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Scotland**

Key points:

- New Scottish Factsheet
- New Format
- Aimed at people over 60
- Gives Information on obtaining Disability Equipment

Disability equipment and how to get it

The information in this factsheet is aimed at people 60 or over who might need help to manage more easily or safely around the home. It gives information about ways to access equipment in Scotland, and gives addresses and sources of further help. For anyone living in England, Wales

and Northern Ireland, a similar Fact sheet 42, *Disability Equipment and how to get it*, is available by telephoning 0800 00 99 66 (free call) or write to Age Concern FREEPOST (SWB 30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ.

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1. Community equipment

1.1 Daily living equipment

If you feel you need equipment to help you manage more safely and easily around the home, contact the social work department of your local authority (the council). They will usually arrange for you to have an assessment in your home by a specialist social worker or an occupational therapist, often referred to as an OT. You do not have to have a letter from your doctor supporting your needs but this can sometimes speed up the process.

Examples of daily living equipment include:

- products for personal care and hygiene, helping you to use the bath or toilet, eg grab rails, bath boards, raised toilet seats etc;
- products for food preparation, eg lever taps, adapted kitchen utensils;
- products to help with the use of beds and chairs, eg bed raisers.

Under the *Chronically Sick and Disabled Persons Act 1970 (CSDP Act)*, social work departments have a duty to make arrangements for the provision of services to support disabled people. If you are disabled, the social work department must assess your need for services. If your assessed needs meet local eligibility criteria, you will have a right to services that will help those needs be met. Your local council is legally entitled to take its own resources into account when setting its eligibility criteria.

However once it is satisfied that a service is required under those criteria, a lack of resources at that stage is not a valid reason for failing to provide services. More information about the *CSDP Act* can be found in Factsheet 32s, *Disability and ageing: your rights to social services* (see section 10).

Local authorities have the legal power to charge for most of the equipment and adaptations they provide although currently most are not known to use this power. Scottish Executive guidance however, advises that equipment and minor adaptations provided by social work departments, - and needed to support a person's return home from hospital should be free, if supplied and fitted within a 4 week period. Equipment and adaptations fitted immediately prior to and in preparation for discharge, to support the person's return home are

also covered but the exemption only extends to equipment and minor adaptations for which social work departments are responsible. In general terms, this covers equipment to give people greater independence and minor adaptations which are removable (Scottish Executive circular CCD2/2001 Free home care for older people leaving hospital http://www.show.scot.nhs.uk/sehd/publications/Ccd2_01/ccd2-00.htm). The Scottish Convention of Scottish Local Authorities (CoSLA) issues guidance that recommends that local authority social work departments should not charge for equipment and adaptations, although it considers a limit of £20 as a charge for small, personal items would be appropriate.

Larger, more expensive items may be classed as adaptations and therefore be the responsibility of the housing department through disabled facilities grants. Further information about disabled facilities grants is provided in Factsheet 13, *Older home owners: financial help with repairs and adaptations..*

1.2 Equipment to meet health related needs

Some items of equipment such as a commode or a walking aid will meet both health and daily living needs. Your GP or a district nurse may arrange for you to receive these items or they may suggest you approach the social work department for a broader assessment of your needs.

Walking equipment should be provided following an assessment by a physiotherapist. A physiotherapist will be able to recommend the most appropriate aid and ensure you know how to use it safely. The Disabled Living Foundation produces a factsheet *Choosing Walking Equipment* (see section 9.1). If you are hard of hearing and might benefit from a hearing aid, you should visit your GP. Your GP will check if there is a medical reason for your hearing problem. If there is not, s/he may refer you to your local hospital for a hearing test. You have a right to have your hearing assessed, particularly if you think your hearing loss is becoming a problem. If a hearing aid will help you, the NHS issues hearing aids on loan to patients.

Low vision aids may be able to help with particular sight problems. Low vision services are mainly found in hospital eye departments.

They can make magnifiers and other low vision aids available on loan.

Your local social work department may provide a range of support services or employ specialist social workers to help people with sight or hearing loss. For further information about help available to those with a hearing or visual impairment see section 9. Some items such as wigs or fabric supports may be issued on an NHS prescription for which there is a specified charge.

If you receive the guarantee part of Pension Credit you will not have to pay for such items. If you are on a low income, you may qualify for help with these charges under the NHS low income scheme. Ask for a copy of the NHS leaflet HC11 Help with health costs at your local post office or see Age Concern IS20, *Help with health costs for older people*.

