

Keeping safe in your own home

This leaflet will give you some advice and ideas about what you need to think about when deciding to get someone to support you to live independently in your own home.



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Introduction

Many of us can find ourselves in a situation where we need help at some time during our lives. For a variety of reasons, help may be needed with getting things done at home such as gardening, cooking, cleaning, and ironing, help getting out of bed, taking medication or with personal care.

If you need some care or support you have to be able to trust the people who you rely on. **You must have your rights and choices respected and be treated well.** This information will help you keep yourself safe and advise you what to do if things go wrong.

In this guide we have referred to 'you' as the person who is looking for someone to help or support you to live independently in your own home. This guide will also be useful to family or friends looking for help or support on your behalf.

In this guide we also use the term person to describe who comes into your home to help or support you. However, you will come across other terms for this person's role, if they are employed directly by you, they are a 'Personal Assistant' (PA), if employed through an agency or organisation, they may be called a 'Care' and 'Support Worker'. If unpaid, they may be described as a 'Volunteer' or 'Carer'.

What can you do to make sure that you get the right support in your home?

Here is a check list of things to think about to safely recruit the person yourself.

- 1 Do not put your home address, telephone number or personal details in the advert. Instead ask a friend if they would be your point of contact or ask your local job centre to advertise for you.
- 2 Carry out the interviews in a place that you know and are known, away from your own home, for example, your day centre, lunch club or other club you attend. Take a friend or relative with you.
- 3 Make sure that you ask for job references and always follow up by calling the referee to ask questions such as whether the person has ever committed a disciplinary offence and whether they would employ that person again. If not, then should you?

- 4 We strongly recommend that you carry out a check through the Criminal Records Bureau (CRB). This service is responsible for the disclosure of criminal records and works in conjunction with the Independent Safeguarding Authority (ISA). ISA holds a list of people who are banned from working or volunteering with children and/or vulnerable adults. Please ring your local authority for more help, the contact details are shown at the back of this guide.
- 5 Do put your expectations of the person in writing, and both keep a signed copy.
- 6 Further information is available through organisations that have produced specialist guides to help you understand what else you should know. Please see the back of this guide for contact details.
- 7 You may wish to organise your care and support through a regulated care and support company. There are costs associated with this option but the Care Company does then take on the responsibilities as the employer. Find out how to get started, where to find local services and what you should expect from good quality care by contacting the Care Quality Commission, details of which are shown at the back of this guide.



What do you need to do to make sure that you are treated well?

Some people deliberately target other people for their own gain. They will look for situations where they feel there is less chance of them getting caught.

On rare occasions, this person could build up a trusting relationship with you that they then take advantage of and, through no fault of your own, may attempt to harm you in a number of different ways:-

Psychological/Emotional harm can mean simply being ignored, laughed at or blamed when things are not your fault or the person may tell you that you are worthless or a burden to others.

Your finances are one of the most common ways through which you can get exploited or be manipulated. People may befriend you or use your sympathy for their own gain.

Neglect is when people who are supposed to help don't look after you properly, which could put you in danger. You could be left without enough food, heating or money or your health needs ignored.

Physical harm can be as obvious as a slap or kick but also applies if you are given too much medication so that you are unable to function well, or treated roughly when being assisted to move.

Discrimination is when you are treated badly because of a disability, your race, your religion, your age or because you are lesbian, gay or bisexual.

Sexual harm could include being touched inappropriately or when people make sexual remarks or jokes in your company that make you feel uncomfortable.



Some other signs to look out for...

- The person asks you for small favours on several occasions, these gradually build into bigger 'favours'.
- You begin to feel isolated from your friends or family.
- You are told that no one else can look after you or be trusted except for the person who is supporting you.
- You may feel as if you are no longer in control of your life, or feel uncomfortable in your own home.
- Your wishes are ignored - for example if you need help getting dressed but aren't asked to choose what to wear.
- The person may say that a 'job' needs doing around the house and they know someone who can fix it at a special price.
- Or the person may start to get some of their own personal shopping with yours and say they will pay you back.
- If you have a pet, the person may either be cruel to it or say that the dog/cat/budgie now prefers them.

