

Forward from 50

A guide to later life in East Sussex



Introduction

Forward from 50

Thank you for picking up this booklet - it's about making the most of life as you get older and knowing where to find information if you need further support. We hope that it will help you enjoy later life in East Sussex.

Age should not be a barrier to being healthy and there are many things you can do to help yourself stay well and get the most out of life. Many people are already staying healthier and more active although, of course, for some this may not be possible. Even so there are lots of things you can do to maintain health and independence and this booklet gives you some helpful ideas and suggestions.

You may want to make the most of leisure activities across the county, plan a new career or take up studies you have never had time for before. Many people feel they want to put something back into the community, others are restricted in their activities but can still use support services to access opportunities. The following pages show just how many opportunities and sources of support there are.

Whether you live in an urban, rural or coastal setting, East Sussex is a great place to grow older. Everywhere, the county is enriched by a diverse range of backgrounds, ethnicities and lifestyles. People from many of these communities worked together to prepare this booklet.

We hope you enjoy reading the booklet and would welcome your comments and suggestions.



Bill Bentley

Councillor Bill Bentley
Lead Member Adult Social Care,
and Older People's Champion,
East Sussex County Council



Charles Everett

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Primary Care Trust









John Barnes

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“ I may be a senior but that doesn't mean I have to sit in a chair all day, staring at the TV. I like to get out, meet new people and have a good old chat. I'd get depressed if I stayed at home on my own. ”



Awareness

Life is what you make it and it doesn't have to stop just because you're getting older. Think about your interests and hobbies and plan for your future years.



Action

Visit your local volunteer centre or library to find out what's going on in your area. There may be many local events and organisations that you have not been aware of. Many organisations are looking for volunteers and support - so get in touch. If you have access to the internet, try visiting www.do-it.org.uk which is a national database that allows you to search over 800,000 voluntary opportunities from around the UK.



Talk to

Talk to friends and neighbours about what they've found locally. Talk to local organisations and find out about local day or community centres. East Sussex Community Information Service (ESCIS) includes a database of voluntary and community organisations that may be seeking volunteers or have a range of activities for you to participate in. Your local library can also provide more information.



Prevention

Growing older is inevitable, but your outlook on life, health and lifestyle can make the difference between slipping into old age or embracing it and all it has to offer!

WEBLINKS • www.ageconcern-eastsussex.org.uk • www.escis.org.uk • www.bbc.co.uk
• www.age-net.co.uk • www.seniority.co.uk • www.u3a.org.uk
• www.silversurfers.net



Contacts

- East Sussex Community Information Service (ESCIS) 01273 481754
- Age Concern East Sussex 01273 476704
- University of the Third Age (U3A) National Office 020 8466 6139
- Volunteer centres:
East Sussex (Hailsham area) 01323 446416
Eastbourne Association of Voluntary Services 01323 639373
Hastings Voluntary Action 01424 446060
South Downs CVS 01273 514379
Lewes Volunteer Bureau 01273 475845
Uckfield Volunteer and Information Centre 01825 760019

A positive attitude making the most of opportunities

- **Older or not, life is what you make it**
- **A positive attitude makes a big difference**
- **There are financial advantages to being over 60**
- **Make the most of the time retirement brings**
- **You're entitled to have fun!**
- **Use the internet and join other 'silver surfers'**

You can't stop getting older, but that doesn't mean you have to stop doing the things you enjoy. Many people find that they finally have the time to do all the things they couldn't do in their younger, working, days.

A positive attitude means making the effort to do the things you enjoy, keeping healthy, active and making the most of opportunities. It's important to maintain existing support networks but now may also be a time to meet new people and try new things.

The benefits of becoming 60+

There are lots of financial benefits once you hit 60, though some depend on your financial status. Further details are in this handbook but these include:

- Free prescriptions and eye tests
- An increase in tax allowances (at 65) and other money benefits
- Winter fuel payments
- Concession schemes
- Assisted transport and free bus travel

What's on offer

There are plenty of things to do that are free, or don't cost much. These include visiting local parks, museums, galleries and libraries. Your local library should have information about places of interest, events and groups you might like to join. There are now many websites aimed specifically at older people, such as age-net (see Weblinks list opposite).

Local services

Local organisations, including those which are culturally-specific, can offer plenty of help and advice. There are community centres, which give you the chance to meet people, try new activities and go on trips. If you find it hard to get out and about, or are worried about meeting new people, local organisations can help. If you're active and keen to help others, volunteering can be stimulating and rewarding.

Join your local older people's forum

Older people's forums are independent organisations led by older people that bring seniors together to take forward ideas and projects in their local communities. They also comment on services and policies that affect older people's quality of life. There are seven forums covering the county and together they make up the East Sussex Seniors' Association (ESSA), a powerful voice in the county for older people and an opportunity for forum members to engage in the county's decision-making processes. To find the forum covering your area contact East Sussex Community Information Service (ESCIS) - see Contacts and Weblinks. Membership is free and anyone over 50 can join; you will be joining thousands of others in the county! To find out more telephone the Older People's Involvement Manager at East Sussex County Council on 01273 481565.

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk

“ I decided to take early retirement, and thought I'd try voluntary work abroad through VSO. ”



Awareness

Be aware that retirement is a major life change and may take time to adjust to. Consider the pros and cons of retiring or whether you can continue working. It may be possible to reduce your hours or the amount of responsibility you have in your current job.



Action

If you are retiring, plan ahead so that you have plenty to keep you occupied. Think long-term and keep up hobbies and interests that you have always had. Or try something completely new, like learning a new language or looking at learning opportunities through the University of the Third Age (U3A). The U3A is a network for sharing interests and knowledge.



Talk to

Talk to your employer about retirement plans; ask if there is a retirement course and whether it is possible to continue working if you wish to do so or whether flexible retirement options are available.

If you are interested in volunteering there are many organisations and websites that can give advice and information on local, national and even international schemes.



Prevention

Suddenly finding yourself with no job and few plans for how to spend your time can be daunting and demoralising. Make sure you plan ahead so retirement is something you look forward to.

WEBLINKS

- www.do-it.org.uk (national volunteers database)
- www.thepensionservice.gov.uk • www.VSO.org.uk • www.U3A.org.uk



Contacts

- The Pension, Disability and Carers Service
0845 60 60 265
- Jobcentre Plus
0845 6060234
- East Sussex Community Partnership Team
01273 482911
- Basic Skills Agency
0800 700 987
- Ethnic Minority Business Services
0845 606 44 66
- Sussex Enterprise
0845 67 888 67
- The University of The Third Age (U3A)
020 8466 6139
- Equality and Human Rights Commission Helpline
0845 6046610
- Age Concern England
0800 009966



Choosing retirement

doing what you want to do

- **Discuss whether there is a mandatory retirement age at your workplace or options for flexible retirement**
- **Think about the benefits of retirement**
- **Retirement is a major life change - plan for it**
- **Consider finding a new job - working life doesn't stop at retirement - you may wish to seek a new direction to working life**
- **Volunteering - giving up some time to help others**

Planning

A sudden change to your pattern of life can be very daunting. Make sure you plan ahead, so that retirement is something you look forward to. If you have the choice to continue working or to retire, there are a few factors you may want to consider before deciding.

Choosing retirement

Retirement can be a time of fresh opportunities. You will have more time to spend with your friends and family. You can pick up old hobbies or take up new interests. It is a time when you can finally relax and do what you really want to do. This can also be a time of major change in your life - your income is likely to drop; you and your spouse or partner may also have to adjust to having more free time together.

Continuing to work

These days, around one in ten people over the state pension age continue to work. Many feel that, just because they are drawing their pension, they don't want to give up a job they enjoy. Many companies see the benefits of having an older workforce. Even if you have retired from your job, you may want to find another one with fewer hours and less responsibility. You may wish to consider working in a totally different sector or arena. There are many organisations that can give you help and advice to find jobs, taking into account your interests, skills and any qualifications.

Voluntary work

Around 22m people in Britain do voluntary work because it is a rewarding way of helping others while helping yourself to keep active. Voluntary work isn't paid, although expenses, such as meals and travel costs, will be met, and in some cases it does lead to a paid job. Many volunteers find the work they do gives them a huge sense of satisfaction and self-worth.

Money management

You may wish to seek financial advice about the options available to you and the implications of different retirement options.

Information on what is available to you from the State, and on financial choices you can make to prepare for retirement, is available from the Pension Service (see Contacts). A booklet 'Pensions: the basics - a guide from the Government' is also available from this source.