2. Wheelchairs

If you have long term mobility problems, use of a wheelchair could help you to maintain your mobility and independence. Your GP or hospital consultant or social work department staff can refer you to your local NHS wheelchair service and seating centre for an assessment. Each service will have its own criteria to be used when assessing who is eligible for a wheelchair. The wheelchair service will provide an assessment of your medical and lifestyle needs and if you are eligible can help you to choose a suitable chair.

Wheelchairs are provided by the NHS on free long-term loan. They will usually be standard models and there will not always be a great choice. If you are assessed as requiring one, the NHS can provide a powered wheelchair suitable for indoor and occasional outdoor use. Any wheelchair provided will officially belong to the NHS and be loaned to you for as long as required. The NHS will pay for servicing or repairs so long as these are not caused by misuse or neglect.

It may also be possible to get charitable help in purchasing a wheelchair. Charity Search may be able to advise about sources of charitable funding (see section 8.3). If you need a wheelchair on a temporary basis it may be possible to hire or borrow one on short term loan from the British Red Cross or other voluntary organisation. (see section 7.3). The Disabled Living Foundation produces

factsheets with information about wheelchairs and scooters (see section 9.1).

3. Community alarms

Community alarm systems allow you to be linked up 24 hours a day to a central service which can offer help in an emergency. The link is usually either by telephone, pull cord or a pendant which you wear round your neck - or a combination of these. If you need to summon help urgently and are unable to make a normal telephone call then you can use the pendant, pull cord or a special button on the telephone to contact a control centre. This centre will be staffed 24 hours a day by people who can talk to you, find out what you need and summon help as appropriate. If you are unable to speak they will ensure that someone gets to your home as soon as possible to find out what the problem is.

Your local authority may provide an alarm service. The service may only be available to people who are council tenants but some councils do offer the same service to other older people in their area. If there is a council scheme this may cost you less than commercially provided schemes. Your local authority social work department or housing department should be able to give you further details.

The Research Institute for Consumer Affairs (Ricability) can provide some information on what alarms are and how to obtain one (see section 9.3). The Disabled Living Foundation produces a factsheet *Choosing a personal alarm system* (see section 9.1).

4. Equipment for employment

The Employment Service or Jobcentre Plus may fund equipment needed for work. Contact the Disability Employment Adviser at your local Jobcentre Plus for advice and assistance.

5. Things to consider in choosing equipment

Where possible it is a good idea to get independent or professional advice in choosing equipment. Occupational therapists or physiotherapists from a hospital, social work department or employed by a Disabled Living Centre or Independent Living Centre (see section 9.1) should be able to help. They will be able to advise

you on equipment which is likely to be suitable for you and on what is available.

For smaller items of equipment, you may not need professional advice. Some things to consider if choosing equipment for yourself are:

- make sure that any products which you buy comply with the necessary British Standards. Equipment which has been tested and approved by the British Standards Institution will be marked with the BSI Kitemark;
- check out how comfortable the equipment is and that it is easy for you to use. Where possible, try it out beforehand. If you are purchasing expensive equipment to help with bathing or toileting, you may want to ask for a trial of the product in your own home so that you can try it out properly. You should also check that the equipment is easy for you to use without help;
- make sure that the equipment is in good condition and that it is suitable for the task you require it for. Ensure that it can be used in the environment in which you want to use it. You should also check that the equipment is easy for you to use without help, and that appropriate and clear instructions for use or training in use are provided;
- if you will need to transport the equipment, for example a wheelchair or other walking aid, consider how easy this will be. Does it fold up or come apart? Is it easy to do this? Will it fit in your car? You should also consider whether there is space to store the equipment in your home;
- check about repair and maintenance of the equipment. Will it be possible to find spare parts and someone to repair the equipment if necessary? Does the equipment need to be serviced regularly and if so how much will this cost? What sort of 'after-sales service' does the company you are buying from provide? Does the equipment come with any sort of guarantee?

For larger items such as electric scooters or power chairs you may want to consider getting insurance. It can be difficult to get the equipment you think you need from social work department or the health service. There might be strict eligibility criteria (see section 1). There can also be long waiting times for obtaining disability equipment, either for an OT assessment or before actually receiving

the equipment. There is no legal time within which disability equipment must be provided but you should not have to wait longer than is reasonable and excessive delays can be challenged.

