

Your hospital stay



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

Our three strategic aims are to:



Help older people to be as well as they can be



Promote a positive view of ageing and later life



Tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

For information, advice and friendship



Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222
(Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)



Visit [agescotland.org.uk](https://www.agescotland.org.uk)
to find out more.

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What this guide is about

No one likes going into hospital but, unfortunately, most of us will have to at some point. Being in an unfamiliar environment while having to cope with illness or the uncertainty of diagnosis can be both distressing and unsettling.

A hospital stay can be a difficult time for you and those close to you but is likely to be less stressful if you know what to expect.

This guide looks at NHS hospital treatment in Scotland:

- going into hospital
- being a hospital patient
- leaving hospital.

If your admission is **planned**, your hospital stay and how you will manage on leaving hospital are reasonably predictable.

An **emergency admission** brings more uncertainty but staff will take steps to make sure that your stay is no longer than necessary and you have the support you need when you leave hospital.

Your rights and responsibilities as an NHS patient

Your rights using NHS services in Scotland are set out in a charter of patient's rights and responsibilities which is available from NHS Inform. See their website www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/ or call **0800 22 44 88**.

The charter looks at:

- **Accessing and using NHS services in Scotland:** your rights when using NHS health services
- **Communication and involving you:** your rights to be informed about your healthcare and services and to be involved in decisions about them
- **Privacy and confidentiality:** your rights to privacy and to have your personal health information protected
- **Feedback, complaints and my rights:** your rights to have a say about your treatment or care and to have any concerns and complaints dealt with

If you are worried that you might have difficulty explaining yourself in hospital, or you have a condition which is likely to get worse, you might want to write down your information and thoughts in an **Anticipatory care plan**. You would normally complete this with the support of a medical professional but the template at **<https://ihub.scot/media/1982/my-acp.pdf>** shows what information may be useful, for example:

- information about yourself
- who is important to you
- what matters to you
- your health conditions at the moment
- understanding your health and what would help you
- what you need to do and who to contact if you become unwell
- what medicines you take
- who is involved in your care
- your responsibilities
- any plans you have made for future treatment and end of life care.

There is also a document called **Getting to know me** for people living with dementia, see the section **If you are living with dementia** for more information.

Consenting to treatment

No treatment or test should be done without your agreement in advance unless you do not have the mental capacity to make decisions for yourself. Staff should talk you through any potential examination or treatment and explain the risks and benefits, so you can make an informed decision for yourself.

You might want to know about:

Tests:

- what tests do I need?
- why are they needed?
- where and when will tests happen?
- how long will I wait for results?

Treatment:

- what treatments are recommended and why?
- what does the treatment involve?
- what will the treatment do for me?
- how likely is the treatment to succeed?
- what are the benefits and risks?
- how often is the treatment required?
- what happens if I do nothing?
- what happens if I wait for a while?

Ask as many questions as you need to help you make up your mind and take your time to consider your options if you are not sure. It may be worth discussing your thoughts with a friend or carer to get their opinion too.

You can refuse treatment, even if others think you are making the wrong decision, as long as you understand the consequences of doing so.

If you are unable to consent to or refuse treatment (for example, if you are unconscious or have lost mental capacity) your family and friends cannot consent to treatment on your behalf, but someone with welfare Power of Attorney can.

If you have made an Advance Directive to refuse certain treatments in certain circumstances or have made a **do not attempt resuscitation (DNAR)** decision this should be respected. See Age Scotland's guide **Planning for your future healthcare** for more information about making decisions about your future treatment.

If you cannot make decisions for yourself and have not granted someone welfare Power of Attorney the doctor responsible for your care will talk to your family and friends to find out your likely wishes, but the final decision about treatment will rest with medical staff, who must make the decision they think is in your best interests. The formal steps they need to take are set out in law; they need to complete a **Certificate of Incapacity** under Section 47 of the Adults with Incapacity (Scotland) Act 2000 to show that they have followed the proper process.

