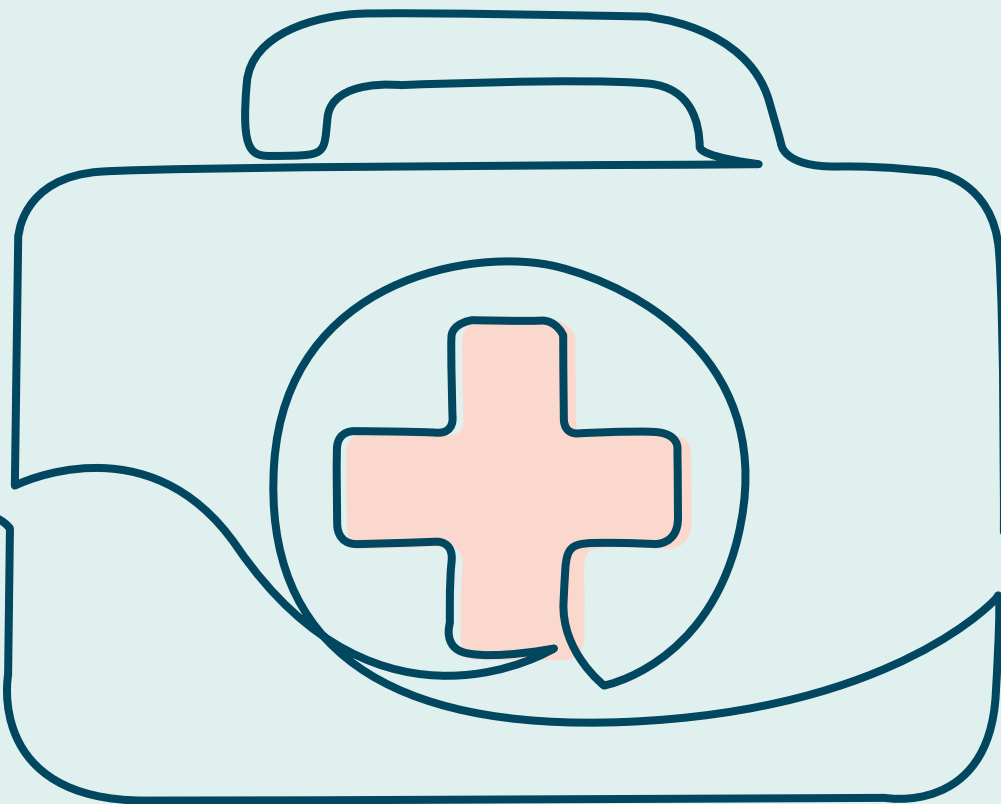


THE  
CARENTS  
ROOM

# ESSENTIAL TIPS FOR CARENTS TO PLAN FOR THAT UNEXPECTED EMERGENCY

Helping You Look After Your Loved Ones



# The Carents Room is committed to helping you and your loved ones stay safe and well

The purpose of this downloadable eBooklet is to help you all be better prepared to deal with whatever life throws your way.

Sadly, as many Carents know, later life can be challenging for older adults living with ongoing health problems. The reality is that they are more likely to find themselves in challenging circumstances with potentially distressing consequences for their physical, financial, or emotional well-being.

By planning ahead, the chances, and dangers, of many of these situations can be significantly reduced.

This eBooklet explores some of the most common vulnerable situations affecting Carents and their loved ones and outlines what you can do to reduce the risks and get help quickly when you need it.

The Carents Room [website](#) provides other practical information to help you make everyday life easier for any older relatives who are struggling to live independently in the face of any disability, failing health, or memory problems.

We hope that by equipping you to plan ahead, we can make life a little easier and safer for you all.

## Carents

Our word for mid-life children providing care for elderly relatives in the community. It refers to anyone who is providing support or care to an older relative who needs extra help due to an ongoing physical or mental illness or disability.

## Carenting

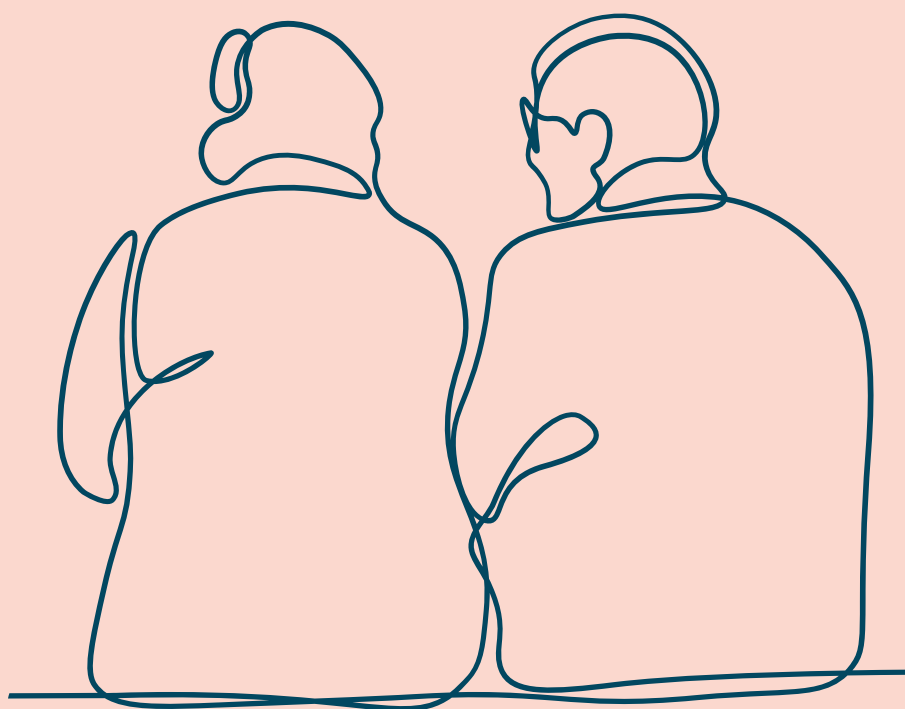
Our word for the multitude of activities Carents undertake as first aiders, homemakers, care coordinators, personal shoppers, chauffeurs, secretaries, and financial or legal advisers.

## Our Information

Our content is underpinned by the NHS England Information Standard Principles. It is based on published best practices and tailored to reflect the concerns of midlife adults caring for their elderly relatives living in the UK.



# The Carents Room: Trailblazing Support for the Carenting Generation



# Founded in 2020, The Carents Room is committed to quality, transparency, respect, and equality

We are the first website dedicated to Carents and Carenting.





A digital platform dedicated to sharing information and connections to make Carenting and ageing a happier, healthier, and more engaged experience.

Join the Carenting Community:  
connect, share, and learn from other Carents

## The Carents Lounge

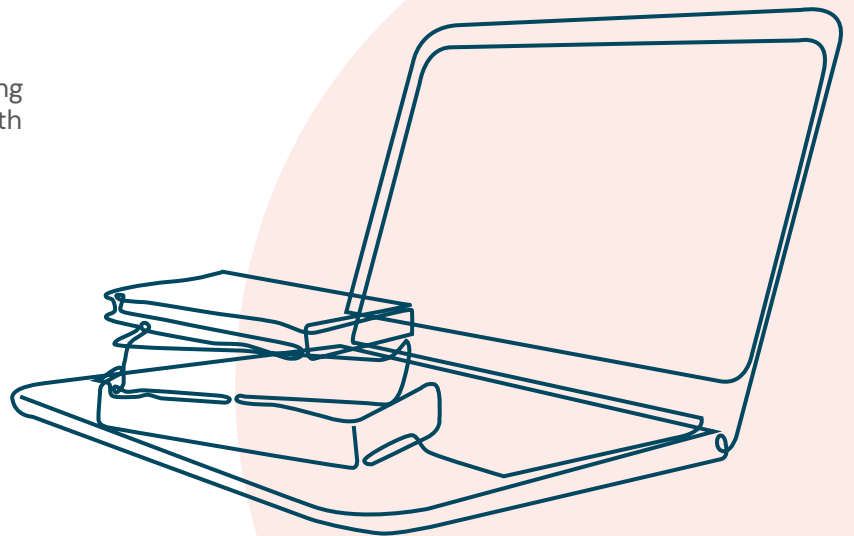
A Facebook community for Carents – enabling you to connect and share tips and stories with others in similar circumstances.

