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 Oxfordshire

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

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

Local help in Oxfordshire

These services are for people who live in Oxfordshire. This includes Oxford, Banbury, Bicester, Witney, Abingdon, Didcot, Wantage, Wallingford, Thame and Henley-on-Thames. Oxfordshire County Council runs adult social care for the whole county.

Oxfordshire County Council adult social care. Call 01865 519800, Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4pm. You can also ask for an assessment with the online form. Out of hours, for emergencies that cannot wait, call the Emergency Duty Team on 0800 833 408. oxfordshire.gov.uk/adult-social-care

Equipment. An occupational therapist can visit you at home to look at what would help. This can be small things, like a walking aid or a second stair rail. If you are eligible, they may be able to provide equipment. There are also equipment clinics around the county. Ask adult social care on 01865 519800. oxfordshire.gov.uk/homeassessment

Falls. If you have had a fall, or feel unsteady, tell your GP. Age UK Oxfordshire runs Stay Strong and Steady, a free first course for people at risk of falling or who have had a fall. It also runs strength and balance classes. The first class is a free taster. After that there is a charge. **01235 849 403**

Personal alarms. A personal alarm is worn on your wrist or round your neck. You press it to get help. Some also call for help if you fall. The council's assistive technology team gives free advice on alarms and other gadgets. You can book online. You can also buy an alarm yourself. If the council arranges one for you, you may be asked to pay towards it. oxfordshire.gov.uk/assistivetechnology

Help for carers. Carers Oxfordshire is a free service for adults who look after someone living in Oxfordshire. It gives advice and support, and can help with a carer's assessment. There is no charge for a carer's assessment. The CarersLine is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm. You can leave a message at other times. **01235 424715** · carersoxfordshire.org.uk

Keep Safe and Well visit. A free visit from Oxfordshire Fire and Rescue Service. A firefighter checks your home for risks, fits smoke alarms or checks the ones you have, and gives advice on preventing falls. Ask for a visit online. For advice on choosing smoke alarms, call 08000 325999. oxfordshire.gov.uk/safeandwell

Citizens Advice Oxfordshire. Free advice on money, benefits, housing and other problems. The Adviceline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 4.30pm. **0808 169 6031** · caox.org.uk

Healthwatch Oxfordshire. Independent help finding health and care services. Tell them about your health or care, good or bad, to help services improve. **01865 520520** · healthwatchoxfordshire.co.uk

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.