



COMING HOME GUIDE

The first week home from hospital: a day by day guide

A family guide

For England, with Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

Version 1 • October 2026. Next review: April 2027

About this guide

This guide is correct at October 2026, version 1. We've written it in good faith as general guidance to help carers and families. It isn't legal, financial or medical advice. Rules and rates change, so before you act, please make sure you have the latest version of this guide and look at the official sources: GOV.UK, Social Security Scotland, nidirect and your local council. 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. For urgent advice, contact NHS 111.

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How to use this guide

Version 1. October 2026. Next review: April 2027. Information read on 4 October 2026. We review this guide every April, and straight away if the law or the official guidance changes in any nation.

Who this guide is for: you, if someone you love has just come home from hospital, or is about to. It might be your mum or dad, your partner, a grandparent or a close friend. This guide walks through the first 7 days: what to keep, who should come and when, how to share the week, what to do if a visit doesn't happen, and how to keep notes. It's written for England, with notes for Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland in section 10.

How to use it: keep it near the kitchen table. Sections 1 to 5 go through the week day by day. Section 6 covers what to do if something isn't right. Sections 7 and 8 cover notes and looking after yourself. Section 9 is a week planner you can write in. Every fact has a source and a date, and the full list is in "Sources" at the back.

Guidance, not advice. This guide helps you organise the first week. It can't tell you anything about the health of the person you look after. The hospital team, their GP and the people providing their care can. For advice about your own situation, talk to one of the free advice services in section 12.

If you're worried about their health, contact their GP or NHS 111. In an emergency call 999.

Before they leave hospital, use [our hospital discharge checklist](#). For the full picture of how discharge works, see [our guide to coming home from hospital](#).

01

The week at a glance

Every family is different, and nobody has a perfect first week. Use this as a guide, not a timetable.

When	Focus
Day 1	Getting home: papers, medicines, who comes when
Days 2 and 3	Settling in: support starting, equipment, the pharmacist
Days 4 and 5	Sharing the week: family, friends, the benefits office
Days 6 and 7	Looking back: prescriptions, appointments, your own support

The first week is often the hardest. Things that weren't planned show up, and that happens to many families. Write things down, ask for help, and change the plan as you go.

02

Day 1: getting home



Keep the papers together

When someone leaves hospital, they should be given a letter for their GP with information about their care and medicines. The NHS says to give it to the GP as soon as possible, or ask the hospital to send it directly ([NHS, Being discharged from hospital, reviewed 6 Apr 2023](#)).

If they need support after leaving hospital, they should also have a **care plan**. The NHS says it should include ([NHS, Being discharged from hospital](#)):

- the support they'll have, who will provide it, and how to contact them
- when and how often the support will happen
- how it will be reviewed
- the name of the person coordinating the plan
- who to contact if there's an emergency or things don't work as they should
- any charges that will need to be paid

Put the discharge letter, the care plan and any leaflets in one folder or envelope, somewhere everyone can find it.

Medicines

- The NHS says people usually go home with enough medicine for about 7 days (NHS, Being discharged from hospital).
- Keep the medicines with the discharge letter, and compare the two. If anything doesn't match, or you're not sure what's new or stopped, ask the pharmacist or the GP practice.
- Start a simple list of what's taken and when, if that helps you.

Our [guide to coming home from hospital, section 6](#) explains medicines after discharge in more detail.

Who comes when

- Find out who is due to visit, and when. This might be a reablement team, home care workers, a community nurse or a therapist.
- Write the names and numbers in the planner in section 9, and put a copy on the fridge.
- If support hasn't been confirmed, ask the number on the care plan when it will start, and who covers the gap until then.

The basics

- Food and drink in, and something easy for the first evening.
- A clear path to the bathroom and bed, and the things they use most within reach.
- Their phone charged, and a list of numbers by it.
- Someone to stay or visit, if you can't be there. The NHS suggests asking a friend or relative to stay with them or visit regularly (NHS, Being discharged from hospital).

03

Days 2 and 3: settling in



Support at home

If they're having **reablement** or other short-term support, it should start in the first days. In England, when the council provides intermediate care or reablement, it can't charge for the first 6 weeks ([legislation.gov.uk](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukhr/2014/1000/contents/inforce), [Care and Support \(Preventing Needs for Care and Support\) Regulations 2014](#), regulation 4). Ask the team how long it will last and what happens when it ends.