## On Social Media

-  [Facebook](#)
-  [Instagram](#)
-  [Twitter](#)
-  [LinkedIn](#)

## Contact us

By emailing [welcome@thecarentsroom.com](mailto:welcome@thecarentsroom.com)



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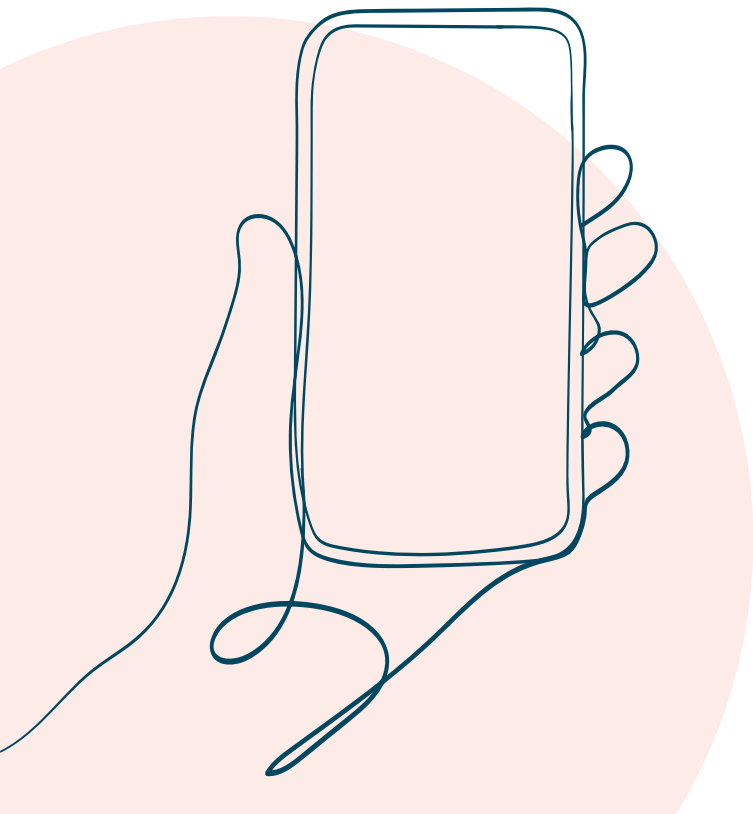
# Preparing for an Emergency Hospital Stay

Unfortunately, healthcare emergencies, especially unplanned hospital admissions or trips to A&E, become much more likely in later life. Older people are more likely to call an ambulance from home, more likely to be taken to the hospital, and more likely to be admitted than other patient groups.

In the event of a health emergency dial **999**  
Otherwise – **Contact your GP or NHS 111**

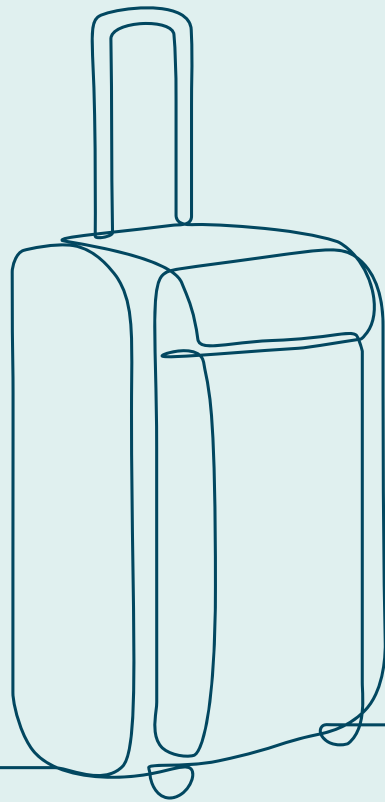
Make a note of the contact details for your loved one's GP(s) here:

GP Surgery	Name, Number & Address



Naturally, emergency admission to the hospital can be a disruptive and unsettling experience, but having a **Hospital Grab Bag** packed and ready can help ease anxieties. It can also help to ensure that all attending medical teams can be armed with the information they need to provide the right care as soon as possible.

# Packing a Hospital Grab Bag



# The Hospital Grab Bag should contain important information and personal items which would be needed for an overnight stay

It should be small enough to carry and kept in a place where it can be easily found in an emergency. A zipped/fastened bag is best to avoid items spilling out and getting lost.

## Essential Information to Include in the Emergency Grab Bag

- Name, address, and date of birth
- Details of GP and any community care teams
- Name and contact details for Carer(s)
- List of medical conditions
- List of regular medicines and any recent or new medicines
- Allergies and sensitivities
- Any recent test results specific to ongoing health problems: eg. test results for a lung, heart or blood disorder

## Essential Items to Include in the Grab Bag

- Any medicines, creams, inhalers or other treatment specific to their condition
- Any spectacles, hearing aids & batteries
- Essential toiletries including toothbrush and toothpaste; comb or brush; soap and towel; and any necessary containment products
- Comfortable clothing and non-slip footwear/slippers; including clean underwear
- A small amount of money
- Mobile phone and chargers

Remember to regularly review and update the contents of the bag so that it can make life easier if your loved one has to go to the hospital.

