

# MS Essentials

For people living with MS

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## Adaptations and your home

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Multiple sclerosis (MS) can raise particular issues around the home. Having MS doesn't necessarily mean you will need to make any changes to your home or where you live, but sometimes, making adjustments can ensure it continues to suit your day-to-day life.

This guide looks at adjustments, useful equipment, gadgets and tools, and larger adaptations.

You don't need to be a home owner to have adaptations made. Landlords must make reasonable adjustments for disabled tenants. Private landlords can apply for financial support for necessary works.

Throughout the booklet, we refer to many other organisations which can help with particular issues – just look for the **i**. Their details are listed at the back of the booklet in the 'Useful organisations' section.

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## Equipment, gadgets and tools

There is a great range of equipment, gadgets and tools which can help you save energy, get around and stay independent. There are some examples on page 3.

An occupational therapist (OT) can help you find equipment which suits your own situation. They will carry out an assessment to see what would be useful. Ask a member of your health or social care team to refer you.

There are also many private suppliers of gadgets and equipment. Sometimes a product easily available in a household store can do the job just as well as a specialist product.

There are many pieces of equipment and gadgets available online from both specialist and non-specialist suppliers. Some also give video demonstrations of the products. It may be a good idea to shop around and get the advice of an OT before buying.

There's more about assessments on page 7.

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## Adaptations to the home

An adaptation to the home is something which changes the structure of the building or its fittings. A small adaptation might be putting on new door handles that are easier to use. A larger adaptation could involve fitting a lift or building an extension.

Not everyone with MS needs to make adaptations to their home, but sometimes they can make life at home easier or safer. All kinds of solutions exist to help with different symptoms.

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## Planning ahead

It is impossible to predict exactly how MS will affect you, but sometimes there is a choice that allows for future possibilities without making things inconvenient right now.

For example, buying a bed with a gap underneath of at least 20cm (eight inches) allows for the legs of a hoist to fit underneath. You may never need to use a hoist, but considering it early might save hassle and money if the need arises.

If you move house, you might want to consider how suitable somewhere is if you were to need adaptations later on.


If you decide you need to make adaptations, it may take some time to get it all done. This often depends on the size of the adaptation. The following sections of this booklet look at how to get small and large adaptations made.

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## Room by room – some ideas

Here are some adjustments, items of equipment and small adaptations that people have found useful. They can give you an idea of what's available, but there are many more you might find. An occupational therapist can advise and help find what suits you.

Some that are arranged through your occupational therapist might be free of charge. Others you may need to pay for. Your local Home Improvement Agency may be able to carry out some of the small adaptations listed below.

The Disabled Living Foundation has details of many gadgets and ideas, and you can also try things out at a local Independent Living Centre. If you need to buy items, the Red Cross or a mobility shop can be good sources. 

### **Kitchen**

- There are gadgets and tools to help with almost every daily task in the kitchen. This list gives just an idea of what is available.
- Single-lever taps and easy-grip handles on cooking utensils and cutlery can help if gripping is a problem. There are also taps which turn on automatically when you put your hands under them.
- A 'perching stool' can help you avoid standing up to do the washing up or ironing – useful if you find this tiring.
- Storing equipment that you use regularly between eye and hip level can help to cut down on bending, stooping and reaching.
- Non-slip mats can keep things from sliding around worktops when preparing food.
- Heavy bowls, pots or casserole dishes can be more easily put in and out of a cupboard if kept in a carrier bag. Lightweight pots and pans are also available.
- Cooking vegetables in a steamer unit can make cooking easier (and safer). You can lift the vegetables out when they are cooked, but leave the water in the pan until it cools. Using wire baskets that fit inside the pan can help in a similar way.
- New products are appearing all the time – if you can think of an issue, someone's probably got a gadget to help.

### **Bathroom**

- If standing or balance is affected, bath and shower benches or boards provide a place to sit when in the bath or shower.
- Use non-skid safety strips or a rubber bathmat on the bath bottom and add well-fitted grab bars to the wall or edge of the bath for support and stability.

- A removable showerhead with a long hose can make rinsing easier.
- As in the kitchen, automatic or single-lever taps might be useful.
- A raised toilet seat, which fits over your existing one, can help with getting up and down from the toilet.
- Grab rails at the side of the toilet can also be helpful. The Mowbray toilet seat has a built-in frame and armrests, and can be a better option than separate grab rails. Both of these solutions are safer and easier to use than basins, radiators or the side of baths, which some people use to pull themselves up.
- Mobile commodes will go over the toilet to raise the height and, if you use a wheelchair, are useful for moving to and from the toilet if doorways to bathrooms and bedrooms are too narrow for a standard wheelchair.
- Hoists that fit inside the bath can help with getting in and out of the water. But with heavy and bulky equipment like this, it might be difficult for others to use the bath.