Each local authority social work department is required by law to have a complaints procedure which you can use to complain about the service or the assessment of your needs. You can also approach the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, but only after you have exhausted the complaints procedure. Further details of these procedures are included in Age Concern Factsheet 32, *Disability and ageing: your rights to social services*(see section 10).

If you have a complaint about equipment provided by the NHS you should use the NHS complaints procedure. For assistance you can contact your local Health Council. They represent patients' interests within the NHS. They will be able to give you information about the complaints procedure and help find support if you need it. To obtain the address and telephone number of your local Health Council you can call NHS24, tel: 0845 24 24 24 or textphone: 18001 08454 24 24 24(local call rate - 24 hours) or visit the website: <http://www.nhs24.com/>. Further details on NHS complaints procedure are also included in Age Concern Factsheet 44, *NHS services and older people* (see section 10).

6 Problems with equipment you have purchased

If you are not happy with the equipment you have purchased, get in touch with the supplier as soon as possible. It may be able to arrange for an exchange or replacement. If equipment is faulty then you should be able to have it repaired, replaced or obtain a refund. You do not have to accept a credit note.

You may want to make your complaint first verbally to the store manager. If you are not happy with the outcome you should put it in writing. You may also decide to report the seller, with details of your complaint, to your local Trading Standards service at your local council. These services are provided by local authorities, and investigate false, misleading or inaccurate claims about services or products.

They can also advise on consumer problems. A Citizens Advice Bureau may also be able to advise you about your rights. It will be listed in the telephone directory.

The supplier of your equipment may be a member of the British Healthcare Trades Association (BHTA). This means that it agrees to meet certain service standards. If your supplier is a member of the BHTA and you are not happy with its service you can complain to the BHTA. A list of member firms is also available.

British Healthcare Trades Association, 1 Webbs Court, Buckhurst Avenue, Sevenoaks, Kent TN13 1LZ, tel: 01732 458868, website: www.bhta.com. The Disabled Living Foundation has a factsheet *Making a complaint* (see section 9.1). A number of private companies sell disability equipment. Some provide mail order catalogues or have shops and showrooms. Look in your local Yellow Pages under 'Disabled Equipment'.

Some large high street chemists stock smaller items of daily living equipment. They may also have their own mail order catalogues.

7. Buying second-hand

You may also be able to buy equipment second-hand. Second-hand equipment is advertised in a number of places, including:

- *Disability Now*, a newspaper published by Scope (see section 9.2);
- the Disability Equipment Register produces a national magazine which lists second-hand equipment both for sale and wanted. The magazine is available on subscription from: Disability Equipment Register, 4 Chatterton Road, Yate, Bristol BS37 4BJ, tel: 01454 318818, website: www.disabreg.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk;
- the Disabled Living Foundation produces a factsheet listing journals that carry advertisements for second-hand equipment (see section 9.1);
- equipment may also be advertised in your local paper.

7.1 Loans of equipment

The local Red Cross can often loan wheelchairs and some other equipment for short periods, for example for the visit of a relative or in the case of a temporary injury. It should be listed in the local telephone directory (usually under British Red Cross) or you can find it on the Red Cross website: www.redcross.org.uk.

Shopmobility schemes lend manual and powered wheelchairs and powered scooters to those people who need them to shop and use other facilities in town centres. There are schemes throughout the UK. For more information contact: The National Federation of Shopmobility UK, The Hawkins Suite, Enham Place, Enham Alamein, Andover, Hants SP11 6JS, tel: 08456 442 446 (local call rate), website: www.justmobility.co.uk/shop.

Disabled Living Centres or DIALs (see section 9.1) may be able to provide you with information about wheelchair hire services or Shopmobility schemes locally.

The Disabled Living Foundation can provide a list of wheelchair hire services in London (see section 9.1).

7.2 VAT

Disabled people do not have to pay VAT when purchasing equipment which is designed or adapted to help daily living. To qualify for this exemption the equipment must be intended for use by disabled people and must relate to their disability.

In addition, there is no VAT payable on the costs of servicing or maintaining disability equipment. You should enquire whether you can receive this VAT exemption before buying or ordering equipment.

The supplier will have to be registered for VAT. You will also need to sign a form declaring that you have a chronic illness or disability. Further information on VAT exemption is provided in the HM Customs and Excise VAT leaflet 701/7/94, *VAT Reliefs for People with Disabilities*. Copies of this leaflet and further advice should be available from your local VAT office; see under 'Customs and Excise' in your local telephone directory.

8. Sources of funding

If purchasing equipment privately you may be able to get help with the cost from other sources of funding.