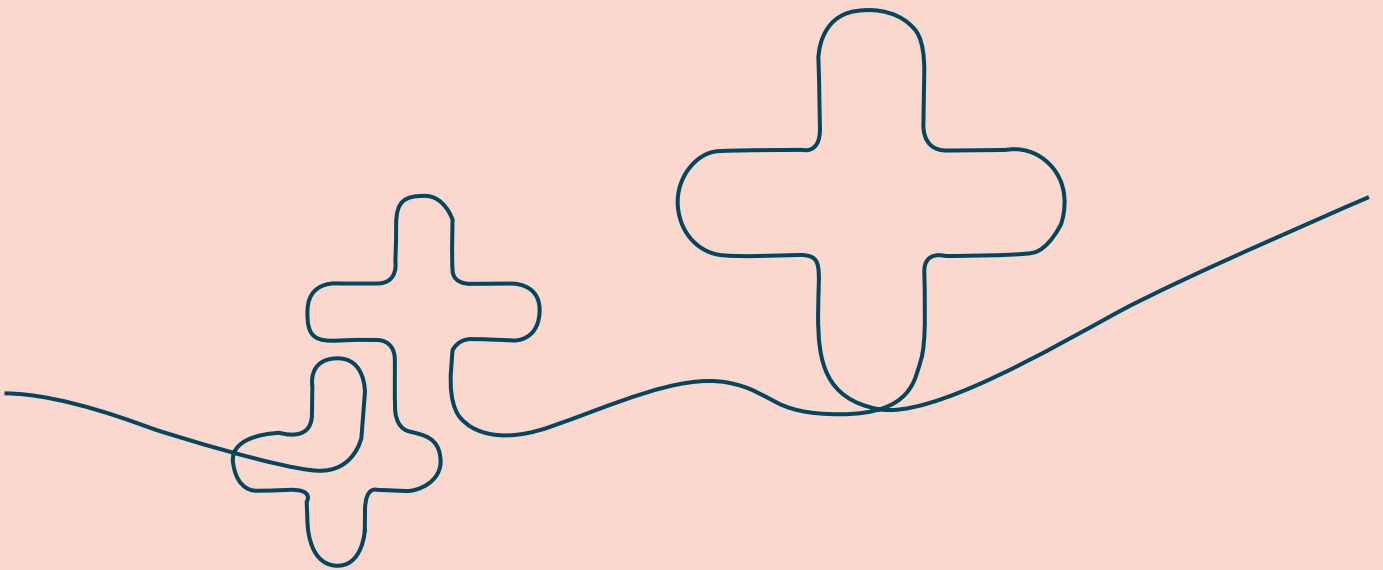
## Staying Healthy

The Carers Room [Bookcase](#) is full of detailed information to help you and your loved ones stay healthy, safe, and well. Our [guides](#) can help you to keep on top of ongoing medical problems, reduce the risks of serious complications, avoid problems with medicines, and prevent new problems from escalating.





# Helping Emergency Services Called to the Home



# Older adults are more likely to call emergency services for a variety of reasons: including a fall, injury, illness, collapse, confusion, a distressing situation, or neighbourly concern.

If an individual is too unwell to provide vital information to any first responders then that can lead to delays or even errors in providing the necessary care and support.

Consequently, emergency services across Britain support a life-saving initiative known as the **Message in a Bottle**. The initiative provides peace of mind as it ensures that prompt and effective assistance can be provided and any emergency contacts – including Carers – can be notified.

## The Message in a Bottle Could Save a Life

Message in a Bottle was initially championed by the [Lions Clubs](#) in Britain, but is now widespread and routinely embedded in emergency care services.

Message in a bottle is a simple way for people to keep their essential personal and medical details where they can be found by emergency services on a standard form, and in a common location i.e. the fridge.

Paramedics, police, firefighters, and social services all support this life-saving initiative and know to look in the fridge when they see the **Message in a Bottle** stickers displayed in the home.

## How to Obtain a Message in a Bottle

You can get a Message in a Bottle kit free by contacting:

- Your local Lions club
- Your local Ambulance Service
- GP surgeries and health centres
- Chemists/ Pharmacies
- Neighbourhood watch
- Housing associations

## How to Use a Message in a Bottle Kit

The kits contain a plastic bottle, a form, and some indication stickers. All of which are very simple to use.

- Complete the form with relevant personal, medical, and emergency contact details.
- Put the form in the bottle and the bottle in the fridge.
- Stick one sticker on the fridge and another close to the front door in a prominent position.

If you do not want a sticker on the fridge, put it close to the back door. The point of the stickers is to alert emergency staff to the fact that the householder has a **Message in a Bottle** in the fridge.

## Information to Include in the Bottle

- GP name, address, and contact number
- A brief description of any medical conditions or regular medicines
- Contact information for two emergency contacts
- A copy of your repeat prescription list if you have one
- For any carers – details of the person being cared for

# Ensuring First Responders Can Access a Property



# When an older adult is alone at home and cannot answer the front door if the emergency services are called, it is essential that first responders can get quick and easy access.

If they are concerned about a householder's safety, they will have to break any locks and make a forced entry. This can add to the distress and disruption of a difficult situation.

However, enabling easy access at any time of day is not always straightforward in a world where home security is a high priority for householders and insurance companies alike.

One common solution is to ensure a trusted neighbour has a spare key and will be able to help. Another option, recommended by many adult social care services is to fit a key safe.

## Key Safes Can Allow Easy Access for Those with Permission

A key safe is a strong mechanical metal box that can securely store front door keys. It is installed into brick or concrete on the outside of a property and keys are accessed by a combination or PIN code.

The combination code will only be known to the householder and anyone who has been given permission to access the property. It allows quick access to the house in an emergency. Key safes are also a helpful way for other community services such as home care services, GPs, and nurses to access the home if the householder has any mobility problems.

## Choosing, Buying and Fitting a Key Safe

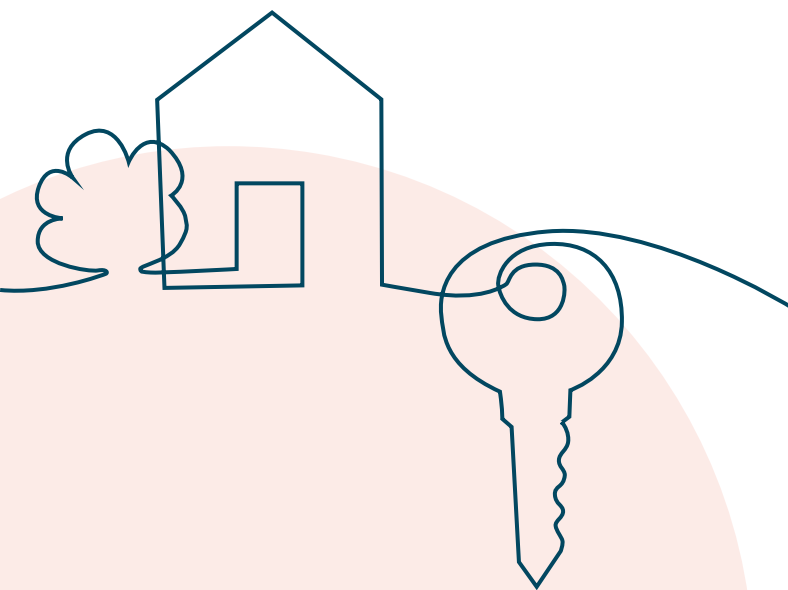
### Ask Your Local Council for Help

Although the level and nature of support from local councils varies across the country, it is extremely likely that your loved one's local council will be able to help them to source and install a key safe if they:

- Are known to be at risk of falling
- Living with a long term medical condition(s)
- Have an ongoing physical, sensory or cognitive impairment or disability

Any costs might be covered although this is likely to be determined by local council policies. Contact the adult social care department at the Council to ask for help.

A discussion about key safes might also prompt other discussions about other support for your loved ones such as personal alarms or falls monitors.



## Ensure the Key Safe Meets Police Security Standards

Police recommended key safes that have a 'Secured by Design' approval. When buying a key safe you should make sure it has the ['Secured by Design'](#) approval and logo.

Read more in this guide from [Norfolk Constabulary](#) which also explores whether key safes affect home insurance policies.

## Best Locations for a Key Safe

A key safe should be fitted securely to a solid surface such as brickwork or concrete using the supplied and approved fittings. They should also be hidden out of sight to reduce the risk of the property being targeted by burglars.

Ensure that:

- The key safe CANNOT be seen by passers-by
- Anyone tampering with the key safe will be clearly visible (security lights can help with this)

## Changing and Sharing the Code

All key safes are supplied un-coded, and you set a code or PIN number yourself. The code can be changed as many times as you wish. The police security advice is to change the access code regularly but you will need to tell everyone who needs access about any changes to the security code, this includes the emergency services.

Make sure you tell the emergency services about a key safe – its code and location – alongside the contact details of anyone with a spare key. Speak to the Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) to find out how. There is likely to be a form to complete like this one from [East of England Ambulance Service NHS Trust](#).

See this [article](#) from West Midlands Ambulance Service for more information.



