

6. EQUIPMENT TO HELP WITH CARING AT HOME

Would it make life easier for you if the person you care for had a wheelchair, a commode, hoist or smaller moving aid? Or perhaps you do not live with the person you look after and an alarm system would be reassuring.

Short term loan

The *British Red Cross* has equipment for short-term loan or for holiday loan at resorts, e.g. wheelchairs, commodes, walking frames and bath seats. Contact your local branch.

Long-term need

Equipment may be needed for longer, or your home may need alterations, such as a grab rail in the bathroom, banisters or a stair lift. The person you care for will need to be assessed by a Community Occupational Therapist (O.T.), who will visit to see how the disability or illness affects everyday life. Your GP can arrange this. The O.T. will also advise and arrange for smaller aids, like a special tap turner. The O.T. also assesses for wheelchairs. Physiotherapists assess for and supply walking aids. Useful tip - keep the phone number of suppliers of equipment to hand for use in case of repairs in an emergency.

Medical Loans can be obtained through an O.T. or Community/District Nurse. These are for short-term loans for up to 6 months and must be for a medical need. Items could include pressure mattresses, hoists or toileting aids. For longer term and for other than medical need, equipment is supplied through *Adult & Community Services*. However, you must meet their Eligibility Criteria and their normal Charging Policy will apply (see section on Adult & Community Services).

Community Care Alarm Systems/Telecare

If the person you care for lives alone or you are, for example, out at work, a community care alarm system can bring help for

the person you care for in an emergency. Worcestershire County Council provides *Telecare* through Adult and Community Services. Telecare equipment is delivered and installed in your home by one of four county community alarm providers depending on where you live. These providers also run the response centres. If you are not eligible for the County Council Telecare Service, you can still arrange to receive Telecare directly from these providers by making your own arrangements. Contact *Worcestershire Association of Carers* or *Worcestershire County Council* for more information.

Keysafes

A small keysafe can be attached to the outside of your house. This gives safe access when occupants find it difficult to get to the door to let people in. Keys are kept in the safe, which can only be opened by a special code. These safes can be bought at DIY stores or through mail order.

House Alterations

The Local Council, on the recommendation of the O.T., can help with alterations to your house. These could include extensions for a downstairs toilet, or to install a shower or stair lift. The **Disabled Facilities Grant** can help towards the costs of the work. It is a means-tested grant and the process can take a while, so do not delay putting in an application if you know you will need adaptations to help you continue caring. Grants cannot be made if an order has already been placed for work to start.

Home Improvement Agencies

These are local not-for-profit organisations, such as Care and Repair, which can help older, disabled or low income owners and private tenants to repair, adapt or improve their homes.

Where to get information

The Disabled Living Foundation gives practical, up to date and unbiased information and advice on all aspects of disability, especially equipment to reduce the problems of daily living. It has **Disabled Living Centres**, where there are permanent displays of a wide range of equipment, backed up by an information and assessment service. **But these centres do not sell equipment.**

Disability Answers in Crowngate, Worcester, offers a free sign-posting service for people with disability and a display of equipment. Worcester City Occupational Therapists can make assessments for bathing needs, demonstrate bathing, kitchen equipment and a stair lift. Make an appointment to see the O.T.

Remap

This organisation offers a one-off design service for an aid, or adaptations to an existing aid, to meet the specific needs of an individual.

Reductions in television licences for people aged 75 or over, or Registered Blind

You will need to contact *TV Licensing* to apply for a free TV licence if you are aged 75 or over. Alternatively if you are registered blind (at any age) you will be entitled to a 50% reduction of the cost of a TV licence.

Telephone, Gas and Electricity Supply Companies

These companies can also supply information about adaptations to telephones and domestic appliances. Free safety checks of gas appliances are also available to households of pensionable or disabled people. Bills can be sent in large print or Braille. Contact your provider for details.

Reducing unwanted telephone calls

BT Privacy at Home registers you for the Telephone Preference Service which helps stop unwanted sales calls. The **Telephone Preference Service** ensures your telephone number is no longer available to organisations who may telephone you with offers and information you do not wish to receive.

Reducing unwanted mail

Royal Mail supports the *Mail Preference service* which helps stop unwanted junk mail. Registering with the MPS is free.

British Telecom Priority Fault Repair Scheme

For BT customers whose telephone is vital in emergencies and an essential link, you as a carer may be able to benefit from this free priority repair service.

Buying privately

Details of companies supplying aids for daily living and mobility equipment are in the **Yellow Pages** (look under **Disabled**), ring **Talking Pages** or visit their website (www.yell.co.uk). Some companies employ an O.T., who can then assess. Do ask.

Do get advice from your O.T. before buying expensive items.