

Assessment for care and support in Wales

Wales factsheet
Factsheet W418LP
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Many people with dementia and their carers will need care and support as the condition progresses. Whether from a carer, family, friends or professionals, all care should help people with dementia and those supporting them to live well. The types of care put in place will be different for everyone, because everyone's needs are different. With the right information and support, you can understand your options and make the right decisions for yourself and the person you care for.

This factsheet is written for carers, however the information is also helpful for people with dementia. It explains what care assessments are and how people with dementia and their carers can access them.

This factsheet is for people living in Wales, as the assessment for care and support is different in England and Northern Ireland. For information about England see factsheet 418, **Assessment for care and support in England**, and in Northern Ireland see factsheet NI418, **Assessment for care and support in Northern Ireland**.

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Assessment for care and support in Wales

People with dementia and their carers will need care and support as the condition progresses. An assessment for care tells you what needs the person has, and what needs you may have. It also shows what care and support will meet these needs.

Some people with dementia and their carers can have their care and support provided and paid for by the local authority (local council). For some people the local authority may only pay some money towards their care and support. Others may have to pay for their care and support themselves.

You have to meet certain criteria (conditions) to have your needs met by the local authority. If you wish to get care and support paid for by the local authority you must have either:

- a care assessment and financial assessment – for a person with dementia, or
- a carer's assessment and financial assessment – for a carer.

Asking for information and advice as early as possible will help you to plan ahead for care and support. This will help you and the person you care for to have more time to explore options and find out what is available locally. It also helps with planning for emergencies or preparing for times when you may not be able to care for them.

Support for people with dementia: the care assessment

Anyone with dementia is entitled to an assessment of their needs by the local authority. This is called a care assessment. It should identify what the person's needs are, and what support would meet these needs. It also helps the local authority to decide whether or not they will pay towards meeting these needs.

The local authority cannot refuse to carry out an assessment, even if they think the person will have to pay for their own support and care. The information in the assessment will be helpful, even if the council does not pay towards the care and support. You can use the information to discuss care and support needs with other organisations and companies such as homecare agencies.

For more information about paying for care see 'Financial assessments' on page 16 and factsheet W532, **Paying for care and support in Wales**.

Getting a care assessment

There are a number of ways someone can get an assessment. The person with dementia can ask for one themselves. You can also ask your local authority's social services department for one on their behalf. This department may be called different things in different areas – for example, 'adult services'. You can find their contact details:

- on a Council tax bill
- online
- at the GP surgery
- at the local library.

Other people can also arrange the assessment on behalf of the person, such as:

- the person's GP, consultant or another health or social care professional such as an occupational therapist
- a carer or relative
- a hospital social worker (if the person is in hospital).

If you ask for an assessment on behalf of someone, you must get their consent first. Some people with dementia may lack the ability (mental capacity) to give this consent. You can still ask for an assessment, as long as it is in the person's best interests. For more information on this see factsheet 460, **Mental Capacity Act 2005**.

Assessments in Welsh

The person you care for has a right to have their care assessment in Welsh if they want. The local authority must meet this request, and this should not delay the assessment.

Alzheimer's Society produces information in Welsh, including **The dementia guide** and factsheets on other topics. For more information see alzheimers.org.uk/publications

Who does the assessment?

The local authority social services department will carry out most assessments. This will normally be done by a social worker or a care coordinator (they may be referred to as an assessor). They may organise for other professionals to be involved, for example the person's doctor or a nurse.

What to expect

A care assessment will usually involve answering questions as part of a discussion. The assessment is designed to find out the person with dementia's 'personal outcomes'. These are what they want to do daily or weekly. For example, the person may want to cook and eat in their own home. They might need support to do this.

The assessment considers five key things:

- **the person's circumstances** – for example, do they have any mental or physical health conditions (including dementia), and do they live alone?
- **the person's outcomes** – what does the person want to be able to do? For example, go out shopping or to see friends
- **any barriers to the person achieving those outcomes** – for example, any mobility problems
- **the risks to the person if the outcomes are not achieved** – for example, they may feel isolated or depressed if they cannot see friends, or they may become ill if they are unable to buy food
- **the person's strengths and capabilities** – such as being able to manage their money or joining in with social events.

These five key things are discussed together, however not all assessments are done face-to-face. They may be done through a self-assessment questionnaire.

