



COMING HOME CARER SKILLS

Module 7: Privacy and dignity

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 7, Privacy and dignity, 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 dignity means at home



Dignity means being seen as a whole person. The person you care for has their own history, likes, habits and opinions. Needing help does not change that.

A story. When Mahesh came home from hospital, his daughter Sunita wanted to help with everything. She walked into his room without knocking. She did up his buttons to save time. She told a neighbour all about his hospital stay. One day Mahesh said, "I feel like a parcel, not a person." Sunita was upset, but they talked, and they changed things together.

Small things that make a big difference.

- Use the name they like. Ask if you are not sure.
- Talk to them, not about them, even when other people are there.
- Ask for their opinion, and listen to the answer.
- Let them choose: clothes, food, what to do, and when.
- Help them look the way they like. Hair, shaving, make-up, jewellery and clothes can matter a lot.
- Ask about any customs that matter to them, for example about washing, modesty, food or prayer.

**Tip**

Talk about it. If you are not sure what someone would like, ask. If something you do upsets them, say sorry and try another way. Caring is new for many families, and it is fine to learn together.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "How to help someone you care for keep clean" (dignity, ask how they would like to be helped), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/practical-tips-if-you-care-for-someone/how-to-help-someone-you-care-for-keep-clean/; Stroke Association, "Top tips for family and friends", www.stroke.org.uk/stroke/life-after/top-tips-family-and-friends; Alzheimer's Society, "Washing, bathing and showering tips" (ask how they like to wear a head covering; respect their preferences), www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/living-with-dementia/washing-bathing-showering-tips

02

Personal care with dignity



Personal care means help with things like washing, dressing, shaving and using the toilet. Many people find it hard to need this help, especially from family. This page is about doing it with respect. It does not teach how to wash or move someone.

Before you start.

- Ask the person how they would like to be helped. Ask what they want to do themselves.
- Keep to their routine, if you can. Bath or shower? Morning or evening? Which soap or shaving cream?
- Get everything ready first: towels, clothes and toiletries. Then you will not need to leave them halfway through.
- Make sure the room is warm.

While you help.

- Close the door and the curtains or blinds.
- Say what you are about to do, one step at a time. Ask before you touch.
- Keep them covered. Only uncover the part being washed, and keep a towel over the rest.

- Let them do as much as they can, even if it takes longer.
- Keep calm and kind. Feeling a bit embarrassed is natural, for both of you.

If they say no. Do not force it. Ask why, and try again later, or another way.



Get help

Look out for skin changes. While you help, you may see new redness or soreness on the skin, often over bony areas like the heels, elbows, hips and tailbone. On black or brown skin, it may look purple or blue instead. Tell the GP, community nurse or care team soon. The NHS page "Pressure ulcers" explains more. It says pressure or rubbing can damage the skin and the tissue underneath, often when someone has trouble moving. If the skin is also hot or swollen, or there is pus, a high temperature or pain that is getting worse, contact the GP the same day. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service.

Get help. The council can arrange a free assessment by an occupational therapist (OT) in England. OTs can suggest equipment, like grab rails, a raised toilet seat or a shower seat. In Wales and Scotland, ask the council. In Northern Ireland, ask your local Health and Social Care Trust. For problems with bladder or bowel control, talk to the GP.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "How to help someone you care for keep clean", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/practical-tips-if-you-care-for-someone/how-to-help-someone-you-care-for-keep-clean/; Alzheimer's Society, "Washing, bathing and showering tips", www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/living-with-dementia/washing-bathing-showering-tips; NHS website, "Pressure ulcers", www.nhs.uk/conditions/pressure-sores/; NHS website, "Home adaptations", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/care-services-equipment-and-care-homes/home-adaptations/; GOV.WALES,

www.gov.wales/adapt-your-home-if-you-are-disabled-or-older-person/how-apply; mygov.scot,
www.mygov.scot/care-equipment-adapt-home/how-to-apply; nidirect,
www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/adapting-your-home

03

Personal space and belongings



Everyone needs some space that is their own. This matters even more when someone needs help with daily life.