# Reducing the Risks of Wandering



# It's common for a person living with dementia to wander. Six in 10 people living with dementia will wander at least once; many will do so repeatedly.

Wandering can put someone at risk of getting lost or going missing. It can be confusing or distressing and put them in a vulnerable situation, especially at night or in bad weather.

## The Herbert Protocol can help if someone goes missing

The Herbert Protocol is a police-led initiative designed to help locate vulnerable adults who go missing or get lost.

**If someone goes missing, alert the police at the earliest opportunity.**

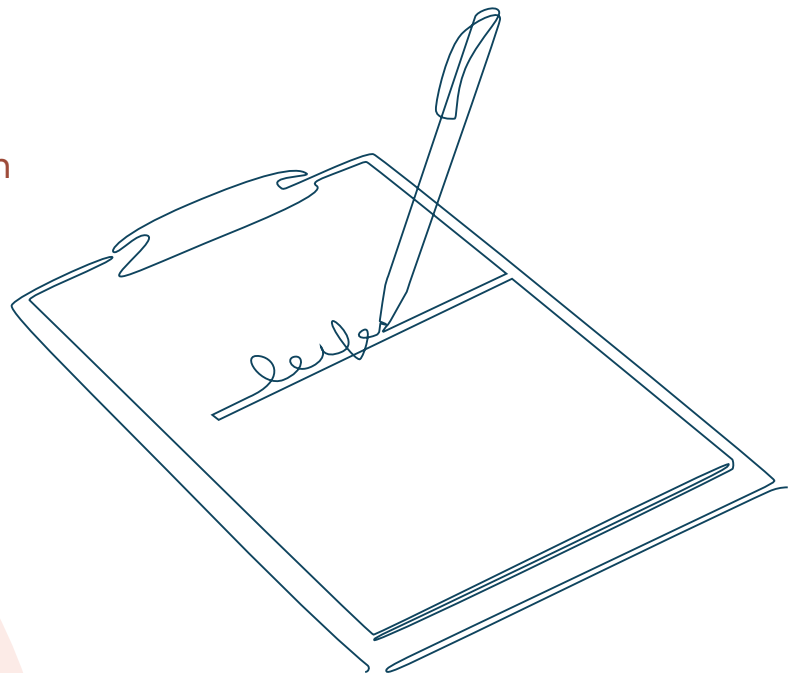
**If they are at a high risk of harm, call 999.**

**Tell the police operator that you have the Herbert Protocol person profile.**

## About the Herbert Protocol

The initiative is named after George Herbert, a War veteran of the Normandy landings. He lived with dementia and sadly died whilst wandering, trying to find his childhood home.

The Herbert Protocol is a national scheme led by the police, working in partnership with other agencies. It simply consists of a form that contains vital information about a person at risk that can be passed to the police at the point the person is reported missing. A recent photograph of the person should also be kept with the form. [This video](#) from West Yorkshire police gives a clear explanation.



## How to Use the Herbert Protocol

The Herbert Protocol includes a form that is completed by the individual or a Carer on their behalf. [A downloadable copy](#) of the form is available from West Manchester Police.

Once completed, you can give a copy to friends, family, and neighbours. You only need to give a copy to the police if your loved one goes missing, so make sure you keep copies somewhere safe and easily accessible.

The Herbert Protocol form will give the police a full description of your loved one, including their physical description, medical history, and places of interest.

## Other Help With Wandering

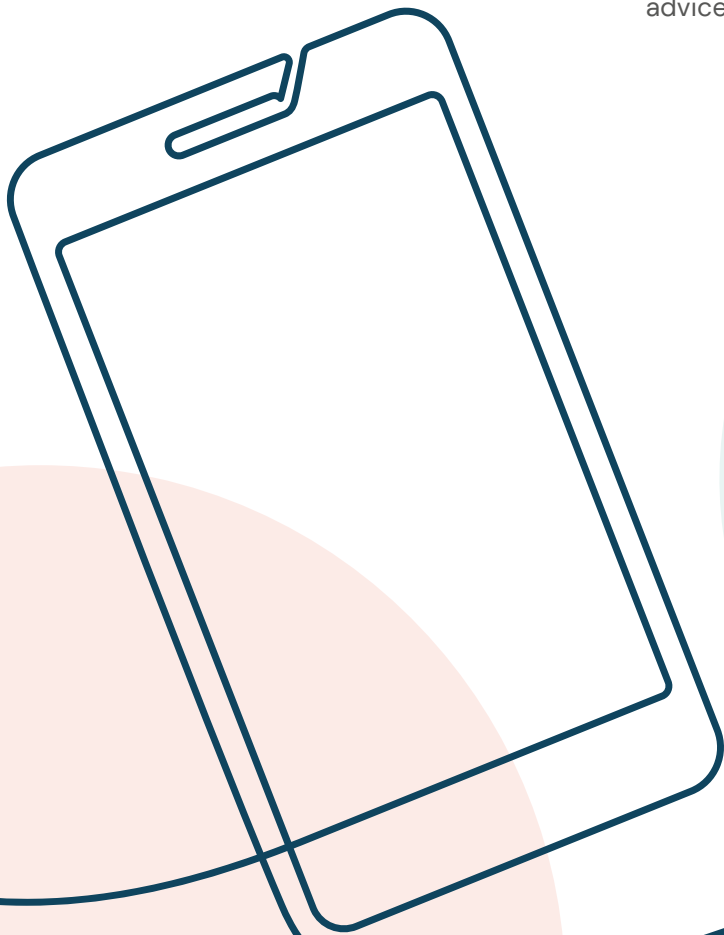
You can also take steps to prevent wandering by installing safety technology, establishing a routine, informing others, and talking to healthcare professionals.

A range of technology can also be helpful such as:

- Door sensors
- Personal alarms
- Boundary alarms
- Tracking devices

A mobile phone can be updated to include emergency information accessible from the lock screen, and to enable tracking. If they do not use a mobile phone, ensuring they carry some basic information in their wallet or pockets can be useful, such as who to contact if they're lost and someone finds them.

Planning ahead can help to avoid distress and keep your loved one safe, but remember to involve them throughout and respect their privacy. [The Alzheimer's Society](#) and [Met Police](#) have more advice about wandering and dementia.





# 05

## Organising Personal Care at Short Notice



# If your loved one is unexpectedly discharged from the hospital, is temporarily ill, or injured, then they might need more help than usual with essential personal tasks

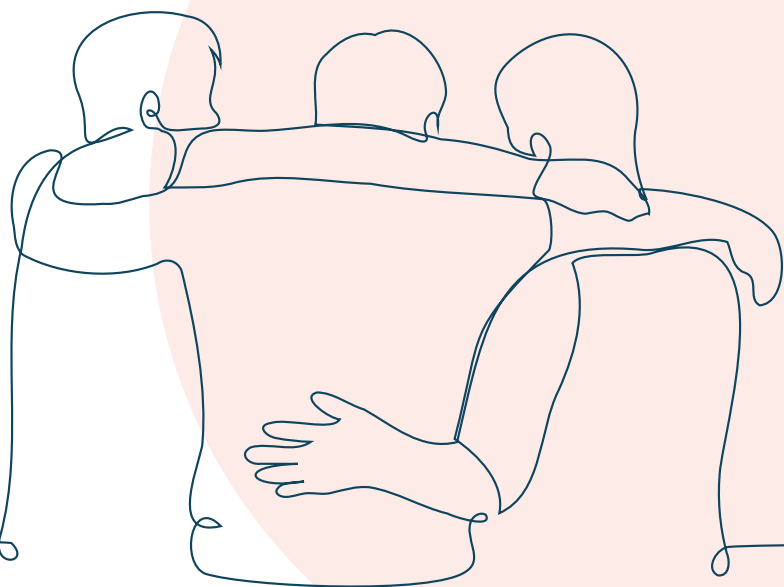
They may need help with things such as preparing meals, bathing, dressing, or getting to and from the toilet or bed. Although it may be related to a health issue, this type of personal care is considered “social care” and is not usually provided by the NHS.

