Looking after someone at home

A practical guide for carers: getting support, moving safely, falls, medicines and an emergency plan, with local help in Berkshire

For adults who look after a partner, relative, friend or neighbour who is ill, older or disabled. This edition adds a list of local help in Berkshire.

Their own care plan comes first. If the person you look after has advice from a hospital, GP, physiotherapist or care team, follow that. This guide is general information. It is not a care plan.

Help for you as a carer

- You can ask for a carer's assessment. It is free. Contact adult social services at your local council.
- It looks at how caring affects you: your health, work, free time and relationships. You can ask for it at the same time as the assessment for the person you look after.
- Help that may follow includes breaks from caring, training in moving and handling, local support groups and advice on benefits.
- If you care for someone for at least 35 hours a week, you may be able to get Carer's Allowance. The person you look after must get certain benefits. Check on GOV.UK. In Scotland it is called Carer Support Payment.

- Breaks help stop you becoming worn out. Options include a sitting service, where a trained volunteer keeps the person company for a few hours, a day centre, or a short stay in a care home. The council only pays for a break when it has assessed that one is needed.
- Our free guide to your rights as a carer covers the assessment, money help and your rights at work: mobilephysiotherapist.co.uk/carers-rights/berkshire.

Moving and helping them safely

Helping someone stand, walk, or get in and out of bed can hurt you both if it is done the wrong way. Back injuries are the most common injury for carers.

- If you help someone move often, get training, or ask a health professional to show you how.
- Ask the council for an occupational therapy assessment. It can show you the right way to help, and what equipment would make it safer.
- The council may provide equipment free, such as a hoist, stand aid, transfer board or slide sheet.
- Do not buy lifting equipment until an occupational therapist, physiotherapist or social worker has advised you. Try equipment before you buy it.
- Your council may run free moving and handling courses.

Helping to prevent falls

- Keep floors clear of clutter, loose wires and rugs.
- Use a non-slip mat in the bath or shower.
- Encourage regular eye tests and hearing checks. Ear problems can affect balance.

- If you think a medicine is affecting their balance, speak to their GP or pharmacist.
- Help them stay active every day. Activities that improve strength and balance, done at least twice a week, help too. Our free sheet of simple exercises is at mobilephysiotherapist.co.uk/balance-exercises.

If they fall

- Keep them comfortable and warm.
- If they can get up, help them carefully. Do not try to lift them yourself.
- Call 999 if they cannot get up, or they may have hurt their head, neck, back or hip.
- Call NHS 111 if they may be in pain, hurt or unwell.

Tell their GP about any fall, even if they were not hurt.

Medicines

- Give medicines at the right time of day. Check whether each one should be taken with food or between meals.
- A pharmacist may be able to give you a pill box with a section for each time of day.
- If they take several medicines, their GP surgery may offer a free review with a pharmacist. Try to go with them, if they would like you there.
- Keep all medicines in one place, ideally locked away. Order repeat prescriptions in good time.
- Never give a double dose to make up for a missed one. Check with a pharmacist before giving a medicine you have bought.

- Never give medicine without their agreement. Check with their doctor or pharmacist before you crush tablets.

Plan for an emergency

If you were ill, or could not get to them, who would step in? Make a plan now, while things are calm.

- Ask a relative, friend or neighbour who could help at short notice. Make sure they have a key or the key safe code, and know what care is needed.
- Write down the care they need, with their medicines and any dos and don'ts. Keep it somewhere easy to find, and tell people where it is.
- Look at the plan again now and then, and keep it up to date.
- Some areas have a carers emergency card scheme. Ask your local carers service.

My emergency plan

Name and address of the person I look after:

Who can step in (name and phone):

Their GP surgery and pharmacy:

Their medicines, and where they are kept:

Allergies:

Care and support they get, and who provides it:

Walking aids and other equipment:

Anything else people need to know:

Local help in Berkshire

Berkshire has six councils: West Berkshire, Reading, Wokingham, Bracknell Forest, the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead, and Slough. Each line says which area it is for. Some NHS and charity services cover more than one area.

Help for carers. Reading and West Berkshire: the Reading and West Berkshire Carers Partnership gives advice and support. Call 0118 926 3941. In West Berkshire, if you care for someone over 50, you can also call Age UK Berkshire on 0118 959 4242. Wokingham: the Wokingham Carers Partnership, through Age UK Berkshire, 0118 959 4242. Bracknell Forest: Signal for Carers gives free support. Call 01344 266088. Windsor and Maidenhead: ask the council for a carer's assessment on 01628 683744. Slough: the council's Slough Carers Support team, through 01753 475111.

West Berkshire Council adult social care. For people in West Berkshire. Call 01635 503050. Out of hours, for emergencies: call 01635 551111 and choose option 1. westberks.gov.uk

Reading Borough Council adult social care. For people in Reading. Call 0118 937 3747. Out of hours, for emergencies: 01344 351 999. reading.gov.uk

Wokingham Borough Council adult social care. For people in Wokingham Borough. Call the Health and Social Care Hub on 0300 365 1234. Out of hours, for emergencies: 01344 351 999. wokingham.gov.uk

Bracknell Forest Council adult social care. For people in Bracknell Forest. Call 01344 351500. Out of hours, the same number goes through to the Emergency Duty Service. bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Windsor and Maidenhead adult social care. For people in the Royal Borough of Windsor and Maidenhead. Call 01628 683744. Out of hours, for emergencies: 01344 351 999. rbwm.gov.uk

Slough Borough Council adult social care. For people in Slough. Call 01753 475111 and choose the adult social care option. Out of hours, for emergencies: 01344 351 999. slough.gov.uk

Equipment. Ask your council's adult social care team for an assessment. Reading, Slough and Windsor and Maidenhead lend equipment through Millbrook Healthcare. To return it or get it mended, call Millbrook on 0118 228 8701. Reading: collection is free, and small changes such as grab rails, up to 1,000 pounds, are free. West Berkshire: council equipment is usually free if the assessment shows you need it. Windsor and Maidenhead: for walking sticks, frames and wheelchairs, ask your GP.

Falls. Tell your GP about any fall. Your GP can check why you fell and refer you for help. Reading: call the Falls Prevention Service on 0118 937 3747, or fill in the online falls checklist. Windsor and Maidenhead: the council's Falls Prevention Team is on 0333 121 0205. West Berkshire: exercise classes at leisure centres, if your GP or health worker refers you.

Personal alarms. A button to press for help, 24 hours a day. Reading: alarms from the council's adult social care have no charge. Call 0118 937 3747. Slough: the council's alarms are free for people who need them, after an assessment. Call 01753 475111. West Berkshire: ask on 01635 503050. You may have to pay towards the monitoring. Anywhere in Berkshire: Forestcare, run by Bracknell Forest Council, fits alarms. There is a charge. Call 01344 786599, any time.

Local contacts checked 16 November 2026. Services can change, so check before you rely on one.

Coming home from hospital?

Our free hospital checklist covers what to sort before they leave, home safety, when to get medical help, and a 14-day diary: mobilephysiotherapist.co.uk/after-hospital-checklist/berkshire.

General information, not a care plan. Prepared by Mobile Physiotherapist UK from NHS, GOV.UK and Carers UK guidance. Sources checked 2 November 2026. Free to print, copy and share. Local contacts checked 16 November 2026.