



COMING HOME CARER SKILLS

Module 3: Doing your best, safely: duty of care

A short guide for family carers, with questions to write in

Coming Home Carer Skills. For England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

October 2026

About this course

Coming Home Carer Skills is our own free course for family carers. Its topics follow the 16 Care Certificate standards (2025) from Skills for Care, NHS England and Skills for Health. It is not the Care Certificate, it is not a qualification, and those organisations have not endorsed it.

This guide to Module 3, Doing your best, safely: duty of care, is correct at October 2026. We've written it in good faith as general information to help family carers. It isn't legal, financial or medical advice, and it can't teach practical skills such as moving someone or first aid. For those, ask the person's nurse or therapist, or find an in-person course. To the extent the law allows, we can't accept liability for any errors or omissions, or for decisions made on the strength of this guide. In a medical emergency call 999. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service.

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How to use this guide

This guide goes with the online module. Read one section at a time. There are questions near the end, with space to write, and example answers at the back.

If you are worried about someone's health, contact their GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service. In an emergency, call 999.

01

What "duty of care" means at home



People who work in care talk about a "duty of care". For a family carer, it simply means doing your best for the person, as safely as you can.

Think ahead. Look out for things that could go wrong, and what would help. For example, a loose rug, a trailing cable, or a dark hallway at night.

Support, do not take over. The person still makes their own choices, as far as they can. Help them do what they can for themselves. This helps them stay independent.

Know your limits. Some tasks need training, such as helping someone move or some medicines. If you have not been shown how, do not try it. Ask the person's nurse, therapist or pharmacist.

Follow the person's plan. If they have a care plan, or instructions from their nurse, therapist or pharmacist, follow those.

Ask for help when you are worried. You do not have to sort everything out on your own. Talk to the GP practice, the care agency, or your council (your Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland).

This course is general information. It is not legal advice.



Get help

Worried about someone's health? Contact their GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service. In an emergency, call 999.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): nidirect, "How to use your health services" (GP out of hours in Northern Ireland), www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-use-your-health-services; nidirect, "GP out of hours service", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service; NHS website, "Care to support recovery after leaving hospital or after a fall, injury or illness" (help to regain independence), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/care-after-a-hospital-stay/care-to-support-recovery-after-leaving-hospital-or-after-a-fall-injury-or-illness/

02

Safety and choice



Sometimes the person you care for wants to do something that worries you. Your dad wants to keep using the stairs. Your mum wants to walk to the shop on her own.

Their choice comes first, as far as they can make it. Adults can make choices that other people would not make. That includes choices that worry you. Your job is not to say no. It is to help them do what they want, as safely as possible.

Look for ways to make it safer. Ask yourself:

- What exactly worries me?
- What could make it easier or safer?
- Is there equipment or a change at home that would help?
- Who could give advice?

**Tip**

Get expert advice. In England, your council offers a free home assessment. An occupational therapist visits, sees what is hard, and suggests changes, such as a banister on the stairs or a grab rail by the bath. Your council should pay for each adaptation that costs less than £1,000. In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland, ask your council, or your Trust in Northern Ireland, what help there is.

If the person cannot decide. Sometimes a person cannot make a particular decision for themselves. Module 5 explains what this means and what to do.

Source (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "Home adaptations", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/care-services-equipment-and-care-homes/home-adaptations/

03

Talking it through



When a choice worries you, a calm talk usually helps more than an argument.

Pick your moment. Choose a quiet time when you are both rested. Sit down together, perhaps with a cup of tea.

Ask, then listen. Ask what matters to the person about this. Maybe the stairs mean their own bedroom, or the walk to the shop means seeing friends. Listen without rushing in.

Say what worries you. Use "I" words, such as "I worry you might fall when I'm out." Keep it short and kind.

Look for ideas together. For example:

- doing it at times when someone else is at home
- taking a phone, or wearing good shoes
- a second stair rail, or better lighting
- trying it for a while, then talking again

**Try this**

Agree a plan and write it down. Note what you agreed, and when you will talk again. Keep it somewhere you can both find it.

If you cannot agree. Take a break and come back to it. You can ask for help from someone you both trust, such as a relative, the GP practice or a social worker.

Share the plan. With the person's agreement, let paid carers and family know what you have agreed.

04

Raising a concern



Sometimes something about paid care is not right. Perhaps visits are often late, or something keeps being missed.

