What to expect during assessment and care planning

A quick guide for people using adult social care services

“People’s experience in adult social care services remains the highest of priorities, and what matters most is supporting a life and not just providing a service”

Clenton Farquharson, Chair of TLAP
Adult care and support should help you live your life the way you want to.
You should be treated as an individual, and your care and support should be based on what you can already do, what you want to achieve and the help you need.

Making decisions
Social care staff should always involve you and respect your right to make your own decisions. They should give you any support you need to express your views and wishes. This might include:

- Support from an advocate and/or interpreter
- Extra time to understand the information
- Communication aids – for example pictures, symbols, large print, Braille, hearing loops
- Making the conditions right to help you communicate, like reducing background noise and providing good lighting

Staff should ask if you would like your family, friends or carers to be involved and if so, how to involve them. This is your choice and you can decide not to.
If you need support to take part in your assessment, care planning or review you should be offered an independent advocate. You should have enough time with your advocate to prepare beforehand and to check your understanding of what has happened afterwards.

What is an advocate?
An advocate can help you express your needs and wishes, and support you to weigh up and take decisions about different options. They can help you find services, make sure the correct procedures are followed, and challenge decisions.
Your needs assessment
An assessment is a conversation about your needs, how these affect your wellbeing and what you want to be able to do in your daily life. It should also:

- Promote your interests and independence
- Recognise the effects of loneliness
- Respect your dignity

The person doing your assessment should make sure:
- It happens at a time and place that suits you
- You know what the assessment is for
- You are given information you can understand that tells you what will happen and when
- You can bring someone with you, if you want to
- They have all the right information about you

After the assessment they should write down what was agreed and give a copy to you and to your carer, if you are happy with this.

During the conversation you should expect:

- The needs of your whole family to be considered, including your carers
- To be fully involved
- To talk about your strengths and what you want to achieve in your day-to-day life
- Your personal history and life story to be heard
- Any caring you do for other family members to be considered and a carer’s assessment offered to you
- Your housing to be taken into account, including where and who you want to live with
Care and support plan

Your care and support plan should say how your needs will be met and what your personal budget is. Your plan should be:

- Flexible – in case your needs and wishes change
- Clear about how family, friends or carers will be involved in your care and support
- Clear how any needs you have linked to your gender, sexuality, disability, ethnicity or religion will be met
- Reviewed regularly – including how and when this should happen
- Clear about what to do if things change or there is a crisis

What is a personal budget?

A personal budget is the amount of money your local council says is available for your care and support. You should be given information and advice about the different ways this money can be managed and used. For example, if you have a direct payment, you will receive money regularly that you can use to arrange your own support.

Further information

People's experience in adult social care services: improving the experience of care and support for people using adult social care services – NICE guideline

Your guide to care and support: getting a needs assessment – NHS Choices

Carer’s assessment – Carers UK

Care and Support Jargon Buster (Plain English definitions of the most commonly used words and phrases in health, social care and housing) – Think Local, Act Personal (TLAP) Visit the About us page for more information about TLAP.

Paying for care – Money Advice Service

Care and Support Planning Guide – National Voices

This content has been co-produced by NICE and SCIE and is based on NICE's guideline on people's experience in adult social care services: improving the experience of care and support for people using adult social care services.

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