

Practical advice

Think about how you want to live your life. What is important to you and makes you feel life is good? What help do you need to achieve this?

Be aware that it can take time to complete an assessment; the number of conversations you have with the assessor depends on your need for care and support and the outcomes you want to achieve.

If you find it difficult to explain your circumstances, you have the right to ask for someone else to help you or speak on your behalf. This could be a carer, support worker, trusted friend or family member.

The assessor may ask to talk with people who understand and support you.

You can ask to change things if they are not working out.

If you're unhappy with a local authority decision relating to social care, you have a right to challenge it.

How do...

I know if things are working well?

You are treated with respect.

Your assessment recognises that you understand your life better than anyone else; the assessor has listened to you and understands your wishes and feelings.

You feel safe and are supported to manage any risks.

You receive the care and support you need to live the life you want.

You receive a copy of your assessment and agree with its contents.

You are in control of the support you receive.

Everyone who helps you clearly understands your individual outcomes.

You know who to contact if you need any further help.

You can plan ahead, keep control and know how to get help early enough to avoid a crisis.

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To ask for an assessment, you or someone who supports you can contact your local council's adult social services. Details of how to contact them will be available in local council offices and on their website. Your GP surgery will also have the information you need.

This guide has been produced by Research in Practice. We are a charity that uses evidence from research, expertise from practice and people's experience to help understand adult social care and to improve how it works.

Adults, carers and their advocates can find more detailed information and advice regarding assessments in the ***Good assessment: Practitioners' Handbook***.

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A brief guide to... **assessment**

Dartington
Trust



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What is... *an adult social care assessment?*



An adult social care assessment is a process which identifies what you want to achieve in order to maintain or improve your wellbeing, whilst having as much independence and control over your day-to-day life as possible. The things you want to achieve that support your wellbeing are often referred to as your 'individual outcomes'.

The purpose of assessment is to ensure you have the right information and support to achieve your individual outcomes. This includes:

- > Finding out what is already helping you to achieve your outcomes and what could be better.
- > Identifying where and how you can get the care and support you need.
- > Deciding who is best to provide the care and support you need.
- > Working out whether you are entitled to financial help towards the cost of services.

Under the *Care Act 2014*, your local council has a duty to carry out an adult social care assessment with anybody they are aware of who seems to need care or support. The council must also carry out an assessment with anybody who asks for one. This law applies to:

- > adults over the age of 18
- > people who are unpaid carers for adults
- > young people approaching 18 years of age who may need care and support as an adult.

This guide focuses on assessment for adults over the age of 18 and young people approaching the age of 18. If you are a carer, your council can provide you with specific information about assessment for carers.

If you have had an assessment in the past, but your circumstances have since changed, you can ask for a new assessment.

How ... *does it work?*



An assessment is carried out by a social care professional (an assessor). They will need to get to know you in order to gather the right information.

Throughout the assessment process, it is important you have the opportunity to voice your wishes and feelings so that you have as much choice and control over your life as possible. At the earliest point possible, the assessor must establish whether you are able or need support to be fully engaged with the assessment process. For example, you may need help to communicate.

In some instances, you may need someone independent to represent you. This could be a friend or family member; but if there is no one that both you and the council consider appropriate, then the council must provide you with an 'independent advocate'. Your council can provide you with further information.

The assessor will want to know about the things that help to improve or maintain your wellbeing; these are sometimes called your 'strengths'. Strengths can include people, places, your skills and knowledge.

The assessor will find out about the things you would like to achieve - everyone will have different things. The *Care Act 2014* provides specific examples for social care:

- > Managing personal care (washing, dressing and using the toilet).
- > Household management (paying bills, living somewhere clean and safe).
- > Having a nutritional diet.
- > Building or maintaining relationships with people (family and friends).
- > Getting out and about and using facilities in your community.
- > Accessing education, training or volunteering opportunities.
- > Finding employment.
- > Caring for someone else (including parenting).

The assessor will also get to know how things you find difficult affect you. The assessor will ask you about what enables you to keep yourself safe and well, as well as what makes that difficult.

The time an assessment takes will depend on your situation - it could be completed during your first conversation with the assessor, or over several.

Once the assessor has got to know about you and understands your circumstances, you will discuss how you can achieve your individual outcomes.

The amount of support offered by the council and the way they support you will depend upon your individual needs and what you want to achieve. This is sometimes referred to as your 'eligibility' for support.

You will be eligible for care and support from your local council if all of the following applies to you:

- > The difficulties you are having relate to a physical or mental health condition.
- > You cannot achieve two or more of the individual social care outcomes outlined in the *Care Act 2014*.
- > Being unable to achieve the outcomes identified will have a negative impact on your health and wellbeing.

If the care and support you need has to be paid for, the assessor will also ask about your finances. The funds you have will determine whether you or the council pays for some or all of the care and support you need.

Even if you are not eligible for care and support from your council, there may be support provided by other agencies (for example, community groups). The assessor will discuss the options with you and, by law, must provide you with relevant information and support to access suitable services in your local area.