# Preparing for your social care assessment (England)

For up to date advice tailored to your circumstances, please call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**, from 8am – 8pm weekdays or 9am – 1pm Saturdays.

## Introduction

Your local council’s social services department is there to give you the help and support that you need to continue leading an independent life. This can include things like:

* personal care at home
* domestic help
* help with shopping
* meals on wheels
* services in day centres
* provision of equipment, aids and minor adaptations to the home
* care in residential or nursing homes.

In order to access this type of support, you will normally need to be assessed by social services. The Care Act 2014 has changed this assessment process in England. It does not apply in Wales, Scotland or Northern Ireland.

Once your social services department has contacted you to inform you of the date and time of your assessment, it’s worth spending some time preparing for it. The Care Act 2014 has also introduced new national rules (called Eligibility Criteria), which social services now use to determine who qualifies for care and support. This factsheet is designed to help you prepare for your needs assessment by:

* explaining what the new eligibility rules are
* looking at how your situation may meet the new rules
* listing extra support that you may wish to ask for
* providing tips for during the assessment.

In this factsheet we mention some other specific areas related to accessing social care. If you would like more information, we have other factsheets which can help:

* Staying Independent
* Challenging charges for community care services

This factsheet should be read alongside our Guide to social care (England), which has more information on arranging assessments and the process that follows.

If you have any other questions about community care, you can call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** or email us at **helpline@rnib.org.uk**.

## What is the eligibility criteria to get support?

When deciding whether you are eligible for care and support, your local authority will follow the Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations 2014. They will need to identify what you can and can’t do in relation to the following areas of your life (which they call “**outcomes**”):

* managing and maintaining nutrition
* maintaining personal hygiene
* managing toilet needs
* being appropriately clothed
* being able to make use of the home safely
* maintaining a habitable home environment
* developing and maintaining family and other personal relationships
* accessing and engaging in work, training, education and volunteering
* making use of necessary facilities or services in the local community, including public transport and recreational facilities
* carrying out any caring responsibilities you have for a child.

To meet the eligibility criteria and qualify for care and support, you must meet three **conditions** which relate to the outcomes above:

1. **Your need is due to a physical or mental impairment or illness**

To meet this condition, you must show that your care needs, in the areas listed above, are due to your sight loss, or any other physical or mental illnesses you have.

1. **As a result of your impairment or illness you are unable to achieve two or more specific outcomes**

To meet this condition, your care needs must mean that you’re unable to achieve at least two of the outcomes listed above. You count as being “unable” to achieve an outcome if:

* you need assistance with it
* **or** it causes you significant pain, distress or anxiety
* **or** it endangers (or is likely to) your health and safety or that of others
* **or** it takes significantly longer than normal to do it.
1. **As you are unable to achieve the outcomes there is, or there is likely to be, a significant impact on your wellbeing**.

To meet this condition, the result of you not being able to achieve at least two of the listed outcomes above must be that your wellbeing is significantly affected.

Wellbeing includes **all** the following areas:

* Personal dignity
* Physical / mental health / emotional well-being
* Protection from abuse
* Control over day to day life including the nature of the care provided
* Participation in work, education, training or recreation
* Social and economic well-being
* Domestic family and personal relationships
* Suitability of accommodation
* Your contribution to society

## How can I show that I meet the eligibility criteria?

You should consider any difficulties you would have in achieving any of the outcomes listed above. For each outcome, does achieving it mean that it:

* requires assistance
* causes you significant pain, distress or anxiety
* poses health and safety risks for you or others
* takes you significantly longer than normal.

If any of these apply, then this means you should be treated as unable to achieve the outcome. It can help to keep a daily diary of when you have needed help or found things difficult to do so that it does not get overlooked during your needs assessment.

Below is a list of outcomes, with suggested areas where someone with sight loss may need support. There are various examples as everyone’s circumstances are different.