NHS staff, including your loved one’s GP or community nursing service, can help you to access the necessary support for personal care and ideally, they can help to put a plan in place. But at short notice, and in the face of overstretched front-line services, you may need to organise some extra support yourself.

If your loved one doesn’t need around-the-clock support, there are two main personal care services that can help:

- A home or domiciliary care service
- A reablement service

In an emergency, a hospital A&E department acts as a safe haven



## Organising Personal Care Services Quickly

### Contact your loved one's Local Authority Adult Social Care department

All local councils have an Adult Social Care Service which is responsible for providing practical support to people so that they can live independently and stay safe and well.

Each service has a duty officer who can be contacted at any time. During office hours you should contact the number for their 'Adult Social Care' service or department. Out of hours, you will be able to contact a duty officer under the 'Out of Hours' or 'Emergency' section.

The Council will respond with advice and arrangements to assess what sort of care your loved one needs and might be able to arrange that support. The timescales of their response can vary depending on the situation and the council resources. The two types of service which they can provide are...

## Reablement services

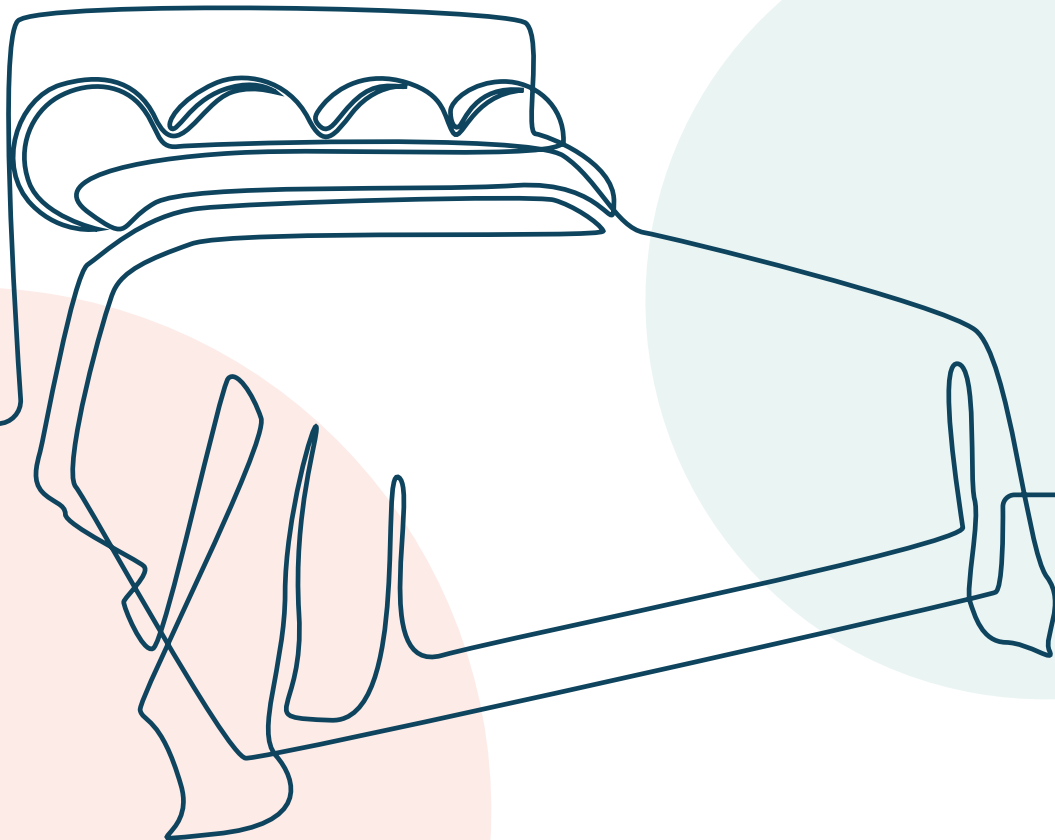
In the circumstances described here, councils can organise and provide free support as part of their reablement service.

Reablement services employ care workers to help with everyday personal and practical activities at home for a limited time period – usually up to six weeks. It is a short-term, [active intervention](#) very much aimed at getting someone back to living independently again.

## Home care services

Home care services employ care workers who can visit the home and help with everyday tasks relating to personal care; such as preparing food, eating & drinking, getting washed and dressed, and getting in and out of bed.

Home care services are not provided freely to everyone that needs them because they are means-tested. You can read more about these services and the payment arrangements on [The Carer's Room website](#)

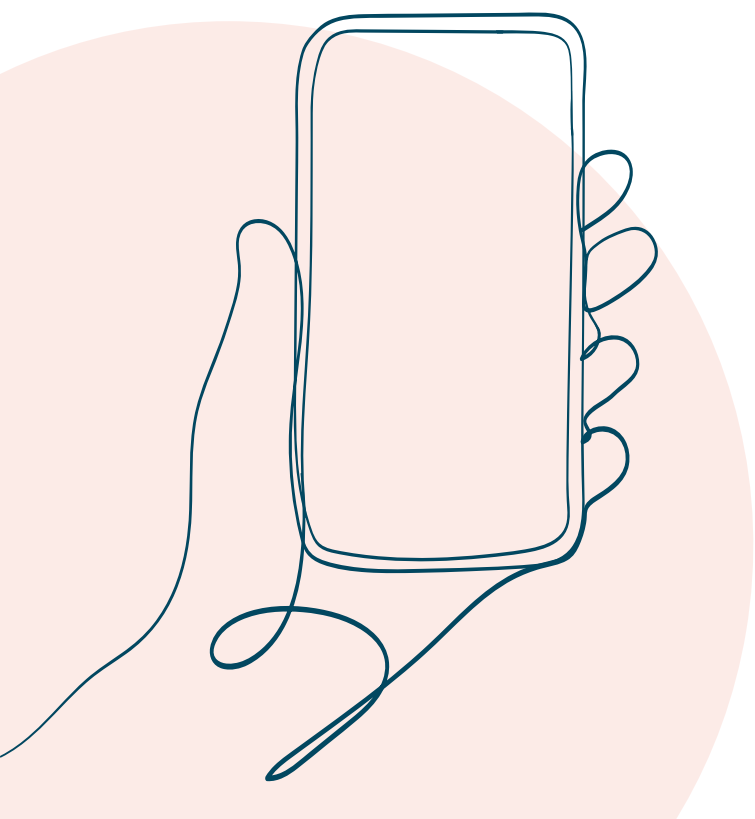


# Organising a Home Care Service

If the Local Authority cannot respond quickly enough, then you can organise a home care service yourself. In the UK, all home care services are registered with a national regulator. The regulators all have a directory of care services.