### **Bedroom**

- An occupational therapist can show you the most effective ways to get in and out of bed.
- You can also raise the height of the bed by using special raisers. Be sure that bed raisers have been fitted correctly and safely. It is never a good idea to use improvised raisers (such as wooden blocks or bricks).
- A ‘bed lever’ attaches to your bed and can help you to sit up, lie down, stand up and get steady on your feet before moving away. It has the added advantage of being moveable and portable if you are going on holiday.

### **Living room**

- Using ‘reachers’ to pick things off the floor or down from a shelf can make getting at the things you need easier. Some have magnetic ends to help pick up things like pins if they get spilt.
- A chair with arms can be easier to get up from than a sofa. Chairs should be of good height with filled-in arms – no gaps for your arms to slip through when you are pushing against them. Filled-in arms also stop magazines and TV remotes from falling through.
- If your current chair is too low it is important to have it properly raised. This will help you get up more easily. Armchairs with castors need different raisers from those with legs, but most chairs can be safely raised with the correct raisers, fitted properly.

- Avoid raising your chair height with piles of cushions. This is bad for the back and can make getting out of the chair more difficult. Your occupational therapist can give you advice about raising the height of a chair.
- If safety around your home is a concern, you might think about having a 24-hour home monitored alarm service. If you fall, you can press a button on a device worn as a pendant and the person you specify will be called. Ask an occupational therapist or social worker for details.
- There may be a number of other 'telecare' options available from your local authority, including fall detectors. You might be eligible to receive the service free of charge, depending on your situation and where you live.

### **Entrances and exits**

- Making easy access to and from your home is as important as improving things inside.
- Fitted handles on the side of a door frame can be helpful to get up and down a step. Adding a half step to reduce the height of the step can also help.
- Some people change their doorbell systems so that they can see and speak to whoever is at the door, and let them in at the press of a button. This saves getting up to answer the door.
- If you sometimes use a wheelchair, you might want to have ramps fitted, or use temporary ones.
- You might also find that the doorway needs to be widened for a wheelchair to fit through.
- If you have a shared entrance to the home, you or your landlord will need to get the permission of all residents before making changes that might affect them (such as a ramp or widened doorway).

### **Stairs**

- If you've got stairs inside your home, you might want to add a second banister. Having a rail on each side can be a real help with balance.
- Stairlifts are also a good option for some people. They can be fitted to straight and curved staircases.

## Garden

- If you like growing plants, you might find it helpful to use containers. They can be put wherever is best for you. Being raised above ground level, they are often easier to reach. Raised beds can have similar benefits.
- Long-handled garden tools might serve the same purpose, saving you from getting down to ground level.
- Automatic watering systems can save you having to do it by hand.
- You might want to make use of paving or decking instead of grass or soil. Although decking can be slippery when wet, this type of surface is generally easier to maintain and more accessible.
- As well as the overall layout of the garden, your choice of plants can also make a difference. If you find frequent watering difficult, you might find drought-resistant plants provide a solution.
- Depending on where you live, you may be able to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant to make your garden safe and accessible. See page 10 for more about these grants and page 9 for the Scheme of Assistance that now operates in Scotland.
- The charity Thrive has more suggestions about making gardening accessible and enjoyable. [\*\*i\*\*](#)

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## Where can I find out about equipment and smaller adaptations?

Getting something that is right for you is vital. Before buying anything, check to see whether it is available on long-term loan through social care services or the NHS. You can often hire equipment, either instead of buying it or as a way of deciding whether the equipment is right for you. Don't be rushed into buying items like riser-recliner beds or walk-in showers as these can cost thousands of pounds.

Occupational therapists might be able to give advice, as can many other health care professionals, such as physiotherapists, nurses and health visitors.

Independent Living Centres and the RNIB regional centres display and demonstrate equipment. They are an important source of impartial advice. The Disabled Living Foundation (DLF) and Rica can also provide information. The DLF also has a loan library for electronic aids. [\*\*i\*\*](#)


If you do decide to buy, there are websites which provide a free or low-cost advertising service on finding second-hand equipment, such as The Disability Equipment Register

www.disabreg.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk and  
www.themobilitymarket.co.uk. You might find other  
sites which do a similar job.

## Home improvement agencies

Home improvement agencies, 'Care & Repair' agencies and 'Staying Put' schemes are locally based organisations offering support for people to help them make adaptations, repairs and improvements to their home. They work with local authorities so people can live independently and securely in their home.

These agencies can provide guidance on getting financial support to undertake adaptation work, and coordinating building works and payment. But they do not just provide information on grants. For example, some provide gardening services and falls prevention services. These kinds of services might mean you don't need to arrange major or lengthy adaptations.