Involving your family or carer

When you go into hospital you will normally be asked who you would like to be contacted in an emergency and who you would like to be given information about how you are getting on. If you want your family or carer to be informed or involved in discussions about your treatment or discharge arrangements, tell hospital staff and ask them to record this in your notes.

If you have set up a welfare Power of Attorney and lack the mental capacity to make decisions yourself, staff should fully involve your attorney in decisions and keep them up to date.

Your carer has a legal right to be involved in planning your discharge from hospital, see Age Scotland's **Adult carer's guide** for more information.

Waiting times for treatment

In Scotland there are normally maximum waiting times for treatment, though these have been affected by the NHS response to COVID-19 and very stretched services. The normal **Referral to treatment standard** says that within 18 weeks of referral at least 90% of patients should receive all of the following:

- an outpatient appointment
- diagnostic test (if required)
- treatment (if appropriate)

The maximum expected waiting time in accident and emergency is four hours but this target is often not met.

Not all treatments are covered in the treatment time guarantee, and there are different standards for more urgent treatment. For detailed information about waiting times call **NHS Inform** on **0800 22 44 88** or see their website **www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/waiting-times#waiting-times-the-basics**.

Going into hospital

Depending on your circumstances, you could go into hospital as:

- **an outpatient**, at an appointment to discuss your condition and possible diagnosis and treatment where you will not stay overnight
- **a day patient**, where you will be given a hospital bed for tests or surgery but will not stay overnight
- **an inpatient**, where you will stay in hospital for one night or more for tests, medical treatment or surgery.

Planned admissions

Outpatient appointments are arranged by referral when you need further tests or more specialised care than your GP can provide. If there is more than one hospital that can provide treatment, your GP will help you to decide which one you would like to attend.

Once you have been referred by your GP you will be contacted by the hospital, usually by letter, and offered an appointment. Let them know straight away if you cannot attend the appointment.

If you have communication support needs such as a large print letter, or interpretation support if English is not your preferred language, your GP can tell the hospital about this so they can make sure you have the support you need.

If you see a consultant (a specialist doctor) they may want to arrange further tests to reach a diagnosis before discussing treatment options with you. Agreeing to further tests may lead to another hospital appointment.

You are likely to have questions for your consultant, so make a note of any which are particularly important to you before you go to the appointment. Have a look at the information on **Consenting to treatment**, but you may also want to ask:

- will life return to normal or will I need help or more help at home?
- what can I do before and after treatment to help my recovery?
- is there information or support locally or nationally to help me understand and manage my condition?

Travelling to appointments

If you have not been to the hospital before, think about how to get there and back, and whether you want someone to go with you. Most hospitals are well served by buses, but you may want the privacy of a lift home from a friend if your treatment may be difficult or stressful.

Patient Transport from the Scottish Ambulance Service is available for patients who either

- require assistance from skilled ambulance staff e.g. require access to oxygen whilst travelling
- have a medical condition that would prevent them from travelling to hospital by any other means
- have a medical condition that might put them at risk from harm if they were to travel independently, or
- have treatment with side effects that requires support from skilled ambulance staff.

If you need this help and think you qualify contact the booking line on **0300 123 1236** within 28 days of your appointment.

The Scottish Ambulance Service website provides more information about the service and also has details of other local services that may be able to help. See **www.scottishambulance.com/our-services/support-with-appointments/**.

The person who takes your call will ask for your CHI number, a unique health number which contains your date of birth, but they can arrange transport if you do not know this number. They will ask about the help you need and assess whether you qualify for patient transport.

In some areas **volunteer drivers** may help. The drivers will have been carefully vetted by the organisation they volunteer for.

If you have served in the Armed Forces, **Fares4Free** may be able to help you get to your appointment, contact them through their website **www.fares4free.org/** or call **0141 266 6000**.

Help with the costs of transport

If you have a low income you may qualify for help with the cost of travelling to hospital.

