



COMING HOME GUIDE

Hospital discharge checklist

A family guide

For England, 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 checklist

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

Who this checklist is for: you, if someone you love is coming home from hospital soon and you'll be helping. It might be your mum or dad, your partner, a grandparent or a close friend. They might be going to their own home, to yours, or to a care home. It covers England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

How to use it: print it, take it to the ward and tick things off as you go. Each group is a short list of things to ask or do, roughly in the order you'll need them. Write names, dates and answers in the margins, and use the names and numbers page near the end. Each group ends with a link to the section of our guide to coming home from hospital that explains why it matters:

www.cominghomecare.app/guides/hospital-discharge?ref=guide-hospital-discharge-checklist

Guidance, not advice. This checklist helps you ask the right questions and get ready. It can't tell you what care or medicines the person you look after needs. Only the ward team, the GP, the pharmacist and the council (the Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland) can do that.

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

You don't have to do everything on this list. Some things won't apply. Tick what helps and leave the rest.

01

Tell the ward you're the carer

- ☐ Tell the nurse in charge that you're the main carer, or one of them
- ☐ Give the ward your phone number, and the best times to reach you
- ☐ Ask to be told about the discharge plan and the expected date as soon as they're known
- ☐ Ask to be involved in planning what happens after they leave
- ☐ Ask if the hospital has a carer support service you can speak to
- ☐ Ask about a carer's assessment for you (in Scotland it's called an adult carer support plan)

Your right to be involved:

- **England:** when someone is likely to need care after leaving hospital, the NHS trust must involve them and any carer in discharge planning as soon as it can (legislation.gov.uk, Care Act 2014, section 74; DHSC and NHS England, Hospital discharge and community support guidance, updated 26 Jan 2024).
- **Scotland:** the health board must tell the carer about the plan to discharge, ask for their views and take those views into account, as soon as it reasonably can (legislation.gov.uk, Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, section 28). This applies whether the person goes to their own home, a care home or somewhere else (Scottish Government, Carers' charter, part 6: Hospital discharge).

- **Wales:** the Welsh Government's discharge guidance says each hospital has its own carer support service, and every unpaid carer has the right to ask for a carers needs assessment ([Welsh Government, Hospital discharge guidance, updated 7 Feb 2025](#)).
- **Northern Ireland:** if you're the carer, you may be involved in the discharge, with the consent of the person you look after ([nidirect, Support if you're going into hospital, updated 25 Jun 2026](#)).

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 1](#) and [section 3](#).

02

Questions about the plan

- ☐ Who is our main contact for the discharge, and how do we reach them?
- ☐ What's the expected date, and roughly what time of day?
- ☐ Where are they going: their own home, a relative's home, a care home or a short stay somewhere else?
- ☐ What support is arranged for when they leave, who's providing it, and when does it start?
- ☐ Is that support confirmed, or still being arranged?
- ☐ What happens if it isn't ready on the day?
- ☐ Is there a written plan, and can we have a copy?
- ☐ Who do we call in the first few days if something isn't working?
- ☐ Is there a local home from hospital service (often run by a charity) that could help in the first weeks?

The NHS says each hospital has its own discharge policy, and you can ask the ward manager or the Patient Advice and Liaison Service for a copy ([NHS, Being discharged from hospital, reviewed 6 Apr 2023](#)). In Northern Ireland, nidirect says: "You should not be discharged from hospital before the services you need have been arranged" (nidirect, Support if you're going into hospital).

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 2](#) and [section 5](#).

03

Medicines and letters

These are questions to ask the ward nurse or pharmacist. Write the answers down exactly as they say them.

- ☐ Which medicines are new, which have stopped, and which have changed?
- ☐ How many days of medicines are they going home with?
- ☐ Who will go through the medicines with us, and when?
- ☐ In England: can you refer them to our community pharmacy for the Discharge Medicines Service?
- ☐ Can we have a copy of the discharge letter, and has it gone to the GP?
- ☐ When is the next prescription due, and who orders it?