Each nation in the UK has a coordinating body for these agencies: Foundations, in England; Care & Repair Forum Scotland; Care & Repair Cymru; and Fold Housing Association in Northern Ireland. 

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## Occupational therapy assessments

If you are considering adaptations in your home, you should have an assessment by an occupational therapist. Their assessment can be helpful in noting useful adjustments or adaptations, or finding easier ways to carry out a task. They work with you to offer practical solutions and may also provide minor adaptations or helpful equipment. An occupational therapist can also help you plan for any major adaptations you might be considering such as advising on room size requirements. They can also give advice on grants that you might be entitled to.

In some areas, MS specialist occupational therapists are available. Ask a member of your health or social care team to refer you.

If your local authority carries out an assessment of your home and your needs, this will normally include an assessment by an occupational therapist.

Unfortunately, you might have to wait several months to be assessed for home adaptations. If you feel that your case is urgent and that you cannot wait such a long time, you can ask to be prioritised.

Some people choose to pay an occupational therapist on a private basis to carry out an assessment. The College of Occupational Therapists has a directory of independent

therapists around the UK. Not all local authorities accept private assessments when considering what they will pay for. Check this before arranging it. [i](#)

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As part of the assessment, an occupational therapist will usually ask you to move around the home. This is so they can see the issues that affect you while you carry out different activities. Because of this, an assessment might be tiring. You might want to ask for an assessment at a time when you have most energy.

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## Larger adaptations

At some stage you might want to make more major adaptations. Some of the larger adaptations that other people have chosen are:

- level-access showers or wet rooms
- installing lifting equipment such as hoists
- door widening (to accommodate wheelchairs)
- ramped access to and from property
- installing a downstairs toilet
- stair lifts
- through-floor lifts
- conversions, for example, a garage converted into a downstairs living area or bathroom

These adaptations can increase your independence or reduce the time it takes to do everyday tasks.

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## Paying for equipment and adaptations

Some small adaptations are relatively simple and may be available free of charge through the local authority. Equipment for independent living is also often available in this way.

For larger adaptations in England, Wales and Northern Ireland, the Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) is the major source of funding (see page 10). In Scotland, the main source is the Scheme of Assistance (see page 9).

### Direct payments

If you live in England, Wales or Scotland, you might be eligible for direct payments to help pay for equipment. This is assessed by social care services (social work in Scotland). Direct payments can mean you have greater freedom to choose the equipment you want.



## VAT

If you are buying or adapting equipment that has been designed solely for a disabled person, you don't have to pay VAT. Also, VAT is not charged on certain services, including some building work to adapt the home and the hire of equipment like wheelchairs. For a list of everything that is covered visit [www.hmrc.gov.uk](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk) or call 0300 123 1073.

## England – smaller grants


Equipment and small adaptations costing less than £1,000 should be provided free of charge by social care services.

They might also be able to help with more expensive work that they assess as being necessary. If they do, this is called a 'discretionary grant'. Not all local authorities offer discretionary grants.

## Wales – Rapid Response Adaptations Programme

In Wales, smaller adaptations are usually paid for by social care services. There is also a Rapid Response Adaptations Programme. This aims to quickly provide small-scale adaptations, so that disabled people can continue to live in their home. The scheme can also provide help if you are leaving hospital or residential care. You can get up to £350 worth of help for work such as the installation of ramps, rails and hand-grips, levelling of paths, community safety alarms and other work to make your home safe. The work to your home should be finished within 15 days of the day you were referred to the scheme. To use the scheme, you need a referral from your local authority or by a health professional such as your GP or occupational therapist.

## Scotland – Scheme of Assistance

The Scheme of Assistance can help with repairs, improvements and adaptations to your home. It is available to home-owners and private tenants. The first step is getting your needs assessed. This will see what kind of difficulties you are facing in your home, whether you are eligible for assistance through the scheme, how urgently you need help and what is the best way to meet your needs. The Scottish Government has a free booklet with more information, called *Help with adaptations to your home – A guide for disabled people in Scotland*. The charity Shelter also has information about the scheme. .

## Northern Ireland grants

Visit the Northern Ireland Housing Executive at [www.nihe.gov.uk](http://www.nihe.gov.uk) for more information about other grants schemes, or call 0344 892 0900 for details of your local office.

## MS Society grants

The MS Society has an Individual Support Grants Scheme, through which we can award grants towards home adaptations or essential home repairs – after the outcome of a DFG or Scheme of Assistance application is known.

An application form is available from your local MS Society branch or from the Grants Team in our UK offices. In England, Wales or Northern Ireland, contact [grants@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:grants@mssociety.org.uk) or call 020 8438 0700. In Scotland, email [grantsscotland@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:grantsscotland@mssociety.org.uk) or call 0131 335 4050.