Start with the provider. Talk to the care worker, or the manager of the care agency or care home. Say what you have noticed, and what you would like to happen. Many problems can be sorted out this way.

Tell the council or Trust if they arranged the care. If the council arranged or pays for the care, you can raise it with them too. In Northern Ireland, contact the Health and Social Care Trust that arranged the care.

Health worries. If you are worried about the person's health, contact their GP practice. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service.



Get help

If someone is being harmed. If you think someone is being harmed, abused or neglected, contact your council's adult social services straight away. In Northern Ireland, contact the Adult Protection Gateway Service at your Health and Social Care Trust. Module 10 explains more. If someone is in danger now, call 999.

You can tell the care regulator. Each nation has a body that inspects care services. In England, the Care Quality Commission (CQC) wants to hear about your experience of care. It cannot take up your complaint for you, but it uses what you tell it. The others are Care Inspectorate Wales, the Care Inspectorate in Scotland, and the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA) in Northern Ireland.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS England, "Feedback and complaints about NHS services" (adult social care section), www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/how-to-complain-to-the-nhs/; CQC, "Report a concern if you are a member of the public", www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us/report-concern/report-concern-if-you-are-member-public; Care Inspectorate Wales, "Raise a concern about a care service", www.careinspectorate.wales/raise-a-concern-about-a-care-service/before-we-begin; nidirect, "How to complain or raise concerns about health services", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-complain-or-raise-concerns-about-health-services; nidirect, "GP out of hours service", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service; NHS website, safeguarding page on abuse and neglect of adults, www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/help-from-social-services-and-charities/abuse-and-neglect-adults-at-risk/; nidirect, "Who to contact if you suspect abuse, exploitation or neglect", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/who-contact-if-you-suspect-abuse-exploitation-or-neglect

05

Making a complaint



If talking does not sort it out, you have the right to make a complaint.



Remember Steps.

1. Ask for the complaints process. Care providers, councils and NHS services all have one. It is often on their website.
2. Write down what happened, when and where, and who was there. Say what you would like to happen now.
3. Keep copies of letters and emails, and a note of phone calls.
4. Complain as soon as you can. There are time limits, often 12 months.

You can complain for someone else, but you usually need their agreement. For NHS complaints in England, a free NHS complaints advocate can help you. In Northern Ireland, you can contact the Patient and Client Council, which gives free help with health and social care complaints.

If you are still not happy. When you have been through the complaints process, you can ask an ombudsman to look at it. An ombudsman is independent.

- **England.** The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at councils, and at adult social care, including care you pay for yourself. The Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman looks at the NHS.
- **Wales.** The Public Services Ombudsman for Wales looks at councils, the NHS and care providers.
- **Scotland.** The Scottish Public Services Ombudsman looks at councils, social work and the NHS. You can also complain about a care service straight to the Care Inspectorate.
- **Northern Ireland.** The Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman looks at complaints after the provider's process has ended.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, "How to complain", www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint; NHS England, "Feedback and complaints about NHS services", www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/how-to-complain-to-the-nhs/; Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, "Organisations you can complain to us about", www.ombudsman.wales/organisations-you-can-complain-to-us-about/; SPSO, "How to complain about a public service", www.spsso.org.uk/how-to-complain-about-public-service; Care Inspectorate, "How to complain", www.careinspectorate.scot/complaints-and-feedback/complaints-about-registered-services/complain-about-a-service/how-to-complain; NIPSO, "Make a complaint", www.nipso.org.uk/make-complaint; nidirect, "How to complain or raise concerns about health services", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-complain-or-raise-concerns-about-health-services

06

Get help



- **The care agency or care home:** ask to speak to the manager, and ask for their complaints process.
- **Your council:** for care it arranged, and if you think someone is being harmed. Find your council: www.gov.uk/find-local-council
- **Northern Ireland:** contact your Health and Social Care Trust (www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/health-and-social-care-trusts). nidirect explains how to complain, and where to get free help: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-complain-or-raise-concerns-about-health-services
- **Carers UK helpline:** 0808 808 7777 (free). Advice for carers in all four nations. www.carersuk.org
- **Ombudsmen (after the complaints process):**
 - England: Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, www.lgo.org.uk
 - England (NHS): Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman, www.ombudsman.org.uk
 - Wales: Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, www.ombudsman.wales

- Scotland: Scottish Public Services Ombudsman, www.spsso.org.uk
- Northern Ireland: Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman, www.nipso.org.uk
- **Care regulators:**
 - England: CQC, www.cqc.org.uk
 - Wales: Care Inspectorate Wales, www.careinspectorate.wales
 - Scotland: Care Inspectorate, www.careinspectorate.scot
 - Northern Ireland: RQIA, www.rqia.org.uk



Get help

Worried about someone's health? Contact their GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111 (or go to 111.nhs.uk). In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service (www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service). **If someone is in danger now, call 999.**

07

Your questions



Write here

Write your answers in the boxes. Take your time, and come back to them whenever you like. There are example answers at the back of this guide to compare with your own.

