

# HOW TO PAY FOR YOUR LONG-TERM CARE AT HOME

The cost of home care (also called domiciliary care) depends on where you live, the level of care you need and which provider you choose. Find out how to arrange home care and what financial support is available.

## How to arrange your home care

How much you need to pay for home care depends on several factors, including your income and savings. Get a care needs assessment

If you're having trouble with everyday tasks such as washing, cooking or getting dressed ask for a care needs assessment from your local council or Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland (HSCNI).

Even if you're paying for your own care, it's still important to get a care needs assessment because:

- the assessment will officially recognise your needs
- the council or HSCNI will let you know about available services to meet your needs
- even if you're not eligible for funding, you can still ask them to help arrange care services for you, but you'll have to pay for it
- the assessment will be useful if your needs change later.

After the care needs assessment, you'll also have a financial assessment to determine whether you need to pay for your own care, or whether your local council or HSCNI will contribute.

Find out more about the assessments and limits you need to meet to get help in our [Beginner's guide to paying for long-term care](#).

## Get a personal budget

If you qualify for council or HSCNI funding for your care needs, the council must offer you a personal budget to help meet your care plan goals.

This budget gives you choices in how to use it, like through direct payments to buy your own support or having the council manage it for you.

You can't use it for daily expenses like bills or food.

This budget aims to give you control over your care and support, letting you choose how and from whom you receive assistance.

You can:

- get your budget by direct payments into your bank account, or
- have the council or HSCNI manage it, or
- opt for an Individual Service Fund where an organisation provides services according to your instructions.

You can even combine these options if you prefer.

Find out more in our guide [Direct payments for care](#).

## What home care services are available?

The services you're offered will be based on a care needs assessment carried out by your local council or HSCNI.

It's called a 'package of care' and will be written into your personal care plan.

Services can include help with:

- getting out of bed in the morning, washing and dressing
- toileting and using continence aids
- preparing meals and drinks
- eating and drinking
- picking up prescriptions
- giving, or prompting to take, prescribed medication
- health-related tasks, as agreed with medical practitioners or community nursing nurses
- nursing care from a registered nurse
- shopping
- collecting pensions
- money, managing and paying bills
- getting out of the house and meeting friends
- supervision and companionship
- getting settled for the evening and going to bed.

### How much does it cost to pay for my own home care?

To arrange home care, you can either go through a home care agency, where they handle everything including hiring carers, or [you can directly hire a private care professional](#). Fees are usually based on hourly rates, except for 24-hour live-in care, which is typically charged weekly.

Home care usually costs from £26 to £38 per hour, and live-in care costs from £900 to £2,000 per week, according to UK Home Care Association. But prices can vary depending on location and the level of care needed.

Check with the [Care Quality Commission for approved providers](#)

### Home care, adaptations and equipment

If you need to make your home more accessible, or you need specialist equipment to help you manage

day-to-day tasks more safely and easily, you might be entitled to financial help. What is available will vary depending on where you live in the UK.

You can also get VAT relief if you're having building work done in your home related to your disability. Find out more at [Low Incomes Tax Reform Group](#)

Find out more about your home, adaptations and equipment in:

- England: [equipment to make life easier visit the NHS](#)
- Scotland: [equipment and adaptations visit Care Information Scotland](#)
- Wales: [housing adaptations visit gov.wales](#)
- Northern Ireland: [home, adaptations and equipment visit nidirect](#)

The Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) charity has a useful [‘How well does your home suit you?’](#) tool to help you assess your home’s suitability.

### NHS care and support you can get free

Sometimes, the NHS can cover the costs for care for people with serious health needs.

NHS Continuing Healthcare supports covers ongoing medical care for those with complex health needs due to disability, accident, or major illness.

The funding doesn’t depend on your money situation, but there are strict rules for who qualifies.

After a brief illness or hospital stay, you might qualify for up to six weeks of NHS-funded care at home. This is known as NHS Intermediate Care or Hospital Based Complex Clinical Care in Scotland.

