

LIFE MATTERS

**sia** spinal  
injuries  
association  
for life after spinal cord injury

# PREPARING FOR A SOCIAL SERVICES ASSESSMENT OF YOUR SUPPORT NEEDS

FACTSHEET



[spinal.co.uk](http://spinal.co.uk)



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 any 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.

There is 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, [here](#).

## 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, (advocacy caseworker on 07535 774135 or at [s.legg@spinal.co.uk](mailto:s.legg@spinal.co.uk) on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays, or you can call the free SIA Support Line Monday to Friday on 0800 980 0501.

**For more information, contact us at:**

Spinal Injuries Association, SIA House,  
2 Trueman Place, Milton Keynes, MK19 6HY

0800 980 0501 (freephone support line open Mon-Fri 10.00am-4.30pm)

sia@spinal.co.uk



## About SIA

Spinal Injuries Association (SIA) is the leading national charity for anyone affected by spinal cord injury. We have specialist support available, for free, to support you through the mental and physical challenges you may face, both now and for the rest of your life.

Our support network is coordinated by a team of people, across the UK, who can put you in touch with our network of experts and trusted partners, covering all aspects of mind, body and life, to help you move forward with life. Our partners specialise in services such as legal, care, housing, finance, mental health and much more.

We are the voice of spinal cord injured people, through our expertise and we can connect you to the services and organisations you need through our network for all.

You can join the SIA community by signing up for free online at [www.spinal.co.uk](http://www.spinal.co.uk).

## Disclaimer

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