

Hospital discharge in Scotland



Who we are

Age Scotland is the national charity for older people. We work to improve the lives of everyone over the age of 50 so that they can love later life.

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

Our mission is to inspire, involve and empower older people in Scotland, and influence others, so that people can make the most of later life.

Our three strategic aims are to:



Help older people to be as well as they can be



Promote a positive view of ageing and later life



Tackle loneliness and isolation

How we can help

We know that growing older doesn't come with a manual. Later life can bring changes and opportunities to your life and you may need to know about rights, organisations and services which are unfamiliar to you.

That's why we provide free information and advice to help you on a range of topics including benefits and entitlements, social care, legal issues such as Power of Attorney, housing and much more. All of our guides are available to download for free from our website, or you can contact our helpline team to have copies posted to you for free.

The Age Scotland **helpline** is a free, confidential phone service for older people, their carers and families in Scotland looking for information and advice.

Later life can bring times when you just need someone to talk to. Our **friendship line** is part of our wider helpline and older people can call us for a chat. We're here to listen, provide friendship and offer support.

For information, advice and friendship



Call us free on: 0800 12 44 222
(Monday – Friday, 9am - 5pm)



Visit [agescotland.org.uk](https://www.agescotland.org.uk)
to find out more.



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Introduction

Being in hospital, whether your stay is planned or an emergency, can be stressful. Knowing how long you are likely to be there, and what will happen when you are discharged, can help you to feel more in control and at ease. This guide is for you if you want to find out more about the discharge process when you leave hospital, and what your options may be.

Discharge planning

Planning your discharge

Planning for your discharge may start as soon as you are admitted to hospital, or even before if your stay was planned in advance. The healthcare professional in charge of your treatment will aim to discharge you as soon as you are well enough for your care and medical needs to be met outside of a hospital. Staying in hospital when you no longer need to is bad for your health and independence, and is bad for the hospital as they have fewer beds available for new patients.

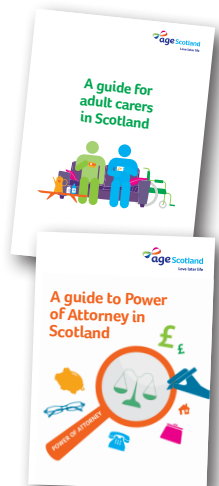
The discharge plan

You should only be discharged from hospital once you have a discharge plan in place. Your discharge plan will include the details of your medical condition, medications and ongoing or follow-up treatment. It will also include any medical or care and support needs you will have on discharge, and details of any services and equipment that will be put in place to meet them.

Family members, or your carer if you have one, have a right to be involved in planning your discharge. See our **Adult Carer guide** for information about the rights of carers in Scotland.

If you have granted Power of Attorney for welfare or for money matters, your attorney should be involved in relevant decisions too. For more information about Power of Attorney, see our **Power of Attorney in Scotland** guide.

You should have a copy of your discharge plan before you leave. A carer, family member or friend can also be given a copy, with your permission.





The assessment

In order to decide if you can be discharged, and to prepare your discharge plan, an assessment will be carried out by a number of people, who may include:

- your doctor or consultant
- the nursing staff
- a social worker or occupational therapist
- the discharge co-ordinator

Depending on your needs, the assessment may also include input from additional specialists, for example:

- a physiotherapist
- a community psychiatric nurse
- a pharmacist
- an incontinence adviser
- a dietician

Discharge options

After the assessment

Once the assessment has been carried out, the medical professional responsible for your treatment will decide if you:

- need to stay in hospital for longer
- can be discharged straight away and don't have any ongoing care needs, or will just need some short-term help in the days or weeks after going home
- can be discharged but will need longer term care and support, either in your own home, a residential care home or other suitable accommodation such as with family
- are likely to be able to return home, but need a period of rehabilitation or intermediate care (sometimes referred to as step-down care)

Discharge to your home: short-term or no care needs

The most straightforward discharge is one where you can go home with little or no ongoing assistance.

If you need some help in the early days of your recovery, the local council may arrange some short-term care and support. This is sometimes referred to as reablement care.