In England, NHS trusts can refer people leaving hospital to their community pharmacy through the Discharge Medicines Service. It's been an essential service for every community pharmacy since 15 February 2021 ([Community Pharmacy England, Discharge Medicines Service, updated 21 Apr 2026](#)). In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland, ask the pharmacist what help they offer after a hospital stay.

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

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 6](#).

04

Equipment and the home

- ☐ What equipment do they need, who's bringing it, and when?
- ☐ Who will show us how to use it?
- ☐ Is someone home when it's delivered?
- ☐ A bed downstairs, if stairs will be hard for a while
- ☐ A clear route from the door to the bed, the toilet and a chair
- ☐ Rugs and trailing wires moved out of the way
- ☐ Night lights between the bedroom and the toilet
- ☐ Heating on before they arrive
- ☐ Food, drinks and easy meals in
- ☐ A key safe, or spare keys, if carers or family will come and go
- ☐ A list by the door of who's visiting and when

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 7](#), and our guide to [adapting a home, section 2](#).

05

On the day

- ☐ Who's collecting them, or has the ward booked transport?
- ☐ Clothes, shoes, a coat and their house keys
- ☐ Medicines and the discharge letter in your hand before you leave the ward
- ☐ A copy of the care plan, if there is one
- ☐ All their belongings from the ward, including glasses, hearing aids, dentures and chargers
- ☐ Any follow-up appointment or fit note they need
- ☐ A forwarding address given to the ward, if they're going somewhere new
- ☐ Someone at home when they arrive
- ☐ Your phone charged, with the ward and support numbers saved

The NHS lists the discharge letter, medicines, the care plan, any follow-up appointment and a forwarding address as things not to forget. If they're going to a care home, the home should be told the date and time and have a copy of the care plan (NHS, Being discharged from hospital).

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 4](#).

06

The first 48 hours

- ☐ Did the first visit from carers or the support team happen when it should?
- ☐ If it didn't, call the contact from group 2 straight away
- ☐ Has the pharmacy got the prescription, or do you know when to collect it?
- ☐ Does the GP practice know they're home?
- ☐ Who's staying over, or popping in, for the first nights?
- ☐ Write down who came, when, and anything that changed

In Wales, the discharge guidance says local teams should help people for the first 48 hours after discharge where needed, including support for carers (Welsh Government, Hospital discharge guidance). Ask the ward what's in place where you live.

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

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 11](#).

07

Money and paperwork

- ☐ Tell the office that pays their benefits about the hospital stay, and the date they came home
- ☐ Tell the Carer's Allowance office about the stay too, if you get it
- ☐ Look at whether they could get Attendance Allowance, or more help, now that their needs have changed
- ☐ Try our Benefits finder, which asks 8 quick questions
- ☐ Tell the council about any change that could affect their Council Tax (rates in Northern Ireland)
- ☐ A Blue Badge, if getting around has become hard
- ☐ A power of attorney, if you'll be helping with their money or decisions

GOV.UK says to report a stay of one night or longer, and that a claim might be stopped or reduced if a hospital stay isn't reported. Attendance Allowance and Carer's Allowance are on its list of benefits to report ([GOV.UK, Going into hospital if you get benefits, updated 31 Aug 2023](#)).

Benefits finder: www.cominghomecare.app/benefits-check?ref=guide-hospital-discharge-checklist

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 8](#), and our guides to [Attendance Allowance](#), [Carer's Allowance](#), [money and help](#) and [power of attorney](#).

08

You

- ☐ Can you do what's being asked of you? It's fine to say what you can and can't do
- ☐ Tell the ward plainly what you can't do, so it can be planned for
- ☐ Ask for a carer's assessment (an adult carer support plan in Scotland)
- ☐ Who covers if you're ill, or need a break?
- ☐ Who else in the family or among friends can help, and with what?
- ☐ Time for yourself in the first week, even an hour
- ☐ Your own GP, if you're struggling

In England, the guidance says the NHS trust should find out early whether unpaid carers are willing and able to provide care after discharge (DHSC and NHS England guidance).

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 9](#), and our guide to [looking after yourself, section 2](#).