You will receive most help if you receive a means tested benefit such as Pension Credit, but you can qualify for some help if you have a low income if you apply to the NHS low income scheme.

You and your partner's income and capital are taken into account in assessing whether you are eligible for help. If you qualify for help you will receive an **HC2** certificate if you qualify for full help or an **HC3** certificate if you qualify for partial help.

You need to complete an **HC1** form to apply. You can download one from **www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/access/help-with-health-costs#low-income**, or ask for one from a community pharmacy, GP practice or jobcentre plus office or by calling **0300 330 1343**.

If you qualify for help with travel costs, tell the hospital that you want to claim back the cost of your journey and show your HC2 or HC3 certificate and receipts.

If you live in the council areas of Highland, Argyll & Bute, Western Isles, Orkney and Shetland you get help with the cost of travel to hospital for NHS treatment if you have to travel at least 30 miles (48km), or more than 5 miles (8km) by sea, to get to hospital.

What to bring with you to hospital

If you know you are going into hospital for some time, it is worth packing carefully. Most of this is obvious but it can be easy to forget something if you have a lot on your mind. Remember to take:

- your admission letter
- the name and contact details of the doctor who referred you
- all the medicines you take, in their original boxes if possible. If you have a card giving details of your current treatment, take this too
- spare clothes and underwear for a few days
- supportive footwear for daytime, nightwear and slippers for night time
- toiletries such as soap, shampoo, toothbrush, shaving kit, etc
- ear plugs and sleeping mask, to block out some of the sound and light on the ward
- money for phone calls or items from the hospital shop
- your mobile phone and charger
- contact details for friends, family, anyone who provides you with care and your Power of Attorney
- a notebook and pen to write down any questions
- glasses, any walking or hearing aids
- items to pass the time, such as books, magazines or puzzles or a tablet computer

It is best not to take valuables such as jewellery into hospital with you as there may not be secure places to store them.

Practical planning

As well as packing for your stay, there are some practical issues to think about before going into hospital. Again, some of it may seem obvious but you would not be the first person to forget something important.

- check the date and time of your appointment, how you will get to the hospital and where to go once you are there
- make sure you follow any specific instructions you have been given, such as drinking plenty of water, taking medication, or not eating or drinking at all
- check your home insurance to see what's covered if your home is unoccupied for a while. Let them know if you might be in hospital for some time
- if you get on well with your neighbours, tell them you are going into hospital so they can keep an eye on your home
- if you have pets, make arrangements with friends or family to look after them or contact the **Cinnamon Trust**. They offer a fostering service for pets while their owners are in hospital. You can call them on **01736 757 900** or see their website **www.cinnamon.org.uk**
- cancel any regular deliveries such as newspapers or milk, or any help at home you receive
- think about which rooms you will be spending most of your time in when you come out of hospital and put items you use frequently, such as your TV remote control, box of tissues and basic painkillers within easy reach
- stock up on drinks and foods that are easy to prepare, such as frozen ready meals for when you are back home. Think about how you will manage for food if you can't get out and about for a while; there may be a local charity which could help or you could book an online supermarket delivery.

- if you have dentures, mark them with your name before going into hospital so they don't get lost
- if you have glasses write your name on the inside of the frame
- if you will be in hospital for a while, ask a friend or family member to help with your laundry, as hospitals cannot usually help with this. If your clothes become stained with body fluids the hospital will have procedures to ensure they can be taken home and washed safely. Advice about how to best clean a patient's clothes is available in the **Health Protection Scotland** leaflet at **www.hps.scot.nhs.uk/web-resources-container/washing-clothes-at-home-information-for-people-in-hospitals-or-care-homes-and-their-relatives/**.

Emergency admission to hospital

If you call an ambulance, ambulance paramedics will assess whether you need to go to hospital and may provide treatment for you at home. If you do need to go to an Accident and Emergency department (A&E) paramedics will work with hospital staff to assess what treatment you need.

