Looking after someone at home

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

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 Bristol, Bath and North Somerset.

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.

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 Bristol, Bath and North Somerset

These services are for people who live in Bristol, Bath and North East Somerset, or North Somerset. Each area has its own council: Bristol City Council, Bath and North East Somerset Council, and North Somerset Council. Each line says which area it is for. Some NHS and charity services cover a wider area.

Help for carers. Bristol: ask Care Direct for a carer's assessment on 0117 922 2700. North Somerset: ask Care Connect for a carer's assessment on 01275 888 801. Bath and North East Somerset: call The Carers' Centre Freephone Support Line on 0800 0388 885, Monday to Friday, 9am to 1pm.

Bristol City Council adult social care. For people in Bristol. Call Care Direct on 0117 922 2700 for advice about care at home, or fill in the adult care referral form online. Family or a doctor can ask for you. bristol.gov.uk

North Somerset Council adult social care. For people in North Somerset. Call Care Connect on 01275 888 801, or email careconnect@n-somerset.gov.uk. An adviser will talk with you about what help you need. n-somerset.gov.uk

Bath and North East Somerset Council adult social care. For people in Bath and North East Somerset. Call 01225 394570, Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm. The Live Well B&NES website lists local help and groups. bathnes.gov.uk

Equipment. Equipment is lent after an assessment, often by an occupational therapist. Bristol: ask Care Direct on 0117 922 2700. North Somerset: equipment is lent free. Bristol and North Somerset: to return or repair equipment, call Medequip on 0330 053 3655. Bath and North East Somerset:

equipment is free, and is collected free. Call 01225 396717 to return it.

Personal alarms. Bristol: Bristol Careline gives you a button to press for help, 24 hours a day. There is a charge. Call 0117 922 3269. North Somerset: the council's alarm service is Medequip Connect. There is a charge. Ask Care Connect on 01275 888 801.

Falls: strength and balance classes. Bristol: the council's strength and balance classes help you walk steadily and lower your risk of falling. You will have a short assessment first. North Somerset: Age UK Somerset runs Strong and Steady classes. Call its Falls Prevention team on 01823 345614.

Local contacts checked 9 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/bristol.

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 9 November 2026.