Remember

Knock and wait. Knock before you go into their room or the bathroom, and wait for an answer. Do this even in your own home, and even if the door is open.

Their things are theirs.

- Ask before you move, tidy or throw away their things.
- Ask before you open their post, or look in their bag, drawers or phone.
- Put things back where they keep them. This matters even more for someone with sight loss or memory problems.

Their room, their way. Let them choose how their room looks: photos, furniture, where things go. If changes are needed, for example to make space for equipment, plan them together.

Time alone. Most people need some time on their own. Give them privacy for phone calls and visitors, if they want it.

When things need to change. Sometimes a bed has to move downstairs, or someone else has to come in to help. Explain why, and ask what would make it feel more like their own space.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "How to help someone you care for keep clean" (privacy and dignity), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/practical-tips-if-you-care-for-someone/how-to-help-someone-you-care-for-keep-clean/; RNIB, "Sight loss: helping you to help others" (ask before moving things), www.rnib.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/helping-you-help-others/

04

Doing things for themselves



When you love someone, it is natural to want to do things for them. But doing too much can take away their confidence and skills. Doing things for themselves, even small things, helps people feel in charge of their own life.

Ask, then help. Ask "Would you like a hand?" and wait for the answer. If they say no, step back.



Try this

Small steps that help.

- Lay clothes out in the order they go on.
- Break a task into small steps. They do some, and you do some.
- Give plenty of time. Try not to rush them, or take over.
- Sit down to dress or shave, if standing is tiring.
- Clothes with big buttons, zips or elastic waists can be easier.
- Praise the effort, without fuss.

Ask about equipment. An occupational therapist can suggest gadgets and new ways to do things. In England, Wales and Scotland, ask the council. In Northern Ireland, ask your local Health and Social Care Trust.

Choices and capacity. People have the right to make their own choices, even ones you would not make. Module 5 explains more about choice and mental capacity.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): Stroke Association, "Top tips for family and friends" (do not do everything for me; lay out clothes),

www.stroke.org.uk/stroke/life-after/top-tips-family-and-friends; NHS website,

"How to help someone you care for keep clean" (help them stay independent),

www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/practical-tips-if-you-care-for-someone/how-to-help-someone-you-care-for-keep-clean/; Alzheimer's Society,

"Washing, bathing and showering tips" (lay out clothes; break it into steps),

www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/living-with-dementia/washing-bathing-showering-tips

05

Keeping things private



Caring means you learn a lot about someone: their health, money, family and feelings. These details belong to them.



Remember

Ask before you share. Before you tell family, friends or neighbours about the person's health or other private matters, ask them what they are happy for you to say.

- Agree a simple answer for people who ask. For example: "He's getting stronger, thanks."
- Ask before you take or share photos of them, especially online, or when they are unwell or in bed.
- Keep letters, notes and passwords somewhere safe.

Talking with health staff. Doctors and nurses keep the person's information private. In England, Scotland and Northern Ireland, health staff usually need the person's agreement before they share it with a carer. In Wales, NHS staff must also keep people's information confidential. Ask the

person if they are happy for you to be told things, and let the GP practice know. Having power of attorney does not always mean you can see health records, so ask the GP practice what they need.

What the law says. The UK GDPR and the Data Protection Act 2018 apply across the UK. They set rules for organisations that hold people's information. Notes a family member keeps at home, just for household use, are not covered by these rules. They are still private, so look after them well.

Copies of records. The person can ask an organisation, such as their GP practice, for a copy of the information it holds about them. You can ask for them if you have their written permission, or the right power of attorney.