At A&E hospital staff will assess you and then decide the next steps. As well as the obvious reason for your arrival in hospital they will also take into account other health conditions you have which may be relevant to your accident or injury.

An emergency admission is a stressful situation for anyone. You may have to wait a long while to be seen and have to ask for updates on how long you will need to wait. Ask if a friend or family member can wait with you so you have someone to talk to who knows you. You may not be allowed to eat or drink anything while you are waiting to be assessed

If you can, tell the team about your symptoms and what happened. Once you have been assessed a doctor will decide if you should be:

- treated and allowed to go home
- moved to a unit where you will be monitored or have tests
- admitted to a ward

It can be difficult to ask questions if you are quite shocked, but the team should let you know when you are likely to see a consultant and what tests and treatment are likely.

If you are going to have to stay in hospital for a while and need someone to sort out things at home, let staff know about your concerns.

While you are in hospital

If you have a planned admission, or are admitted after an accident or emergency, you will be an inpatient on a ward. A hospital ward can be an unsettling environment and take some time to get used to but it is the best place to receive many types of medical care.

Toilets and shower facilities are generally shared with other patients. You will be shown where they are when you are settled.

There should be an alert button by your bedside to press if you need help. This will alert one of the staff to ask what help you need.

How you should be looked after

You might feel that things are not in your control in hospital, but you have rights which should ensure that you are well treated. You should:

- not be discriminated against because of your age, gender, gender reassignment, race, religion or belief, sexual orientation or disability
- receive NHS services within the set time limits
- be treated by qualified and experienced staff in a clean, safe, secure and suitable environment
- receive approved medication and treatments
- receive suitable and nutritious food
- be involved in discussions about your treatment in a way you can understand and be asked whether you want to accept or reject the treatment you are offered
- expect the NHS to keep your confidential information safe and secure and to respect your privacy
- have access to your own health records
- expect the hospital to take complaints seriously

Many different people may be involved in your care or treatment, but you should be given a specific nurse as your contact for any

questions. You should also make staff aware of any difficulties you have with your sight, hearing or memory.

If you are in a teaching hospital there will be health care students on clinical placements working as part of their learning. They are carefully supervised by trained staff.

Hospital staff should be polite, understanding and treat you as an individual, responding to any questions or requests you have, such as going to the loo. They should introduce themselves by name and wear a name badge. You can sometimes know which role someone has by the colour of their uniform, for example healthcare assistants' uniforms are light blue and trained nurses have dark blue uniforms.

If you feel you are not being treated properly, let someone know. All hospitals have procedures for dealing with feedback and complaints.

Eating and drinking

Eating and drinking regularly is important to your health and wellbeing and will help with your recovery. Staff should place food and drink where you can reach it and if you need it, offer help to eat and drink throughout the day. Being well hydrated helps greatly with the healing process so try to drink plenty of clear fluids (preferably water), ideally 1.5 - 2 litres per day.

Speak to staff if you:

- need help filling in your menu choices or if you find the menu choices unsuitable because of allergies, cultural or personal preferences
- have trouble chewing or swallowing
- have difficulty cutting your food or opening cartons
- prefer small meals with between-meal snacks.

It is not unusual for patients to be weighed when they first go into hospital and during their stay. This is so that staff can keep an eye on your weight and a dietitian may talk to you about adjusting your diet if there are any concerns. If you have problems swallowing a Speech and Language Therapist may advise you what will help with this.

Keeping active and independent in hospital

It is easy to think that being in hospital is mostly being in bed, but as a patient it is important to be as active and independent as you safely can. If you sit for a long time and do not move about your muscles will become weaker. If everything is done for you, you may lose the skills and confidence to do things for yourself when you go home.

If you want to stay active and you are well enough you should:

- let ward staff know that you want to be as active as safely can
- ask them to supervise and support you to do as much as you can for yourself
- during the day, spend as little time in bed as your recovery allows
- avoid sitting for long periods of time; stand up at least every hour if you can
- walk as much as you safely can
- join in with any ward activities available
- chat to people and keep your brain active.