You can find the relevant regulator and their directories at the following websites:

Service location	Regulator and website
England	<a href="#">The Care Quality Commission (CQC)</a>
Northern Ireland	<a href="#">The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)</a>
Scotland	<a href="#">The Care Inspectorate (CIS)</a>
Wales	<a href="#">The Care Inspectorate (CIW)</a>



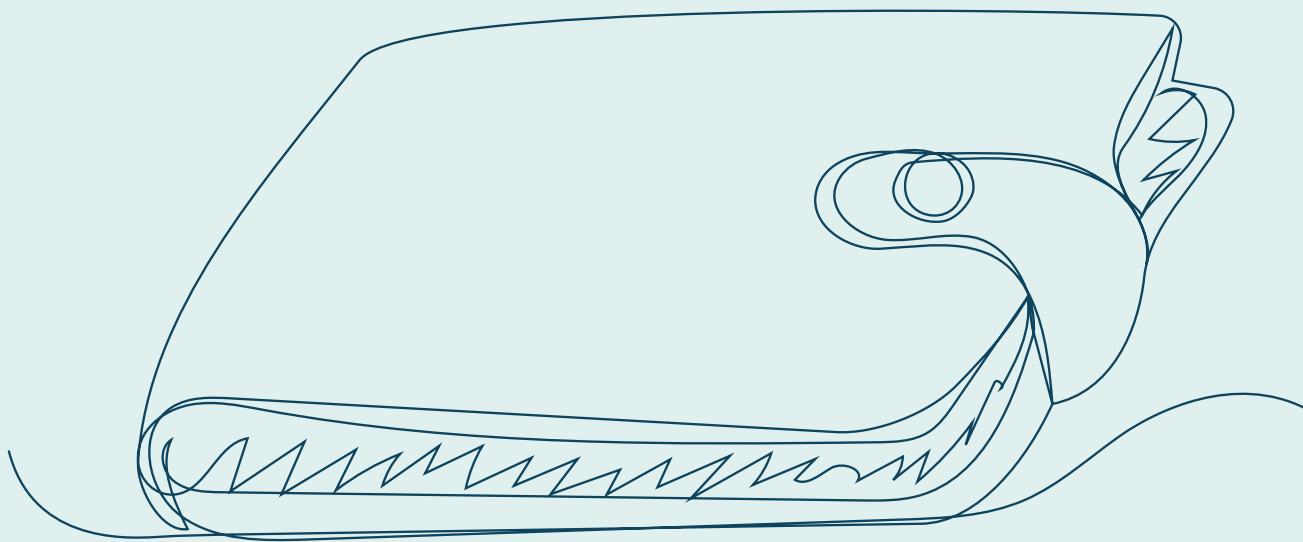
Using your parent's postcode, you can use the relevant regulator site to generate a short list of home care services local to them.

Having identified potential services local to your parent you can then make contact to find out their availability and make suitable arrangements.

If you have not done this before, it might seem like a daunting task but once you make a start and speak to some of the service providers, you will soon find that they are used to this happening and you will be in safe hands. There is plenty more information about choosing and paying for a home care service on [The Carer's Room website](#)

# 06

## Ensuring Financial Safety

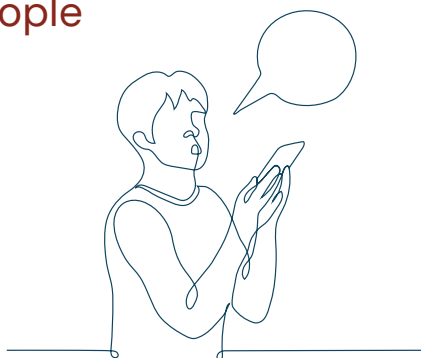


# Scams are financial crimes. Scammers target people of all ages and backgrounds, but the average age of a scam victim is '75 years'.

Some older people are especially at risk, either because perpetrators target them or because their circumstances make them vulnerable. For example, if they are bereaved, lonely, or living with dementia.

Never judge someone who is a scam victim. Fraudsters are experts in their game. Many victims experience a deep sense of shame and embarrassment which can cause further suffering for them, often with serious consequences.

## Fraudsters prey on vulnerable people



### If your loved one falls for a scam

Immediate danger?

Call **999** for emergency help  
Call **101** for non-emergency enquiries  
or textphone **18001 101**

If you have lost money, contact your bank immediately

Make a note of your (loved one's) bank contact details here:

Report any fraud to [Action Fraud](#)  
Phone: **0300 123 2040**  
Textphone: **0300 123 2050**

## How to Protect Yourself and Others

Although most of us know what to look out for, it's easy to forget what to do in the heat of the moment. Make sure your loved ones have this advice close to their phone, tablet, etc for whenever they are faced with a request for money or information:

**STOP** – take a moment to stop and think before parting with your money or information

**CHALLENGE** – consider whether the request could be fake. It's okay to reject, refuse or ignore a request.

**PROTECT** – contact your bank immediately if you think you have fallen for a scam and report it to Action Fraud.

## Further Advice on Scams

Action Fraud is the national fraud & cyber crime reporting centre.

These national anti-fraud campaigns also provide excellent impartial advice to help everyone protect themselves from financial fraud:

[Take five](#)

[Friends against scams](#)

The Carers Room has more information on tackling phone scams and nuisance calls.

# 07

## Fire, Smoke, and Gas Safety



# Serious fire incidents are becoming less common but older people are statistically more at risk in the home.

In case of fire – Get out, Get the Fire Service out, stay out – Dial 999

## Smoke Alarms

Smoke alarms are life savers. They should be fitted on each floor of the home and well maintained. Make sure to dust and check them regularly and change the batteries at least once a year.

Does your loved one have a smoke alarm?

Is it working?

Can they hear it?

When were the batteries last changed?

Specialist smoke alarms are available for people with hearing problems – when activated, they flash or trigger a vibrating pager or pad. For more information on fire safety specific to older adults, [Cheshire Fire Service](#) has advice about open fires, escape routes, and smoking.

Most local fire services have a community service that offers free home visits to older adults. Often these visits will extend beyond fire safety to include other safety advice such as falls prevention.



## Gas Safety

Poorly fitted and badly maintained gas appliances or equipment can put you at risk of gas leaks, fires, explosions, and carbon monoxide poisoning.

1 in 6 homes has a dangerous gas appliance so it is important to be prepared. Cadent Gas is the biggest expert gas organisation in the UK and has [produced a fact sheet](#) specifically for adults looking after vulnerable people.

### A Suspected Gas Leak

This could be serious for you and anyone in your neighbourhood. You must act fast.

**If you smell gas act fast – phone  
0800 111 999 – 24/7**

## Safe Gas Appliances

If you suspect an appliance may not be working correctly turn it off and contact a [Gas Safe](#) engineer to check it. All Gas Safe registered engineers carry a Gas Safe ID card which tells you whether they are registered for the specific job they need to do.

### Locking Cooker Valves

These safety valves allow care workers or Carents to safely and simply control when the gas can and cannot be used. They are designed to help vulnerable people retain their independence at home and provide reassurance to family, friends, and Carents. They are provided and fitted free by [local gas distribution networks](#).

[The Carents Room store cupboard](#) has more information about these helpful valves which can increase your loved one's safety.

# Any unsafe cooking or heating appliance which uses a fossil fuel (gas, oil, coal,) can produce a highly poisonous gas called carbon monoxide (CO).

Carbon Monoxide can make you feel seriously ill and can kill quickly without warning. At lower levels, over longer periods, carbon monoxide can cause flu-like symptoms with tiredness, headaches, nausea, dizziness, personality changes, memory problems, loss of vision, and dementia. Carbon monoxide is especially dangerous because it has no taste, colour, or smell.

## If you suspect carbon monoxide:

Phone **0800 111 999** – day or night  
Turn **off** any appliances  
Open the windows and **leave the property**  
Seek urgent medical advice – **call 111** or **dial 999**

Older people (along with children and pregnant women) are more susceptible to harm following exposure to carbon monoxide. Anyone living with a circulation or breathing problem is also at increased risk because they are already more likely to have problems carrying oxygen to the heart or brain.