If you are a member of a company or private pension scheme then you can also seek information from your pension provider about your pension position when you retire. See page 30 for further information on benefits advice.

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



“ The computer course the library ran was excellent - now I feel confident e-mailing my grandchildren in Canada. Just being able to keep in touch more easily has made a big difference to me. ”



Awareness

Don't let age be a barrier to learning something new, or taking up an old hobby. Most people find that the more their days are filled with doing things that interest them, the more they remain active.



Action

There are many ways to learn. Your local library will have information about local activities and courses. You can check the East Sussex Community Information Service - either by asking for the hard copy at your local library or by looking on the website. You can also check local and national newspapers. Or log on to the learndirect or BBC websites for advice on online learning.



Talk to

Phone or visit your local adult education or community college for advice and information, or ask at your library or local Council office. If you live in a rural area you may like to contact the Adult College for Rural East Sussex (ACRES).



Prevention

Enjoying mental activity can help reduce the risk of conditions such as Alzheimer's disease and depression, as well as helping you to get out and about and make new friends.

WEBLINKS

- www.eastsussex.gov.uk • www.escis.org.uk
- www.learndirect.co.uk • www.bbc.co.uk
- www.wea.org.uk • www.open.ac.uk



Contacts

- Library and Information Services 01273 481538
- East Sussex Community Information Service 01273 481754
- ACRES 01825 761820
- Hastings College of Arts and Technology 01424 442222
- Sussex Downs College 01323 637637
- Hastings Library LearnDirect Centre 01424 434301
- Basic Skills Agency 0800 700 987
- Ethnic Minority Business Services 0845 606 44 66
- The University of The Third Age (U3A) 020 8466 6139
- Workers' Educational Association 01634 298600

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



Lifelong learning

you're never too old to learn

- **It's never too late to start learning**
- **Learning will keep you mentally active**
- **Gaining knowledge will keep you interested - and interesting!**
- **Learn at home, college, library or community centre**
- **Classes give you the opportunity to make new friends**

Don't let age be a barrier to getting as much as you can out of life. The old saying that 'it's never too late to learn' is true - many people in their 50s, 60s, 70s and 80s are taking courses and gaining degrees. But remaining mentally active does not mean having to sit exams. Taking up chess, doing the crossword puzzle or reading can be equally as stimulating.

Choosing what to do

There are many activities and courses available, you have to choose what it is you would like to do. Take into account your interests, skills and budget and then find out what's on offer.

Where to look

Your local library is a good source of information and will have leaflets and directories about local activities. East Sussex Community Information Service (ESCIS) has a wide range of information on local clubs and societies. Local newspapers will also list activities or events going on in your area. Contact your community or adult education college, the Open University or U3A, for advice and information on what courses may suit you.

There is a mobile library service across East Sussex. A Home Library Service operates for people unable to visit a library due to frailty or disability. Care homes, day centres and other groups can borrow reminiscence material and books on activities. If you cannot handle a printed book, there are audio books on tape or CD. Libraries are also a good source of information for people who want to find out more about local or family history. They also provide free access to computers.

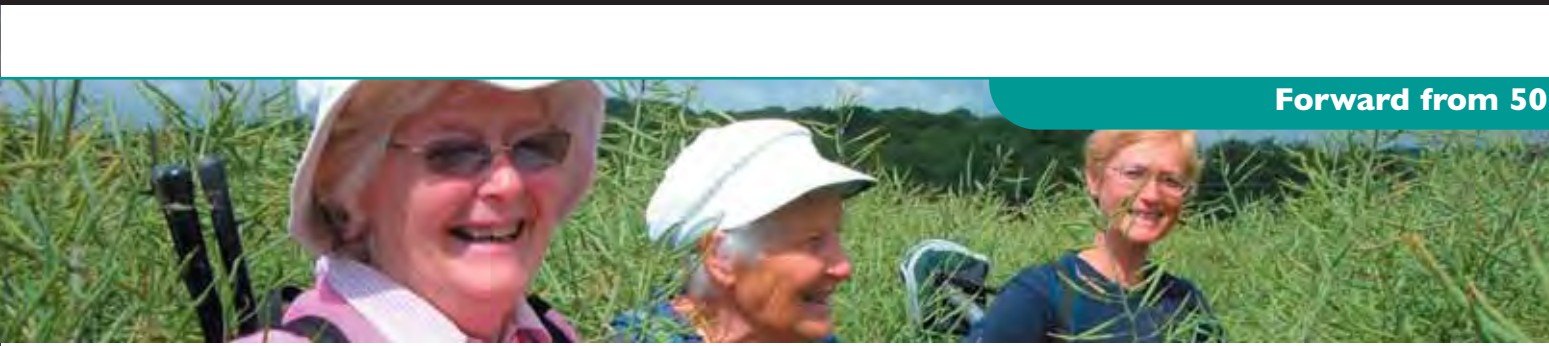
You can access the library catalogue remotely from a computer - library staff will give you a PIN to do this. You can reserve and renew books online as well as look at online databases.

Why it's important to keep mentally active

Exercising our minds is important. By learning a language or playing bridge, you are keeping mentally active. This can help keep you mentally healthy for longer. If you're going out to a class or centre, you'll also be meeting new people and making new friends, which is stimulating in itself. You will probably find you have lots in common with other people you'll meet as your interests will be similar.



“ I thought I was too old to start exercising, but now my day doesn't feel right if I haven't been out for a good walk. I feel fitter, have more energy and have a good old chat with my friends along the way. It's given me the confidence to try other new things, too.”



Keeping well

a healthy mind and a healthy body

- You are never too old to start something new
- Physical activity gives you more energy
- Gaining knowledge will keep you interested - and interesting!
- Contact local organisations to find out what's on offer in East Sussex
- Get help to get motivated

Research shows that most of us are too inactive to benefit our health, but age shouldn't be a barrier to being physically and mentally healthy. There are many things you can do to exercise both your body and mind. Research also highlights the benefits of maintaining spiritual and emotional well-being.

Exercise also gives you the 'feel-good factor' - making you feel fitter, more energetic and more likely to get out and meet people.

The benefits of physical activity

Keeping physically active has a huge number of benefits. It helps to reduce the risk of diabetes, heart disease and stroke. It strengthens your muscles, aids mobility, encourages a healthy appetite, regular bowel movements and a good sleeping routine. It can reduce the risk of falls, osteoporosis, stress and depression. It stimulates the brain, keeping brain cells on the alert. The recommended daily amount of physical exercise for adults is 30 minutes of activity that makes you breathe a little harder than normal. Remember this can be broken down into several 10-minute blocks throughout the day, and it's a good idea to build up gradually.

Keeping mentally stimulated

We all forget things sometimes but age doesn't have to mean sinking into mental decline - the more you use your brain, the more mentally active you'll remain. There are many classes such as IT courses, heritage studies, singing or craft activities available locally. For instance, you could take a computer training course aimed at over 50s or a Keep Fit 50+ course for beginners.

Exercising our minds as well as our bodies is important. Many activities help keep your brain mentally agile: crossword puzzles, chess, bingo, learning a language or taking a cookery course. Your local library is a good source of information (see Lifelong learning). You can also train your memory to some degree, for instance by making lists, or using certain 'trigger' words to jog your memory.

Organisations like Age Concern can tell you about planned healthy walks, Tai Chi courses, keep fit and seated exercise classes. Physical activity doesn't mean having to join a gym. You could take up a dance class, walk to the shops instead of taking the bus, or tackle the garden, all of which will be keeping your muscles toned and your joints supple. Even if you are not able to be active when standing up, there are lots of seated exercises you can do. Don't forget lots of local leisure centres offer a range of activities like swimming, water-based exercises or dancing, with opportunities to keep fit and make new friends.

Just turning up at a local community centre and meeting new people may be all the mental stimulation you need. Check your local newspapers, village hall or community centre notice boards to see what's going on in your area.

It may seem daunting at first to go somewhere, or try something new, but you will be made to feel welcome. If you're worried about language problems or fitting in with people from a different ethnic background, staff and volunteers will help you to feel comfortable.



Awareness

Growing older doesn't have to mean you become less able. The more aware you are of keeping physically and mentally active the more you can reduce the risk of health problems.



Action

Find a form of exercise that suits you - if you don't want to exercise as part of a group, think about walking or swimming. Taking up activities that keep you mentally stimulated, such as chess or bingo, will not only keep your brain active, but will help you to meet new friends.