Self-assessment questionnaire

Sometimes an assessment is done through a questionnaire which the person completes themselves. The person you care for might need your help to fill out a self-assessment questionnaire. You or a social worker can help them at home, to make sure that all their needs are considered. You can ask the local authority for support if the person with dementia needs it. Some local charities may also help with this.

See 'Other useful organisations' on page 21.

Where the assessment takes place

A face-to-face assessment usually takes place in the person's home. This can help the assessor to know what care and support they need. If the assessment is arranged elsewhere it should be somewhere convenient for the person, and you, their carer.

The care assessment: tips

If the person with dementia is having a care assessment, there are some things that can help them to prepare for it. They may want to make notes so they can take their time to think about what support they need.

It might seem like a lot for the person to think about, but even noting down some of the details listed below will help them to get more from the assessment. You both might find it helpful to look through the five key things listed in the 'What to expect' section, and think about answers to these questions. A carer can help the person prepare for an assessment and might also find these tips useful.

Preparing for the assessment

- What needs does the person have, and what care and support would they like?
- Start a diary outlining what daily tasks the person needs support with.
- If the person is already receiving support or care from a family member or friend, is this something that can continue?
- Thinking ahead, can this care continue long term?
- What does the person want the outcomes of the assessment to be?
- Is there any equipment or assistive technology that might help? For example, an automated pill dispenser, or 'smart' home systems that can be set up to turn off lights.
- What care and support might they need in the future as their condition gets worse? This can include equipment and assistive technology.
- Collect any other supporting evidence, such as letters from the GP. For example, if the person struggles with mobility, the GP might suggest ramps or grab rails.
- Make a list of any medication the person is taking and what conditions they are for.
- Make sure any carers or relatives that the person wants to be present at the assessment are available.

During the assessment

- Be honest. Some people feel they need to hide the problems they are having from professionals. However, the point of the assessment is to see how the person's needs can be met.
- Tell the assessor about any support the person currently gets from carers and family. This is important because even if it will continue, the care plan should cover what would happen if this support is no longer available.
- Tell the assessor if there are things the person wants to do.
For example:
 - be more active
 - engage more with the community by attending social groups and events
 - have some help with shopping, going for walks or swimming.
- Think about what care and support would help and share this in the assessment. It doesn't necessarily mean the person will get it, but the assessment should consider it. As well as practical care, think about equipment and other items such as assistive technology devices.

For more information on assistive technology see factsheet 437, **Using technology to help with everyday life**.

Getting support from the local authority for people with dementia

Once a care assessment has been completed, the local authority will decide if they will pay for care and support for the person. They will consider whether the person has an ‘eligible care need’, and also their financial situation. For more information on the financial assessment see factsheet W532, **Paying for care and support in Wales**.

A person must have an eligible care need for the local authority to consider paying for their care and support. These care needs are organised into ‘criteria’ (conditions) which apply across Wales. Please see the box on page 10 for more information on these criteria.

If the person you care for is told that they do not have eligible care needs and you believe they do, you will need to make a complaint (see ‘Complaints’ on page 20). You should explain why you think their needs do meet the criteria.

Eligibility criteria

There are four criteria (conditions) that someone must meet for the local authority to consider funding their care and support. The person will have eligible needs if:

1. The person's needs are due to their physical or mental health, age or disability (this includes dementia).
2. The person's needs mean they are unable to do at least one of the following:
 - carry out self-care or domestic routines such as cooking meals or washing
 - communicate
 - protect themselves from abuse or neglect
 - be involved in work, education, learning or in leisure activities such as volunteering or going swimming
 - maintain or develop family or other personal relationships, for example with friends
 - maintain and develop social relationships and involvement in the community such as the library or local shops
 - fulfil caring responsibilities to a child.
3. The person doesn't have a carer or community support to meet their needs, or they can't meet them on their own.
4. The person is unlikely to meet their needs without support from the local authority.

Support for carers: carers' assessments

Anyone who cares for a person with dementia is also entitled to an assessment of their needs as a carer. This is called a carer's assessment. It should identify what your needs are, and work out what type of support would meet your needs.

As a carer, the impact of dementia on your daily life can be challenging, and everyone needs support from time to time. Accessing care for yourself can help you to maintain your own health and wellbeing and carry on caring for the person with dementia. For more information see factsheet 523, **Carers – looking after yourself and booklet 600, **Caring for a person with dementia: A practical guide**.**

If you meet certain eligibility criteria (conditions), the local authority may pay for your support. Even if the person you are caring for is paying for their own care (self-funding), you may still be able to receive support. If the person you care for refuses an assessment, or does not want care or support, you can still have an assessment.