If you are living with dementia

If you have been diagnosed with dementia but do not usually need help making decisions, you might want to consider granting a trusted friend or family member Power of Attorney for financial and welfare issues. If someone is your attorney they can make decisions on your behalf if in future you are not able to do so yourself. For information see Age Scotland's **Guide to Power of Attorney in Scotland**.

If you care for someone with dementia who is going into hospital and will need some extra support, talk to them about how you can help them to manage during their stay in hospital.

John's Campaign is a campaign to encourage hospitals to recognise the expertise of family members caring for someone living with dementia. It highlights that welcoming and working with them throughout a hospital stay and discharge planning, benefits the patient and hospital staff. You can find information on their website **<https://johnscampaign.org.uk/>**.

Time spent in hospital can be frightening and confusing for people with memory problems or dementia. The more staff know about them as an individual, the better they can provide appropriate care and support; everyone with dementia has individual needs and preferences.

Dealing with worry in hospital

It is common to worry when you are in hospital, both about your health and about the everyday things you are not able to do, but there are things you can do to make it easier:

- bring in small things to remind you of home, such as photographs
- ask for things to make you feel more comfortable, such as an extra blanket or pillow
- ask not to be disturbed if you need a rest
- if you are not clear about what treatment you are going to have and what it will involve, ask one of the nurses to explain what will happen
- if there is someone you trust, let them deal with practical things at home during your stay in hospital
- tell staff if you are worried about something; they are there to help you.

Getting support in hospital

Visitors

Having visitors can help keep your spirits up, give you moral support and help you keep in touch with family and local news. No-one should visit you if they have an infection, and sometimes hospitals have to stop visits for a while because of the risk of infection.

You need to know when friends or family can visit and how many visitors you can have at one time. Ask for a note of visiting times as this will vary between hospitals and different wards. Most wards ask you to avoid having visitors during meal times and rest periods.

Visitors should always use anti-bacterial and antiviral gel to clean their hands before and after entering your room or ward to limit the spread of germs and viruses.

If people cannot visit in person, you can call them from your mobile phone and they can call you. If friends or family want to talk to staff and you are happy with this, they should find out the number of the ward and the best times of day to call.

If you do not have people who are able to visit, chat to the people around you in hospital. Other patients can be a source of comfort and may fancy a chat too. In some hospitals there will be a visiting service where a volunteer will come and chat with you.

Chaplaincy service

Hospital healthcare chaplains are good at listening and offer emotional and spiritual support to all patients and visitors regardless of their faith and belief. If you would like to speak to a chaplain please ask a member of staff to contact the chaplaincy team. If you have any particular needs because of your faith or beliefs let the staff know and the hospital will try its best to meet them. The chaplaincy service can also arrange for a visit from your own church or faith community.

Social security benefits

Your entitlement to benefits might change during your hospital stay, but no matter how long you are in hospital, you will continue to be entitled to your State Pension.

Disability benefits

Nothing changes if you are in hospital for fewer than 28 days but if you stay longer, or have periods of going in and out of hospital, some things do change.

If you receive Attendance Allowance (AA), Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Personal Independence Payment (PIP), you should let the Department for Work and Pensions know when you go into hospital and when you leave hospital. These benefits are suspended after 28 days in hospital. If you receive Adult Disability Payment you should inform Social Security Scotland. If you are moving between a hospital and a care home call the **Age Scotland** helpline on **0800 12 44 222** for advice, as time in a care home can count towards the 28 day limit.

Carer's Allowance

If you receive Carer's Allowance (CA) and go into hospital yourself, it stops after 12 weeks. Tell the Carer's Allowance Unit when you go into hospital and when you come home.

If someone receives Carer's Allowance for looking after you and you go into hospital, their Carer's Allowance stops when your Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance, Personal Independence Payment or Adult Disability Payment is suspended after 28 days.