Talk to

Organisations in East Sussex run a number of classes aimed at the 50+ age group. Age Concern can offer advice and information. If it's been a long time since you have done any exercise, or you are receiving any medical treatment, it's a good idea to talk to your doctor or practice nurse before you begin, or ask your GP about local 'exercise referral' schemes.



Prevention

Enjoying mental and physical activities can help reduce the risk of many conditions, such as Alzheimer's disease, osteoporosis and depression, as well as helping you to get out and about and make new friends. Look out for a booklet called 'Nifty after 50' which is a directory of local physical activity opportunities.



Contacts

- Age Concern East Sussex 01273 476704
- East Sussex County Council, Social Care Direct 0845 60 80 191
- East Sussex Community Information Service 01273 481754
- Your local library is a good place to find out about local courses.

WEBLINKS

- www.ageconcern-eastsussex.org.uk
- www.freedom-leisure.co.uk
- www.waveleisure.co.uk
- www.eastbourne.gov.uk/leisure/sport/directory
- www.activeinhastings.org.uk
- www.activerother.org.uk
- www.whi.org.uk
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk - See links to your NHS Primary Care Trust
- www.age-net.co.uk
- www.seniority.co.uk
- www.escis.org.uk

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



“ I know my eyesight is not as good as it used to be but never thought much more of it - until I got my eyes tested. I now wear glasses for reading and driving - it's really made a huge difference to my life. ”



Looking after your health

making you feel better

- It is never too late to improve your health
- Know what medicines you are taking and what they do for you
- Have regular check-ups including eye tests and dental appointments
- Between 75% and 80% of the adult population have some form of foot problem*
- The average adult takes 4000 - 6000 steps a day*
- In an average lifetime our feet carry us the equivalent of five times around the world*
- If you are a smoker, giving up is the best thing you can do to improve your health

As a society we are living longer and we now have far more time to enjoy our retirement. It is important to remember that it is never too late to start to make changes to your lifestyle and routines in order to improve your health and well-being and ensure that your later years are not hampered by ill health.

the benefits. Your health improves, you feel better and you have more money to spend on other things. The local NHS Stop Smoking Service can help you. It offers group or individual support and advice on treatments such as nicotine patches, gum and other stop-smoking aids.

General health

In order to be seen by a local doctor you need to register with a practice near your home. Contact your local practice in the first instance or call the Primary Care Support Services Team for a list and information on how to register.

A library near you may also have this information available.

Other health professionals, such as pharmacists, dentists, opticians, podiatrists (chiroprodists) are also able to provide you with information and advice on health matters.

The benefits of quitting smoking

It's never too late to stop smoking! Giving up smoking increases your chances of living a healthier and longer life. Once you have stopped, your body begins to repair the damage and you start to feel

Ageing feet

Footcare is one of the most important aspects of personal healthcare whatever your age. However, painful and uncomfortable feet needn't simply be something to 'put up with' as we grow older.

If you experience any pain something is most likely wrong. It is important to seek prompt treatment, particularly if you have diabetes. People suffering from diabetes often suffer from poor circulation and loss of sensation in their feet, meaning that problems may go unnoticed unless they examine their feet regularly. You may prefer to visit a private registered podiatrist (chiroprodist) for information, advice and/or treatment. Contact the Society of Chiroprodists and Podiatrists to find one near you.

* Source: The Society of Chiroprodists and Podiatrists.



Awareness

Have you had a Medicines Review in the last twelve months? Talk to your doctor or pharmacist to arrange one. A problem with your feet can lead to irritability, pain and limited mobility. Proper foot care is essential and should be part of your daily routine.



Action

Check the expiry dates on the medicines that you have in your cupboards. Do not order more than you need. Take a moment to think about your feet, eyesight, dental health and hearing - perhaps you've not noticed a gradual decline.



Talk to

Always discuss problems with your doctor, pharmacist, dentist, optician or podiatrist. Some conditions can be treated and not all aches and pains are a consequence of getting older.



Prevention

Do not wait until you are ill to register with a local doctor. For information on your nearest surgery contact the Primary Care Support Service Team. Have regular dental and sight check ups. Talk to your pharmacist about any concerns that you may have. If you are over 65 ask your doctor about receiving the flu vaccination.



Contacts

- NHS Direct 0845 4647
- East Sussex Stop Smoking Service 0800 917 8896
- Primary Care Support Services 01273 403588
- Medicines Information Centre 020 8321 5880
- The Society of Chiroprodists and Podiatrists 0845 450 3720
- Diabetes UK Helpline 0845 120 2960
- Royal National Institute for the Deaf 0808 808 0123 (Hearing check line is 0845 600 5555)
- East Sussex Community Information Service 01273 481754

WEBLINKS • www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk • www.rnid.org.uk • www.escis.org.uk

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



Basic footcare tips

Keeping feet clean is an essential part of any good healthy feet regime. Wash feet daily in warm soapy water, rinse well and dry thoroughly. You may need to apply moisturiser, massaging from the toes to the knees but do not apply between the toes themselves. Trim your toenails regularly, cutting straight across and making sure you do not cut too short. If possible have your feet professionally measured when buying new shoes and make sure that you wear well-fitting shoes that provide good support, are wide enough and allow your feet to breathe. Exercise your feet regularly to improve blood circulation, increase muscle tone and strengthen arches.

Medicines

Your high street pharmacist will be able to advise you on a range of medicines and remedies for everyday illnesses. You do not need to make an appointment and advice and information will be provided free of charge.

Medicines reviews

Many of us rely on medicine to keep us fit and well. If you are taking a number of different medicines it can be difficult to remember what each one is for and when to take them. Ask your doctor or pharmacist if you have any questions or need help with your medicines.

If you are taking regular prescription medicines or suffer from a long-term illness you should have a regular review of your medicines at least once a year.

The review may be carried out by a pharmacist, a doctor or a nurse. It will give you the opportunity to ask questions, talk about anything that is worrying you and explain how your medicines are working for you. Ask for a leaflet at your doctor's surgery or the local pharmacy.

Repeat dispensing

Ask your doctor or pharmacist about 'Repeat Dispensing' if you are taking regular medicines. You may be able to collect monthly supplies of



your medicine from your local pharmacy without needing to obtain a repeat prescription from your doctor each time.

Remember to only order the medicines you are taking and tell the doctor or pharmacist if you have stopped taking any of your medicines. Check the expiry dates on the medicines that you have in your cupboards. Just like foods, medicines should not be taken after the use-by date. Return any out-of-date or unused medicines to your pharmacist.

Sight

People over 60 are eligible for a free NHS sight test every two years, annually if you are over 70. If the test shows that you need glasses, you may also be eligible for help with the cost of glasses. Some opticians will visit you at home. NHS Direct can provide a list of opticians in your area.

Dental care

Regular dental check-ups are very important, even if you have no natural teeth. Your dentist will tell you how often you should go, and this may be anywhere between six months and two years. If you are on a low income or receiving certain benefits you may be entitled to free treatment. Always check the cost of treatment in advance, as it may be expensive. NHS Direct can provide details of dentists in your local area. For urgent dental treatment out of hours (evenings, weekends or bank holidays) contact the emergency dental service: Lewes 01273 486444, Hailsham 01323 449170, Hastings 01424 850792

Hearing

Four million people in the UK are losing their hearing but doing nothing about it. Research suggests this is because of embarrassment, but unfortunately a hearing loss at any age can have a huge impact on personal, social and working lives if it is not dealt with.

Many people wait up to 15 years between the onset of hearing loss and seeking advice about it. However it can be better to find out about hearing aids sooner rather than later as getting used to amplified sound is harder if you have already got used to a 'quieter world'.

If you think you may have some hearing impairment you should visit your GP as soon as possible. Your GP may do some simple tests, such as asking you to cover one ear, then speaking at different levels or using a hand-held sound generator, to see how you respond to sounds at different volumes.

Your GP may refer you to an ear, nose and throat (ENT) specialist or (particularly if you are over 60) an audiologist, who will test you further to determine the cause of your hearing loss and work with you to find the best possible treatment. You may have to wait a few weeks for your first appointment. The RNID's hearing check line is a quick and easy way for people to take action to deal with a potential hearing problem.