The MS Society can also help you to access other sources of funding from trusts or charities that give to individuals in need.

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## Disabled Facilities Grants (DFG)

This grant is available in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. If you live in Scotland, see the information on the Scheme of Assistance (page 9).

A Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG) can be used for a wide range of adaptations to the home. Exactly what it will cover will depend on your needs. These are assessed before a grant is awarded.

The DFG might be used for works that:

- create easier access to the home
- make rooms and facilities accessible in the home
- make a garden or balcony accessible
- make the property safe

A DFG can be awarded to an owner-occupier, a private tenant or a landlord with a disabled tenant. Some owner-occupiers of caravans and houseboats are also eligible.

In England and Wales, a DFG is administered by the local authority housing department. Ask them for full details and an application form.

In Northern Ireland, a DFG is handled by the local Housing Executive Grants Office. To start the process, contact your local health and social care services trust.

### What if I'm a local authority or housing association tenant?

If you're a local authority or housing association tenant and you need to adapt your home to make it more suitable for your needs, you won't be able to apply for a DFG. Instead, you should speak to your housing provider.

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## How much can be awarded?

The maximum grants are £30,000 in England, £36,000 in Wales and £25,000 in Northern Ireland. For anyone aged 19 or over, the grants are means tested, so the exact amount awarded depends on your financial circumstances. You might not get a DFG that covers the whole cost of the adaptation. Sometimes, other grants can help top this up, but you might need to pay some of the costs yourself.

## Appealing a decision

If you are refused a DFG, or are unhappy with the amount you have been awarded, you can appeal against the decision. Ask your local authority for their appeals and complaints procedure.

## More information

You can get more information about the DFG in England and Wales from the government booklet *Disabled facilities grant*. You can download a copy from [www.gov.uk](http://www.gov.uk).

## Key points to remember

- You are unlikely to be awarded a grant if you begin work before it is approved.
- The grant will not be paid until works have been completed to the standards accepted by you and the local authority or Housing Executive Grants Office.
- DFGs are means-tested. If you don't qualify for a full grant then you might be left with a bill. So, you may want to wait for the outcome of your means test before you arrange any professional services.
- For any DFG over £5,000, the local authority can 'place a charge' on a property. This means that if the adapted home is sold within 10 years, they can reclaim up to £10,000 from the seller.
- DFGs are not available for second homes.
- When you apply for a DFG, some local authorities will direct you towards social care services to arrange for an assessment by an occupational therapist. However, it is important that you also receive a DFG application form from your local authority at the same time, so that you can make a formal application and get the process moving. It can take several months to get a decision on a grant application – but it should take no more than six months.

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## Self-funding – equity release schemes

If you need to pay for all, or a substantial part, of the costs for adaptations, you might want to consider ‘equity release’. Equity release schemes are a way you can benefit from the value of your home without having to move out – by borrowing against it or by selling all or part of it for a regular income or a lump sum.

Equity release is not the best option for every home owner. These schemes are usually only appropriate for people over 55. There might be better ways for you to find the money than equity release, such as moving to a smaller house, or taking out a different kind of loan. Before committing to any equity release scheme, you may want to seek independent legal and financial advice. The Money Advice Service has information about equity release schemes. [\*\*i\*\*](#)

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## Getting larger adaptations done

If you are making larger adaptations, there are certain things you might want to consider, to make the process as smooth as possible.

Works could take several weeks and could involve many different people.

So keep a good record of what’s discussed and agreed. It also pays to prepare for the disruption works can cause. You can’t avoid it all, but you can keep it to a minimum.

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If you intend to apply for a Disabled Facilities Grant or Scotland’s Scheme of Assistance, remember that you will need to gain approval for any grant before commencing work. This includes signing contracts or commissioning any architects, surveyors or other people involved in the work.

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## Before work starts

### **Plan and get advice**

Like any work that you get done on your house, it is worth taking the time to plan. Before a screwdriver is lifted, you will need to prepare for the work by getting quotes and advice, including checking planning permission and building regulations. Your local Citizens Advice Bureau, the local authority housing and social care services departments can all give advice and information on these issues. [\*\*i\*\*](#)

## Tell your mortgage provider and insurer


If you have a mortgage on your home, you should tell your bank or building society of any adaptations you intend to do. Mortgage conditions might say you need to get approval from the lender before starting building work. You should also tell the insurance company which provides you with buildings and contents insurance cover.

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## Do I need an architect?

If your adaptations involve major building work, such as building an extension, it might be a good idea to use an architect to plan and oversee the work. Because architects deal with builders all the time, they might have a working relationship that smooths the process along. They can also advise on building regulations and planning permission.

It is an extra expense, but their fees can be included in the costs covered by a Disabled Facilities Grant (DFG). If the DFG does cover this cost, the local authority can ask to see plans or drawings provided by your architect before any work is started.


Through their Housing Adaptations Advisory Service, the Centre for Accessible Environments can help you find an architect or designer to help with a house adaptation. The initial visit and advice is free. 

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## Finding the right people to do the work

Finding a good, reliable builder is the key to successful work.

If you are receiving a Disabled Facilities Grant, your local authority might insist on quotes from an approved list of builders. They might insist on using one of these for the works.

If you are paying for the works yourself, it is normally up to you to get quotes from builders. It is important to choose someone who operates legally and is qualified for the job. There's information on choosing builders on the online Advice guide from Citizens Advice. 

Before employing any builder, check their insurance certificates. You may also want to make a note of the name, address, policy number and renewal date. Ask about any exclusions or limitations on what the builder is insured for.

References from previous customers can be helpful. You may want to ask for details of recently completed works, as well as from a year or so ago. You might also be able to get trade references – for example, from a builder's merchant or supplier.

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# Considering a move

If you are thinking of moving, for any reason, there are certain things you might want to consider. There is support available for many aspects of a move.

You may never need to move house because of your MS, and you might not have to make major adaptations to anywhere you live. But considering the possibilities of a property and an area can help give as much flexibility for the future as possible.

## Location

- Do you want to live near family or friends? How close are you to shops, schools, library, post office, college, a doctor's surgery or other services? Could you get help at home if you needed it?
- If you are thinking of moving to be closer to family or friends, does this mean you'll be giving up other networks that you've built up? A network of social activities and health care that you are happy with may be too good to lose out on.
- If you drive, is there a convenient parking space near the front door? If you use public transport, is there a bus stop or station near? What are the pavements like? Are there cobbles or dropped kerb stones?

## Layout

- Does the house need a lot of work to get it how you want it? Will there be a lot of maintenance needed for its general upkeep? It is important to be realistic about what you can do.
- If you like gardening or would like to start, it is worth bearing in mind that some gardens can need lots of attention. You might be able to adapt your garden to make it low maintenance. See page 6 of this booklet for more information.
- Flats with well maintained and wide lifts will make accessibility easier.
- Consider safety. For example, how easily could you get out if there was a fire?
- Look out for homes with large rooms and wide doorways and hallways. Is the kitchen large enough to move around in a wheelchair or with a walking frame? Could extra cupboards be fitted if you wanted to lower the height of the worktops?
- If the living areas are spread out consider if it will be difficult to walk the length of long hallways.
- Are the living areas separated by internal steps? Could you make a bedroom and bathroom on the ground floor if you needed to?

- Outside, soft surfaces like gravel and sand make wheelchair movement tricky. Hard surfaces, such as cement, allow easier access.
- Is there a rear or side entrance you could use, if you wanted to get a wheelchair or scooter in without going through the house? Is there somewhere to store a wheelchair or scooter and batteries for a power chair?
- If the house isn't already accessible, would it be possible to adapt it if your needs changed in the future? Remember, listed properties may have restrictions, and shared areas need the permission of others to make significant changes.
- You may want to get advice about the different types of housing that are on offer. Most local authorities provide a housing advice service. Specialist housing services are available in some areas.

There are other more specific concerns for each room around the house. Some of them you may never need to consider.

- Straight flights of stairs are easier to adapt if a stair lift needs to be fitted at any stage. Is there somewhere to put a through-floor lift if you need one? Is there room for a ramp if there are steps up to the front door?
- Is there a toilet upstairs and downstairs? Is the bathroom big enough to move around in? Is there a shower and is it easily accessible? Could it be adapted to be a level access shower if needed? Are the bathroom walls strong enough to have grab rails fitted?
- Are the doorways wide enough for a wheelchair (if you use one)? Is the front door flush or is there a threshold you have to step over? Uneven carpet grippers between rooms can cause problems, but they can be easily fixed.
- Are the living room windows low enough to see out when you are sitting down? How do the windows and doors open? Doors that open outwards or sliding doors may be better for wheelchair users. Could windows and doors be fitted with electric opening systems?

## Joined-up care

Health and social care services may vary around the country. Before you think about moving to a new area, you or someone you know might want to visit it. If this isn't possible, you can telephone the MS Society branch in the area and talk to them about what health and social care services are available to you. Contacts for local branches can be found on the MS Society website [www.mssociety.org.uk](http://www.mssociety.org.uk) or by calling the MS Society UK Information Team (020 8438 0799) or your MS Society national office (see back cover).

When you move area, you might need to be referred to a new neurologist by your current GP. Your MS nurse or other central point of contact for health care might help coordinate some of the move to new health care networks. This could ensure that there is no gap or dip in the level of care you receive.

