

Information Sheet



15. Getting an Assessment from Social Services

If you feel that you require practical support to carry out day to day tasks because you have a disability or you are suffering from a long-term health condition, then you have the right to be assessed by Social Services. In order to get a 'community care' (also known as social care) assessment, you will need to get in touch with your local authority and ask to be assessed. Also, the route to getting a personal budget/direct payment (to live independently) is via this assessment.

To contact your Social Care services in Cheshire East please ring 0300 123 5010.

Press 1 for Adult Social Care

You will then be asked to choose a number for your location.

Press 1 for Crewe and Nantwich

Press 2 for Congleton, Sandbach, Middlewich, Holmes Chapel

Press 3 for Macclesfield

Press 4 for Wilmslow Knutsford, Poynton, Handforth

You **cannot** be refused an assessment even if you are already paying for all or part of your care needs (known as self funding).

When you first call the social services, you will need to give your details to the **SMART (Skilled Multi Agency Response Team)** and tell them that you have a disability, explaining to them that you need support and that you request a social care assessment. You may be told at this initial stage (by the SMART) that you do not meet their criteria and you are not eligible for help. You are entitled to challenge this decision. You are also entitled to be assessed again if your circumstances change. Social Services will then get in touch with you by phone or in writing to inform you of the date of the visit of your allocated social worker.

Some of the ways assessments can be done:

- **Face-to-face** – you and the assessor. This can take place in your home, or somewhere else.
- **Supported self-assessment** – you take the lead in filling in the

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assessment form and the local authority makes sure that it accurately identifies your requirements.

- **Online or by phone**
- **Jointly** – where relevant agencies work together so you don't have to tell your story more than once. For example, social care and health.
- **Combined** – for example, your assessment takes place at the same time as your carer's assessment. If a young carer is involved, their assessment will be done by children's services, so there may have to be two assessors.

The assessment must be *person-centred* around you, and based on your *individual circumstances*. It must take account of your wishes and preferences, what's important to you and what you want to achieve for yourself.

Getting help to be fully involved in your own assessment

Your Local Authority must also take account of your ability to be part of the assessment conversation, including any difficulties you may have in communicating with them.

They must find out if you can:

- Understand what is happening
- Understand information that is given to you
- Remember information that is given to you
- Understand choices
- Make decisions about what you want to happen
- Communicate what you want

The role of the independent advocate is to help you to:

- understand information
- express your needs and wishes
- represent your interests
- make sure your rights are respected
- make sure you get the care and support you need

When you think about who would be best to support you through an assessment, bear in mind that it might not make sense for people to support you if, for example, they are:

- a family member who only sees you occasionally

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- someone who also finds it hard to understand how the assessment process works
- someone who has strong views which they put forward before finding out what you think

What should happen during the assessment?

The assessor will talk to you about the support you need with everyday activities such as looking after yourself, household tasks and getting out and about. They must also talk to you about how this affects your *wellbeing and about the outcomes you want to achieve.*

The Care Act says Local Authorities have to take a *strengths-based approach*. This is about valuing the capacity, skills and knowledge that you and your support *network* have. They will talk to you about not only the difficulties you face but also what you like and don't like, what's important to you, your work, hobbies and social network, for example. They will also discuss how you can be supported by your family, friends and neighbours, as well as the support that you can get from the wider community. It is important to be clear that this is not about imposing more on carers. However, it's possible that having this conversation could generate ideas for sources of support that you didn't know about or haven't thought of before.

In some cases, a person's eligible requirements for care and support can be met through their own support networks or existing provision in the community. The local authority is still responsible for making sure that your eligible needs are met and should review the situation if you tell them that your circumstances have changed.

In other cases, a Local Authority might offer someone their reablement service, which could help them to regain skills. This can work really well for people who've had a stroke or an accident.

The Local Authority also has to take account of the impact of your needs on your family and anyone with caring responsibilities, both adults and young carers. For example, if you have a carer who is also responsible for other people, like their children or an elderly relative, the assessor should offer three assessments: one for you, one for your carer, and one for the elderly relative.

You will need to show your social worker what assistance you require to carry out your day to day tasks. It is highly recommended that you

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prepare for the assessment before the allocated social worker visits you. A good idea would be to keep a diary for a week before the assessment of your daily needs and the difficulties that you encounter in carrying out the personal tasks and daily activities.