If you are worried someone is being harmed, Module 10 explains who to talk to. If someone is in danger now, call 999. Module 14 says more about handling information and records.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): Data Protection Act 2018, section 214 (extent: the whole UK), www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/section/214; ICO, data protection exemptions (domestic purposes), ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/exemptions/a-guide-to-the-data-protection-exemptions/; ICO, getting copies of your information, ico.org.uk/for-the-public/getting-copies-of-your-information-subject-access-request/; NHS England Digital, sharing information with unpaid carers, digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/information-governance/guidance/sharing-information-with-unpaid-carers; NHS inform, information for carers using NHS services, www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/communication-and-consent/information-for-carers-using-nhs-services/; nidirect, accessing medical or health and social care records, www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/accessing-medical-or-health-and-social-care-records; Wales: Digital Health and Care Wales, Code of Practice for Health and Social Care in Wales (paragraph 13, confidentiality), dhcw.nhs.wales/ig/ig-documents/ig-framework/codeofpractice-pdf/

06

Get help



- **Your council's adult social care team:** for an assessment by an occupational therapist, and equipment like grab rails, a raised toilet seat or a shower seat. In England the assessment is free. In Northern Ireland, contact your local Health and Social Care Trust instead.
- **The person's GP practice:** for new redness or soreness on the skin, bladder or bowel control problems, and to ask about a district or community nurse.
- **Carers UK helpline:** 0808 808 7777 (free). Advice for carers in all four nations. www.carersuk.org
- **Alzheimer's Society Dementia Support Line,** including help with washing and dressing: 0333 150 3456. www.alzheimers.org.uk
- **Stroke Association helpline:** 0303 3033 100. www.stroke.org.uk
- **Information Commissioner's Office (ICO):** information about your data rights, and how to get copies of records. ico.org.uk



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. Online: 111.nhs.uk. Northern Ireland GP out of hours: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service. **New redness or soreness on the skin: tell the GP, community nurse or care team soon. In an emergency, 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. What does the person like to do for themselves, even if it takes longer?

2. How could you give the person more privacy when helping them wash or dress?

3. What name do they like to be called? How do they like to look?

4. Which belongings and routines matter most to them?

5. Who does the person want to know about their health? What are they happy for you to say?

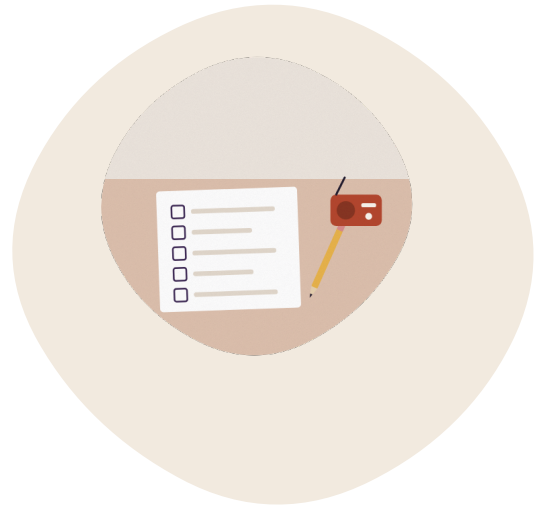
6. Choose one daily task. How could you break it into small steps so they can do more of it?

7. What would you do if you saw new redness or soreness on their skin?

8. Where are their letters, notes and important papers kept? Who agreed this?

08

Quick quiz



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

1. Your dad's bedroom door is closed. What should you do?

- ☐ Knock, and wait for an answer
- ☐ Walk straight in, it is your house too
- ☐ Call through the door and go in
- ☐ Open it a little and look in

2. You are about to help your mum have a wash. What should you do first?

- ☐ Start straight away to get it done quickly
- ☐ Do it the way you would like it done
- ☐ Ask her how she would like to be helped
- ☐ Wait until she asks for help

3. While you help someone wash, how can you keep their dignity?

- ☐ Keep the door open so you can hear the phone
- ☐ Talk to someone else on the phone
- ☐ Hurry, without saying what you are doing
- ☐ Keep them covered with a towel, and only uncover the part being washed