What can you do to keep safe?

Practical things you can do:-

- If you have a key safe, think carefully about who you give access to it and change the number regularly. Do you want to give this person a key, or let them in yourself?
- Have a personal alarm so that you can get help quickly. Get in touch with local companies who provide these services in your area. Your local council should be able to provide you with a list.
- Make sure that the written agreement between you and the person is signed and witnessed by someone you trust. It can cover such things as:

Hours of work and duties

A 'Code of Conduct' or expected behaviour. Even if the person is unpaid, they must treat you with respect.

The person should not bring their children, relatives or friends into your house or use anything in your home without your permission.

It is important that you have a plan to cover what happens when the person is on holiday or is ill themselves; you can't be left without vital support.



To keep your finances safe we strongly recommend that you:

- Keep your money in a bank or building society, not at home. Have regular cheques and payments paid directly into your bank account.
- Arrange to have bills paid by direct debit from your bank account.
- Keep a list of all property, bank accounts and valuable belongings. Store the list in a safe place or with someone you trust.
- Plan ahead. Make a will with a solicitor's help and review it now and again to keep it up-to-date.
- Do not discuss your will with the person and we strongly advise against giving them Power of Attorney.
- Ask a trusted friend or family member to review all documents before signing.
- **NEVER** give your PIN (Personal Identification Number) for any debit or credit cards to anyone.
- Don't be taken in by a 'hard luck' story especially if you are asked for a loan or a favour.

If you are worried or concerned, who can you talk to?

- Tell someone you can trust. This could be someone in your family, a close friend, your doctor or someone from your faith group or lunch club.
- If the person is employed through an agency, then let the agency know that you have some concerns, they can resolve any worries or make sure that they act upon your concerns.
- Don't ignore a problem even if it seems like a small thing. It can be sorted out, but this will only happen if someone else knows it is happening.
- There are organisations set up to help you in these situations; organisations such as Action for Elder Abuse can be contacted on:
Elder Abuse Response 080 8808 8141
or Age UK Advice line 08001696565.
- All local authorities have a support and advice line if you have concerns about being treated badly. A social worker can help you resolve these situations. Your local number is shown at the back of this guide.
- If you are in immediate danger please contact 999 and/or press your personal alarm if you have one.

Once you have told someone who can act upon the information you share they should listen, take your concerns seriously, make sure you are safe, give you support and ensure that they involve you in deciding what happens next.



Where to go for useful information

There are a variety of organisations that can provide support. Some of these organisations have a national helpline but will be able to give you a local number you can ring. They can help by giving advice and support over the telephone, sending you copies of useful leaflets and guides, or sometimes can provide more in depth support through home visits.

Many national groups also have websites that provide useful information. If you do not have or use a computer, then you can ask a friend or member of your family for help with this. Here are just some examples of UK wide organisations.

Every local authority is set up with an advice and guidance telephone number. This number is listed on the back cover under the 'Your Region' section.



National Organisations

Action On Elder Abuse

0808 808 8141 • www.elderabuse.org.uk

Action on Elder Abuse, PO Box 60001, Streatham SW16 9BY

Age UK

0800 169 6565 • www.ageuk.org.uk

Tavis House, 1-6 Tavistock Square, London WC1H 9NA

Victim Supportline

0845 3030 900 • www.victimsupport.com

The postal address for correspondence depends on where you live and what service you require.

Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

08444 111 444 • www.citizensadvice.org.uk

The postal address for correspondence depends on where you live.

Skills for Care

0113 245 1716 • www.skillsforcare.org.uk

A toolkit is available to support people to employ their own personal assistants.

Skills for Care, West Gate, 6 Grace Street, Leeds LS1 2RP

Care Quality Commission

03000 616161 • www.cqc.org.uk

Where to find local services and what you should expect from good quality care.

CQC, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle upon Tyne NE1 4PA

This guide has been produced and designed by Care Focus Ltd in conjunction with ADASS supported by the following organisations:
Skills for Care, Age UK, Compass Disability, Way Ahead Care and Carers UK.

In my region:

