

Healthy Homes for Healthy Ageing



Care & Repair
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Advice and Information
from Care & Repair

FREE

Dealing with
damp and mould

Welfare benefits:
claim what's yours

Top tips to avoid
slips and trips



Looking after
your home:
A handy checklist

How to save
energy at home

How to find a



Good Tradesperson



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Who are Care & Repair?

Care & Repair helps older people in Wales to repair, adapt and maintain their homes.

We are a Wales-wide charitable movement, working to ensure that older people have homes that are appropriate to their needs. Our vision is a Wales where all older people can live independently in safe, warm, and accessible homes.

Care & Repair services are available to people over the age of 60 and who own their own home or privately rent. However, there are some exceptions to this, depending on the service needed and the location in Wales. We also have some specific services for people over the age of 50.

You may be worried about how you can remain living independently at home as you grow older. That's where Care & Repair can help you.

Use the Contact Us section (page 14) to find the contact details for your nearest Care & Repair.

We are here to help you.



Hello, I'm Sandra

A welcome message from Care & Repair Caseworker Sandra Davies.

I find that it's usually the smallest things in life that have the biggest impact.

Whether it is a well-timed compliment or a smile from a stranger, small things matter. It's certainly true when it comes to our health, as the tiniest things can cause such problems or equally such relief. If you've ever slipped on the stairs and now feel anxious each time you walk up steps, you know exactly what I mean. Thankfully though, sometimes the solution is just as small. A handrail in the right place, a new step by the front door or the reassuring presence of someone who's there for you. Small things can be life changing.

I work for Care & Repair as a Senior Caseworker, and I help hundreds of older people to adapt their homes. Even if you are just a little unsteady on your feet, I can help you to live independently and without fear in your own home.

If you contact your local Care & Repair, they can arrange a home visit from a caseworker just like me. And for free! They will speak to you about your home and your health and then suggest what changes would help you most. The caseworker will even try to

find funding to cover the cost of any changes, though it depends on what is needed.

The ways in which we can help you range from a simple handrail by a step, to a whole new bathroom with wheelchair access. But we work with you to figure out what's best and what funding might be available in your area.

We can't promise to solve all your problems, but we will do our best to find the small things that will make a huge difference to you and your home.

Sandra

Care & Repair Senior Caseworker



I find that it's usually the smallest things in life that have the biggest impact.



Advice and information

Welfare Benefits: Claim What's Yours

Every year, many millions of pounds in Wales are lost because people don't claim all the social security and welfare benefits they're entitled to. This can be a complicated area, but free help and advice is available. Many people are able to claim extra financial help, but aren't aware of what's out there for them.

Pension Credit

If you have reached State Pension age, you may also be able to claim Pension Credit. This is an additional benefit intended to 'top up' your income. You may be able to claim some Pension Credit even if you have savings or a personal pension. How much you could get depends on your circumstances.

Housing Benefit

If you rent your home, you may be able to claim Housing Benefit to help with some or all of the rent cost. People of working age can also claim this, but the rules change (and become more generous) once you reach pension age, so you may be eligible now even if you weren't in the past.

Attendance Allowance

If you need help with daily activities or someone to be around to help ensure that you're safe, you may be able to claim Attendance Allowance. Many people are put off by the name, because it sounds as if you need a high level of care or that you're not able to be independent. Some people also think that it means you have a carer provided by the local authority. In fact, Attendance Allowance is a cash benefit which you can spend however you like, and is intended for anyone over pension age with a long-term health condition. For Attendance Allowance, it does not matter if you already have savings or other income.



Carers Allowance

If someone looks after you, such as a partner, friend or family member, they may be able to claim Carer's Allowance.

This might be someone who helps with personal care, or helps you to enjoy hobbies or social activities, do the shopping or get out and about.

Council Tax Reduction

If you are entitled to either Pension Credit or Housing Benefit, or if you are on a low income, you can also get your Council Tax reduced. Some people may not have to pay it at all. Additionally, people who live alone are entitled to a council tax discount.

This is just an overview of the help you might be able to get. You can get free independent advice about this and help to apply if you are entitled. A professional benefits adviser will always keep your personal information secure and confidential, and never share it with anyone. They would only ever contact someone else, like the Pension Service, if you ask them to.

Ten Tips to Avoid Slips and Trips

Falling over is not an inevitable part of growing older. Avoid trips and falls with these tips.

1. Keep your home well-lit, especially in the hallway, landing and stairs. If you usually have to get up at night, make sure you have a bedside lamp or a good quality torch within easy reach.
2. Try to avoid clutter as much as possible so you have fewer things to trip or fall over. Never leave things on the stairs.
3. Look out for trailing wires. Ideally these should be protected by boxes or securely fixed to the wall.
4. Think about your storage. Keep the things you use most in the easiest places to reach.
5. Rugs and mats should have a secure, non-slip backing.
6. Wear shoes that fit, have good grip and are comfortable. Be careful of clothes that you might trip over, particularly loose clothes like pyjamas and dressing-gowns.
7. Keeping fit makes falling less likely. Even a little exercise can help.
8. Take good care of your day-to-day health. Have regular hearing and sight tests. Look after your feet; your GP may be able to refer you for help with this if you need it. Some health conditions can affect your balance, and so can the side effects of some medicines. It's important to talk to your doctor if this affects you.
9. Take your time moving around. Stand up slowly if you need to. Don't rush yourself.
10. If you have pets, they can easily get under your feet! Consider providing them with a bell or a high-visibility collar so you know where they are.

Remember, adaptations in your home such as handrails, bannisters or shower seats can make an immense difference to your safety and help you feel more confident and independent when moving around at home.

Care & Repair offers a free Healthy Homes Check which will help you identify places in your home that may cause you to trip and fall. We can also provide handrails and other adaptations to prevent falls.



Saving Energy at Home

There are many things you can do at home to reduce the amount of gas and electricity you use every day. This will help the environment and also help you to keep your bills low.

Insulation

Having good quality insulation in your home is the single biggest thing you can do to reduce your energy bills. You may be able to get help toward the cost of this. Cavity wall and loft insulation are good options. Be careful of rogue traders offering spray foam loft insulation (this is not a good way of insulating your roof). Make sure to do some research about the installer and the most appropriate means of insulation for your property.

Small Measures

There are small and simple things you can do yourself to insulate your home. You can reduce draughts around windows and doors by applying strips of insulating tape and using draught excluders. Drawing curtains at night helps to keep the heat in. Small measures can save around £90 in energy bills per year.

Funding Schemes

If you are on a lower income or have a health condition that is made worse by the cold, you might be entitled to grants that will help pay to make improvements to your home to keep you warmer.

Warm Homes Programme: This scheme offers free advice about improving your energy efficiency and, if eligible, home improvements such as a new boiler, insulation, or solar panels.

ECO4/Flex: This scheme is for those on a lower income (or have recognised health conditions) living in an energy inefficient property. If you are eligible, energy suppliers will pay for the installation of home energy efficiency measures

Further Ways to Save on Your Energy Bills

- Turn off lights when you don't need them. Low energy LED lightbulbs are much cheaper to run, and don't burn out as often.
- Modern cooking appliances such as microwaves, slow cookers and air-fryers can be more energy efficient than normal ovens.
- Switch electrical appliances off at the wall when you're not using them. If you have an immersion heater, only switch it on when you need it and switch it off again after use.
- Understand your central heating system and become confident using the controls. Understand your gas or electricity bill and seek advice if you think something is not right.

How to Find a Good Tradesperson

When we pay a builder, plumber, electrician, carpenter, gas engineer or other skilled tradesperson to carry out work for us, we want to be confident that we can trust them. There are things you can do to make sure you're dealing with a reputable worker:

- Your local Care & Repair Agency may be able to provide you with a recommendation for a reliable contractor. (Be careful with online directories; some of these will include anyone who pays the fee, and don't necessarily check that they can be trusted.)
- Have another person with you when you meet with the contractor and discuss the work to be done.
- Get a detailed quote in writing. This should include the overall final cost, and also the cost of each item and when the work should start and finish.
- If you accept the quote, do it in writing and also state that no extra work should be done unless you both agree.
- Some contractors will want a certain percentage of the cost up-front. This is not unusual, but make sure that the full payment is only made after the job has been completed and you have had time to inspect the work and are happy with it.

Trustworthy contractors will be happy to work with you on this basis. They understand the importance of showing you that they are reliable.

You have the right to cancel certain services or contracts within a specified timeframe. This is called the 'cooling off period'. Ask your contractor what their cooling off period is. In most cases, the cooling off period is 14 days from when you received your purchase or signed the contract.

Additionally, if things do go wrong you have certain legal rights, either to have the contractor re-do the work and fix the problem or give you a refund. You do not need to pay for a solicitor if this happens. You can get free independent advice before you decide what to do.



Dealing with Damp, Condensation & Mould

Damp conditions happen when water from the air collects in areas where you don't want it.

Damp can cause damage to your belongings and can encourage the growth of black mould, which can affect your health.

There are two main types of damp: 'penetrating damp' and 'condensation damp'. Penetrating damp means that water is coming in from outside your home. Condensation damp is caused by water in the air indoors.

Condensation

Condensation damp is usually the easiest kind to deal with. Making a few small changes can reduce or remove condensation, or prevent it from building up in the first place.

- Make sure your home is well ventilated. If your windows have trickle vents, open them. Open a window a small amount, to allow air to circulate. Make sure air vents aren't blocked.
- Try not to dry your washing indoors. If you have to, ensure that the room you use is well ventilated.
- If you have an extractor fan, for example in your kitchen or bathroom, use it when you cook or when you have a bath or shower.
- A well-insulated home will have less condensation, because your interior walls will be warmer.

Penetrating Damp

Penetrating damp means that there is a problem with the structure of your home which is letting water in from outdoors. Unlike condensation, this will be visibly worse in wet weather. Sometimes the water comes in around doors or windows if they are not fitted properly or are in poor condition. Damaged or loose roof tiles can let leaks in.

Damp can also be caused by cracks in walls. Water which seeps into your walls from underground is called 'rising damp', and this is usually visible as a tide-mark around the affected wall. Penetrating damp does not go away on its own, and can get gradually worse over time if not dealt with.

Mould

Both types of damp can cause black mould to form inside your home. Washing it away normally can reduce the appearance of mould, but to get rid of it completely requires a special fungicide to kill off the mould spores and prevent them re-growing.

Your local Care & Repair Agency can help you with any problems relating to condensation, damp and mould. They can assess your home and advise you on what to do next.

Gas Safety

It's important to have all gas appliances checked every year by a Gas Safe registered engineer. If you rent your home, your landlord is responsible for making sure this happens. If you own your own home, you will have to arrange this yourself.

Look out for warning signs that your gas appliance isn't working properly. A gas flame should be blue, with sharply defined edges. If the flame is yellow, and the edges are unclear, this indicates a problem. Other warning signs include soot, black marks or stains around your appliance. Gas should burn cleanly, without soot or residue.



What Do I Do If I Smell Gas?

It is important to know what to do if you smell gas, or have any other reason to think you have a gas leak. The following is a helpful guide:

- Do not use any gas appliances, naked flames or electrical switches.
- Open all doors and windows to let the gas out.
- If you can do so safely, turn off the meter at the control handle. (Do not try to do this if the meter is in a cellar or basement, or if it is in a confined space)
- Call the Gas Emergency Service straight away on 0800 111 999. They will tell you what to do next.

Carbon Monoxide

Install a carbon monoxide alarm in your home. Carbon monoxide is a very dangerous gas, which is produced when gas appliances are faulty. It is a gas with no colour or smell. Without a detector you will have no sign that it is present until you start to feel ill.

FREE Detector

Care & Repair can provide you with a carbon monoxide detector alarm free of charge and show you how to use it.



Electrical Safety

The electric supply and appliances in your home should be safe, but it is important to make sure that they are used correctly as any damage or faults could be very dangerous. The following steps can help.

- Don't overload your plug sockets. Don't use one adapter or extension cable to plug into another. This will put too much strain on the components and is unsafe. Don't use adapters for high-powered appliances like freezers or washing machines. These should have their own separate socket.
- Regularly check your appliances' plugs and cables, and don't use them if they are or might be damaged. Signs of damage include frayed, split or broken coverings on cables, cables which aren't securely attached to the interior of the plug, and plugs which are cracked, discoloured or melted.
- Don't store cables by winding them tightly or tying them, as this can cause damage. Don't remove a plug from the socket by pulling on the cable.
- If a socket appears damaged, do not use it and get it repaired as soon as possible. A damaged socket may be cracked, discoloured or melted, or there may be a smell of burning.
- In the bathroom, only ever use electrical items that have been specifically designed for bathroom use. Never take hairdryers, heaters or other mains electricals into the bathroom.
- Always employ a suitably qualified electrician to carry out electrical work in your home. Don't ever try to do your own repairs and maintenance on your mains electricity supply, even if you are confident that you can. As well as the safety risk, this will very likely invalidate any insurance that you have for your home and contents, and if it causes damage elsewhere you would be found liable.
- Electricity distributors have a Priority Service Register. This means that if there is a power cut, they will get emergency supply to the people who need it most. If you rely on something like a powered stairlift, if you have to keep medication refrigerated, or if you would be at risk for any other reason during a power cut, you should ensure that your address is signed up to the Register. We can help you do this and it does not cost you anything.



Your local Care & Repair Agency can help you with electrical safety. In some areas, we might be able to arrange an electrical home safety check from your local Fire Service, free of charge.

Fire Safety

A fire at home is a frightening thing to think about. But you can make a fire less likely by being aware of the main risks and taking some simple precautions.

- The most important item of fire safety equipment that everyone should have is a working smoke alarm. Test your smoke alarm at least once a month. Make sure you can hear it. If you are Deaf or have difficulty hearing, flashing or vibrating alarms are also available.
- Plan an escape route in case there is a fire. This is usually the normal way you would come in and out of your home. Think about what alternative route you might use if this is blocked. Make sure your escape routes are kept clear.
- Most fires at home begin in the kitchen, so always take extra care when cooking. Make sure there are no items such as towels or dishcloths that could catch fire near a lit hob when you're cooking. If you have problems with your concentration or memory, or if you're not feeling well, you may want to think about having someone else around when you cook, just in case. Warming up food in a microwave is much less risky than using an oven or hob.

- If you smoke, it's safest to do this outdoors. If you do smoke inside your home, always make sure you have a sturdy, non-flammable ashtray (not a wastepaper basket) that you can easily reach, and that you put your cigarette right out. Keep matches and lighters in a safe spot. Never smoke in bed.
- Try to keep your home tidy and free of clutter to reduce the risk of a fire spreading.
- If you have an open coal fire, take extra care. Always use a fire guard and allow the fire to burn down fully before you go to bed.

Your local Fire Service can help you check your home for fire safety and provide any advice and information that you need. They may also be able to provide smoke alarms and fit them for you. Their officers would much rather prevent fires than fight them, so they would be happy to hear from you. We can help you to get in touch with your local fire station.



Looking After Your Home: A Checklist

Some problems in the home are unavoidable, but others can be prevented. Some issues can be caught early, before small problems turn into large ones. This list is for you to remind yourself about what you need to check on a regular basis. Get someone to help you if you need to.

Once a Week

- ✔ Check that all the alarms in your home are working properly, including smoke alarms and carbon monoxide alarms.
- ✔ Check around windows and doors for draughts and leaks.

Once a Month

- ✔ Go through your gas, electricity and water bills, to make sure you're being charged the right amount.
- ✔ Check for leaky taps, and don't forget outside taps if you have them.
- ✔ Check for trip hazards, especially unsecured rugs or carpets that have 'lifted'.

Every Three Months

- ✔ Look over your external walls for any cracks or damage to brickwork.
- ✔ Check that your guttering is clear and in good condition.
- ✔ Check for damage or fraying on wired electrical equipment.

Every Year

- ✔ Ensure that your gas boiler is checked and serviced by a suitably qualified professional.
- ✔ Check that your chimney is clear and free of blockages.
- ✔ Check your home insurance cover – you may be able to save shopping around for a new provider.
- ✔ Check the condition of outdoor woodwork, in case it needs to be repainted or re-sealed.

Following a regular checking routine can help you to spot potential problems before they become serious. If you do see anything that doesn't look right, Care & Repair can help you to find a trusted tradesperson who will help to fix it.





Ways to Support Care & Repair

Donate

As a charity, donations to our work can make a huge difference to the people we help. Please will you consider making a difference to someone in need today?

Every donation we receive goes directly to helping older people in Wales, so that they can continue living safely and with peace of mind in their own homes.

You can donate on our website at www.careandrepair.org.uk/donate. Alternatively, speak to your local Care & Repair about making a donation via a printed form.

Leave a Legacy

By including Care & Repair in your will, you can help ensure that older people are supported for many years into the future.

Legacy gifts will mean that older people across Wales will have Care & Repair to turn to for help and support when they need us most. It means that we can keep improving homes and changing lives for years to come.

Your will is an important document, and we recommend that you contact a solicitor who can help you write it and sign it.

Become a Care & Repair Ambassador

Have you or a family member experienced a Care & Repair service? If so, you could support our work and be a voice for older people in Wales.

Care & Repair Ambassadors are individuals who are happy to speak openly about their experiences so more people hear about our services and so that older people's voices are heard by those in power in Wales.

We are looking for people who are happy to share publicly, whether that be to a camera, in front of a group or to a member of the Senedd.

If you are interested, please contact ambassador@careandrepair.org.uk or visit:

www.careandrepair.org.uk/ambassador

Contact Us

Do you need help in your home or know someone that does? Then please contact your local Care & Repair Agency:

Care & Repair Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly

Blaenau Gwent and Caerphilly
01495 321091
enquiries@bgccr.co.uk

Care & Repair Bridgend County

Bridgend
01656 646755
enquiries@bridgendcareandrepair.co.uk

Care & Repair Cardiff and The Vale

Cardiff and the Vale of Glamorgan
02920 473337
careandrepair@crcv.org.uk

Care & Repair Carmarthenshire

Carmarthenshire
01554 744300
office@careandrepaircarms.org.uk

Conwy and Denbighshire Care & Repair

Conwy and Denbighshire
0300 111 2120
post@gofalathrwsio.com

Care & Repair Cwm Taf

Rhondda Cynon Taf and Merthyr Tydfil
01443 755696
enquiries@cwmtaocr.org.uk

Care & Repair Newport

Newport
01633 233887
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