The cost of reablement care varies between council areas. Some councils provide free reablement care for up to 6 weeks. Others may charge for these services, depending on the type of help you need and your financial situation. Ask the social work department of your council about their charging policy.

If the council doesn't arrange any support, there may be voluntary organisations such as the Royal Voluntary Service or the Red Cross, who provide a 'home from hospital' service in your area. The social work department of your council may have details of local voluntary support organisations, or you can call the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** and we can look up any services in your area.

Discharge to your home: long-term care needs

If the assessment shows that you have longer-term care needs, the social worker will talk to you about the support you will need to stay safe at home and what help they can offer. They will take into account any support you already have, such as help from family and friends. Let them know if this support is short term and will stop, or whether it is longer term help.

The social worker will prepare a care and support plan, which will include information about the services that will be provided, who will arrange them and how much they will cost. For information about paying for care at home, see pages 8-9.

The services and support you receive may include, for example, help with personal care, help with daily living tasks, equipment or adaptations to help you in your home, and services to help any unpaid carers who help you. You could receive a package of different types of care including social care, nursing care, health services and housing services.

If you are uncertain about anything in your care plan, ask the person who drew up the plan to include more detail.

You should be given the plan in a format you can understand. This could mean arranging for information to be translated, or produced in larger print.

Discharge to step-down care

If you are well enough to leave hospital and will likely be able to continue to live independently in your own home, but need more intensive support for a short time, a period of step-down or intermediate care may be arranged for you. This may be provided in a residential setting such as a care home or community hospital, or in your own home. You will be assessed during the period of step-down care, to look at how any longer-term care needs you have can best be met.

See pages 8-10 for information about paying for intermediate care and temporary stays in residential care.



Discharge to a care home

Your assessment should take into account your views and the views of any carers you may have. If you want to return to your own home, the council should consider how to make this possible. However, they may recommend that your needs can best be met in residential care.

You have the right to choose the care home you want to live in, provided the care home:

- can meet your assessed needs
- is willing to provide accommodation
- will not cost your council more than it would usually expect to pay for a care home place, for someone with your assessed needs
- will have a place available within a reasonable period of time

You can name up to three care homes that you would like to live in. If it is unlikely that any of your preferred homes will have a place available by the date of your discharge, you may need to move into a different care home until a place becomes available at one of your chosen homes.

Depending on your circumstances, financial help may be available towards your care home costs.

Most people will qualify for some help towards their costs through Free Personal and Nursing Care.

Paying for care

Care costs and funding: care at home, reablement care and step-down care

Most people have to contribute to the cost of their care and support at home, but the charges vary between council areas. Services that are classed as Personal Care will be provided free if you are assessed as needing them. If you are assessed as needing Nursing Care, this will be arranged and provided free by NHS Scotland, via your GP surgery.

Personal care includes help with things like bathing, shaving, going to the toilet, getting up and going to bed, medications and dressings, cooking or reheating food and the use of surgical appliances and equipment.

Nursing care covers medical assistance involving a qualified nurse, such as giving injections or managing pressure sores.

If you are assessed as needing help with housework or shopping, sometimes known as domestic assistance, there is likely to be a charge for these services.

Some councils may provide extra reablement services after a hospital discharge for free, for up to 6 weeks, but some charge for these services. Check with your council for their local charging policy.

If there are charges for any of the services you will be receiving, the social worker will make a financial assessment. They will ask you for information about your income, savings and essential expenditure, and will work out how much you will need to contribute.

You should be offered a choice in how services will be arranged and paid for. This is called **Self-Directed Support**.



Self-Directed Support

Self-Directed Support is a way of letting you choose how much control you have over how your care and support services are arranged and paid for. You can:

- receive a direct payment and have complete control over how your care budget is spent
- ask the council to hold the budget, but make your own decisions about how the money is spent
- ask the council to hold the budget and arrange services on your behalf
- use a mixture of these methods

Age Scotland's guides **Care and support at home: assessment and funding** and **Care and support at home: practical help** provide more information.



The **Self-Directed Support Scotland** website has a directory of independent support organisations who can give you advice and help with Self-Directed Support. Visit www.sdsscotland.org.uk and click on the **Find Help** button to search for local services.