4. Mahesh's hands shake. Doing up his buttons takes him a long time. What is best?

- ☐ Always do the buttons for him
- ☐ Let him do them, give him time, and help only if he asks
- ☐ Tell him to wear a dressing gown all day
- ☐ Do them while he is not looking

5. While helping your mum dress, you see a new red, sore patch of skin on her hip. What should you do?

- ☐ Put some cream on and say nothing
- ☐ Wait a few weeks to see what happens
- ☐ Tell the GP, community nurse or care team soon
- ☐ Rub it hard to warm it up

6. A neighbour asks how your dad's hospital stay went. What is the best answer?

- ☐ Tell them everything the doctor said
- ☐ Show them his hospital letters
- ☐ Tell them to ask the hospital
- ☐ Give the simple answer you and your dad agreed, like "He's getting stronger, thanks"

7. You want to post a photo of your dad in his hospital bed, to update family. What should you do?

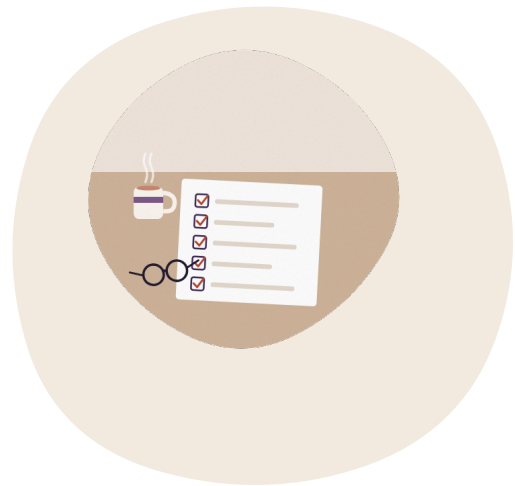
- ☐ Ask him first, and respect his answer
- ☐ Post it, family will want to see
- ☐ Post it, but only for a day
- ☐ Post it without his face showing, without asking

8. What does dignity mean?

- ☐ Doing everything for someone
- ☐ Always being quiet and polite
- ☐ Being seen and respected as a whole person
- ☐ Never needing any help

09

Answers



Your questions

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

1. Every person is different. You might write things like: choosing their clothes, doing their own buttons, brushing their hair, shaving, making a cup of tea, or deciding when to have a wash. Ask them, and write down what they say.
2. For example: close the door and curtains, warm the room, get everything ready first, keep them covered with a towel, say what you are about to do, ask before you touch, and let them do the parts they can.
3. For example: a nickname or a formal name, how they like their hair, shaving or make-up, favourite clothes or jewellery, or things that matter for their faith or culture.
4. For example: where their glasses and photos are kept, a favourite chair, a radio programme, prayer times, or a bedtime routine. Ask before you move or change anything.
5. Ask them. For example: "You can tell my sister, but not the neighbours." Agree a simple answer for people who ask, like "He's getting stronger, thanks." Let the GP practice know if they are happy for you to be told things.

6. For example, dressing: lay clothes out in order, sit down to dress, they do the buttons while you hold the sleeve, and give plenty of time. An occupational therapist can suggest more ideas.
7. Tell the GP, community nurse or care team soon. On black or brown skin, it may look purple or blue. If the skin is also hot or swollen, or there is pus, a high temperature or pain that is getting worse, contact the GP the same day. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service. In an emergency, call 999.
8. For example: a drawer or folder they chose, somewhere private and safe. Agree it with the person. Give them their post, and open it only if they ask you to.

