Aids and equipment for independent living

After a stroke, daily tasks such as getting around, cooking and bathing may be more difficult than before. Many people benefit from using special aids or equipment. There are many products available, some of which your local authority may be able to provide. This resource sheet outlines how to get further information about aids and equipment (including community alarms) and lists some product suppliers.

What types of aids and equipment are available?

There is a huge range of aids and equipment available to make everyday life easier. Some examples are listed below:

- **bathing aids** – grab rails, non-slip mats, bath and shower seats
- **dressing** – long-handed devices to help you do up buttons, specialist clothing (for example with Velcro fastenings)
- **furniture** – beds, chairs, bath stools
- **kitchen aids** – easy to use tin openers and utensils, kettle tippers, talking tins
- **mobility aids** – walking sticks and frames, wheelchairs, scooters
- **making life at home safer** – community alarms, grab rails and handi reachers
- **telephones** – with large displays and flashing lights.

Am I entitled to any aids or equipment?

If you need help and support at home after a stroke, contact your local **social services** department. They can arrange for you to have a community care assessment, which includes looking at whether you need any aids, equipment or adaptations in your home.

This is often done by an **occupational therapist** (OT) who will visit you at home. Help from social services is means-tested so you may have to pay towards the help you need, and not all types of aids and equipment will be provided by social services.

Where can I get advice about buying aids?

The Disabled Living Foundation (see **Useful organisations**) has a range of resources to help you find out which aids could help you and where you can buy them from. Their ’Ask Sara’ facility is an interactive website with questions about the day-to-day problems you face, and information on the aids that may help.
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Prices of aids and equipment can vary so it is worth contacting a few different suppliers before buying a product.

Some suppliers will let you try out products before you buy them, or you may be able to borrow equipment if you only need it in the short term.

There are some centres across the UK where you can see some of the equipment available. Contact the Disabled Living Foundation or Assist UK for details of your nearest centre.

Community alarms

Community alarm systems (sometimes called personal alarms) help people to stay independent in their own homes. They usually involve an alarm system that is linked to your telephone, and a pendant with a button that you wear, so you can press it and automatically call for help in an emergency.

Many local councils run schemes for people living in their catchment area in England, Scotland and Wales. However, they are usually run by charities or Housing Associations in Northern Ireland. Some Housing Associations, charities and private companies also run schemes throughout the UK.

Contact your local council directly to find out if they have a scheme and if so how you can apply for it.

Help from the Stroke Association

1. Aids and equipment

Our Strokeshop
We have a shop available on our website, which sells a range of products to make life easier. It is run in association with Homecare from The Consortium.

Our Strokeshop products include a wide range of aids, such as handi reachers, walking aids, cups with adjustable handles and gadgets to help you to button up clothes more easily.

Tel: 0843 224 1200
Website: www.strokeshop.org.uk

The Stroke Association receives a donation for every product sold.

2. Community alarms

Our partnership with CarelineUK
We have a partnership with CarelineUK, a provider of personal alarm services. Their alarm system provides a pendant which you can wear around your neck or on your wrist, and a base unit which attaches to your phone line.

If you need assistance, press the button on the pendant or base unit and you will be connected immediately to CarelineUK staff. They will identify the best way to help you, and if they cannot hear you or speak to you on the phone they will notify your named keyholder or the emergency services. This service is available 24 hours a day.
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What are the costs?

- The alarm and pendant costs £145.60 plus £5.95 for postage.
- One year of monitoring costs £98.67, which can be paid monthly.
- To rent the unit costs £16.20 per month (minimum 12 month contract).

All prices include VAT. For more information contact CarelineUK directly:

Tel: 0845 434 7698
Email: stroke@carelineuk.com

The Stroke Association receives a donation for each new customer taking up their service.

Useful organisations

All organisations are UK wide unless otherwise stated.

**Stroke Association**

*Stroke Helpline:* 0303 3033 100  
*Email:* info@stroke.org.uk  
*Website:* stroke.org.uk  
Contact us for information about stroke, emotional support and details of local services and support groups.

**Advice about aids and equipment**

**The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF)**  
380-384 Harrow Road, London W9 2HU.  
*Helpline:* 0845 130 9177  
*Email:* helpline@dlf.org.uk  
*Website:* www.dlf.org.uk  
*Ask Sara:* www.asksara.org.uk  
The DLF give impartial advice and information about equipment for people with disabilities. They do not sell equipment themselves, but have in-depth information available on their website and a range of factsheets. Ask Sara is an interactive website to help you find the equipment you need. They also have a showroom where you can view and try equipment.  