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## Finding a new home

### **Home owners**

If you are looking for an independent home that has already been adapted, or was built with access in mind, there are agencies like Mobility Friendly Homes, and Accessible Property Register who may be able to help. [i](#)

### **Sheltered housing**

Sheltered housing is another option that some people prefer. It provides a range of support services such as an emergency alarm system, communal facilities and a resident warden. Newly built retirement developments may offer what you need in terms of access and grab rails. But if you are younger, or don't want to live in that kind of community setting, this might not be the right option for you.

### **Accessible new homes**

Developments of brand new houses sometimes include specific 'accessible' homes. Developers may be willing to alter plans to meet your needs.

### **Local authority and housing association homes**

If you want to rent a home from the housing department of your local authority or a housing association, apply to your local authority. The government requires that they give priority to disabled people, including people with MS. Some local authorities use a points system to ensure those with the greatest need are prioritised. Details vary around the UK.

The local authority can help you to fill in the application form. When completing the form, give as much detail as you can about how MS affects you. Remember that an accurate picture will reflect your worst days as well as better days.


Some local authorities have restrictions on housing owner-occupiers or people from outside the area. Get advice about moving to another local authority area – you might need to be nominated by your current authority.



## Housing swaps

If you are a local authority tenant, you might be able to swap your home with another local authority or housing association tenant. In England, this is called 'mutual exchange'. Housing associations also sometimes have schemes to help you move from one to another in different areas.

## Specialist housing associations

There are associations that specialise in housing for people with disabilities, like Accessible Property Register, Ability Housing Association, Habinteg, Livability and Sanctuary Housing. There may be others in your area. 

## Priority

You should be given priority to move to a suitable home if:

- your local authority or housing association property is unsuitable AND
- you have been assessed as being disabled.

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## Financial support for moving house

If you are moving house as a result of your MS – for example, if you are moving into adapted or more accessible accommodation – the MS Society may be able to provide a grant to help with the moving costs. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland, contact the Grants team for an application form at [grants@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:grants@mssociety.org.uk) or call 020 8438 0700. In Scotland, email the Grants team at [grantsscotland@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:grantsscotland@mssociety.org.uk) or call 0131 335 4050.

You can borrow any of the books listed (right) that have an MS Society Library reference – email [librarian@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:librarian@mssociety.org.uk) or call the Librarian on 020 8438 0999.

## Further reading

*Help with adaptations to your home – a guide for disabled people in private housing in Scotland.* Published by the Scottish Government. Download at [www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) or call 0845 370 0067 to order.

*Multiple Sclerosis. The questions you have, the answers you need* by Rosalind C. Kalb. Published by Demos Medical Publishing. ISBN: 978-1-932603-45-3. MS Society Library reference A01.00 KAL.

*Coping with MS, A Practical Guide to Understanding and Living with MS* by Cynthia Benz and Richard Reynolds. Published by Vermillion. ISBN: 9780091902469. MS Society Library reference C01.00 BEN.

*MS, 300 Tips for Making Life Easier* by Shelley Peterman Schwarz. Published by Demos Medical Publishing. ISBN: 1-888799-23-4. MS Society Library reference C01.00 SCH.

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## Further information

### Read more

Our free booklets help explain MS, look at its practical and emotional effects, and help you find your own ways to manage life with MS. Titles are available in large print, audio format and a number of languages. For copies, email [shop@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:shop@mssociety.org.uk) or call 020 8438 0999.

We can help you find and borrow other books, research articles and DVDs about living with MS. Search online or call the librarian on 020 8438 0900.

### Find out more online

Get the latest on research, campaigns, and MS news. Chat online with our message boards and Facebook. Follow us on Twitter, see the MS community at Flickr and watch us on YouTube.

### Join us

Just by being a member you strengthen the voice of all people affected by MS. For just £5 a year you will receive our national magazines – *MS Matters* and *Research Matters* – local newsletters and details of local events, as well as being able to vote on how we are run. Help us continue our vital work and join online at [www.mssociety.org.uk/joinus](http://www.mssociety.org.uk/joinus) or by calling 020 8438 0759.

### Get in touch

The Freephone MS Helpline offers confidential emotional support and information for anyone affected by MS, including family, friends and carers. Information is available in over 150 languages through an interpreter service 0808 800 8000 (weekdays 9am-9pm) or [helpline@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:helpline@mssociety.org.uk)

### Near you

Our volunteers run over 300 local branches and support groups. They provide information about MS and local services, and a chance to meet others affected by MS and take part in a range of activities.

In many parts of the country, you can pick up our booklets at MS Society Info Points. Larger information centres – including ones in our national offices in London, Belfast, Cardiff and Edinburgh (Newbridge) – can help you with information about MS and services in your area.

Or come along to our local and national events and learn more about MS from expert care professionals, researchers and other people with the condition. Find out more online or call your national office.