Care home funding

Most people pay something towards the cost of care in a care home. The amount you need to contribute will depend on your income, such as your State Pension and other pensions, and your capital.

Capital includes savings, stocks and shares, Premium Bonds and property. If you have jointly-held capital with another person, the council will assume each joint owner has an equal share, unless you can prove that this isn't the case.

If you own your own home, it will be ignored as capital if your partner or certain other people live there.

Personal and Nursing Care are free in Scotland. If the council assesses you as needing one or both of these types of care, and decides that your needs can best be met in residential care, they will make a payment to the care home to cover this part of the cost.

The council will only pay the rate for nursing care if you have been assessed as needing it **and** you move to a home where 24-hour nursing care is available.

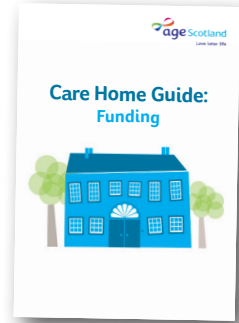
The system of NHS Continuing Healthcare that operates in some other areas of the UK does not apply in Scotland.

Each year the Scottish Government sets standard rates for residential care and nursing care. If you decided to move into a care home that charges more than the standard rate per week, for the level of care you are assessed as needing, a top-up payment from a third party such as a relative or charity would be needed to cover the difference.

If the council arranges a temporary stay in a care home for you, for example, to recover after a period in hospital, they can either carry out a normal financial assessment straight away, or ask you to pay what they feel is a reasonable amount for the first 8 weeks. After 8 weeks the council must use its normal financial assessment. Your home will not be counted as capital during a temporary stay in a care home.



For more information about care home fees, contact the **Age Scotland helpline** on **0800 12 44 222** to speak to one of our advisers, or request a copy of our **Care Home: Funding** guide.



Discharge

Before you leave

Before you leave the hospital, you and the hospital staff should check a few basic things, such as:

- you have clothes to go home in
- if you wear glasses, contact lenses, dentures or hearing aids, that you have them with you
- you have your door key
- you have enough money for short-term needs
- there's someone collecting you, or a taxi or hospital transport is booked
- you have a supply of any prescribed medication to take home
- you know how and when to take your medication – make sure you ask questions if you are not certain about this, or are unsure what your medications are for
- you and/or your carer can use any new equipment with confidence
- if you need incontinence products, a supply has been arranged
- you know how much activity to do in the early stages – whether you should try to get moving as soon as possible, or have a period of rest
- you know about any local support available for things like shopping or collecting prescriptions
- your GP has been informed of your discharge



Other things you may need to think about include:

- if you were receiving benefits such as Attendance Allowance and Pension Credit, and these stopped while you were in hospital, remember to restart them
- if the weather is cold, is there someone who could call in to switch on your heating before you return home?
- if you need specialist rehabilitation, for example from a physiotherapist, speech therapist or clinic, do you have details of these and do you know what to do to arrange appointments?
- do you have the number of someone you can contact in an emergency?
- do you have friends, family or details of organisations such as Age Scotland that you can contact for a chat, if you are going to be mostly alone in the house for a while?

If things go wrong

Complaints about social work decisions

If you are unhappy with a decision made by the social worker about your care needs, you can use the social work complaints process to challenge the decision. However, you cannot insist on remaining in hospital once you are clinically well enough to leave.

Social work complaints follow a three-stage process:

Stage one – frontline resolution

You should make your complaint to the social work department, by telephone, email or letter, within six months of the time you become aware of the problem. They should respond within five working days. If you are not happy with their response you can ask them to move your complaint to stage two.

Stage two – investigation

Your complaint should be acknowledged within three working days. The council should investigate your complaint and give you a full response within twenty working days, unless they let you know that they need more time to look into it. If you are still not happy with the council's response, you can ask the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman to look at the decision.



Stage three – the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman

The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman (SPSO) can review decisions independently and make recommendations for actions that organisations are expected to carry out. These could include:

- asking the council to look at their decision again
- asking the council to change their decision
- recommending the council improve their services in a particular way
- recommending that the council apologises to you.

