

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. For example, wheelchairs, commodes, walking frames and bath seats are available. Contact your local branch (see useful contacts).

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

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. There are 24-hour telephone or pendant schemes (run by the local District Councils). Your Social Worker or *Worcestershire Association of Carers* can give you information. There is an increasing range of telecare products and monitoring services.

Keysafes

A small keysafe attached to the outside of the house can ensure 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 DIYs or through mail order.

House Alterations

The Local Council, on the recommendation of the O.T., can help with alterations to the 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 adaptation to help you continue caring. Grants cannot be made if an order has already been placed for work to start.

Home Improvement Agencies (Stay Put/ Care and Repair)

These are local not for profit services which can help older, disabled or low income owners and private tenants to repair, adapt or improve their homes. *Care and Repair England* have a useful booklet on services available.

Where to get information

The Disabled Living Foundation aims to reduce the disabling effects of all kinds of impairment. It gives practical, up to date and unbiased information and advice on all aspects of disability, especially equipment to reduce the problems of daily living. At its **Disabled Living Centres**, 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 Crown Gate, Worcester, offers a free sign-posting service for people with disability and a display of equipment. The Worcester City Occupational Therapists can make assessments for bathing needs, demonstrate bathing, kitchen equipment and a stairlift. Make an appointment to see the O.T.

Remap

This organisation endeavours to offer 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 company for details.

Reducing unwanted telephone calls

There are two schemes you can register with free of charge to reduce these. 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. The **Silent Call Guard** stops dialling up through computers to your telephone line. Telephone 150 from a BT land line for further information of these services.

BT Free Directory Enquiry Service

British Telecom's free directory enquiry service is available to blind and partially sighted people. It is also intended for people who are unable to hold, handle or read a telephone directory. Once you are registered with the service you will be provided with a Personal Identification Number (PIN) that you will need to give every time to use this service.

For further information, telephone 195 from a BT phone or contact *British Telecom Age & Disability Service*.

British Telecom Priority Fault Repair Scheme

For BT customers whose telephone is emergencies and an essential link, you as a benefit from this free priority repair service.

Buying privately

Details of companies supplying aids to 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 OT, who can then assess. Do ask.

Do get advice from your OT before buying expensive items.