## What to do to protect you and yours:

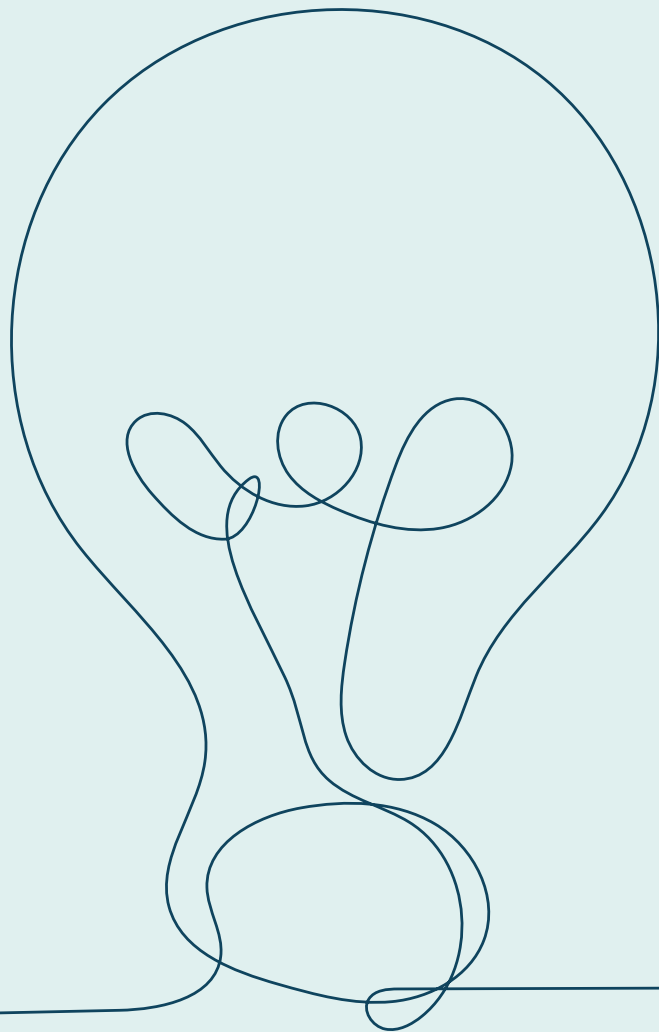
Be alert – know the dangers, symptoms, and signs  
Ensure all gas appliances are serviced annually  
Fit a carbon monoxide alarm

## Carbon Monoxide Alarms

A smoke alarm will NOT detect carbon monoxide. You need a special carbon monoxide alarm to detect increases in levels of this toxic gas and alert you to danger.

Cadent Gas and The Carents Room [have more information](#) about Carbon Monoxide (CO) and CO alarms.

# Interruptions to the Gas or Electricity Supply



# Interruptions to the electricity or gas supply can be disruptive for any of us, but older adults are more vulnerable and can find it harder to take appropriate action.

A loss of power, light, or heat can be distressing and confusing. These situations can also be dangerous, especially if they affect the use of essential medical equipment.

As we age, a drop in temperature can lead to circulatory problems, chest infections, and mobility problems, increasing our risk of serious injury so it is important to know what to do if a power outage occurs.

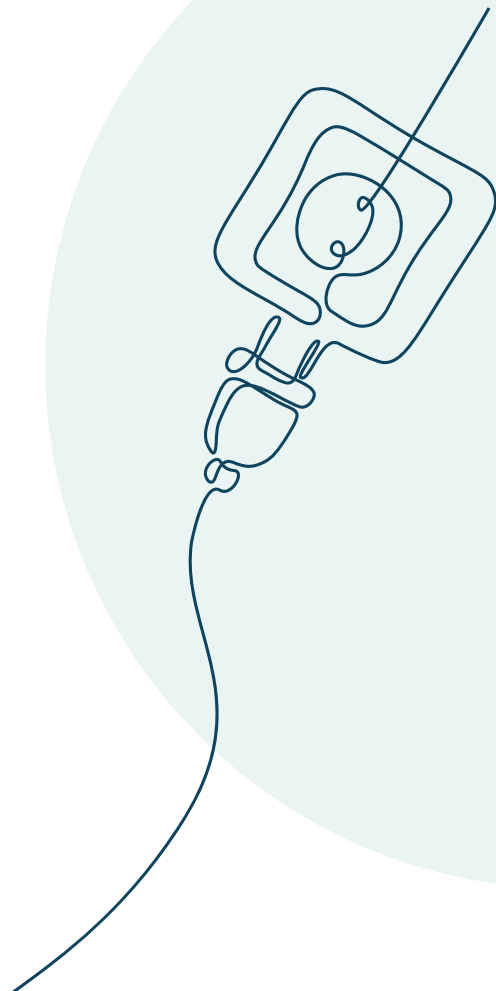
## In a power cut – Call 105 for information and advice

You can find updates from your electricity operator via the [Energy Networks Association's website](#) and social media feed.

[UK Power Networks](#) and [National Grid](#) recommend the following:

- Keep a torch with spare batteries in easy reach
- Leave a light switched on so you know when the power returns.
- Check if a neighbour has their lights on, or if the street lights are working
- Check the fuse box trip switch is in the 'on' position
- Keep any medical equipment charged
- Keep the freezer shut – the contents will usually stay frozen for up to 12 hours
- Turn off and unplug any sensitive equipment such as TVs, computers, and solar panels

Do you know where the fuse box and trip switch are in your loved one's home?



## Stay Warm

Older adults need to take extra precautions and stay warm. As we grow older, we are less able to regulate our body temperature and we can rapidly become cold and unwell.

**Use an alternative heating source if possible.**

**Wear extra clothing with plenty of layers including a hat and gloves.**

**Extra blankets, hot drinks, and hot water bottles also help.**

**Reduce further heat loss by closing doors in unused rooms and closing your curtains.**

If the heating is unlikely to return quickly, consider moving elsewhere – friends or family, cafes, and pubs. You can find a local warm hub or warm space using this [interactive map](#) on warm spaces.

## Check Any Stairlifts

If the stairlift stops working, some mains-operated stairlifts have a manual release handle that can be used to return the stair lift safely to ground level. Many also have battery backup. Check the manufacturer details and familiarise yourself with what to do in an emergency.



## The Priority Services Register

For additional support sign up to the [Priority Services Register \(PSR\)](#) to receive priority help and care in the event of a power, water, or gas supply problem.