Often a carer's assessment is done at the same time as a care needs assessment for the person with dementia. This can be helpful, as your needs might be best met by support that is provided to the person you care for. For example, if respite care is provided to the person with dementia, this allows you both to have a break.

Getting a carer's assessment

You can ask for a carer's assessment directly from your local authority's social services department. This department may be called different things in different areas – for example, 'adult services'. You can find their contact details:

- on a Council tax bill
- online
- at the GP surgery
- at the local library.

There are other ways this may be arranged:

- as part of a care needs assessment for the person you care for
- a referral from a health or social care professional
- a referral from a friend or relative.

If someone makes the referral for you as a carer, they must have your consent. For a carer's assessment to be carried out, you must agree to it.

Assessments in Welsh

You have a right to have your carer's assessment in Welsh if you want. The local authority must meet this request, and this should not delay the assessment.

Alzheimer's Society produces information in Welsh, including **The dementia guide** and factsheets on other topics. For more information see alzheimers.org.uk/publications

What to expect

What to expect from a carer's assessment depends on how it has been arranged. The assessment will usually be carried out by a social worker. It may involve other health professionals, such as a GP, but the social worker will arrange this if it is needed. It involves a series of questions. You will have the opportunity to explain the care and support you give, and also what help and support you, yourself would like.

Sometimes you may be asked to give this information through a questionnaire. You can ask the local authority for support filling this out if you need it. Some local charities may also help with this. If the carer's assessment is carried out at the same time as a care assessment, it is likely to be in the home of the person getting the care assessment.

The carer's assessment may take place separately from the care assessment of the person with dementia, or the person with dementia may not be having an assessment themselves. In this case the assessment should take place somewhere that is convenient for the carer, for example in your own home.

A carer's assessment: tips

If you are caring for a person with dementia and are going to have a carer's assessment, there are a number of things you can do to get the most from your assessment. You may want to make notes so you can more easily tell the assessor what support you feel you need.

- **Make a note of what you want from the assessment.** For example, that you want to stay in your job, or that you want your relative to live nearer to you so that you can give care more easily.
- **Write a list of the care and support that you give to the person,** including when, where and for how long. Include any time that you might spend checking that things are OK or being 'on call' in case of problems.
- **Think about what care and support you can continue to give.** You should not feel pressured into providing care that you are not willing or able to give.
- **Keep a diary for a few weeks** with all the tasks that you do to support the person. Include things such as making several bus journeys or doing a daily shop.
- **Make a note of how your caring role may be difficult at times** – possibly making you feel depressed, irritable, stressed or tearful.
- **Take note of the things that you are unable to do as a result of caring** – for example, cleaning your home, your childcare responsibilities, taking on extra hours at work or doing further education, or maintaining social activities and seeing your friends.
- **Think about and list the support that would help you in your role.** This may be someone else providing care temporarily for the person so you can have a break. It can also be some specific help for you, such as training or having some equipment, for example a tumble dryer, or driving lessons so you no longer need to use public transport.
- **Think about what support you may need in the future** as the person's condition gets worse.
- **If you'd feel more comfortable,** ask for a separate carer's assessment without the person you care for being present. Be open and honest. This may be difficult but, for the assessment to work, the person carrying out the assessment needs to understand your situation.

Getting support from the local authority for carers

Local authorities will give care and support to carers who meet certain eligibility and financial criteria (conditions). They have to carry out a carer's assessment first and then usually a financial assessment will follow. For more information see 'Financial assessments' on page 16 and factsheet W532, **Paying for care and support in Wales**.

A carer must have an 'eligible care need' for a local authority to consider paying for their care and support. These care needs are organised into 'criteria' which apply across Wales.

If you are told that you are not eligible because you do not meet these criteria, but you feel that you do, you will need to make a complaint (see 'Complaints' on page 20). You will need to explain why you believe your needs do meet the criteria.

