

SOCIAL CARE

FACTSHEETS

sia spinal
injuries
association
FOR LIFE AFTER SPINAL CORD INJURY



**PREPARING FOR A
SOCIAL CARE ASSESSMENT**

Preparing for a social services assessment of your support needs

It is vital that you prepare well for social care assessments and reviews, to give yourself the best possible chance of having all your care and support needs recognised and met. This can make a real difference to your quality of life.

You are the expert

When your local council's social services are carrying out an assessment or a review of the support you need, the most important thing to remember is this: **you** almost certainly understand more about your needs than they do. Because you live with your needs every day, only you are really in a position to understand how to have your needs met so that you can live your life as you want to. Most social workers and care managers have had very little knowledge or experience of spinal cord injuries. It is therefore very important to try to be in control of the assessment process as far as possible, and good preparation is essential for a good outcome.

Preparing well

Make sure you know what you're going to say. It is easy to come out of the meeting realising that there are half a dozen things you have forgotten to say - and it can be quite difficult to actually remember everything that is relevant, because a lot of it may be routine things that you do every day and no longer give much thought to. You may find it useful to have a list of points you need to make so that you can check what you've forgotten to mention.

It is often useful to prepare a "care diary" over a period of time, listing exactly what support you needed and how long it took. This is also helpful extra evidence, as it shows that you have systematically measured and timed your support needs.

As well as your specific day-to-day care needs, think about changes and improvements that you can make in your life, and what support you will need to do this.

It is vital that you do not underreport your care needs. It is easier to reduce the amount of care you receive in the community than to increase it.

There is some information about eligibility under the Care Act [here](#).

Person centred assessment

The assessment process should be centred on you as an individual. It should not just be about what the council usually provides, but about your individual needs. It should have regard to your dignity, emotional well-being, your control over day-to-day life (including your support), your

participation in work education and leisure, your relationships and your opportunities to contribute to society

Most councils have a self-assessment form of some kind, which you can download or ask for a paper copy of. Although most of them have titles like "supported self-assessment questionnaire", more often than not a social worker or care manager will fill it in without you even seeing it. You may prefer to get a copy before the meeting so that you can see what questions it is asking, and you may want to fill in a copy first and bring it to the meeting.

Alternatively (or as well) you might prepare some written information which explains your needs from your own point of view, as your council's paperwork may not ask the right questions to draw out what is crucial for you.

Although it is the council that makes the decision as to whether your needs are eligible, they must nevertheless take your views into account, and any disagreements about your needs should be recorded as part of the final assessment

Spelling it out

It is vital that you explain the complexity of your needs, how one thing affects another, and what the consequences and knock-on effects are if your needs are not met properly. For example, a proper diet and regular appropriate mealtimes may be necessary for good bowel management, while a well-managed bowel routine may prevent autonomic dysreflexia, whereas a poorly managed one may cause skin problems.

Make sure they understand all of your needs: it can be all too easy to overlook some of your support needs simply because the support is already in place, and it has become a routine thing that you don't need to think about the more. This can make it seem as though you need a lot less support than you actually do.

Unpaid carers

If you have an unpaid carer (often your partner or another family member) who is both willing and able to meet some of your needs freely, the local authority will not need to put support in place to meet those needs; but don't let them assume that your carer is both willing and able if they are not.

If your carer is under a lot of strain as a result of what they are doing, if it is stopping them working, or being able to do other things that they want to do with their life, it is important to make social services aware of this as well. A separate carer's assessment must be offered to a carer who may have needs for support, and this can lead to additional services to reduce the pressure on the carer. Councils normally have a separate pot of funding to meet carers' needs, although this often takes the form of additional services

for the disabled person.

Financial assessment

Be aware that social services support is means tested, so they will look at your income and savings to see if you can afford to contribute to the cost of your care package. Please note however that councils must assess your needs before they assess your finances: it is unlawful for them to screen you out of the process on the basis of income or savings.

More information about how your contribution is calculated, and how to challenge it if you think it is wrong or if you simply cannot afford it, will be uploaded to this website in the future.

Help from SIA

After all this, when your assessment or review has been completed, if you do not feel that the support you are offered is adequate to meet your needs, the Spinal Injuries Association may be able to advise you or help you challenge the decision. You can contact Simon Legg, SIA's social care caseworker on 07535 774135 or at s.legg@spinal.co.uk on Tuesdays Wednesdays and Thursdays, or you can call the SIA Freephone Advice Line Monday to Friday between 11am and 4.30pm on 0800 980 0501.

Disclaimer

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ABOUT SIA

The Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) is the leading national user-led charity for spinal cord injured (SCI) people. Being user led, we are well placed to understand the everyday needs of living with spinal cord injury and are here to meet those needs by providing key services to share information and experiences, and to campaign for change ensuring each person can lead a full and active life. We are here to support you from the moment your spinal cord injury happens, and for the rest of your life.

For more information contact us via the following:

Spinal Injuries Association
SIA House
2 Trueman Place
Oldbrook
Milton Keynes
MK6 2HH

T: 01908 604 191 (Mon – Fri 9am – 5pm)

T: 0800 980 0501 (Freephone Advice Line, Mon – Fri, 11am – 1pm/2pm – 4.30pm)

W: www.spinal.co.uk

E: sia@spinal.co.uk

Charity No: 1054097

Brought to you by:



PLEASE SUPPORT SIA

SIA relies on fundraising, donations and gifts in wills to provide services that help spinal cord injured people rebuild their lives.

With your help, we can provide the right support to spinal cord injured people and their families and friends so they can enjoy a full and independent life after injury. Your donation today will go towards changing someone's life.

I would like to give: £15 £20 £53 other amount £.....

Method of payment

I enclose a cheque/postal order/CAF voucher made payable to Spinal Injuries Association.

I would like to pay by Mastercard/Visa/Maestro/Switch (delete as appropriate)

Card number

Start date

Expiry Date

Security Code

Signature

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Date

Name.....

Address

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Postcode Tel no.....

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Please gift aid my donation

If you tick the box it means for every £1 you donate we can claim an extra 25p from the taxman, at no extra cost to you. You need to pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax we reclaim from HM Revenue and Customs – currently 25p in every £1 you give.

Please send your donation to: FREEPOST SPINAL INJURIES ASSOCIATION or you can donate online at www.spinal.co.uk

Thank you for your support!