**Living made easy**

*Website:* www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk  
The website offers impartial advice about a wide range of daily living equipment and other aspects of independent living. Includes lists of suppliers. Part of the DLF.

**Assist UK**

*Tel:* 0161 832 9757  
*Website:* www.assist-uk.org  
Has a network of 38 Disabled Living Centres (DLCs) across England and Scotland, which offer impartial advice and information about products and where to buy them.

**Ricability (Research and information for older and disabled people)**

*Tel:* 020 7427 2460  
*Email:* mail@ricability.org.uk  
*Website:* www.ricability.org.uk  
An independent consumer research organisation. It produces many reports and publications including consumer guides to help you choose equipment (such as chairs, stairlifts, telephones and mobility equipment).

**Suppliers of products**

**A.A Mobility Scotland**

*Tel:* 01236 761 596  
*Website:* www.mobility-scotland.co.uk  
A leading supplier of a range of mobility products in Scotland. Offers free home visits.
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Able2Wear Ltd
Tel: 0141 775 3738
Email: info@able2wear.co.uk
Website: www.able2wear.co.uk
Provider of specialist clothing for people with disabilities including clothes with Velcro fastenings.

Anything Left-Handed
Tel: 01737 888 269
Website: www.anythingleft-handed.co.uk
Offers specialist products, including equipment for the kitchen and garden for people who are left-handed.

The Disabled Shop
Email: info@thedisabledshop.com
Website: www.thedisabledshop.com
Sells a range of equipment including bathing aids and wheelchairs.

Homecraft Rolyan
Tel: 0844 124 330
Website: www.homecraft-rolyan.com
Catalogue of aids, equipment and rehabilitation supplies.

Hearing and Mobility
Tel: 0844 888 1338
Website: www.hearingandmobility.co.uk
Has a wide range of products including household and mobility equipment and there are some local stores across England and Wales.

Independent Living Company
Tel: 020 8931 6000
Email: sales@independent-living.co.uk
Website: www.independent-living.co.uk
Has a range of mobility and daily-living aids. Some equipment can be hired for short periods or as a trial to help you decide if it is suitable for you before buying it.

Mobility Aid Services Scotland
Tel: 0800 084 2336
Website: www.mobilityaidservices.co.uk
Specialises in mobility products, daily-living aids and home nursing equipment.

Nottingham Rehab Supplies
Tel: 0845 805 2236
Email: customerservice@nrs-uk.co.uk
Website: www.nrs-uk.co.uk
Catalogue of aids and equipment for independent living and rehabilitation.

OT Stores
Tel: 0845 260 7061
Email: info@otstores.co.uk
Website: www.otstores.co.uk
Supplies a wide range of daily-living, occupational therapy and physiotherapy aids. Has a specialist showroom and advice centre in Malvern and appointments can be made with an occupational therapist there.

REMAP
For England, Northern Ireland and Wales
Tel: 0845 130 0456
Website: www.remap.org.uk
For Scotland:
Website: www.remap-scotland.org
A small charity which makes or adapts equipment for people with disabilities if nothing suitable is available.

Community alarms

National Benevolent Fund for the Aged
Tel: 020 7828 0200
Website: www.nbfa.org.uk
Provides free long-term loans of community alarm base units for older people on a low income and unable to get an alarm through their housing provider. The monitoring fee is £1.50 per week. They can also arrange short-
term loans, for example, as a trial period or if a carer is ill or on holiday.

**Ricability**  
**Tel:** 020 7427 2460  
**Email:** mail@ricability.org.uk  
**Website:** www.ricability.org.uk  
Produces a booklet, *Calling for help: A Guide to Community Alarms*, which includes test results on 13 models (2003). The guide can be read free of charge on their website.

**Telecare Services Association**  
**Tel:** 01625 520 320  
**Email:** admin@telecare.org.uk  
**Website:** www.telecare.org.uk  
The representative body for the telecare industry within the UK. They list suppliers of alarms across the UK and you can search for local and national schemes on their website.

**Disclaimer:** The Stroke Association provides the details of other organisations for information only. Inclusion in this resource sheet does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement.
£5 could help us answer a helpline call from a desperately worried person looking for answers about stroke. Text ‘stroke’ to 70007 to donate £5 today.

Texts cost £5 plus your standard network rate of which a minimum £4.70 will go to the Stroke Association. Full terms and conditions at www.stroke.org.uk/textterms