Your hormones

One of the female hormones is oestrogen and in younger women production of this hormone plays an important role in maintaining bone strength. Once women reach the menopause, oestrogen levels drop and this protective factor is lost. Although women are more likely to have osteoporosis, men can also have it, especially if they have low levels of the male hormone, testosterone. Bone mass also decreases as we get older and in some people it may be very low. This can mean that they have osteoporosis and are at risk of fractured bones if they have a fall. Keeping physically active can help to maintain bone and muscle strength. Eating healthily is also important so include foods with calcium and vitamin D in your diet, such as dairy foods, sardines, soya products and green leafy vegetables. If you have had a fall or a bone fracture, speak to your doctor, who will advise if you need extra calcium and vitamin D.

“ I think my 40-year-old daughter would be shocked to know that I'm still interested in sex. But why shouldn't I be? Just because I'm well over 60 doesn't mean I stop having those feelings and wanting to share my life with someone. ”



Loving in later life

intimate relations

- **Sexual desire doesn't disappear because you are older**
- **Older people can enjoy active sex lives**
- **Maintain intimacy in your relationship - keep the romance going**
- **Dating agencies cater for all ages, and for heterosexual and same-sex relationships**
- **Sexual problems can be resolved**
- **Sexually transmitted infections (STIs) affect all ages, a condom is the best way of protecting yourself and your partner**

The younger generation often assume that sexual intimacy disappears once you reach 60. The truth is that desiring sex and having sexual relations doesn't have to diminish as we get older. One recent survey found that at least 50% of people over the age of 70 are still having sex and that nearly two-thirds of older people felt their sex lives were as good as when they were younger*.

The health benefits of sexual activity

There are many reasons why regular sex is good for you. In women it can increase blood oestrogen levels, helping to protect against coronary heart disease and osteoporosis, and helping to keep the pelvic floor muscles toned, reducing the risk of incontinence. In men, sex releases hormones which help strengthen bones and muscles, protect against heart disease and may relieve congestion in the prostate gland. For both sexes, in addition to the emotional benefits, it can be a great stress reliever, induce sleep and be fun!

Maintaining a relationship

When you have been with your spouse or partner for a great number of years, it can be easy to slip out of intimacy and into companionship. Good communication will help you to discuss ways of maintaining a close sexual relationship that suits both your needs. If you are alone in

your later years, socialising or taking up a new hobby can introduce you to people with similar interests. If you are a lesbian or gay man there may be local groups you can join. For information contact Hastings and Rother Gay and Lesbian Helpline on 01424 444777 or the Lesbian, Gay, Bi-sexual and Transgender Switchboard on 01273 204050.

There are dating agencies that cater for older people, whether heterosexual, lesbian or gay men - including anyone with a disability. Remember, safe sex isn't just for younger people - sexually transmitted infections (STIs) can affect anyone.

Your changing body

It's an inevitable fact that, however young we feel inside, physically our body is changing. You may also be suffering from sexual problems related to age. Men may find it more difficult to get and maintain an erection, while women may find lubrication a problem. Erectile dysfunction can be a sign of other health problems, so do speak to your GP. These problems should not be just accepted as a part of growing older - your GP can probably help you, so don't be embarrassed to ask for advice.

*Source: 'Intimate Relations: Living and Loving in Later Life' by Dr Sarah Brewer



Awareness

Many older people will be put off by language that appears to trivialise sex as 'for fun' outside the context of a loving relationship. You don't have to lose your zest for life and sexual relationship just because you are getting older.



Action

If you've lost intimacy between you, take time to explore all aspects of your relationship again. And remember, as long as you're both comfortable with it, it's never too late to learn new ways.



Talk to

Talk to your spouse or partner if you feel you would like to re-energise your sexual relationship. You may be surprised by their response.



Prevention

Don't let sexual problems prevent you from having an intimate relationship. Discuss your concerns with your GP who will be able to advise you and discuss possible treatment.



Contacts

- Intimate Relations: Living and Loving in Later Life by Dr Sarah Brewer. Available from Age Concern Books £9.99
- The New Love and Sex After 60 by Robert N. Butler and Myrna I. Lewis
- Relate 0845 130 40 10 (helpline)
- Sexual Health Clinics: Eastbourne 01323 444166 Hastings and Rother 01424 448410 Lewes 01273 664721
- NHS Direct 0845 4647 (local rate)

WEBLINKS

- www.ageconcern.org.uk • www.nhs.uk
- www.ageconcern.org.uk/AgeConcern/lesbian_gay_links.asp
- www.playingsafely.co.uk • www.tht.org.uk
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk (see links to your NHS Primary Care Trust)

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk

“ Newspapers often make crime levels seem worse than they are. I like to feel safe, but while it's common sense to be careful about security, it doesn't mean I have to turn my home into Fort Knox or be afraid to go out.”



Awareness

The more aware you are of the potential risks, the less likely you are to be a victim of crime. Take a good look around your home and secure any weak points. Keep your bag closed and close to your body when you go out.



Action

Check locks on doors and windows to make sure they are secure. Never open the door to anybody unless you can check they are who they say. When out, keep to well-lit, busy streets and don't carry large amounts of cash.



Talk to

Organisations such as Sussex Police (Crime Prevention), East Sussex Trading Standards and East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service can give you free advice about keeping yourself safe in your home. Victim Support can help if you experience crime.



Prevention

It can be easy to think that every person who knocks on your door is up to no good, or that youths are waiting for a chance to pounce. In fact people over 60 are less likely to be victims of crime than any other age group. However it is still important to minimise the risks. Take steps to reduce crime and to protect yourself sensibly. Prevention is better than cure.

WEBLINKS

- www.eastsussex.gov.uk
- www.safeineastsussex.org.uk
- www.sussex.police.uk
- www.victimsupport.org.uk
- www.helptheaged.org.uk
- www.esfrs.org
- www.consumerdirect.gov.uk

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



Contacts

- East Sussex County Council 'Buy with Confidence' scheme 01323 418215
- East Sussex Safer Communities Partnership 01323 466549
- Victim Support 0845 30 30 900
- Help the Aged 020 7278 1116
- East Sussex Fire and Rescue Service (Community Safety Team) 0800 177 7069
- Consumer Direct 0845 40 40 506
- Sussex Police 0845 60 70 999
- Crimestoppers 0800 555 111
- Home Improvement Agencies:
Wealden and Lewes 01323 441013
Eastbourne 01323 415355
Hastings and Rother 01424 464880

Keeping yourself safe

reducing the risks

- **Take sensible precautions to reduce the risks though statistically you are at less risk than other age groups**
- **Secure your home so you feel safe - do not let strangers into your home without identification**
- **Don't buy from doorstep callers, get quotes for work on your home and use recommended contractors. Do not part with money before any work has been satisfactorily completed**
- **Keep safe on the streets**

Secure windows and doors

Make sure not to leave windows or doors unlocked when you are out or sleeping. Front and back doors should be fitted with five-lever mortice locks. If you like a window open at night fit it with a lock so that it can only open a few inches. Locks should be fitted through one of the handyperson schemes (operated by the Home Improvement Agencies) or by a qualified locksmith. Make sure you have a chain on your front door.

Bogus callers and doorstep sales

Sometimes people may try to gain entry to your property by pretending that they are from a reputable organisation. Always ask for identification and only let people into your house if they provide this. Genuine callers will not mind showing you their identification. If in doubt, you can telephone their company to check. Do not feel pressured into paying for things sold at the door. By law you must be given time to think about any purchase made on the doorstep. Ask for time before deciding. If work is carried out on your property do not pay for repairs until the work is completed to your satisfaction. Get quotes and use recommended contractors. The 'Buy with Confidence' scheme can assist with this or contact your local Home Improvement Agency. If you are dissatisfied with work that you have paid for, call East Sussex County Council Trading Standards or Consumer Direct.

Out and about

In urban areas reduce your risk of an attack by sticking to busy routes where plenty of other people are about. Keep your house keys separate from other possessions so that if your bag is stolen the thief does not have your address and your keys. Also you will still be able to get into your home. Keep your bag with you and do not leave it unattended, for example in a supermarket trolley. However, do not fight any attempt to snatch your bag - you could be seriously injured.

Peace of mind

Insure your home contents for theft or fire. If you keep valuables at home take photographs of them so you have a record of what is missing if you are burgled. Marking your property with your postcode can deter burglars because it makes it harder for them to sell the goods. Your local police station can provide special pens and 'postcode stickers' to deter potential thieves. Do not keep large sums of money at home and keep a list of credit cards and their emergency telephone numbers so you are able to inform the company if your cards are stolen.