Find out more in our guide [Do I qualify for NHS continuing healthcare funding?](#)

### Benefits to help cover care costs

When your local council or HSCNI carries out a financial assessment to work out how much you’ll pay towards your care, they’ll assume you’re already receiving certain disability benefits, even if you aren't in fact claiming them. So, it’s important to check if you qualify, and make a claim for:

- Attendance Allowance, if you're State Pension age or over, need help with personal care because of illness or disability.
- Personal Independence Payment, if you're aged 16 or over but under State Pension age. If you live in Scotland, you need to apply for Adult Disability Payment.
- Disability Living Allowance, for a person aged under 16.

You might also be able to claim other benefits, depending on your circumstances. Find out more in our guide [Benefits to help with your disability or care needs](#).

### Using your home to help pay for your care

Selling your home and buying a smaller, cheaper one could free up money to pay for your care costs. It could also give you a chance to live somewhere that might better cater for your needs now and in future.

#### What are the pros and cons of downsizing or releasing equity?

Downsizing can give you more manageable and cost-effective living arrangement tailored to your needs. For example, with a smaller house, managing daily tasks might become simpler, from cleaning to maintenance. It can also lower running costs, like reduced utility bills and maintenance expenses, which can ease financial strain.

But be aware:

- Downsizing or releasing equity may affect your financial assessment for home care and benefits eligibility.
- If you downsize your home or release equity from it, you might have to pay for your care costs, even if you weren't paying for it before.
- Smaller properties, such as bungalows, may not always be cheaper, and modifications can be costly.
- Care costs might rise as you get older or if you fall ill. So, remember to factor that into your calculations.

It's important to get professional advice if you're thinking about downsizing or releasing equity.

Find out more in our guide [What is equity release?](#) You can consider other options besides downsizing to a smaller house, like:

- retirement property, also known as sheltered housing that has: help from a scheme manager (warden), or support staff
  - 24-hour emergency help through an alarm system
  - communal areas, such as gardens or lounges
  - social activities for residents.
- extra care housing suitable that has:
  - a minimum age for residents, usually 55 or 60.
  - help from scheme manager, warden, or other staff who can help
  - 24-hour emergency help using an alarm
  - communal areas, like gardens or lounges
  - social events for residents
  - you have your own place to live in, so you can be independent
  - shared communal areas where you can meet others.

Some extra-care housing is available to buy or rent yourself. Other extra-care housing is provided by the local council after it checks your needs, but not every area has it available.

The Elderly Accommodation Counsel (EAC) charity can help you [find a property to meet your needs](#)

If you're considering sheltered or extra care housing Sheltered and extra care housing are clusters of homes that share facilities, such as an on-site warden and social events.

They're usually available to rent from local councils, housing associations and charities. If you want to buy, sheltered housing is also available from some private developers, but it can be expensive to buy.

Moving to a serviced apartment in a retirement village or into sheltered housing can bring advantages you might not have considered:

- your new home might be easier to maintain
- accessibility might be easier, so you can stay in your home for longer.

But be aware that there will often be annual charges to pay, such as service charges and ground rent if it's a leasehold property. So, it's important to factor these costs into your budget.

You can [find out more about sheltered housing](#) on Which?

### Ways to pay for your care at home using your savings

If you have a lump sum, explore these options to help fund your long-term care.

Consider buying an immediate needs annuity plan. If you release equity from your home or if you already have a lot of savings, an immediate needs annuity might be worth looking at.

It's a type of insurance policy that provides a guaranteed regular income for life to pay for care costs.

The income from this type of annuity is tax free if it's paid directly to the care provider. Find out how it works and whether it's right for you in our guide [What is an immediate needs annuity?](#)

### Using investment bonds to pay for your care

You can use investment bonds to help pay for your care. But there's no guarantee that the returns will cover the cost of your care, and your money is tied up for a long time.

Find out [how investment bonds work and the pros and cons](#) before deciding whether they're suitable for you.

When your local council or HSCNI carries out a financial assessment to work out how much you'll pay towards your care, money tied up in investment bonds will usually be excluded from their calculations, but it's worth asking if that's the case. This is because they're treated as life insurance policies and disregarded.

But if you already need care, you can't just put your money into bonds to avoid paying. Your local council or HSCNI could see this as 'deliberate deprivation of assets' and take their value into account.

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