and home adaptations* for more information. In Wales, see Age Cymru's version of this factsheet. Your local Home Improvement Agency may also be able to help you apply (see page 33). In Northern Ireland, contact Fold for advice or the Northern Ireland Housing Executive (see pages 32 and 33).

In Scotland, there is a similar grant available. Contact your local authority or see Age Scotland's factsheet *Older homeowners: funding repairs, improvements and adaptations* for more information.

Boost your income

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

- (i) *More money 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*. In Scotland, see Age Scotland's *Benefits maze*. You could also try our online benefits calculator at www.ageuk.org.uk/benefitscheck.

Equity release

Equity release can be a way to release some spare cash or to fund repairs or adaptations. 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.

It's a big decision and you are strongly advised to consider all your options before deciding. If you think equity release would be the best option for you, make sure you get advice from a fully qualified, experienced equity release adviser before taking out a plan.

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



Contact your local council's social services
department to get an assessment and to find out
what assistance and **equipment you could get.**

Home Improvement Agencies and handypersons

There may be a Home Improvement Agency (HIA) in your area offering help with home improvements. HIAs can offer practical help with adaptations, such as arranging a survey, getting estimates for the work, applying for local authority assistance (including Disabled Facilities Grants, or equivalent

- i** grants available for disabled people in Scotland, and loans) and supervising the work to completion. Even if you can afford to pay for the work yourself, you can take a lot of the strain 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 co-ordinating body for Home Improvement Agencies in your nation (see

- i** page 33). Home Improvement Agencies are not available in Northern Ireland.

Some HIAs also run a handyperson scheme for help with small repairs, such as fitting rails to prevent falls. There may be a handyperson service in your area even if you don't have an HIA – ask your local council.

Over 70 local Age UKs also operate handyperson services across much of the country. These are usually charged-for services, and the cost will depend on the nature of the work required. Contact Age UK Advice (see page 31) to see what

- i** 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 31). In Scotland, contact Age Scotland (see page 31).

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 it, 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 that you 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/giftedhousing.

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 could apply for a transfer to more suitable accommodation, such as sheltered housing. If you're a homeowner, you may want to think about 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 and 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.

[See our free guide *Housing options* for more information.](#)

what
next?

Notes

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: 0800 124 4222

www.agescotland.org.uk

The evidence sources used to create this guide are available on request. Contact resources@ageuk.org.uk

AT Dementia

Provides information on assistive technology that can help people 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

www.actiononhearingloss.org.uk

Care Information Scotland

Provides information about care services for older people.

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

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

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

wwwFOUNDATIONS.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.careandrepairscotland.co.uk

Northern Ireland Housing Executive

Provides information on grants for home improvements.

Tel: 03448 920 901

www.nihe.gov.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

www.rnib.org.uk

In Wales, contact **RNIB Cymru**

Tel: 029 2082 8500

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

Tel: 028 9032 9373

In Scotland, contact **RNIB Scotland**

Tel: 0131 652 3140

Royal Society for the Prevention of Accidents (RoSPA)

A charity dedicated to saving lives and preventing injuries.

Also has offices in Northern Ireland, Scotland and Wales.

Tel: 0121 248 2000

www.rospa.com

Sense

National organisation offering information and support

to people who have combined hearing and sight loss.

Tel/Textphone: 0300 330 9256

www.sense.org.uk

In Wales, contact **Sense Cymru**

Tel: 0300 330 9280

In Northern Ireland, contact **Sense NI**

Tel: 028 9083 3430

In Scotland, contact **Sense Scotland**

Tel: 0300 330 9292

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

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: **Freepost Age UK Supporter Services**.

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.

We'd [†] like to let you know about the vital work we do for older people, our fundraising appeals and opportunities to support us, as well as the Age UK products and services you can buy.

Personal details

Title:

Initials:

Surname:

Address:

Postcode:

We will never sell your data and we promise to keep your details safe and secure.

Please tick here if you **do not** wish to receive communications by post.

You can change your mind at any time by telephoning us on 0800 169 8787 or by writing to Supporter Services at the registered address below.

Your gift

I would like to make a gift of: £

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

Card payment

MasterCard Visa CAF CharityCard

I wish to pay by (please tick) Maestro American Express

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Expiry date

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Signature **X**

Gift aid declaration

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 am a UK tax payer and understand that if I pay less income tax and/or capital gains tax than the amount of Gift Aid claimed on all my donations in that tax year it is my responsibility to pay any difference.

Date ____/____/____ * Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI



[†] We, includes the charity, its charitable and trading subsidiaries, and national charities (Age Cymru, Age Scotland and Age NI). Age UK is a charitable company limited by guarantee and registered in England (registered charity number 1128267 and registered company number 6825798). The registered address is Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA. **Age UK provides a range of services and your gift will go wherever the need is the greatest.**

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 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**.