If you have suffered a crime

Contact the Police immediately and give as many details as you can. If credit cards were stolen inform the relevant companies and if keys are missing change the locks. The Police can put you in contact with Victim Support.

“Slipping on the wet bathroom floor gave me a nasty shock. It could have been a lot worse if I'd broken my hip instead of just bruising it and I might have lain there for hours. Now I'm a lot more careful.”



Awareness

As you get older, it is easier to fall and hurt yourself. Tell your GP or nurse if you have a fall as you may be at risk of having further falls. It's important to make an action plan of what to do if you should fall.



Action

Check to see how you can make your home safer, room by room. Install stair and hand rails if necessary. Check loose carpets and make sure items that you use every day are within reach. Correctly fitting footwear can reduce the likelihood of a fall - check your footwear regularly, including slippers.



Talk to

If you are worried about getting help after falling, you may want to get a 'community alarm' (a Lifeline). The alarm can be worn on your wrist, as a pendant, or it can be part of a special telephone. Just pressing a button will alert staff at a response centre. There are many local alarm schemes (see Contacts).



Prevention

Age Concern and Help the Aged have information leaflets about fall prevention. They and the East Sussex Falls Services can advise you on home safety and what sort of equipment you may need to help prevent accidents. You should also talk to your GP if you feel you need help walking or would like to be referred to the East Sussex Falls Services. Remaining fit and mobile will help strengthen your bones, reducing the risk of falls.



Contacts

- Age Concern East Sussex 01273 476704
- East Sussex Falls Services:
East Sussex Downs and Weald Falls Prevention Service 01323 514801
Hastings and Rother Falls Prevention Service 01424 755255 ext. 5234
- Help the Aged 0870 1502 500
- Home Improvement Agencies:
Wealden and Lewes 01323 441013
Eastbourne 01323 415355
Hastings and Rother 01424 464880
- Lifeline Alarm schemes:
Hastings and St Leonards 01424 728000
Rother 01424 776640
Wealden and Eastbourne 01323 644422
Lewes 01273 611227

WEBLINKS www.helptheaged.org.uk • www.ageconcern.org.uk • www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk

Accident prevention at home

including reducing the risk of slips, trips and falls

- **Check your home for any possible hazards**
- **Make an action plan now of what to do if you fall**
- **If you fall, get help and keep warm**
- **Consider a pendant alarm to get help quickly**
- **Always tell your GP or nurse if you, or your spouse or partner, has had a fall**

Being fit and active can help to reduce your risk of having a fall by maintaining muscle strength and better balance. Eat a healthy balanced diet, with regular meals and healthy snacks containing calcium and vitamin D, for example dairy produce, fruit, green vegetables and oily fish. However active you are some aspects of ageing can increase the risk of a fall so it is important that your home is a safe place. Make your home clutter-free and easily accessible. Evidence shows that once an older person has had a fall, they are more likely to fall again. Tell your GP or nurse if you have had a fall. Falls are not an inevitable part of getting older and the specialist falls service can help. Make sure you have an action plan and think about how you will get help if you fall and cannot get up. You need to avoid lying for a long time on the floor, especially in the cold. Consider getting a Lifeline pendant alarm (see Contacts).

Minimise the risks by:

- Keeping clutter off the floor and stairs
- Using high wattage bulbs
- Wearing flat, well-fitting shoes
- Getting help carrying heavy objects
- Arranging regular health and eye tests
- Doing gentle exercise to improve balance - Age Concern have information on classes in your area

In the bathroom

Test your bath water, to prevent scalding. Use a non-slip rubber mat to stop you sliding when you get into the bath. A hand rail is useful if you need extra support. It's a good idea to leave the door unlocked in case you need help.

In the bedroom

Always switch off your electric fire or blanket before getting into bed, and check their cords regularly for scorch marks. In autumn time, check with your local council to see if electric blanket testing is available in your area. Before getting into bed, make sure that anything you need is within easy reach - a lamp, drink, medication - and it's a good idea to have a torch by the bedside. If you feel dizzy when you first sit up, wait a couple of minutes before standing up.

In the living area

If rugs are frayed, it is safer to remove them. To prevent having to bend, make sure everyday objects, such as the telephone or remote control, are kept within easy reach. Fitting a letter tray to your letterbox will also save bending. Have fire and gas equipment checked regularly; contact your supplier for details on how to arrange this. Check smoke alarm batteries regularly. Many areas have a Home Improvement Agency scheme (see Contacts).

What to do if you fall

- Think of your action plan
- Call for help
- Keep warm, covering yourself with anything available and try to keep moving as much as you are able, even if by just flexing your muscles
- Rest before you try to get up if you are able to do so



“ I enjoy an occasional drink with my friends but know my limits. ”



Awareness

As you get older it becomes more important to know your limit and stick to it. Alcohol can help us 'wind down'. However, if it is used without addressing an underlying problem, alcohol is likely to be used more frequently, with increasing amounts needed to produce the same effect.

If you take drugs - illegal or over the counter - you need to be aware that natural ageing processes can lead to additional risks, even from drugs you may have been taking for some time.

There is no shame in seeking help to address these problems.



Action

Follow the recommended guidelines for alcohol consumption, and be sensible about your drinking. For example, never drink alcohol on an empty stomach. The best option may be to stop drinking altogether. Illegal drugs are often highlighted as dangerous, but using prescribed drugs, over-the-counter medicines, and buying drugs over the internet, also carry risks.



Talk to

If you are worried about your own, or someone else's drinking or drug use, confidential advice and support is available from a number of services in East Sussex, see opposite. It is usually a good idea to talk to your GP first as they can refer you on to specialist services.



Prevention

Drinking sensibly will allow you to continue to enjoy alcohol but also to stay safe and healthy. Try to avoid using alcohol with any drugs - especially illegal drugs - or medicines. Always check with your doctor if it is safe to use alcohol with prescribed drugs.



Contacts

- Speak to your GP or Practice Nurse
- Action for Change (for difficulties with alcohol, free and confidential) 01424 460066
- Drinkline (24 hour confidential advice) 0800 9178282 (Free from BT landline)
- Alcoholics Anonymous 0845 76 97 555 (24hour Helpline)
- Al Anon (for families and friends of problem drinkers) 020 7403 0888
- Addaction (free and confidential drug treatment Hastings and Rother) 01424 426375
- CRI (free and confidential drug treatment Eastbourne and Wealden) 01323 410092
- Adfam (helpline for families and parents of drug users) 020 7928 8898
- National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247

WEBLINKS • www.alcoholics-anonymous.org.uk • www.al-anonuk.org.uk
• www.womensaid.org.uk • www.downyourdrink.org.uk • www.talktofrank.com

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk

Alcohol and drugs

useful things to know

- **Stick to the recommended guidelines for sensible drinking**
- **Talk to your GP if you are concerned about your own or someone else's drinking**
- **Keep a note of all medicines or remedies you take regularly**
- **Avoid buying medicines, preparations or remedies over the internet**

Reducing the risk of harm

Although most people tend to drink less as they get older, some people still drink more than the recommended safe limit. One unit of alcohol is the equivalent of one pub measure of spirits, a half pint of lager, a small glass of wine or a small sherry. However, the measures that you pour at home are likely to be larger than pub measures, and thus contain more units of alcohol.

It is recommended that men should drink no more than four units a day and women no more than three. Try to have one alcohol-free day a week. Drinking more than this can lead to significant health problems. Older people may be more vulnerable to the effects of alcohol, so drinking less is recommended. If you are drinking in company, pace yourself. You don't have to keep up with everyone else! Whenever a doctor, nurse or pharmacist recommends a medication you should tell them what you take already so they can give advice about possible interactions. When taking any kind of drug or medicine check that it is safe for you to drive or handle machinery.

What are the long-term effects of alcohol and drug taking?

As with alcohol, drugs can be misused when they are taken regularly without trying to address the underlying problem. Short-term effects of taking medicines or drugs without medical supervision can be falls, low mood, confusion, apathy and

poor appetite. Long-term effects can include ulcers, nutrition deficiency, organ failure and depression. Illegal drugs carry additional risks.

Can I drink when I am taking medication?