1. In your own words, what does doing your best, safely, mean for you as a carer?

2. Your mum wants to walk to the shop on her own. What worries you, and what could make it easier?

3. Think of a choice the person you care for makes that worries you. How could you talk about it calmly?

4. Write down one change at home that might make daily life easier or safer for the person you care for. Who could you ask about it?

5. Something about the paid care is not right. Write down who you would speak to first.

6. If you needed to make a complaint, what would you write down first?

7. Which part of the UK do you live in? Which ombudsman would you go to if a complaint was not sorted out?

8. Who else could help you raise a concern or make a complaint?

08

Quick quiz



Tick one answer for each question. The answers, with the reasons, are at the back of this guide.

1. For a family carer, what does duty of care mean?

- ☐ Doing everything for the person
- ☐ Doing your best for the person, as safely as you can
- ☐ Never letting the person take any chances
- ☐ Following whatever the neighbours say

2. Saul wants to keep using the stairs. Ruth is worried. What is a good first step?

- ☐ Lock the stairs gate
- ☐ Talk it through calmly and agree a plan
- ☐ Move his bed downstairs without asking
- ☐ Let him do it and never mention it

3. What is a good time to talk about a worry, such as using the stairs?

- ☐ In the middle of an argument
- ☐ A quiet, calm moment
- ☐ When you are both very tired
- ☐ In front of visitors

4. Your dad struggles with the stairs. You live in England. Who could you ask for a free home assessment?

- ☐ Your council
- ☐ A builder
- ☐ The Post Office
- ☐ Nobody

5. The paid carer is often late, and your mum's lunch is sometimes missed. Nobody is in danger. What is a good first step?

- ☐ Post about it online
- ☐ Talk to the care worker or the agency manager
- ☐ Stop the care straight away
- ☐ Say nothing

6. You think someone is being harmed or neglected by the person caring for them. What should you do?

- ☐ Wait and see
- ☐ Contact the council's adult social services, or the Trust in Northern Ireland, straight away
- ☐ Only mention it at the next review
- ☐ Ask the person to keep it quiet

7. You are going to make a complaint. What will help most?

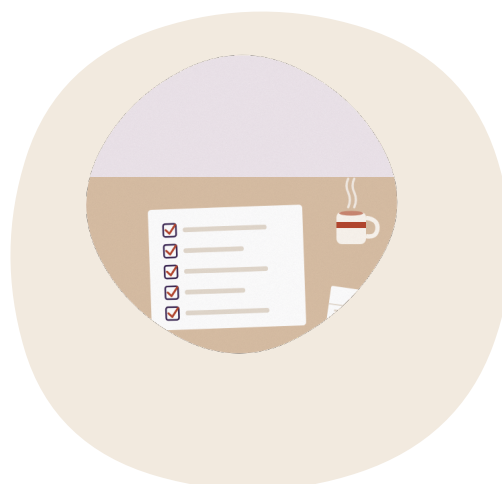
- ☐ Notes of what happened, when, and who was there
- ☐ Shouting on the phone
- ☐ Waiting a few years
- ☐ Leaving out the details

8. You complained to the council about your mum's care and went through its complaints process. You are still not happy. Where can you go next in England?

- ☐ The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman
- ☐ The police
- ☐ Your bank
- ☐ There is nowhere else

09

Answers



Your questions

There are no wrong answers to most of these questions. These are examples to compare with your own.

1. There is no single right answer. You might say: caring well for the person, thinking ahead about what could go wrong, not taking over, respecting their choices, and asking for help when something needs training or you are worried.
2. You might worry about falls, traffic or getting lost. Things that could help: agreeing a route, going at a quiet time, taking a phone, good shoes and a walking aid if she uses one, or someone walking part of the way at first. The choice is still hers, as far as she can make it.
3. Pick a quiet moment. Ask what matters to them about it, and listen. Then say what worries you, and look for ideas together. Agree a plan, write it down, and agree when to talk again.
4. Examples: a second stair rail, a grab rail by the bath, better lighting, or moving things within easy reach. In England, ask your council for a free home assessment by an occupational therapist. Elsewhere, ask your council, or your Trust in Northern Ireland.