Pension Credit and means tested benefits

If you receive Pension Credit Guarantee Credit, suspension of disability benefits or Carer's Allowance can affect the amount of Pension Credit you receive. If your Pension Credit award stops, you may not be able to reclaim it if you are a couple and one of you is under State Pension age.

Leaving hospital

Practical arrangements

If you have had basic treatment and will be mostly independent at home, the person responsible for your discharge should ensure that:

- there is someone collecting you, or that a taxi or hospital transport is booked
- if necessary, there will be someone to keep an eye on you for 24 hours
- you have suitable clothes to go home in and house keys
- you have enough money for your short-term needs
- you can keep warm at home and have the food you need
- you have all the medication and equipment you need
- you have information about your medical condition, including information on treatment, medication, future medical appointments, and details of your GP and consultant
- a supply of incontinence products has been arranged, if necessary.

Getting better

Even if you have only had a simple procedure, your recovery will continue after you have left hospital. Take any medication you have been prescribed and do any exercises a physiotherapist has given you but be gentle with yourself and accept help if people offer it. Be active and independent if it is safe for you to do so.

Hospital discharge if you need care support

If you are staying on a hospital ward, your consultant and their team will have an overview of your health needs and will be thinking about the support you may need when you are discharged. They will consider whether you are ready to leave hospital, whether temporary intermediate care and rehabilitation will help you to make the best recovery or if you need further long-term or short-term hospital treatment.

The hospital team making the decision will involve relevant specialists which may include doctors, nurses, a discharge co-ordinator, pharmacist, dietitian, occupational therapist, physiotherapist and social work staff. Health and social care services are integrated in Scotland which means they work closely together.

The team should let you know as soon as they can when you are likely to be able to go home, but you will not be discharged from hospital until your consultant thinks it is clinically appropriate.

If you will need care support when you leave hospital there are steps the hospital and social work department need to take to assess the needs of yourself and your carer. This process is explained in detail in our guide **Hospital discharge** and briefly covered here. The Scottish Government produces a guide **Hospital discharge what happens next**, which you can download from the [Care Information Scotland](https://www.careinformation.scot.nhs.uk/careinfoscotland/media/1167/read-for-discharge.pdf) website [careinfoscotland.scot/media/1167/read-for-discharge.pdf](https://www.careinfoscotland.scot/media/1167/read-for-discharge.pdf) or call **0800 011 3200** and ask them for a copy.

Involving your carer

If you have a carer they have the right to have their own support needs assessed, and they have a right to be involved in planning your discharge from hospital. See the Age Scotland **Adult carer's guide** for more information.

If you need a little help at home

If you will need a little help at home for just a few weeks after leaving hospital staff may not do a full assessment of your needs but give you information and advice about local organisations that can help for a while. Some voluntary organisations offer **home from hospital support**. These services can help get your home ready for your return and continue for several weeks by assisting with tasks such as shopping, light housework, collecting prescriptions and helping you sort through your post.

Help with nursing, such as dressing wounds and taking out stitches will be provided by a district nurse. The hospital will have notified them of your discharge.

For information about services which may help see Age Scotland's guide **Care and support at home: practical help**.

If you need some support to return home

You may be offered temporary care services if you only need help for a short time. This is sometimes called intermediate or reablement care and can involve support from both the council and the NHS.

Intermediate care

Intermediate care usually lasts up to six weeks. It is provided to help people to be as independent as possible after a stay in hospital and prevent people from having a permanent move into a care home unless they really need to. You can receive intermediate care at home, in a care home or a community hospital. This could include support from a physiotherapist or occupational therapist, as well as nursing care. When intermediate care finishes, staff assess your needs again to see if you need ongoing social or NHS services.

Reablement care

Reablement is a period of personal care arranged by your council which can help with daily living and provide other practical help. It usually lasts for up to 6 weeks and gives you time to get used to managing at home again.