### Managing and maintaining nutrition

Do you have difficulties in preparing and/or eating food and drink? Examples of this may be:

* finding cutlery, utensils and ingredients
* peeling, cleaning and chopping vegetables
* deboning meat or fish
* checking “sell by” dates on packages and checking for mould on food
* heating oil and boiling water
* carrying pots and pans and preventing spillages
* serving food and checking if there is food left on the plate
* avoiding accidents in the kitchen
* determining the contents of tins and packets of food
* navigating shop environments
* checking prices, special offers, ingredients (allergies), fat content
* sorting shopping once home
* travelling to the shops.

### Maintaining your personal hygiene

Do you have difficulties with managing personal care and hygiene? Examples of this may be:

* getting in and out of the bath or shower
* checking your cleanliness
* shaving or putting on make up
* washing, drying and styling your hair
* cutting your fingernails and toenails
* getting in and out of bed, especially during the night
* washing, drying and ironing clothes
* changing bed linen.

### Managing your toilet needs

Do you experience difficulties with getting on and off, or using the toilet?

### Being appropriately clothed

Do you have any problems with dressing yourself appropriately? This could include:

* choosing clean clothes that match and are appropriate for the weather or any activity you are doing (e.g work or volunteering)
* making sure clothes are not being worn inside out
* fastening buttons
* tying shoelaces.

### Being able to make use of the home safely

* Are you able to enter and move around your home safely?
* Is your home suited to your needs?
* Do you need advice about accommodation, including any adaptations your home might need such as improved lighting, guide rails or changes to the kitchen?
* Do you need assistance to access your home such as braille markings in the communal lift, or guide strips on steps to the building?

### Maintaining a habitable home environment

Is your home clean and safe from dangers and hazards? Do you need help with:

* Keeping kitchen surfaces and appliances clean and hygienic, or knowing that a surface is already clean?
* Washing up, drying and storing crockery, cutlery, glasses and cookware?
* Clearing away uneaten food and taking rubbish outside
* Clearing up breakages or spills?
* Sweeping and vacuuming floors?
* Installing and maintaining smoke alarms, intruder alarms and domestic appliances?
* General household maintenance (e.g. changing light bulbs, replacing fuses)?
* Maintaining a safe environment (e.g. making sure there are no loose carpets to trip on or obstacles to bump into)?
* Adjusting your central heating, hot water temperature controls and ventilation?
* Controlling lighting and domestic appliances?
* Maintaining your privacy (e.g. drawing curtains, locking doors)?
* Responding to emergencies?

### Developing and maintaining family and other personal relationships

Is your sight loss causing difficulties with keeping in contact with people? For example, this may include difficulties with:

* living alone or feeling isolated
* maintaining family or domestic roles
* ability to travel to visit people
* ability to travel to and sustain social groups that you belong to
* ability to use and obtain accessible phones, or other technology to keep in touch with people on a regular basis
* ability to access emails and social networking sites
* access to training to use accessible software or equipment.

### Accessing and engaging in work, training, education and volunteering

Is your sight loss making it difficult for you to:

* find voluntary work in the community?
* look for a new job, because you recently lost your previous job due to your sight loss?
* cope with changes to your education, which has been disrupted due to your sight loss?

### Making use of necessary facilities or services in the local community including public transport and recreational facilities

Are you unable to get around safely on your own outdoors? For example, difficulties could include:

* crossing the road
* avoiding obstacles and tripping or falling in the street
* using public transport (e.g reading timetables, finding the right train platform or bus stop, finding a seat) or hailing a taxi
* reading street signs
* asking for assistance when you are lost
* going to pubs, restaurants, sports events and theatres
* taking part in religious worship
* avoiding traffic accidents
* coping with disorientation after moving to a new house.

You may also want to think about whether:

* you need information and advice about using transport, including local concessions and schemes
* you are able to get out to do your own shopping
* you can get to local shops and facilities, visit friends or attend social activities or classes

### Carrying out any caring responsibilities the adult has for the child

Are you able to carry out your caring responsibilities, such as parenting for your own child or babysitting for others? Being blind and partially sighted can impact greatly on being able to carry out caring responsibilities for a child. Difficulties can include:

* taking children to school
* identifying if they are unwell
* reading to children and helping with homework
* preparing meals
* keeping the environment safe
* reading letters from school or GP
* being able to take part in family leisure/play
* being able to get to, access and take children to activities outside school.