Quick quiz

- 1. Knock, and wait for an answer.** Knock and wait for an answer, even in your own home. It is their private space.
- 2. Ask her how she would like to be helped.** Ask how the person likes things done, and what they want to do themselves.
- 3. Keep them covered with a towel, and only uncover the part being washed.** Close the door, keep them covered, and say what you are about to do.
- 4. Let him do them, give him time, and help only if he asks.** Doing things for themselves keeps confidence and skills. Give time, and help only if they want it.
- 5. Tell the GP, community nurse or care team soon.** Tell the GP, community nurse or care team about new redness or soreness on the skin soon. On black or brown skin, it may look purple or blue.
- 6. Give the simple answer you and your dad agreed, like "He's getting stronger, thanks".** Their health details belong to them. Agree with the person what to say.

7. Ask him first, and respect his answer. Ask before you take or share photos, especially when someone is unwell or in bed.

8. Being seen and respected as a whole person. Dignity means being seen as a whole person, with your own history, likes and choices.

10

Sources

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

- **Section 1. What dignity means at home.** NHS website, "How to help someone you care for keep clean" (dignity, ask how they would like to be helped), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/practical-tips-if-you-care-for-someone/how-to-help-someone-you-care-for-keep-clean/; Stroke Association, "Top tips for family and friends", www.stroke.org.uk/stroke/life-after/top-tips-family-and-friends; Alzheimer's Society, "Washing, bathing and showering tips" (ask how they like to wear a head covering; respect their preferences), www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/living-with-dementia/washing-bathing-showering-tips
- **Section 2. Personal care with dignity.** NHS website, "How to help someone you care for keep clean", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/practical-tips-if-you-care-for-someone/how-to-help-someone-you-care-for-keep-clean/; Alzheimer's Society, "Washing, bathing and showering tips", www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/living-with-dementia/washing-bathing-showering-tips; NHS website, "Pressure ulcers", www.nhs.uk/conditions/pressure-sores/; NHS website, "Home adaptations", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/care-services-equipment-and-care-homes/home-adaptations/; GOV.WALES, www.gov.wales/adapt-your-home-if-you-are-disabled-or-older-person/how-apply; mygov.scot, www.mygov.scot/care-equipment-adapt-home/how-to-apply; nidirect, www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/adapting-your-home

- Section 3. Personal space and belongings.** NHS website, "How to help someone you care for keep clean" (privacy and dignity), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/practical-tips-if-you-care-for-someone/how-to-help-someone-you-care-for-keep-clean/; RNIB, "Sight loss: helping you to help others" (ask before moving things), www.rnib.org.uk/get-involved/volunteer/helping-you-help-others/
- Section 4. Doing things for themselves.** Stroke Association, "Top tips for family and friends" (do not do everything for me; lay out clothes), www.stroke.org.uk/stroke/life-after/top-tips-family-and-friends; NHS website, "How to help someone you care for keep clean" (help them stay independent), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/practical-tips-if-you-care-for-someone/how-to-help-someone-you-care-for-keep-clean/; Alzheimer's Society, "Washing, bathing and showering tips" (lay out clothes; break it into steps), www.alzheimers.org.uk/get-support/living-with-dementia/washing-bathing-showering-tips
- Section 5. Keeping things private.** Data Protection Act 2018, section 214 (extent: the whole UK), www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2018/12/section/214; ICO, data protection exemptions (domestic purposes), ico.org.uk/for-organisations/uk-gdpr-guidance-and-resources/exemptions/a-guide-to-the-data-protection-exemptions/; ICO, getting copies of your information, ico.org.uk/for-the-public/getting-copies-of-your-information-subject-access-request/; NHS England Digital, sharing information with unpaid carers, digital.nhs.uk/data-and-information/information-governance/guidance/sharing-information-with-unpaid-carers; NHS inform, information for carers using NHS services, www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/communication-and-consent/information-for-carers-using-nhs-services/; nidirect, accessing medical or health and social care records, www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/accessing-medical-or-health-and-social-care-records; Wales: Digital Health and Care Wales, Code of Practice for Health and Social Care in Wales (paragraph 13, confidentiality), dhcw.nhs.wales/ig/ig-documents/ig-framework/codeofpractice-pdf/



Coming Home

Less to hold in your head.

www.cominghomecare.app