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## Useful organisations

### **Ability Housing Association**

A not-for-profit organisation which specialises in providing disabled people with housing and support services to enable them to live more independent lives – in London, south east and south west England.

Telephone 01784 490 910  
[www.ability-housing.co.uk](http://www.ability-housing.co.uk)

### **The Accessible Property Register**

Offers a free online database of accessible and adapted homes in all sectors – private residential property, social housing, shared ownership, supported living, sale or rent. If you don't have easy access to the internet, they also offer the service over the phone.

Telephone 0774 911 9385  
[www.accessible-property.org.uk](http://www.accessible-property.org.uk)

### **Assist UK**

A UK-wide network of locally situated Disabled Living Centres where you can try out equipment and get advice and information about what might suit you best. Contact them for details of your nearest centre.

Telephone 0161 832 9757  
Helpline 0161 850 9757  
[www.assist-uk.org](http://www.assist-uk.org)

### **Capability Scotland**

Capability Scotland gives specialist advice for disabled people on adaptations and other housing options.

Telephone 0131 313 5510  
Textphone 0131 346 2529  
[www.capability-scotland.org.uk](http://www.capability-scotland.org.uk)

### **Care and Repair Cymru**

The national body for Wales that actively works with older and disabled people to ensure homes are safe, secure and appropriate to needs.

Telephone 02920 674 830  
[www.careandrepair.org.uk](http://www.careandrepair.org.uk)

### **Care and Repair Scotland**

The national body for Scotland that actively works with older and disabled people to ensure homes are safe, secure and appropriate to needs.

Telephone 0141 221 9879  
[www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk](http://www.careandrepairsotland.co.uk)

### **Care Information Scotland**

Scottish government resource with information on supported housing, equipment and adaptations.

Helpline 08456 001 001  
[www.careinfosotland.co.uk](http://www.careinfosotland.co.uk)

### **Centre for Accessible Environments**

A charity which can help find architects or designers for house adaptations. Also has information on inclusive design and accessibility.

Telephone 020 7822 8232  
[www.cae.org.uk](http://www.cae.org.uk)

### **Citizens Advice**

Help with welfare rights, housing and disability advice. Local offices are listed in the telephone directory and on the national websites.

To find local offices in England and Wales:  
[www.citizensadvice.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)

In Scotland: [www.cas.org.uk](http://www.cas.org.uk)

In Northern Ireland: [www.citizensadvice.co.uk](http://www.citizensadvice.co.uk)

Online advice: [www.adviceguide.org.uk](http://www.adviceguide.org.uk)

### **The College of Occupational Therapists**

Holds a directory of independent occupational therapists who can carry out assessments on a private fee-paying basis.

Telephone 020 7989 0681  
[www.cotss-ip.org.uk](http://www.cotss-ip.org.uk)

### **Money Advice Service**

Offers tools, tips and advice about money matters.

Telephone 0300 500 5000  
[www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk)

### **Disabled Living Foundation**

Information about all sorts of gadgets and equipment.

Helpline 0300 999 0004 (weekdays 10am-4pm)

Textphone 020 7432 8009

[www.dlf.org.uk](http://www.dlf.org.uk)

### **Disability Equipment Register**

Monthly booklet listing second hand equipment to buy, sell or exchange.

Telephone 01454 318 818

[www.disabreg.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk](http://www.disabreg.pwp.blueyonder.co.uk)

### **Disability Wales**

Provides information and advice to disabled people in Wales, helping to encourage equality and independent living.

Telephone 029 2088 7325

[www.disabilitywales.org](http://www.disabilitywales.org)

### **Fold Housing Association**

In Northern Ireland, this Housing Association works with older and disabled people to ensure homes are safe, secure and appropriate to needs.

Telephone 028 9042 8314

[www.foldgroup.co.uk](http://www.foldgroup.co.uk)

### **Foundations**

Foundations is the national body of home improvement agencies in England, who offer help with adaptations, repairs and home improvements. They can provide guidance on getting financial support to undertake the work (including applying for a Disabled Facilities Grant) and coordinating building works and payment.

Telephone 0845 864 5210

[www.foundations.uk.com](http://www.foundations.uk.com)

### **Habinteg**

A housing association that provides homes that are accessible, adaptable and affordable. Working across England with a scheme in Wales and sister associations in Scotland, Northern Ireland.

Telephone 0300 365 3100

[www.habinteg.org.uk](http://www.habinteg.org.uk)

### **The House Key**

Scottish Government site providing information about housing support services.

[www.scotland.gov.uk](http://www.scotland.gov.uk) (search 'house key')

### **Housing Options Scotland**

Scottish charity that aims to help disabled people to find the right house.

Telephone 0131 247 1400

[www.housingoptionsscotland.org.uk](http://www.housingoptionsscotland.org.uk)

### **Livability**

Livability provides quality residential care and housing for disabled people, so they can live as independently as possible.