Carer's eligibility criteria

There are four criteria (conditions) that a carer must meet to be eligible for local authority funded care or support:

1. The carer has a need because they are providing care to a person with dementia.
2. As a result the carer is unable to do at least one of the following:
 - carry out self-care or domestic routines such as cooking or cleaning
 - communicate
 - protect themselves from abuse or neglect
 - be involved in work, education, learning or leisure activities such as volunteering or swimming
 - maintain or develop family or other relationships, for example with friends
 - maintain or develop social relationships and involvement in the community
 - care for a child.
3. The carer doesn't have someone to help them or community support to meet their needs, or they can't meet them on their own.
4. The carer is unlikely to achieve their outcomes without support from the local authority.

Financial assessments

Not everyone will have their care and support paid for by their local authority. There will be a financial assessment to decide how much the person will pay and how much the local authority will pay, if anything.

If the person with dementia needs to move into a care home, the local authority will assess the person's income and savings according to national rules.

For more information on financial assessments see factsheet W532, **Paying for care and support in Wales**.

Care at home

Local authorities have different procedures for charging for care in the person's own home, the time it takes to assess whether someone has to pay, and the amounts they charge. These charges should always be 'reasonable' and leave the person with enough money to run their home. If you or the person with dementia thinks the charge for care and support services is unreasonable, you should ask the local authority for a breakdown of costs and an explanation of how the decision was made.

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 provides guidance for local authorities to follow, so that people can afford to receive services.

The local authority will calculate the cost of the services to be provided. Examples of these services could be:

- personal care at home
- frozen meals delivered to your home
- transport
- a personal assistant who provides care and is directly employed by the person or their carer.

The local authority will carry out the financial assessment. From this they will work out how much the person should pay towards the cost of these services, if anything. The local authority must provide you with a breakdown of how they worked out the charge.

Local authorities can charge a flat rate for low-level, low-cost care and support, such as preparing meals or doing laundry. If a local authority charges a flat rate, it does not have to carry out a financial assessment.

There is a maximum weekly charge that any local authority can impose for services at home. For up-to-date figures see alzheimers.org.uk/benefitrates

For more information on paying for care at home and in a care home see factsheet W532, **Paying for care and support in Wales**.

Organising care and support

Care and support plans

If a person with dementia has eligible needs, they will get a care and support plan. If a carer is eligible, they will also get a support plan. These outline the care and support needs, and how they can be met. For example, a person with dementia may need prompting and support at mealtimes. The support plan may say that a care worker should visit them in their home to help them at mealtimes.

A carer's support plan outlines things that are specifically for the carer, for example manual handling and lifting training (which could help you to use a hoist), or having a temporary break from caring. A carer's assessment may also lead to changes in the care and support plan of the person they care for. Sometimes a carer's need is best met by providing services to the person they care for. An example is respite care, such as a paid carer coming to spend time with the person, which allows the carer to have a break. Although it is there to help the carer, it is given to the person with dementia as part of their care and support plan.

A care and support plan must name a person who will coordinate the preparation, reviews, delivery and revision of the plan. Often this person will be the person that carried out the assessment. This is someone you can speak to about the care and support plan.

How care and support are arranged

The main ways that care and support can be arranged are:

- The local authority gives the support directly.
- The local authority arranges for a care provider, such as a homecare agency, to give the care.
- The local authority makes a direct payment to the person or their carer to buy their own care and support.

You may have care and support arranged as a combination of these options. How the care will be arranged is usually discussed in the assessment, and should be in the care and support plan.

The local authority must give you information about where to get care and support locally, even if they are not paying for the care. It can include advice from professionals such as an occupational therapist or a social worker. You can also get information from local care agencies and charities. The Care Inspectorate Wales lists all registered homecare agencies (see 'Other useful organisations' on page 21).

Some services, such as community nursing, are arranged through the GP, either directly or after discussion with social services.

Direct payments

If a person's care is funded by the local authority, they may choose to receive this funding in the form of a direct payment. A direct payment is money that a local authority gives to someone to spend on meeting their own eligible care needs. The money can be spent on a wide range of products and services. Direct payments allow people to make their own choices about their care.

The Social Services and Wellbeing (Wales) Act 2014 allows people to use direct payments to pay for long-term residential care as well as other services.

For specific information on direct payments in Wales see the wales.gov.uk website.

Reviews

Your circumstances change, so the services you get should be reviewed from time to time. Local authorities have review meetings to see whether the needs of the person with dementia, or you as the carer, have changed. Care and support plans must contain a review date. The date must be within 12 months of the care plan being agreed. However, if a review is needed sooner as the person's needs have changed, or it becomes clear the support isn't working, you can request one.