8.1 State Benefits

If you are disabled, you may be entitled to Attendance Allowance or Disability Living Allowance. These are benefits to help disabled people meet the extra cost of living expenses relating to their disability. They provide additional income which may help to purchase equipment. There are further details about these benefits and how to claim them in Age Concern Factsheet 34, *Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance*.

8.2 Social Fund

If you are on Pension Credit, income-based Job Seeker Allowance or Income Support you may be able to get a Community Care Grant from the Social Fund. These grants are available to enable people to remain at home rather than going into a care home (although this does not mean you must be in immediate risk of needing care). They can cover specialist furniture and furnishings which might include daily living equipment. Medical, surgical, optical, aural or dental equipment are specifically excluded. This is either because the health service has responsibility for providing them or because there are other arrangements for helping people on low incomes get assistance with the costs. Community Care Grants are discretionary and will depend on the decision made by the local Social Fund officer. If you cannot get a grant you may be able to get a Budgeting Loan from the Social Fund. See Factsheet 49, *Help from the Social Fund* for more information.

8.3 Charities and other sources

You may be able to get financial help with buying disability equipment from charities.

Charity Search, 25 Portview Road, Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 9LD or FREEPOST (BS6610), Avonmouth, Bristol BS11 9TW, tel: 0117 982 4060. A charity providing free advice for older people, to link them

with established charities which may be able to help with funds.
Does not itself give grants to individuals.

The Disabled Living Foundation, provides information about equipment for daily living and specialist advice service on clothing. Also produces a factsheet on ways of raising funds to purchase equipment; *Sources of funding and obtaining equipment for disabled and older people* (see section 9.1)

Disabled and Independent Living Centres

There are a number of local Disabled Living Centres of Independent Living Centres throughout the country. They provide advice and information about a range of aids and equipment and can display and demonstrate this equipment. Further information about Disabled Living Centres and whether there is a centre near you is available from:

Disabled Living Centres Council, Redbank House, 4 St Chad's Street, Manchester M8 8QA, tel: 0870 770 2866 (national call rate), textphone: 0161 839 0885, website: www.dlcc.org.uk. has information about Disabled Living Centres throughout the UK and is the national voice for disabled/independent living centres.

DIAL UK, St Catherine's, Tickhill Road, Doncaster, South Yorkshire DN4 8QN, tel: 01302 310123, textphone: 01302 310123, website: www.dialuk.org.uk. DIAL (the Disablement Information and Advice Line) is a network of local groups throughout the country providing information and advice to disabled people on a range of issues. DIAL UK should be able to tell you if there is a group in your local area or it may be in the local telephone directory.

The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)

The DLF provides advice and information on disability equipment and assisted products. It has factsheets on a variety of subjects, including choosing wheelchairs or other equipment. A full list of publications is available from the address below.

Disabled Living Foundation, 380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU, helpline tel: 0845 130 9177 (local call rate), textphone: 020 7432 8009, website: www.dlf.org.uk. provides information about

equipment for daily living and specialist advice service on clothing. Details of a variety of information sheets are also available.

9. Charities providing advice to people with a particular disability

Alzheimer Scotland, 22 Drumsheugh Gardens, Edinburgh EH3 7RN, Telephone: 0131 243 1453, Fax: 0131 243 1450
<http://www.alzscot.org/> supports people with all types of dementia, their families and carers, and provides information about all forms of dementia. If you need information or emotional support on any issue to do with dementia, you can call the Scottish 24 hour

Dementia Helpline: 0808 808 3000

Arthritis Care Scotland

Arthritis Care Scotland, Unit 25a, Anniesland Business Park Glasgow, G13 1EU, tel 0141 954 7776 fax 0141 954 6171 email scotlandoffice@arthritiscare.org.uk helpline tel: 0808 800 4050 (free call), website: www.arthritiscare.org.uk Arthritis Care provides advice and information by trained counsellors, some of whom have arthritis. 600 branches, for people with arthritis and their families.

Parkinsons Disease Society

Parkinson's Disease Society Office in Scotland, 10 Claremont Terrace, Glasgow G3 7XR
Telephone/fax: 0141 332 3343, helpline: 0808 800 0303 (free call), website: www.parkinsons.org.uk. helps people with Parkinson's Disease and their relatives with problems arising from this disease; collects and disseminates information on the disease; encourages and provides funds for research.