09

If something isn't right

- ☐ Speak to the ward, or the discharge contact, first
- ☐ Write down names, dates, times and what was said
- ☐ Ask for the plan, or any decision, in writing
- ☐ If it's still not sorted, use the advice and complaints route for your nation (below)
 - **England:** the hospital's Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) gives confidential advice and can explain the discharge policy (NHS, Being discharged from hospital). Formal NHS complaints should be made within 12 months ([NHS England, Feedback and complaints](#)).
 - **Scotland:** the Patient Advice and Support Service (PASS) gives free help: 0800 917 2127 ([Citizens Advice Scotland, NHS complaints](#)). You can also talk to staff or the health board's complaints team ([NHS inform, Feedback, complaints and your rights](#)).
 - **Wales:** talk to staff or the health board's complaints team. You can take up to 12 months to raise a concern ([Welsh Government, NHS Wales complaints and concerns](#)). Llais gives free, independent help ([Llais, Making a complaint](#)).
 - **Northern Ireland:** contact the Trust's complaints manager as soon as you can, usually within six months ([nidirect, How to complain or raise concerns about health services, updated 16 Feb 2026](#)). The Patient and Client Council (PCC) gives independent support, at no cost: 0800 917 0222 ([PCC](#)).

Why this matters: see our guide to coming home from hospital, [section 10](#).

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Names and numbers

Write these in as you go.

Who	Name	Phone
The ward		
Discharge contact		
Hospital social worker or care coordinator		
Home care or support team		
Equipment service		
GP practice		
Pharmacy		
Council adult social care (the Trust in NI)		
Family contact		
Family contact		

Date	Who I spoke to	What they said

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Across the four nations



	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Your right to be involved	The NHS trust must involve carers (Care Act 2014, section 74)	The health board must tell you, ask your views and take them into account (Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, section 28)	Each hospital has a carer support service; you can ask for a carers needs assessment (Welsh Government guidance)	You may be involved, with the person's consent (nidirect)
Who arranges support at home	The council, with the NHS	The council and the health board, working together	The council, with the health board	The Health and Social Care Trust

	England	Scotland	Wales	Northern Ireland
Short-term support after hospital	When the council provides intermediate care or reablement, it can't charge for the first 6 weeks	Once they've left hospital, the council's charging policy applies, after a financial assessment	Ask the ward and the council what's charged for	Ask the Trust what's charged for
Where to raise a concern	PALS, then the NHS complaints process	The health board; PASS	The health board; Llais	The Trust; the PCC

England's 6 weeks: [legislation.gov.uk, SI 2014/2673 \(care and support regulations for England\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk, SI 2014/2673), regulation 4. Scotland's support and charging: [Scottish Government, Hospital care](#). Other rows: DHSC and NHS England guidance, Welsh Government guidance, nidirect, and the sources in groups 1 and 9.

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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 medical advice, and it doesn't replace the hospital, the council, the pharmacist or the GP.

The discharge plan keeps the questions for the ward, a home-readiness list and the key dates in one place.

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

The family care diary helps you note who visited, what was said and what's changed.

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

www.cominghomecare.app/?ref=guide-hospital-discharge-checklist

Built by people who know home care.

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Who to call



This checklist is guidance, not advice. For support and advice:

- **The ward, or the discharge contact** on your names and numbers page
- **Your council's adult social care team**, or your **Health and Social Care Trust** in Northern Ireland
- **Carers UK Helpline**: 0808 808 7777, Monday to Friday 9am to 6pm, including bank holidays ([Carers UK, Helpline and other support, read 4 Oct 2026](#))
- **Carers Scotland**: 0141 378 1065 ([Carers Scotland, Contact us, read 4 Oct 2026](#))
- **Carers Wales**: 029 2081 1370, Monday to Friday 9am to 3pm ([Carers Wales, Get in touch with us, read 4 Oct 2026](#))
- **Carers NI**: 028 9043 9843, or advice through the Carers UK Helpline ([Carers NI, Contact us, read 4 Oct 2026](#))
- **Age UK Advice Line** (England): 0800 678 1602, 8am to 7pm, every day of the year ([Age UK Advice Line, read 4 Oct 2026](#))
- **Age Cymru Advice** (Wales): 0300 303 44 98, Monday to Friday 9am to 4pm ([Age Cymru, Information and advice, read 4 Oct 2026](#))
- **Age Scotland helpline**: 0800 12 44 222, Monday to Friday 9am to 1pm ([Age Scotland, Helpline, read 4 Oct 2026](#))
- **Age NI Advice**: 0808 808 7575, Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm ([Age NI, Advice and advocacy, read 4 Oct 2026](#))