Assessing your care needs if you will need long term help

If you are likely to need long term care and support when you leave hospital the hospital team, usually led by a social worker, will assess what support you will need and look at whether this can be provided at home or whether your needs can only be met in a care home.

This process is called a care needs assessment and is explained in the Age Scotland guides **Care and support at home: assessment and funding** and **Care home funding**.

The social worker carrying out the assessment will consider what you can do, what you would like to be able to do and what you have difficulty with. The discussion will include yourself, your carer and your welfare attorney if you have granted Welfare Power of Attorney to someone and it is in force. The assessment will look at how you manage:

- washing and bathing
- dressing and undressing
- getting up and going to bed
- eating and drinking
- getting around your home
- managing your medications
- housework and shopping
- social and cultural activities.

It is really important to be open about what you can and cannot do. You may need to describe where you live if you have difficulty with stairs or using your bathroom. Do not say you can do something if it really is a struggle.

The social worker will ask about any care you already have in place. It is important to let them know if this help is not going to continue long term.

Once your care needs have been agreed, the social worker will look at how best your needs can be met. This could be by:

- adaptations or equipment to make your home safer and easier to live in
- carers or a personal assistant to help you at home
- a personal alarm so you can easily call for help if necessary
- an opportunity to meet people and socialise, such as at a day centre
- a permanent place in a care home.

If you are offered services in your own home, the rules about Self-Directed Support give you the right to choose whether the council arranges the services, you arrange the services yourself or a mixture of the two. The social worker will also assess what you will need to pay towards your home care, but many people do not need to pay for care at home because of Free Personal and Nursing care funding.

Your care plan should be reviewed regularly.

See our guides **Care and support at home: assessment and funding** and **Care and support at home: practical help** for more information.

Moving into a care home

Your care needs assessment may find that your care needs cannot be met at home, even with equipment and carers coming to help, and that you need to move into a care home.

There are different types of care home; social work staff should work with you, your carer and family to find an appropriate care home which can meet your assessed needs.

Age Scotland's **Care Home** guides include a checklist of what to look for, practical arrangements and how social work will calculate what you need to pay towards care home fees.

You can find detailed information about the processes and issues involved in the Age Scotland guides **Hospital discharge** and **Care home funding**.

Health and care feedback and complaints

Whether it is good or bad, feedback allows hospitals to evaluate and improve the quality of their care. You may be asked to complete a questionnaire in the ward before you leave. If you have any problems, let someone know. Speak first to the doctor or nurse in charge of the ward or seek the help of the **Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS)**.

The Patient Advice and Support Service is an independent service which provides free confidential advice and support to patients, their carers and families in their dealings with the NHS. They can help you to give feedback, make comments, raise concerns or make a complaint about treatment and care provided by the NHS in Scotland.

You can contact the service by:

- phoning **0800 917 2127**
- chatting online at **www.patientadvicescotland.org.uk**
- calling in at any Scottish **Citizens Advice Bureau**.
- emailing **pass@cas.org.uk**

You can also post your story or concerns on the **Care Opinion Scotland** website. This is part of NHS Scotland and they will pass information on to the relevant service.

www.careopinion.org.uk/services/nhs-scotland

NHS Complaints procedure

The NHS has a complaints procedure, but if you think you have had a personal injury because of health treatment you should get legal advice before making a complaint.

You can ask for a copy of the complaints procedure at the practice or hospital where you had treatment.

The stages involve:

- 1 Trying to resolve matters quickly and locally, possibly with the assistance of a mediator.
- 2 If your complaint is not resolved locally you can refer the matter to the **Scottish Public Services Ombudsman**. You can find information about their service at **www.spsso.org.uk** or call them on **0800 377 7330**.
- 3 Judicial review may be possible if you are not satisfied with the Ombudsman's decision. This is a complex court process so you would need a solicitor's help to do this and you should get advice about the costs of this legal action.