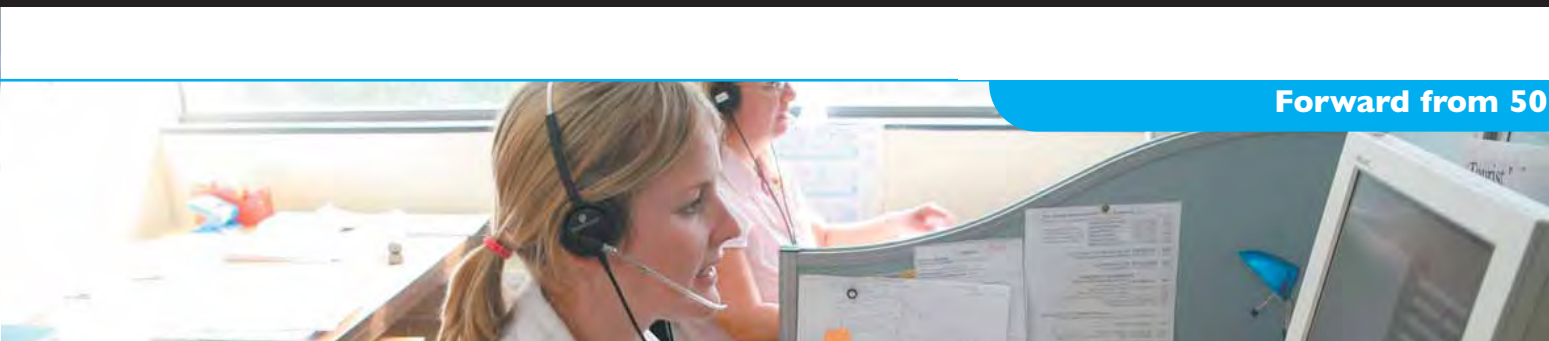
Many tablets and medicines cause problems with alcohol and you may need to stop drinking altogether. Painkillers and sleeping tablets are particularly affected by alcohol. Always check with your doctor or pharmacist before drinking if you are taking medication.

If you feel you need help please contact your GP or one of the agencies listed in the contacts section.

Worried about the drinking or drug-taking of a friend or relative?

You may be worried that someone close to you is drinking too much or misusing drugs. This may make you feel alone, angry or ashamed.

Sometimes, having someone in the family who is drinking or misusing drugs causes problems such as arguments, physical fights or problems with money. If this is the case you may feel torn between loving the person and hating what they are doing to themselves and the family. People in this situation often find it very helpful to have someone who is outside the family to talk to about their concerns or feelings.



What to do in an emergency

staying in control

- **Try to remain calm, think before acting and try to reassure others**
- **Make sure 999 has been called if people are injured or if there is a threat to life**
- **Know where and how to turn off water, gas and electricity supplies in your home**
- **If you are at home and an emergency happens, try to gather together some essential items such as keys, cash and a list of useful phone numbers**

How to stay in control of an emergency situation

Don't panic! Staying calm means the emergency services can get the information they need from you more easily. Summarise the situation briefly and clearly. Try to use a landline telephone rather than a mobile so the services can locate you if you get cut off. Of course if it's a fire call from a safe distance.

The emergency services, local authorities and providers of residential accommodation would be on hand to assist in the event of a flood or other serious emergency.

What to do if you smell gas

Open the windows to clear the air. That should reduce the smell, as well as any danger. If it's dark, don't turn on lights (to avoid the risk of sparks) and never use a naked flame to see your way.

It may not even be a leak; check your gas cooker or fire has not been accidentally turned on. If not then shut down all your gas appliances and turn off your gas at the mains supply.

Do you know where that is?

It's probably under the stairs or near the door.

Flooding

Changes in our climate, such as more severe storms and wetter winters, will increase the risk of flooding. To find out if you are at risk please check with the Environment Agency website or telephone Floodline. A free telephone warning service is also available.

What to do when a pipe bursts

Do you know where your mains stop tap is? If not, try looking under the sink or where the pipe comes into your home. Turning it clockwise will shut down the supply. It could take a few moments for the water to stop.

What is a medical emergency?

When it comes to your health or the health of someone in your family, it is often very obvious if the person is seriously ill and needs immediate emergency care.

An emergency is a critical or life-threatening situation. The Accident and Emergency Department is not an alternative to your GP. Contact your GP, pharmacist or NHS Direct for non-urgent medical care.

Do you have a mobile phone?

If you find yourself outside the coverage area of your mobile network and there is an emergency, dial 112. The mobile will search any worldwide network to establish the emergency number for you.

“ I had peace of mind having the leak fixed by someone I found using the 'Buy with Confidence' Directory I got from East Sussex Trading Standards. ”



Awareness

For an immediately serious situation, don't hesitate to call 999. What about the less serious but still very worrying things that can occur at any time? It's helpful to have an idea of what to do as well as a list of some useful numbers you might need.



Action

You can prepare for some emergencies by having a box of essential items kept in a place you can easily locate. The box could include a torch and batteries, candles and matches (not to be used if you suspect a gas leak!), a list of essential telephone numbers for family, friends and your GP surgery, small first-aid kit, and spare hat and gloves in case your heating fails. Have a plan, written down or in your mind, about what you would do if your property were to flood, catch fire, spring a leak, or need emergency repairs.



Talk to

Discuss what to do in different kinds of emergencies with family members or friends. Think about how you might get to a place of safety.



Prevention

Planning and being prepared for an emergency helps to reduce the feelings of panic and fear. Reduce fire hazards in your home. Fit smoke detectors - at least one on every floor. The Community Safety Team may be able to provide these free of charge. Telephone 0800 177 7069 for more information.

WEBLINKS

- www.eastsussex.gov.uk/atoz/emergencies/
- www.pfe.gov.uk • www.environment-agency.gov.uk



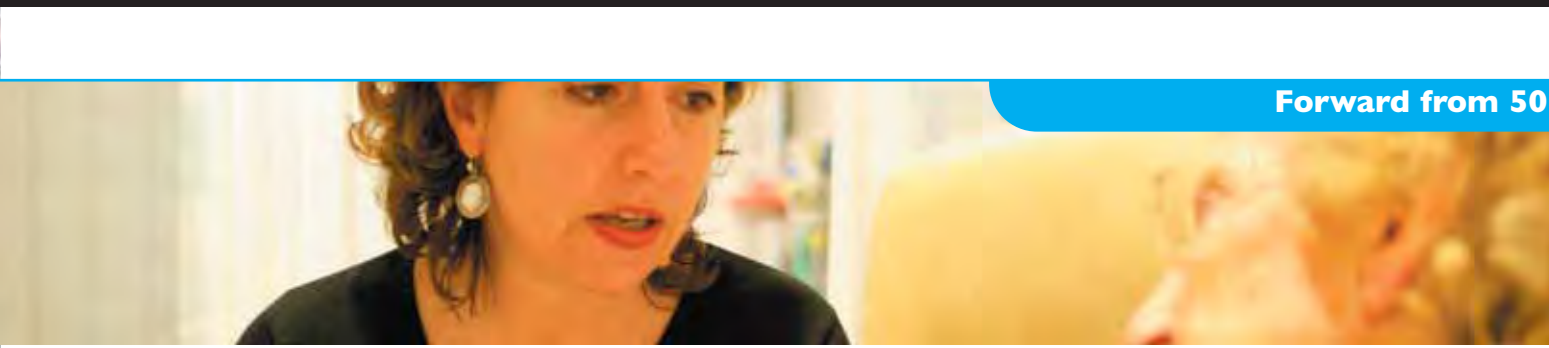
Contacts

- Ambulance, Fire Brigade, Police and Coastguard DIAL 999
- East Sussex County Council 'Buy with Confidence' scheme 01323 418215
- Floodline 0845 988 188
- National Gas Emergency Service 0800 111 999
- Pest control: Contact your local District or Borough Council - details on page 51
- Power cuts EDF Distribution South East 0800 783 8866
- Social Care Direct 0845 60 80 191
- To report a leak from a water main 0800 028 3399

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



“ I knew that the way she was treating me wasn't right, but I didn't know who to turn to. Luckily, another careworker realised I wasn't quite my usual self and encouraged me to talk. ”



Abuse

keeping safe

- Abuse of older people has been called a ‘hidden and often ignored problem in society’
- Abuse isn't common and you can do a great deal to keep safe
- Both older men and women can be at risk of being abused
- Abuse can happen anywhere

The abuser may be well known to the older person. The strain of caring for someone, especially on a long-term basis, can lead people to act in ways that they shouldn't. There may be a single or occasional act of abuse as the result of frustration. Or there are systematic attacks, deliberate acts with intent to harm. These may be caused by a relative or carer having their own physical or mental problems, the breakdown of the relationship or the carer's inability to provide the level of care needed. In nursing homes or residential care homes, abuse can occur when staff are inadequately trained or supervised and have little management support or guidance. Abuse can be an unintentional reaction to circumstances a person does not know how to deal with.