- **Advice NI:** 0800 915 4604 ([Advice NI, Contact, read 4 Oct 2026](#))
- **Their GP, or NHS 111.** In an emergency call **999**

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. Dates in brackets are the page's own published, updated or reviewed date.

Law and official guidance

- legislation.gov.uk, Care Act 2014, section 74:
www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/74
- legislation.gov.uk, Health and Care Act 2022, section 91 (as enacted, inserting the duty to involve carers): www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2022/31/section/91/enacted
- legislation.gov.uk, SI 2014/2673, care and support regulations for England, regulation 4 (services the council can't charge for):
www.legislation.gov.uk/uksi/2014/2673/regulation/4/made
- legislation.gov.uk, Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, section 28:
www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/9/section/28
- 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
- Scottish Government, Carers' charter, part 6: Hospital discharge:
www.gov.scot/publications/carers-charter/pages/7/
- Scottish Government, Hospital care:
www.gov.scot/policies/independent-living/hospital-care/
- Welsh Government, Hospital discharge guidance (first published 13 Dec 2023, updated 7 Feb 2025; the guidance for staff is dated January 2025):
www.gov.wales/hospital-discharge-guidance

NHS and government services

- NHS, Being discharged from hospital (reviewed 6 Apr 2023): www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/hospitals/going-into-hospital/being-discharged-from-hospital/
- Community Pharmacy England, Discharge Medicines Service (updated 21 Apr 2026): cpe.org.uk/national-pharmacy-services/essential-services/discharge-medicines-service/
- GOV.UK, Going into hospital if you get benefits (updated 31 Aug 2023): www.gov.uk/going-to-hospital-benefits
- nidirect, Support if you're going into hospital (updated 25 Jun 2026): www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/support-if-youre-going-hospital

Complaints and advice

- NHS England, Feedback and complaints: www.england.nhs.uk/contact-us/feedback-and-complaints/complaint/
- NHS inform, Feedback, complaints and your rights: www.nhsinform.scot/care-support-and-rights/health-rights/feedback-and-complaints/feedback-complaints-and-your-rights/
- Citizens Advice Scotland, NHS complaints: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/scotland/health/nhs-healthcare-s/nhs-complaints-s/
- Welsh Government, NHS Wales complaints and concerns: www.gov.wales/nhs-wales-complaints-and-concerns-putting-things-right
- Llais, Making a complaint: www.llaiswales.org/have-your-say/making-complaint
- nidirect, How to complain or raise concerns about health services (updated 16 Feb 2026): www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-complain-or-raise-concerns-about-health-services
- Patient and Client Council: pcc-ni.net

Charities (Who to call)

- Carers UK, Helpline and other support: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/helpline-and-other-support/
- Carers Scotland, Contact us: www.carersuk.org/scotland/contact-us/
- Carers Wales, Get in touch with us: www.carersuk.org/wales/help-and-advice/get-in-touch-with-us/
- Carers NI, Contact us: www.carersuk.org/ni/contact-us/
- Age UK Advice Line: www.ageuk.org.uk/services/age-uk-advice-line/
- Age Cymru, Information and advice: www.agecymru.wales/information-advice/
- Age Scotland, Helpline: www.agescotland.org.uk/how-we-help/helpline
- Age NI, Advice and advocacy: www.ageni.org/services/advice-advocacy/
- Advice NI, Contact: www.adviceni.net/contact

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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 official discharge guidance changes in any nation. The latest version is always at www.cominghomecare.app/guides/hospital-discharge-checklist



Coming Home

Less to hold in your head.

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