5. Start with the care worker, or the manager of the care agency or care home. If the council arranged the care, or the Trust in Northern Ireland, you can tell them too. If someone is being harmed, contact the council straight away. In Northern Ireland, contact the Adult Protection Gateway Service at your Health and Social Care Trust. If someone is in danger now, call 999.

6. What happened, when and where, who was there, how it affected the person, and what you would like to happen now. Keep copies of letters and emails, and a note of phone calls with the date and the name of the person you spoke to.

7. England: the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman (councils and adult social care) or the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (NHS). Wales: the Public Services Ombudsman for Wales. Scotland: the Scottish Public Services Ombudsman. Northern Ireland: the Northern Ireland Public Services Ombudsman. You usually need to finish the organisation's complaints process first.

8. You could ask a friend or relative to help, or call the Carers UK helpline (0808 808 7777). For NHS complaints in England, NHS complaints advocacy can help. In Northern Ireland, the Patient and Client Council gives free help with health and social care complaints.

Quick quiz

1. **Doing your best for the person, as safely as you can.** It means caring well and safely, without taking over.

2. **Talk it through calmly and agree a plan.** A calm talk, and a plan you both agree, works better than taking over.

3. **A quiet, calm moment.** Pick a calm moment, ask what matters to the person, and listen.

4. **Your council.** In England, the council can arrange a free home assessment, usually by an occupational therapist.

5. Talk to the care worker or the agency manager. Raise it with the care provider first. Many problems can be sorted out this way.

6. Contact the council's adult social services, or the Trust in Northern Ireland, straight away. Report harm or neglect straight away. If someone is in danger now, call 999.

7. Notes of what happened, when, and who was there. Clear notes and copies of letters and emails make your complaint stronger.

8. The Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. In England, the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman looks at complaints about councils and adult social care.

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Sources

Every source was read on 8 October 2026. Each section also lists its own sources at the end.

- **Section 1. What "duty of care" means at home.** nidirect, "How to use your health services" (GP out of hours in Northern Ireland), www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-use-your-health-services; nidirect, "GP out of hours service", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service; NHS website, "Care to support recovery after leaving hospital or after a fall, injury or illness" (help to regain independence), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/care-after-a-hospital-stay/care-to-support-recovery-after-leaving-hospital-or-after-a-fall-injury-or-illness/
- **Section 2. Safety and choice.** NHS website, "Home adaptations", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/care-services-equipment-and-care-homes/home-adaptations/
- **Section 4. Raising a concern.** NHS England, "Feedback and complaints about NHS services" (adult social care section), www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/how-to-complain-to-the-nhs/; CQC, "Report a concern if you are a member of the public", www.cqc.org.uk/contact-us/report-concern/report-concern-if-you-are-member-public; Care Inspectorate Wales, "Raise a concern about a care service", www.careinspectorate.wales/raise-a-concern-about-a-care-service/before-we-begin; nidirect, "How to complain or raise concerns about health services", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-complain-or-raise-concerns-about-health-services; nidirect, "GP out of hours service", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service; NHS website, safeguarding page on abuse and neglect of adults, www.nhs.uk/

[social-care-and-support/help-from-social-services-and-charities/abuse-and-neglect-adults-at-risk/](#); nidirect, "Who to contact if you suspect abuse, exploitation or neglect", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/who-contact-if-you-suspect-abuse-exploitation-or-neglect

- Section 5. Making a complaint.** Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman, "How to complain", www.lgo.org.uk/make-a-complaint; NHS England, "Feedback and complaints about NHS services", www.nhs.uk/using-the-nhs/about-the-nhs/how-to-complain-to-the-nhs/; Public Services Ombudsman for Wales, "Organisations you can complain to us about", www.ombudsman.wales/organisations-you-can-complain-to-us-about/; SPSO, "How to complain about a public service", www.spsso.org.uk/how-to-complain-about-public-service; Care Inspectorate, "How to complain", www.careinspectorate.scot/complaints-and-feedback/complaints-about-registered-services/complain-about-a-service/how-to-complain; NIPSO, "Make a complaint", www.nipso.org.uk/make-complaint; nidirect, "How to complain or raise concerns about health services", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-complain-or-raise-concerns-about-health-services



Coming Home

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