You have 12 months to complain to the SPSO from the time you become aware of the problem. You can contact the **SPSO** on **0800 377 7330** or see their website **www.spsso.org.uk**.

You may also wish to discuss your complaint with your local councillor or MSP. If you do not know their contact details, call the Age Scotland helpline and we will find this information for you.

Complaints about clinical decisions

If you feel the decision to discharge you is incorrect and you are not well enough to leave hospital, you can ask for the decision to be reviewed. If agreement cannot be reached, you can use the NHS complaints process.

You must make your complaint within 6 months of the decision you are unhappy with, or within 6 months of discovering you had reason to complain.

You can find out more information about your rights as an NHS Scotland patient on the **NHS Inform website** at **www.nhsinform.scot** or call **0800 22 44 88**.

The **Patient Advice and Support Service** (PASS) is a free, independent service provided by Citizens Advice Scotland. They provide information about patients' rights and responsibilities, and advice and support for anyone who wants to raise a concern or complaint. You can contact them on **0800 917 2127**, or visit their website **www.cas.org.uk/pass**.

Advocacy can help you to represent your point of view as well as possible. This may involve friends or family speaking on your behalf or, in some areas, there may be an advocacy service available.

Contact the **Scottish Independent Advocacy Alliance** on **0131 510 9410** or visit **www.siaa.org.uk** to find an advocacy service near you.



Other sources of advice and information

Age Scotland helpline

The Age Scotland helpline provides information, friendship and advice to older people, their relatives and carers.

0800 12 444 222 / www.agescotland.org.uk

You can order free copies of all our information guides by calling the Age Scotland helpline on **0800 12 44 222** or through our website: **www.age.scot/publications**

Pain Association Scotland

Self-management training and support for people with chronic pain.

0800 783 6059 / <https://painassociation.co.uk>

Royal Voluntary Service

Support and practical help in the community.

www.royalvoluntaryservice.org.uk

British Red Cross

Emotional and practical support.

www.redcross.org.uk

Defence Medical Welfare Service

Support and assistance for veterans and their families who are on a medical care pathway in some areas of Scotland.

0800 999 3697 / www.dmws.org.uk

Disability Information Scotland

Advice about services, aids and equipment.

0300 323 9961 / www.disabilityscot.org.uk

Care Information Scotland

Information and advice if you look after someone, need care yourself or are planning for your future care needs.

0800 011 3200 / www.careinfoscotland.scot

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Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, websites, companies, products, services or publications in this information guide does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Scotland or any of its subsidiary companies or charities.

How you can help

Our vision is a Scotland which is the best place in the world to grow older.

All the information and advice we provide is free and completely impartial and in helping people access their rights and entitlements, it can be life changing.

We are an ageing population and more people than ever are coming to us for support. You can help us be there for those that need us most.



Make a donation

No matter how small or large, donations make a massive difference and help us continue our important work.

- ▶ Call **03330 15 14 60**
- ▶ Visit **age.scot/donate**
- ▶ Text **LATERLIFE** to **70085** to donate £5.*



Fundraise

Whether it is having a bake sale, running a marathon or knitting small hats for the Big Knit, there are so many ways to raise vital funds to support our work. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/fundraise**.



Leave us a gift in your Will

By choosing to leave us a gift in your Will, you can help Age Scotland to continue being there for vulnerable older people in the years to come. To find out more, call **0333 323 2400** or visit **age.scot/legacy**.

* Texts cost £5 plus one standard rate message

Let's keep in touch



Sign up to our newsletter

Our regular newsletters by email contain details of our campaigns, services and how you can support our work.

Sign up today by visiting [**age.scot/roundup**](https://age.scot/roundup)



Follow us on social media

Our social media channels are a great way to keep up to date with our work and issues that affect older people.



[**/agescotland**](https://www.facebook.com/agescotland)



[**@AgeScotland**](https://twitter.com/AgeScotland)



[**@age_scotland**](https://www.instagram.com/age_scotland)



[**/AgeScotland**](https://www.linkedin.com/company/AgeScotland)

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