Social Work complaints procedure

If you need to complain about the social work department, there is a three stage process to follow:

- 1 **Frontline resolution:** You should make your complaint to the social work department, by telephone, email or letter, within six months of the time you become aware of the problem. They should respond within five working days. If you are not happy with their response you can ask them to move your complaint to stage two.
- 2 **Investigation:** Your complaint should be acknowledged within three working days. The council should investigate your complaint and give you a full response within twenty working days, unless they let you know that they need more time to look into it. If you are still not happy with the council's response, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to look at the decision.
- 3 **The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman:** The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) can review decisions independently and make recommendations for actions that organisations are expected to carry out. These could include:
 - asking the council to look at their decision again
 - asking the council to change their decision
 - recommending the council improve their services in a particular way
 - recommending that the council apologises to you.

You have 12 months to complain to the SPSO from the time you become aware of the problem. You can contact the SPSO on **0800 377 7330** or see their website **www.spsso.org.uk**.

You may also wish to discuss your complaint with your local councillor or MSP. If you do not know their contact details, call the Age Scotland helpline and we will find this information for you.

Money matters when you have left hospital

When you leave hospital, you may find yourself in a different financial situation because of reduced income from work, paying for care or increased travel or energy costs. Age Scotland's **Money Matters** guide includes ideas for budgeting and making the most of your money.

If you need long-term care or supervision because of a health condition or disability, you may be able to claim a social security disability benefit. These include:

- **Adult Disability Payment** for people of working age who have a disability or long-term health condition who need help with daily living or mobility. Adult Disability Payment can continue to be paid after State Pension Age.
- **Attendance Allowance** for people who are over State Pension age who need help with care or supervision during the day, during the night or both. If you do not already receive Disability Living Allowance, Adult Disability Payment or Personal Independence Payment you may be able to claim Attendance Allowance.
- **Carer's Allowance** for people who are caring for someone for 35 or more hours a week; the person they care for must be receiving either Attendance Allowance, the middle or higher rate care component of Disability Living Allowance or the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment or Adult Disability Payment. It overlaps with State Pension so most people over State Pension age will not receive Carer's Allowance, though it can increase the level of means tested benefits the carer is entitled to.

In Scotland, people who receive Carer's Allowance are also entitled to an automatic 6-monthly payment of Carer's Allowance Supplement from Social Security Scotland.

Means tested benefits

Claiming Adult Disability Payment or Attendance Allowance can increase the amount you are entitled to in means tested benefits such as Pension Credit. Claiming Carer's Allowance can increase the carer's means tested benefits but may reduce the means tested benefits of the person they care for. Call the **Age Scotland** helpline on **0800 12 44 222** for benefits advice or see Age Scotland's **benefits guides** for more information.

Useful organisations

Age Scotland helpline **0800 12 44 222**

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

If you need an interpreter call **0800 12 44 222** and simply state the language you need e.g. Polish or Urdu. Stay on the line for a few minutes and the Age Scotland helpline will do the rest.

You can call us on **0800 12 44 222** for a copy of our publications list or download copies from our website at **www.agescotland.org.uk**.

The Care Inspectorate

The Care Inspectorate is responsible for inspecting care homes, and regulating and supporting the improvement of care and social work, across Scotland.

Tel: **0345 600 9527**

www.careinspectorate.com

NHS Inform

Health information and advice for people in Scotland.

Tel: **0800 22 44 88**

www.nhsinform.scot

Office of the Public Guardian Scotland

Provides guidance and advice on Powers of Attorney and guardianship orders in Scotland.

Tel: **01324 678 300**

www.publicguardian-scotland.gov.uk

Defence Medical Welfare Service (DMWS)

The Defence Medical Welfare Service can support you during a period of hospital treatment in some areas of Scotland.

Tel: **0800 999 3697**

<https://dmws.org.uk>

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.*



Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Let's keep in touch



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting age.scot/roundup



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



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Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Contact us:

Head office

0333 323 2400

Age Scotland helpline

0800 12 44 222

Email

info@agescotland.org.uk

Visit our website

www.agescotland.org.uk

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