Keep a record of what you do, how long it takes, and what help you receive, as well as what you would like to be able to do if you had the necessary help.

The Care Act 2014 introduced a national minimum threshold for eligibility. Local Authorities don't have to arrange services to meet needs below the threshold, but they can if they choose to.

To be eligible for care and support from your Local Authority, your requirements must meet three conditions.

They must:

1. Relate to an impairment or illness
2. Mean that you can't achieve at two or more of the specified outcomes in your day-to-day life and, as a result
3. There is a significant impact on your wellbeing

You will be seen as unable to achieve an outcome if you:

- can't achieve it without help
- can achieve it without help but it causes you significant pain, distress or anxiety
- can achieve it without help but this puts you or others in danger, or is likely to put you or others in danger
- can achieve it without help but it takes you significantly longer than would normally be expected

When the Local Authority has decided whether or not you are eligible for state-funded support, they must give you a copy of their decision. If they have decided that your needs are not eligible, **they must explain** how they have reached this decision.

Each local authority will have its own guidelines. The information below is intended to help you think about what you might be asked in your assessment.

The specified outcomes relate to:

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Healthy eating

Can you get to the shops to buy food and can you cook, eat and drink?
Are you able to eat a healthy diet?

Personal hygiene

Can you wash yourself and your clothes? Do you have a washing machine or can you get to a laundrette? Can you get to the shops to buy cleaning products? Do you understand how to work a washing machine?

Using the toilet

Can you get to the toilet and manage on your own? Do you have difficulty with continence, during the day or at night?

Getting dressed and wearing the right clothes

Can you dress yourself and can you decide what to wear in relation to the weather or the activities you're going to be doing, including work, whether paid or voluntary? Can you manage casual clothes but need help with more formal clothes like doing up zips, putting on a tie and cleaning your shoes? Can you buy new clothes? Can you see well enough or understand enough to know if your clothes are appropriate or clean?

Using your home safely

Can you get around your home safely, including going up or downstairs, using appliances in the kitchen and using the toilet and bathroom? This includes getting in and out of your home from the outside. Can you get to all the rooms you need to or do you have to spend all day in one room, for example?

Managing your home

Can you keep your home clean and safe? Can you sort out your bills for things like the electricity, gas, water, and your rent or mortgage?

Personal relationships with family and friends

Are you socially isolated or lonely? Do you find it difficult to develop or keep relationships with family or friends? For example, can you use a phone or computer to keep in touch with other people?

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Going to work and learning opportunities

Do you have opportunities to work or learn? Do you want to? Can you participate in work or learning without support? Can you find out what work and learning opportunities are available in your local area or on the internet, for example?

Accessing the local community

Can you get out and about in the community safely? Can you use public transport or do you have your own transport? Can you get to the shops and leisure facilities? Do you need support to go to health care appointments or to the library, or to meet a friend in a café or pub?

Caring for a child

Do you have any parenting or other caring responsibilities, as a parent, step-parent or grandparent.

You will need to highlight to social services the potential risks and the resulting impact on you not getting the support that you actually need. Do not pretend to them that you do not need assistance when you do.

You need to take into consideration the fact that activities may take longer on bad days. The Local Authority may not be able to assist you with everything you identify in the assessment, but this process will help to define your needs in a way you are comfortable with. You may ask an advocate, family member, a friend or a local support group to help you prepare for your assessment.

What happens next?

After the assessment, the Local Authority will decide whether any of your needs are eligible for support from them. Their decision must disregard any care and support you get already; for example, from a family member, friend or another carer.

If your requirements for care and support are eligible, the Local Authority will go on to discuss your care and support plan with you. Whether or not you are eligible for care and support from the Local Authority, they must give you advice and information about the support that is available in the

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community.

Local Authorities still have the power to meet needs that are not considered eligible. This means that Local Authorities can support people early on, to help maintain wellbeing and independence, and potentially delay a situation where longer-term care and support might be required.

Once eligible for social care funding, the council may offer you Personal Budget and you will be able to choose direct payments. This is sometimes known as 'self-directed support' (SDS). This is support that you decide and control, in other words you control the money for support - Personal Budget.

<http://www.advicece.org.uk/social-care>