[Our guide to coming home from hospital, section 5](#) explains reablement and intermediate care.

Equipment

If equipment was promised, such as a raised toilet seat, a perching stool or a bed rail, it should arrive in the first few days. Make sure you know how to use it. The same regulations say the council can't charge for community equipment or minor adaptations (regulation 4). If it hasn't come, call the equipment service or the occupational therapist who ordered it.

Talk to the pharmacist

The NHS says the local pharmacy can help you get on top of new medicines, and you can ask for help with newly prescribed medicines (NHS, Being discharged from hospital). In England, some people are referred by the hospital to a community pharmacy after discharge, through the NHS Discharge Medicines Service ([NHS England, NHS Discharge Medicines Service, read 4 Oct 2026](#)). Ask the pharmacy if they've had a referral.

Notice how you're doing

The first nights can be broken. If you're doing most of the caring, think now about who could take a turn later in the week.

04

Days 4 and 5: sharing the week



Family and friends

- **Share the plan.** Send the planner from section 9, or a photo of it, to the people who help.
- **Give people real jobs.** For example, the shopping on Thursday, a visit on Saturday afternoon, or picking up a prescription. Specific jobs are easier to say yes to.
- **One person keeps the notes.** It helps if one person holds the folder and the list of numbers, even if everyone helps.

Our [guide to coming home from hospital, section 9](#) has more on coordinating family.

Tell the benefits office

If they get benefits, the office that pays them must be told about the hospital stay, including the exact date they went in and the exact date they left. A friend or relative can call for them ([GOV.UK, Going into hospital if you get benefits, read 4 Oct 2026](#)). If you get Carer's Allowance, a hospital stay can affect it too. See [our guide to Carer's Allowance, section 10](#).

Fit notes

If they work and need a fit note, the NHS says to speak to the nurse in charge of the ward before leaving, if possible (NHS, Being discharged from hospital). After that, contact the GP practice.



05

Days 6 and 7: looking back

Prescriptions

The hospital supply often runs out around now. The NHS says to order a repeat prescription up to 5 working days before you need the medicine ([NHS, How to order a repeat prescription, reviewed 17 Oct 2023](#)). If the GP practice hasn't got the discharge letter yet, ask the hospital to send it.

Appointments

- Make sure any follow-up appointments are booked, and you know how they'll get there.
- Put the dates in the planner.

How did the week go?

Take ten minutes with the family, or on your own, and ask:

- What worked?
- What didn't?
- Is the support at home the right amount?
- Is anyone doing too much?
- What needs to change next week?

If the support isn't enough, contact the number on the care plan or the council's adult social care team. In Northern Ireland, contact the Health and Social Care Trust.

Your own support

If you're going to keep caring, ask the council for a **carer's assessment**. It's free, and it's about your needs, not theirs ([NHS, Carer's assessments, reviewed 1 Jul 2022](#)). See [our guide to carer's assessments](#).



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If a visit is missed or something isn't right



A visit doesn't happen

1. **Call the provider first**, using the number on the care plan. Ask when someone will come.
2. **If you can't reach them, or no one can come**, call the care transfer hub, reablement team or council number on the discharge paperwork. In Northern Ireland, call the Trust.
3. **Write it down**: the date, the time, who you spoke to and what they said. Use the call log in section 9.

If you're worried about their health, contact their GP or NHS 111. In an emergency call 999.

Raising a concern

The national discharge guidance says local areas should have agreed ways to raise concerns after discharge and to sort them out ([DHSC and NHS England, Hospital discharge and community support guidance, updated 26 Jan 2024](#)). Ask the coordinator named on the care plan how to raise one.

For concerns about the hospital, the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) can help (NHS, Being discharged from hospital). For concerns about council care, contact the council. [Our guide to coming home from hospital, section 10](#) explains complaints in all four nations, and [our hospital discharge checklist, section 9](#) has a short version.