Domestic violence is a term used for abuse between people who share the same home. Domestic violence can affect victims in many ways, including isolation from family and friends, poor mental and physical health, anxiety, depression and a lowered sense of self-worth.

What to do about it

Abuse stays hidden because people are afraid to speak out. Abuse has a profound effect on the quality of life of an older person and their rights need to be recognised. Ongoing abuse can lead to the loss of the person's independence.

Forms of abuse include:

- **Physical abuse** - causing physical harm either deliberately or by rough or thoughtless behaviour.
- **Psychological** or emotional abuse - behaviour that makes you feel anxious, frightened or intimidated, including verbal abuse or demeaning, threatening, or intimidating language.
- **Financial abuse** - includes theft, fraud or exploitation. It may be someone using, or putting pressure on you to use, your money in a way that you don't want or isn't in your best interests.
- **Neglect** - including ignoring or failing to meet your medical or physical care needs, or not providing necessities such as medication, nutrition and heating.
- **Sexual abuse** - involves someone making you do something you don't want to, or that you didn't or couldn't consent to.
- **Discrimination** - being treated less favourably because of your race, sex, age, disability, sexual orientation, religion or role in society.



Awareness

Anyone can experience abuse and the abuser may be known to them. The abuser can be someone you know well or a stranger. The Adult Social Care Department has a legal responsibility to prevent, investigate and take action where it is alleged a vulnerable adult is being abused.

Abuse is an action affecting someone's human or civil rights. It may be a single act or happen repeatedly over time. The abuse may be deliberate or the result of ignorance. The vulnerable adult may be neglected or taken advantage of.



Action

Explain your concerns to someone you trust and ask for action to be taken. Never feel embarrassed about highlighting abuse and don't be afraid to complain. If the problem relates to a care service get a copy of their complaints policy and speak to the registered manager. If the abuse involves physical or sexual assault, racial harassment or theft you should involve the Police.



Talk to

Contact somebody you trust like your doctor, a relative, friend or carer. Call the Police, Social Care Direct, Age Concern or Action on Elder Abuse. All of these people will make sure somebody talks to you promptly. CRI Domestic Abuse Project offer specialist information and support for people experiencing domestic violence. If a trader is abusing vulnerable people by exploiting them financially, Trading Standards will take action to stop this happening.



Prevention

The earlier abuse is identified, the less long-term harm will be caused - always trust your instincts if you feel someone is not being treated in the way they should be.



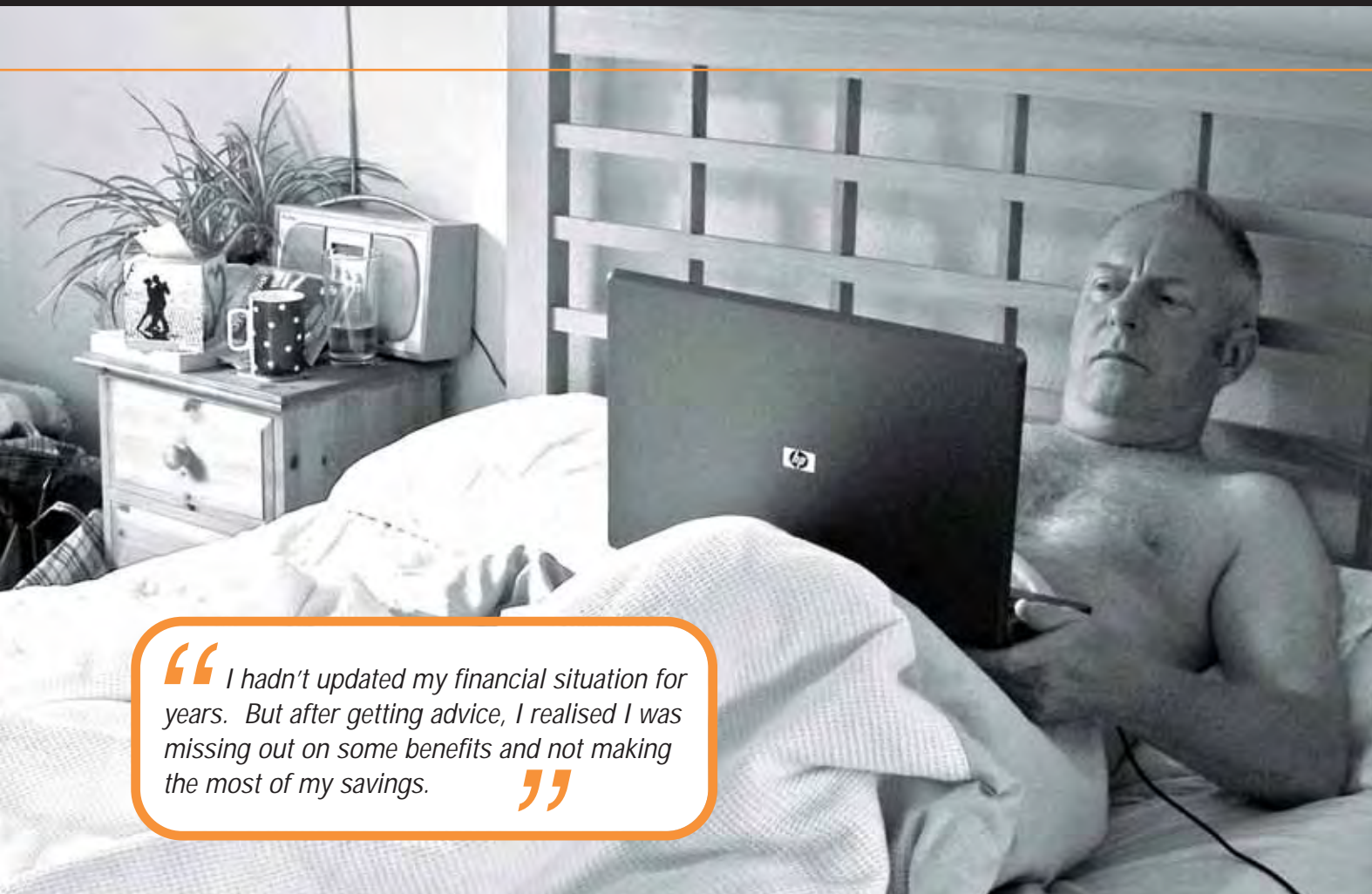
Contacts

- Social Care Direct 0845 60 80 191
- Action on Elder Abuse 0808 808 8141 (Mon-Fri, 10am-4.30pm)
- Age Concern 0800 009966 (Mon-Sun, 7am-7pm)
- Carers UK 0808 808 777 (Wed and Thurs, 10am-12pm, 2-4pm)
- CRI Domestic Abuse Project 01424 716629 or 01323 414224
- Commission for Social Care Inspection 0845 015 0120
- Counsel and Care Advice Line 0845 300 7585 (10.30am-4pm)
- Refuge National Domestic Violence Helpline 0808 2000 247
- Adult Social Care Emergency Duty Service 07699 391462 (outside office hours)

WEBLINKS

- www.crinet.co.uk • www.csci.org.uk • www.carers.uk.org
- www.eastsussex.gov.uk • www.refuge.org.uk • www.elderabuse.org.uk

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details www.eastsussex.gov.uk



“ I hadn't updated my financial situation for years. But after getting advice, I realised I was missing out on some benefits and not making the most of my savings. ”



Awareness

You may have had the same bank or building society account for years, but feel you are not making the most from your money. Find out whether concessions are available and which account might best suit your circumstances.



Action

Get advice on what benefits you may be entitled to. Try Citizens Advice, Age Concern or the Pension, Disability and Carers Service. For personal finances contact your bank or building society, or use the services of an independent financial advisor.



Talk to

Discuss your personal finances with an independent financial advisor. If you are having problems with money take advice as soon as possible. The Citizens Advice is a good place to start. Their advice is free. Beware of people who charge for debt advice - it is rarely a good option.



Prevention

Get help and advice early before debts build up. Find cost-effective ways to make your money spread a little further. Take advantage of incentives like having the same supplier for your gas and electricity.