### Less than half of those eligible for priority support are registered

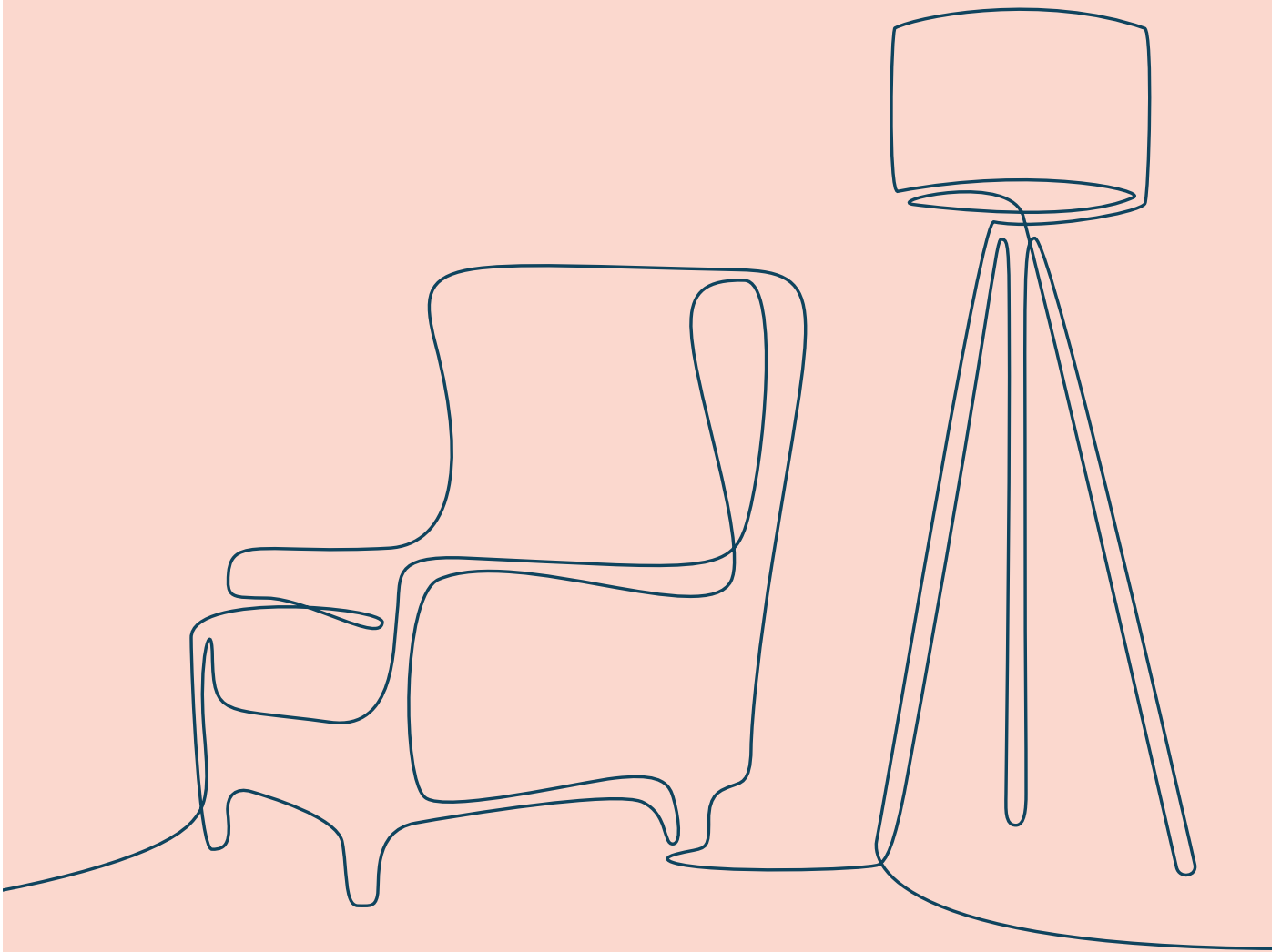
The Priority Services Register is a free UK-wide service that provides extra advice and support, especially during periods when the gas, power, or water supply is interrupted.

All gas, water, and electricity networks are required to have a PSR and to provide extra support to any potentially vulnerable consumers.

### The benefits of being on the PSR include:

- Support and information during a power or gas supply interruption
- Connection to local emergency services
- Emergency power during prolonged supply interruptions
- Emergency heating and cooking equipment if the mains gas supply is interrupted for a prolonged period
- Nominee schemes which allows information and notifications to be sent to preferred named contacts such as a carer, family member or friend
- Advance warning of any supply interruptions
- Priority support in emergencies
- Bills and other literature in accessible formats
- Doorstep identification schemes for engineers –this usually entails a password system to identify legitimate callers and is likely to include “knock and wait” arrangement to give you time to get to the door

# Looking After Your Loved One's Property



# If your loved one is in hospital or care for long periods of time you may need to look after their property.

In these circumstances, you might need to respond to common problems such as leaking pipes. Make sure you know:

- How to turn the water off
- How to operate the heating and thermostat
- Where to find the fuse box
- Any home insurance details
- The details of the utility companies
- When the boiler was last serviced

It may also be useful to check and note the contact details of any essential and preferred local trades professionals using the checklist provided.

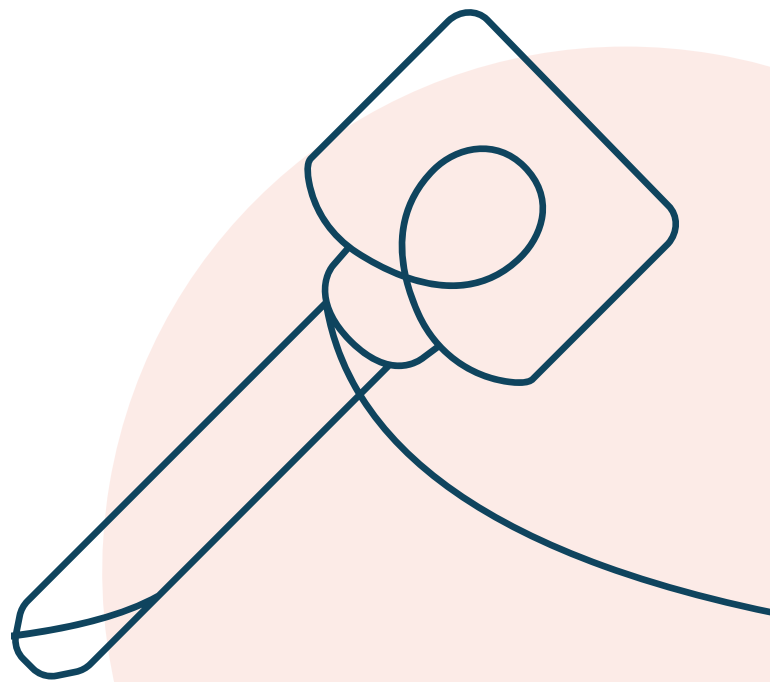
## If a Home Is Empty for an Extended Period

If your loved one's home is empty for an extended period of time, you should contact the insurance company and explain the situation. They are often very supportive and will be able to guide you through the next steps.

Similarly, you will find many utility companies are also supportive and can advise you on how best to manage any outstanding bill payments.

For a small fee, [Royal Mail](#) can redirect any mail to a UK or overseas address for a period of 3, 6, or 12 months.

Consider the [police advice](#) regarding securing a property.



# Useful Contacts and Telephone Numbers

Think ahead, talk to your loved ones, and make sure you know who to contact if the need arises. Some of the contact information you may need will be specific to you and your loved one and not mentioned in the above guide.

In the form below, you can keep a note of any important contact information you might need. Feel free to alter it how you see fit, keeping in mind who you may need to contact in the event of an emergency situation.

Key Contacts	Name, Number & Contact details
Family, friends, or neighbours who live nearby and can help at short notice	
A trusted key holder	
An emergency contact for any pets including dog walkers, kennels or catteries	
Local/preferred Heating engineer	
Local/preferred plumber	
Local/preferred electrician	
Local/preferred joiner	
Local/preferred window/glazier	
Local/preferred locksmith	
Local/preferred gardener	
Utility companies	
Local Authority Adult Social Care Department	
Home Insurance company	
GP surgery	
Bank Branch For Contact	



Key Contacts	Name, Number & Contact details
For you to fill in:	

Make sure this list is easily accessible to both you and your loved one in the event of an emergency. Update as necessary.

Published May 2023 by Strata Nostra Ltd.

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