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB)

Royal National Institute of the Blind (RNIB) Scotland, Dunedin House, 25 Ravelston Terrace, Edinburgh, EH4 3TP
Tel: 0131 311 8500
Fax: 0131 311 8529, helpline: 08457 669 999 (local call rate), website: www.rnib.org.uk. Offers many services for people with visual impairments.

Royal National Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (RNID) Scotland

Royal National Institute for Deaf and Hard of Hearing People (RNID) Scotland, Floor 3, Crowngate Business Centre, Brook Street, Glasgow G40 3AP. Telephone: 0141 554 0053
Textphone: 0141 550 5750
Fax: 0141 554 5837 voice helpline tel: 0808 808 0123 (free call),
website: www.rnid.org.uk.

Largest charity reflecting the needs and interests of deaf and hard of hearing people. It provides and offers the following services, information, residential care, communication service, disability and deaf awareness training. RNID Typetalk (telephone relay service), RNID Deafness and Disability Solutions. Has a range of factsheets and leaflets about special equipment including *Buying a hearing aid* and *Digital hearing aid*.

Scope

Scope, 6 Market Road, London N7 9PW, tel: 020 7619 7100, helpline: 0808 800 3333 (free call), website: www.scope.org.uk. Disability organisation whose focus is people with cerebral palsy - provides information and advice.

Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland

Chest, Heart and Stroke Scotland, 65 North Castle Street, Edinburgh EH2 3LT Telephone: (0131) 225 6963
Fax: (0131) 220 6313 website:www.chss.org.uk/. Provides an information service and some community services.Sc. Can also refer enquirers to stroke clubs throughout Scotland. CHAS Advice Line number is **0845 077 6000**; textphone (**0845 077 6000**).

Further information about specific charities is available from **RADAR**: Royal Association of Disability and Rehabilitation (RADAR), 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF, tel: 020 7250 3222, textphone: 020 7250 4119, website: radar.org.uk.

9.1 Publications

Ricability (Research and Information for Consumers with Disabilities) has publications that you might find useful:

1. *What's new? a guide to easier and safer living (2002)*
2. *Calling for help: a guide to Community Alarms (2003)*
3. *Easier Living: a guide for elderly and disabled people (2001)*

All available free on receipt of a large SAE, from Ricability, 30 Angel Gate, City Rd, London EC1V 2PT, tel: 020 7427 2460, textphone: 020 7427 2469, website: www.ricability.org.uk.

10. Further information from Age Concern

The following factsheets may be of use:

Factsheet 6 *Finding help at home*

Factsheet 13 *Older home owners - financial help with repairs and adaptations*

Factsheet 32 *Disability and ageing: your rights to social services*

Factsheet 34 *Attendance Allowance and Disability Living Allowance*

Factsheet 44 *NHS services and older people*

Factsheet 49 *Help from the Social Fund*

If you would like

- any additional factsheets mentioned (up to a maximum of 5 will be sent free of charge)
- a full list of factsheets and/or a book catalogue
- further information or if you have questions arising from this factsheet
- to receive this information in a different format

phone 0800 00 99 66 (free call) or write to Age Concern FREEPOST (SWB 30375), Ashburton, Devon TQ13 7ZZ.

For people with hearing loss who have access to a textphone, calls can be made by Typetalk, which relays conversations between text and voice via an operator.

Age Concern's series of over 40 factsheets is available as a subscription service to those whose work involves older people; for details of this service please call us on 08705 00 99 66 (national call rate) and ask for our factsheet subscription leaflet.

Age Concern provides factsheets free to older people, their families and people who work with them. If you would like to make a donation towards the work of Age Concern Scotland, you can send a cheque or postal order (made payable to Age Concern Scotland) to Age Concern Scotland, 113 Rose Street, Edinburgh EH2 3DT. Find out more about Age Concern Scotland online at

www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk, or Age Concern England at www.ageconcern.org.uk.

If you have questions arising from this factsheet, or it does not cover the information you require, please contact the Scottish Helpline for Older People, a confidential and impartial service managed by Age Concern Scotland, tel: 0845 125 9732 (local call rate), Monday to Friday 10am - 4pm. The address is Age Concern Scotland, 113 Rose Street, Edinburgh EH2 3DT

Please note that the inclusion of named agencies, companies, products, services or publications in this factsheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement by Age Concern. Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, Age Concern cannot be held responsible for errors or omissions.

No factsheet can ever be a complete guide to the law, which also changes from time to time. Therefore please ensure that you have an up to date factsheet and that it clearly applies to your situation. Legal advice should always be taken if you are in doubt.

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