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 Berkshire

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

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/berkshire. Coming home from hospital? Our free hospital checklist: mobilephysiotherapist.co.uk/after-hospital-checklist/berkshire.

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.

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.

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.

Safe and Well Visit. A free home visit from Royal Berkshire Fire and Rescue Service, if you qualify. They check your home room

by room and can fit free smoke alarms where needed. Check online to see if you can have one. rbfrs.co.uk

Age UK. Help and advice for older people. Age UK Berkshire works across the county. Call 0118 959 4242, Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm. Age UK Reading gives free information and advice. Call 0118 950 2480. ageuk.org.uk/berkshire

Citizens Advice. Help with money, benefits and other problems. Call Adviceline on 0800 144 8848. It is usually open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm, and puts you through to a local Citizens Advice. Calls are free from mobiles and landlines.
0800 144 8848 · citizensadvice.org.uk

Healthwatch. Healthwatch is independent. Tell them about your health or social care, good or bad. Reading: 0118 214 5579. West Berkshire: 01635 886210. Wokingham: 0118 418 1418. Bracknell Forest, Slough, and Windsor, Ascot and Maidenhead: 0300 012 0184.

Local contacts checked 16 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 16 November 2026.