You may also care for sick or disabled family member and friends. If you do, then a carers’ assessment maybe appropriate. Similarly, if someone is already providing some care for you, they are also entitled to a carers’ assessment. For more information on carers’ assessments, Contact Carers UK on **0808 808 7777**.

## What other things should I mention in my assessment?

It is important to tell the professional carrying out your assessment about all aspects of your life that might improve with some support – even if they do not ask you about these. You do not have to limit your answers to the questions that you’re asked by the assessor. Below we have listed some areas that you may wish to bring up during your assessment

### Equipment and adaptations

Would special equipment help you to manage everyday tasks? If you have a need for equipment (called “community equipment”) this should be covered by the assessment. Your local authority should supply you with any aids or equipment you need which costs less than £1,000.

### Communication

You may wish to consider whether you would benefit from:

* a radio and CD player, to help you with leisure and accessing information
* extra help because you have hearing loss or are deafblind
* access to a computer with internet access, or a reading machine or CCTV
* help with reading utility bills, labels on food, cleaning products, medicine bottles, text messages or reading and replying to personal mail.

### Social and leisure activities

You may wish to consider if you need anything to help with:

* reading for pleasure
* gardening
* needlework, knitting or sewing
* painting, writing or other artistic or cultural activities
* watching television
* identifying CDs and USB sticks
* arranging a holiday.

### Your health

Do you have another disability or a health problem which affects your daily life? If you have any difficulties in the following areas, you may wish to raise this in your assessment:

* Identifying the correct tablets to take
* measuring the correct dosage of drugs and medicines
* reading the instructions on medicine bottles
* using eye drops
* managing serious conditions such as diabetes (e.g testing blood sugar and urine, injecting insulin)
* Taking enough exercise and keeping fit.

## Top tips for the assessment

Here are three tips that you may wish to bear in mind on the day of your assessment:

* don’t underestimate your needs, and give as full a picture of your life as possible to the person doing the assessment
* tell the assessor about aspects of your life that might improve with some support – even if they do not ask you about these. You do not have to limit your answers to the questions that you’re asked by the assessor
* give real examples of when you find it hard to manage, or you’re prevented from doing something, especially if affects your health and safety. Also, tell the assessor if you have had any accidents, for example when cooking at home, or while trying to walk outdoors, such as a fall.

For more information on what happens following your needs assessment, contact us for our “Guide to needs assessments” which covers your options if you are eligible for care.

## How we can help

If you would like any more information, you can speak to our Advice team by calling our Helpline on **0303 123 9999** 8am – 8pm weekdays and 9am – 1pm Saturdays. Alternatively, you can email **helpline@rnib.org.uk**.

Our Helpline is your direct line to the support, advice and services you need. Whether you want to know more about your eye condition, buy a product from our shop, join our library, find out about possible benefit entitlements, or be put in touch with a trained counsellor, we’re only a call away.

Our Legal Rights service is available to offer help with more complex benefit cases. If you would like to challenge a benefit decision or think you should be awarded more than you have been, we can help with the appeals process.

Call our Helpline on **0303 123 9999**, we’re ready to answer your call Monday to Friday 8am – 8pm and Saturday 9am – 1pm. You can also email us at **helpline@rnib.org.uk**. You can also say, **“Alexa, call RNIB Helpline”** to an Alexa-enabled device.

### The Sight Advice FAQ

The Sight Advice FAQ answers questions about living with sight loss, eye health or being newly diagnosed with a sight condition. It is produced by RNIB in partnership with a number of other sight loss organisations. **sightadvicefaq.org.uk**

### Connect with others

Meet or connect with others who are blind or partially sighted online, by phone or in your community to share interests, experiences and support for each other. From book clubs and social groups to sport and volunteering, our friendly, helpful and knowledgeable team can link you up with opportunities to suit you. Visit **rnib.org.uk/connect** or call **0303 123 9999.**

The factsheet is not an authoritative statement of the law and is for general guidance only.

Please let us know if you use a language other than English. We will try to arrange a telephone interpreting service.



**RNIB Legal Rights Service**

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