There are different ways to get a review:

- A planned review is where the date of the review was set out in the initial care plan.
- An unplanned review is normally the result of a change in circumstances, such as a fall or hospital admission.
- A requested review is where the person, their carer or a professional (for example their GP) requests a review. This may be due to a change in care needs, or where it is felt that different support is needed.

Complaints

It is best to try to resolve any complaints about the assessment process with the person you have contact with, such as the social worker. There may have been a breakdown in communication or a misunderstanding. However, if this is not successful, the local authority will have a complaints procedure you can follow. The local authority will explain how to use this. The complaints procedure might be useful if:

- there are problems arranging an assessment
- there is an unreasonably long wait for an assessment
- the required services are not provided, or are unsatisfactory
- there is a dispute about the amount of personal budget that is allocated
- where someone is told that they are not eligible and they feel that they are.

Contact the local authority to find out what the complaints procedure is.

If the local authority complaints procedure does not resolve the issue, you can take your complaint to the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. It may be helpful to talk to a local advice agency first, for example, Citizens Advice Cymru (see 'Other useful organisations' on page 21).

Other useful organisations

Age Cymru

0300 303 44 98 (advice line, 9am–4pm Monday–Friday)
advice@agecymru.org.uk
www.ageuk.org.uk/cymru

Age Cymru provides information and advice for older people in Wales.

Care Inspectorate for Wales

0300 7900 126
ciw@gov.wales
www.careinspectorate.wales

The Care Inspectorate for Wales regulates, inspects and reviews all adult social care services in Wales.

Carers Trust Wales

0300 772 9702
wales@carers.org
www.carers.org/wales

Carers Trust works to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring for a family member or friend.

Carers UK

0808 808 7777 (helpline, 9am–6pm Monday–Friday)
advice@carersuk.org
www.carersuk.org/wales

Carers UK gives advice, information and support about caring. This includes information on how to access support.

Citizens Advice Cymru

0800 702 2020 (Advicelink, 9am–5pm Monday–Friday)
www.citizensadvice.org.uk/wales

Citizens Advice provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice to everyone on their rights and responsibilities. Trained Citizens Advice advisers can offer information on finances in a way that is easy to understand. To find your nearest Citizens Advice, look in the phone book, ask at your local library or look on the website. Opening times vary.

Disability Rights UK

0330 995 0400 (general enquiries line)
enquiries@disabilityrightsuk.org
www.disabilityrightsuk.org

Disability Rights UK is an organisation of disabled people working for equal participation for all.

GOV.UK

www.gov.uk

GOV.UK is the website for information and services from the UK government, including information about paying for care.

Independent Age

0800 319 6789 (helpline, 8.30am–6.30pm Monday–Friday)
advice@independentage.org
www.independentage.org

Independent Age provides an information and advice service for older people, their families and carers, focusing on social care, welfare benefits and befriending services. They also offer local support, including one-to-one and group befriending schemes.

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales

0300 790 0203 (phone line, 10am–12.30pm and 1.30pm–4pm)

ask@ombudsman.wales

www.ombudsman.wales

Public Services Ombudsman for Wales is an independent organisation that investigates complaints about public services, and independent care providers, and looks for a resolution.

Solicitors for the Elderly (SFE)

0844 567 6173

www.sfe.legal

Solicitors for the Elderly is a specialist group of lawyers who support older and vulnerable people.

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Our information is based on evidence and need, and is regularly updated using quality-controlled processes. It is reviewed by experts in health and social care and people affected by dementia.

Reviewed by: Alison Tarrant, PhD Researcher, Cardiff Law School, Cardiff University and Claire Davis, Partner, Howells Solicitors, Director of Solicitors for the Elderly

This factsheet has also been reviewed by people affected by dementia.

To give feedback on this factsheet, or for a list of sources, please email publications@alzheimers.org.uk

People affected by dementia need our support more than ever. With your help we can continue to provide the vital services, information and advice they need.

To make a single or monthly donation, please call us on **0330 333 0804** or go to alzheimers.org.uk/donate

We are Alzheimer's Society. We are a vital source of support and a powerful force for change for everyone affected by dementia. We provide help and hope.

For support and advice, call us on **0333 150 3456** or visit alzheimers.org.uk



Alzheimer's Society operates in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Registered charity number 296645.