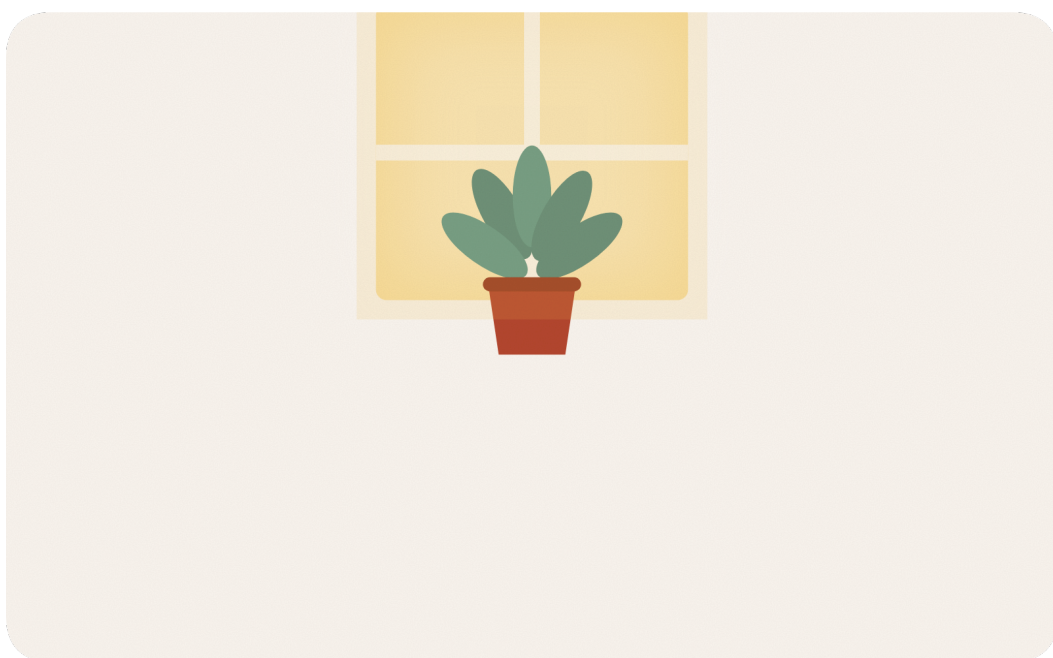
07

Keeping notes

Notes help you remember who said what, and they help when you talk to the GP, the care team or the council. Keep them short.

- **Calls:** date, who, what they said, and what happens next
- **Visits:** who came, when, and anything they asked you to pass on
- **Changes you've noticed:** in plain words, for example "didn't want lunch" or "slept most of the afternoon". Pass anything that worries you to the GP or NHS 111.
- **Questions:** things to ask at the next visit or appointment

You don't need to write everything. A line or two a day is enough.



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Looking after yourself this week



- **Eat, drink and sleep when you can.** It sounds obvious, and it's the first thing to go.
- **Say yes to help.** If someone offers, give them a job from the planner.
- **Take a short break each day,** even ten minutes outside.
- **Talk to someone.** The Carers UK Helpline is free on 0808 808 7777 ([Carers UK, Helpline and other support](#)).

[Our guide to looking after yourself as a carer](#) has more.

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Your week planner

Write these in as you go.

Who	Name	Phone
Care plan coordinator		
Reablement or home care team		
Community nurse or therapist		
Equipment service		
GP practice		
Pharmacy		
Council adult social care (the Trust in NI)		
Family contact		

Day	Who visits, and when	Who from the family helps	Notes
Day 1			
Day 2			
Day 3			
Day 4			
Day 5			
Day 6			
Day 7			

Date	Who I spoke to	What they said

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In Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland



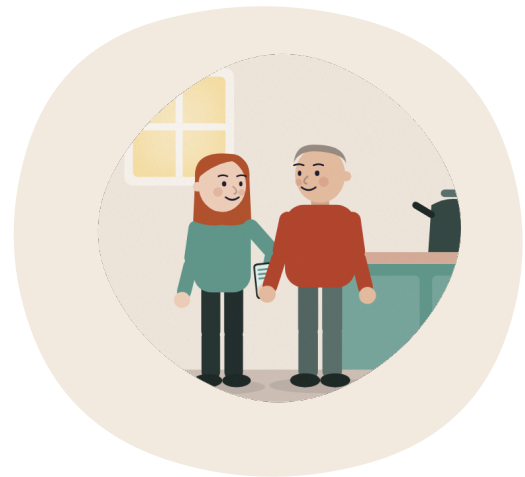
The steps in this guide work in every nation. A few names and rules differ:

- **Wales.** Discharge follows the Welsh Government's hospital discharge guidance ([Welsh Government, Hospital discharge guidance, updated 7 Feb 2025, read 3 Oct 2026](#)). Councils can charge for care at home after a financial assessment, up to a maximum of £100 a week ([Welsh Government, Charging for social care, read 3 Oct 2026](#)).
- **Scotland.** Ask the council for an **Adult Carer Support Plan** rather than a carer's assessment ([mygov.scot, Get an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement, updated 12 Sep 2025](#)).
- **Northern Ireland.** Support at home is arranged by the Health and Social Care Trust, and Trust services may be charged for ([nidirect, Support if you're going into hospital, updated 25 Jun 2026, read 3 Oct 2026](#)). Ask the Trust for a carer's assessment ([nidirect, Assessments for carers, read 4 Oct 2026](#)).

Reporting a hospital stay to the Department for Work and Pensions is the same across Great Britain. Benefits paid by Social Security Scotland, or in Northern Ireland, have their own contact numbers. Use the number on their award letter.

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How Coming Home can help



Coming Home: Family Care is an iPhone app for families looking after someone. It's coming soon. It helps you organise. It isn't financial, legal or medical advice, and it doesn't replace the hospital team, the GP or the care team.

The care circle brings the family, friends and neighbours who help into one place, with shared notes, tasks and a calendar, so everyone knows who's doing what this week.

The family care diary helps you note visits, calls and changes, so you don't have to hold it all in your head.

To hear when Coming Home is ready, join the waitlist:

www.cominghomecare.app/?ref=guide-first-week

Built by people who know home care.

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Who to call



- **The number on the care plan**, for the support at home.
- **The GP practice**, for prescriptions, the discharge letter and fit notes.
- **The pharmacy**, for questions about medicines.
- **Council adult social care** (the Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland), if support isn't enough or hasn't started.
- **Carers UK Helpline**: 0808 808 7777 ([Carers UK, Helpline and other support](#)).
- **Age UK Advice Line**: 0800 678 1602 ([Age UK, Advice Line](#)).
- **Independent Age Helpline**: 0800 319 6789 ([Independent Age, Contact the Helpline](#)).

If you're worried about their health, contact their GP or NHS 111. In an emergency call 999.

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Sources

All read on 4 October 2026 unless another date is given. Dates in brackets are the page's own published, updated or reviewed date.

England

- NHS, Being discharged from hospital (reviewed 6 Apr 2023): www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/going-into-hospital/being-discharged-from-hospital/
- NHS, How to order a repeat prescription (reviewed 17 Oct 2023): www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/prescriptions/how-to-order-a-repeat-prescription/
- NHS, Carer's assessments (reviewed 1 Jul 2022): www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carers-assessments/
- DHSC and NHS England, Hospital discharge and community support guidance (updated 26 Jan 2024): www.gov.uk/government/publications/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance/hospital-discharge-and-community-support-guidance
- legislation.gov.uk, Care and Support (Preventing Needs for Care and Support) Regulations 2014, regulation 4: www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/2673/regulation/4/made
- NHS England, NHS Discharge Medicines Service (service live from 15 Feb 2021): www.england.nhs.uk/primary-care/pharmacy/pharmacy-services/nhs-discharge-medicines-service/
- GOV.UK, Going into hospital if you get benefits: www.gov.uk/going-to-hospital-benefits

Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

- Welsh Government, Hospital discharge guidance (updated 7 Feb 2025; read 3 Oct 2026): www.gov.wales/hospital-discharge-guidance
- Welsh Government, Charging for social care (read 3 Oct 2026): www.gov.wales/charging-social-care
- mygov.scot, Get an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carer Statement (updated 12 Sep 2025): www.mygov.scot/help-for-carer/carers-support-plan
- nidirect, Support if you're going into hospital (updated 25 Jun 2026; read 3 Oct 2026): www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/support-if-youre-going-hospital
- nidirect, Assessments for carers: www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/assessments-carers

Helplines

- Carers UK, Helpline and other support: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/helpline-and-other-support/
- Age UK, Advice Line: www.ageuk.org.uk/services/age-uk-advice-line/
- Independent Age, Contact the Helpline: www.independentage.org/get-advice/helpline

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Changelog

Version	Date	What changed	Why
1	October 2026	First published	Information read on 4 October 2026

The next review is due in April 2027, or straight away if the law or guidance changes. The latest version is always at

www.cominghomecare.app/guides/first-week-home-from-hospital



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