Telephone 020 7452 2000

[www.livability.org.uk](http://www.livability.org.uk)

### **Law Centres Network**

Can provide details of your nearest Law Centre in England, Wales and Northern Ireland. Law centres specialise in social welfare law, and can provide legal advice, casework and representation for people who can't afford a lawyer.

Telephone (for details of your nearest centre – NOT an advice line)  
020 7749 9120

[www.lawcentres.org.uk](http://www.lawcentres.org.uk)

### **Margaret Blackwood Housing Association**

Designs, builds and manages affordable housing for both disabled and non-disabled people in small communities across Scotland, providing different levels of care and support as appropriate.

Telephone 0131 317 7227

[www.mbha.org.uk](http://www.mbha.org.uk)

### **Mears Home Improvement**

Provides assistance with repairs, improvements or adaptations in a number of areas around the country.

[www.mearsgroup.co.uk/page/home-improvements/](http://www.mearsgroup.co.uk/page/home-improvements/)

### **Mobility Friendly Homes**

If you have a property for sale or you wish to buy in the private sector.

Telephone 08456 120 280  
[www.mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk](http://www.mobilityfriendlyhomes.co.uk)

### **Papworth Trust**

This is a registered charity that helps and supports disabled people to be more independent at home and at work.

Telephone 0800 952 5000  
[www.papworth.org.uk](http://www.papworth.org.uk)

### **The Red Cross**

Online shop for home equipment.

Telephone 0844 89 300 90  
[www.redcross.org.uk](http://www.redcross.org.uk)

### **Rica**

Consumer research for older and disabled people.

Telephone 020 7427 2460  
[www.rica.org.uk](http://www.rica.org.uk)

### **RNIB**

Provides information on adaptations that can be made for people with visual impairment. Some local RNIB centres display and demonstrate equipment.

Telephone 0303 123 9999  
[www.rnib.org.uk](http://www.rnib.org.uk)

### **The Royal Institute of British Architects (RIBA)**

Provides details of local, registered architects.

Telephone 020 7580 5533  
[www.architecture.com](http://www.architecture.com)

### **Sanctuary Housing Association**

Housing association that provides supported living and other housing options for people with care needs.

Telephone 01905 334 392  
[www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk](http://www.sanctuary-housing.co.uk)



**Shelter**

For free, confidential advice on all kinds of housing problems.

Telephone 0808 800 4444

[www.shelter.org.uk](http://www.shelter.org.uk)

**Thrive**

A charity which helps disabled people start or carry on gardening.

Telephone 0118 988 5688

[www.thrive.org.uk](http://www.thrive.org.uk)

**Update**

Scotland's national disability information service.

Helpline 0131 669 1600

[www.update.org.uk](http://www.update.org.uk)



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## Authors and contributors

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Edited by James Bailey

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Disclaimer: We have made every effort to ensure that the information in this publication is correct. We do not accept liability for any errors or omissions. The law and government regulations may change. Be sure to seek local advice from the sources listed.

Suggestions for improvement for future editions are welcomed. Please send them to [infoteam@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:infoteam@mssociety.org.uk)

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The MS Society provides this information free of charge but if you would like to help cover the cost, which will help towards our essential work, please call 0800 100 133 or visit the fundraising section of our website to make a donation. Anything you can give will be greatly appreciated.

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## MS Society

100,000 people live with multiple sclerosis in the UK. Every one of them shares the uncertainty of life with MS.

The MS Society is the UK charity fighting to improve treatment and care to help people with MS take control of their lives.

We're a world-leading funder of MS research. We've already made important breakthroughs, and we're now at the start of a generation of MS research that holds incredible promise.

With your support, we will beat MS.

## Contact information

MS National Centre  
372 Edgware Road  
London NW2 6ND  
Telephone 020 8438 0700  
[info@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:info@mssociety.org.uk)

MS Society Scotland  
National Office, Ratho Park  
88 Glasgow Road  
Ratho Station  
Newbridge EH28 8PP  
Telephone 0131 335 4050  
[msscotland@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:msscotland@mssociety.org.uk)

MS Society Northern Ireland  
The Resource Centre  
34 Annadale Avenue  
Belfast BT7 3JJ  
Telephone 028 9080 2802  
[information@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:information@mssociety.org.uk)

MS Society Cymru  
Temple Court  
Cathedral Road  
Cardiff CF11 9HA  
Telephone 029 2078 6676  
[mscymru@mssociety.org.uk](mailto:mscymru@mssociety.org.uk)

National MS Helpline  
Freephone 0808 800 8000  
(weekdays 9am-9pm)  
[www.mssociety.org.uk](http://www.mssociety.org.uk)

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