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Help to manage at home

Where to get help when everyday things are getting harder: assessments, help at home, equipment, alarms and money, with local help in Bedfordshire

For adults who are finding everyday things harder at home, and their family and friends. This edition adds a list of local help in Bedfordshire.

You do not have to wait for a crisis. If washing, dressing, cooking, getting about or staying safe at home is getting harder, you can ask for help now. This guide is general information. It is not advice about your own situation.

Ask your council for a free needs assessment

- Anyone can ask for one, for themselves or for someone they know. It is free. Contact adult social services at your local council, by phone or online.
- Someone from the council, such as a social worker or occupational therapist, looks at how you manage everyday things like washing, dressing and cooking. It can be at home, by phone or online.
- Tell them about everything you find hard, even small things. If you leave things out, you may be offered less help.
- It can help to have a friend or relative with you.
- If you do not qualify for help, the council should still give you free advice about support in your area.
- If you disagree with the result, you can complain to the council.

Help that may follow

- Equipment, such as a walking frame or a personal alarm.
- Changes to your home, such as grab rails or a walk-in shower.
- Paid carers who visit you at home.
- Day centres and lunch clubs.
- Equipment and small changes to your home are free if you are assessed as needing them.
- You will usually be asked to pay towards the cost of care. A financial assessment works out whether the council will help pay.

Equipment and changes to your home

- Small things can make a big difference: a raised toilet seat, a non-slip mat in the bath or shower, a grab rail by the bed, or a kettle holder for easier pouring.
- Ask the council for a home assessment. An occupational therapist visits and watches what you find hard. It is free.
- The council should pay for each adaptation that costs less than £1,000, such as grab rails or a small ramp.
- For bigger work, such as a stairlift, a level-access shower or wider doors, you may be able to get a Disabled Facilities Grant from your council. It does not affect your benefits.
- You can often hire equipment first, to see if it suits you before you buy it.

Personal alarms and key safes

- A personal alarm lets you get help if you fall or have a problem at home. You wear it on your wrist or round your neck.
- Some are linked to a monitoring service that answers 24 hours a day. Some have fall detectors.
- A key safe is a small locked box on an outside wall that holds a key. Family, carers or the emergency services can open it with a code if you cannot get to the door.
- Costs vary. Monitored alarms usually have a set-up charge and then a monthly charge. Ask adult social services what your council offers.

Money help

- If you are over State Pension age and need help looking after yourself because of an illness or disability, you may be able to get Attendance Allowance. You do not need to have a carer to claim. Check on GOV.UK. In Scotland it is called Pension Age Disability Payment.
- Getting Attendance Allowance may mean you can also get extra Pension Credit, Housing Benefit or Council Tax Reduction.
- If someone cares for you for at least 35 hours a week, they may be able to get Carer's Allowance.

Staying safe and keeping in touch

- Keep floors clear of clutter, loose wires and rugs. Use a non-slip mat in the bath or shower.
- If you think a medicine is affecting your balance, speak to your GP or pharmacist.
- Activities that improve strength and balance, done at least twice a week, help prevent falls. Our free sheet of simple exercises is at mobilephysiotherapist.co.uk/balance-exercises.
- If you feel lonely, keep in touch by phone or video call, or join a local group or class.
- Ask your GP about social prescribing. A link worker can help you find local support and activities.
- Age UK, The Silver Line and Re-engage offer support and befriending.

Get help quickly

- If you need help urgently, but it is not an emergency, call NHS 111.
- If you or someone else needs help right now, call 999.

If you fall and cannot get up, or may have hurt your head, neck, back or hip, call 999.

More free guides

Looking after someone? Our free guide for carers: mobilephysiotherapist.co.uk/carers-guide/bedfordshire. Coming home from hospital? Our free hospital checklist: mobilephysiotherapist.co.uk/after-hospital-checklist/bedfordshire.

Local help in Bedfordshire

Bedfordshire has three councils: Bedford Borough, Central Bedfordshire and Luton. Use the number for the council where you live. Each line says which area it is for. Some services may charge.

Adult social care: your council. Advice about care at home, and how to ask for an assessment. Bedford Borough: 01234 276168, Monday to Thursday 9am to 5pm, Friday 9am to 4pm. Central Bedfordshire: 0300 300 8000, Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5.30pm, Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm. Luton: 01582 547 659.

Out of hours, emergencies only. The Emergency Duty Team covers all three councils in the evenings, at weekends and on bank holidays. Call 0300 300 8123. If someone is in danger, call 999.

Short-term help to get back on your feet. Each council has a reablement team. It helps you do everyday things for yourself again after an illness, a fall or a hospital stay. Ask the ward staff before you leave, or call your council. In Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire it usually lasts up to six weeks, and in Bedford Borough it is free for up to six weeks. In Luton, a short stay in a step-down flat is free for up to six weeks.

Equipment. The Community Equipment Loan Service lends equipment free of charge to people who are assessed as needing it. Medequip delivers, repairs and collects it: 0333 091 7763. Central Bedfordshire: for equipment and small changes to your home, call 0345 602 4064. Bedford Borough: see equipment and get free advice at the Centre for Independent Living, by appointment, 01234 276102. Luton: ask for an occupational therapy assessment through the council's Adult Care Portal.

Falls. If you have fallen, or are scared of falling, ask your GP about NHS falls help. Luton: Age Concern Luton's Falls Prevention team can fit grab rails and fix trip hazards at home. The service is free, but you pay for materials. Call 01582 456812.

Personal alarms. A pendant you press to call for help, day or night. Bedford Borough: ask for a telecare assessment on 01234 276168. It can be free, but some people pay a weekly charge. Central Bedfordshire: ask for a care assessment on 0300 300 8000. Luton: Assistive Technology Solutions, 01582 720703.

Help for carers. Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire: Blue Sky Carers Support, 01234 673810. Carers in Bedfordshire, 0300 111 1919, Monday to Friday 10am to 2pm. A carer's assessment from your council is free. Luton: Carers in Luton, or ask Luton Council for a carer's assessment online.

Home Fire Safety Visit. A free visit from Bedfordshire Fire and Rescue Service for people who may be at risk, for example if you are over 65, live alone or have care needs. The team can also give advice about falls. **0800 043 5042** · bedsfire.gov.uk/home-fire-safety-visits

Advice for older people. Bedford Borough and Central Bedfordshire: Age UK Bedfordshire gives free advice about benefits and forms. Call 01234 360510, Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm. Luton: Age Concern Luton, 01582 456 812.

Healthwatch. Help finding health and care services, and a place to tell someone about your care. Central Bedfordshire: 0300 303 8554. Luton: 01582 817 060, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm. Bedford Borough: healthwatchbedfordborough.co.uk.

Local contacts checked 9 November 2026. Services can change, so check before you rely on one.

General information, not advice about your own situation. Prepared by Mobile Physiotherapist UK from NHS and GOV.UK guidance. Sources checked 2 November 2026. Free to print, copy and share. Local contacts checked 9 November 2026.