Contacts

- The Pension, Disability and Carers Service
0845 6060265
- Jobcentre Plus
0800 0556688
- National Home Fees Association (NHFA)
0800 99 88 33
- National Debtline
0808 808 4000
- Citizens Advice:
Eastbourne
01323 413480
Lewes District
01273 473082
Wealden District
01323 842336
Hastings
01424 721420
Rother
01424 215055

WEBLINKS

- www.direct.gov.uk • www.eastsussex.gov.uk • www.escab.org.uk
- www.hmrc.gov.uk • www.taxaid.org.uk • www.publicguardian.gov.uk
- www.nhfa.co.uk

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk

Looking after your finances

you have worked hard, so make your money work hard too

- **Look at your personal finances closely - do a financial health check**
- **Know how to claim benefits, discounts and allowances, even with savings you may be entitled to some help**
- **Update your finances and get help with any debts**
- **Seek professional advice for your financial future**

Don't neglect personal finances

As you get older, your needs and priorities change. If you have savings, make sure that they are in the right place. If money is tight check that you are claiming everything that you should. In fact check anyway - some benefits depend on age, health or other circumstances rather than on how much money you already have (see page 30). If you are concerned about debts of any amount or struggling to pay bills, help is available (see Contacts).

Insurance

Check that you are adequately insured for your car, home and contents. Can you get a better deal with a different insurer?

Utilities

Check to see whether you are getting the best deal from your telephone, gas and/or electricity company. Paying by direct debit may be cheaper.

Banking

Make sure that the bank accounts you hold are still the best for your changing needs. Don't forget that your local Credit Union offers a range of saving schemes and low-cost loans. These are open to everyone but can be especially useful for people on a low income.

Incomings and outgoings

Income, savings, pensions and taxes are often inter-linked and changes to one can affect the others. As there are often new deals available, get advice on making the most of your money.

Getting advice

If necessary discuss your personal finances with a financial advisor. Banks and building societies have their own financial advisors, but you don't have to take their advice. Alternatively, an independent financial advisor can give you advice but check their fees first. The Citizens Advice will help with any debt problems - it is never too soon to contact them and they won't charge you for help and advice.

Lasting Power of Attorney

This ensures that your wishes are carried out in the future should you be unable to take decisions for yourself. See page 33 for information on setting up a lasting power of attorney.

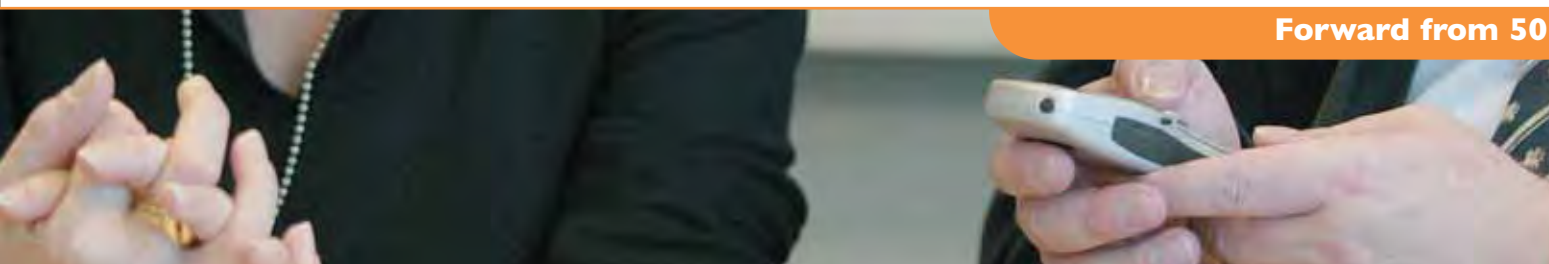
Pre-paid funeral plans

There are many companies which offer a pre-paid funeral arranging service. It is a simple way to provide for your funeral in advance. This will help to reduce the emotional and financial burden on your family and friends. It also means that you know that your wishes will be carried out after your death.

Equity release

Equity release schemes offer older homeowners the chance to get cash for some of the value of their home. Sometimes this will be a lump sum but other schemes will give you regular payments. Before you participate in an equity release scheme you must seek independent financial and legal advice to ensure that this is the best way to make your money work for you.

“ I had a little money in the bank, so I didn't think I would be entitled to anything. But I got assessed by the benefits advisor and now the little extra I get each month makes a big difference to my quality of life. ”



Knowing what you're entitled to the benefits are out there

- Don't assume you're not eligible for entitlements
- Ask a benefits advisor to assess your financial situation
- Don't be embarrassed to ask for advice
- You may still be entitled even if you have savings
- Many older people are not claiming their entitlements

There are many benefits, allowances, discounts and concessions you may be entitled to, even if you have personal savings. It is important to try and work out what these are. Some benefits, such as Council Tax, Housing Benefit and Pension Credit, are based on your financial circumstances (but not the value of your home). Other benefits, such as the Winter Fuel Payment and Age Related Allowance, are based purely on your age. Others are based on your care needs, such as the Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance or Carer's Allowance.

You may be entitled to financial allowances if you need someone to help care for you, if you have a physical or mental disability, or if you are a carer. At 60, you will also be entitled to other concessions, such as free or reduced price travel, and reduced price entry to leisure centres or adult education classes.

Over 60

You may be entitled to travel concessions from your District or Borough Council. If you receive Pension Credit you may also be able to get a refund on reasonable travel costs to hospital appointments. Contact organisations such as Age Concern, Citizens Advice and the Pension, Disability and Carers Service for advice.

Attendance Allowance

This is a tax-free benefit for over 65s who have an illness or disability and need help with personal care. It is not affected by your savings. The money can be paid directly into an account of your choice. Getting Attendance Allowance may increase other benefits that you are already getting. Inform your benefits office if your health changes.

Disability Living Allowance

This allowance can be claimed by people who need help in caring for themselves or in getting around because they are ill, disabled or terminally ill. You are not eligible to make a new claim for Disability Living Allowance if you are over 65. In this case you should claim Attendance Allowance instead.

Council Tax reductions

You are entitled to a reduction of 25% in your Council Tax if you live alone. You may also be able to claim a reduction to your bill if your home has been adapted for a disabled person. Contact your local District or Borough Council - details on page 51.

Understanding your entitlements

While you may know that you are eligible for some entitlements, there may be other benefits you are unaware of so ask your benefits advisor to check for you. These may include:

- Pension Credit
- Working Tax Credit (if you have not retired)
- Housing Benefit
- Council Tax Benefit
- Social Fund (such as winter fuel payments, or to help cover extra costs, such as paying for a funeral)



Awareness

Many older people are not getting the entitlements they are due because they haven't looked into whether they are eligible or not. Don't miss out - even a small extra payment each week can make a big difference.



Action

The pension and benefits system can be very complex, so rather than trying to work out on your own what you may be entitled to, and how your savings may affect this, you should seek specialist advice. Act now!



Talk to

It's easy to quietly find out what benefits you may be entitled to, by contacting Age Concern or the Citizens Advice for a confidential discussion.



Prevention

You are entitled to financial help and support. Many people find it difficult to make ends meet because they are not claiming the benefits they are entitled to. All you have to do is ask. Age Concern and Citizens Advice both provide benefit checks.

WEBLINKS

- www.adviceguide.org.uk
- www.escab.org.uk
- www.ageconcern-eastsussex.org.uk
- www.direct.gov.uk
- www.eastsussex.gov.uk



Contacts

- Citizens Advice:
Eastbourne
01323 413480
Lewes District
01273 473082
Wealden District
01323 842336
Hastings
01424 721420
Rother
01424 215055
- Age Concern
East Sussex
01273 476704
- East Sussex Disability
Association (ESDA)
01323 514500
- Jobcentre Plus
08000 55 66 88
- The Pension Disability
and Carers Service
0845 60 60 265
- Your local District or
Borough Council -
details on page 51

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



“ I wanted to get my affairs into order before I became too ill. I feel happier now because I know my wishes will be carried out and that, when I die, those closest to me will benefit from my will. ”



Awareness
Writing a will helps save your family from worry in the future, and means your wishes will be met. If you have an illness that may lead you to be mentally incapacitated in the future, and if you have views about the kind of treatment you receive and for how long, it makes sense to think about writing an advance statement or directive - a 'living will'.



Action
Contact one of the organisations listed to get more information on writing a will or a living will. For factsheets call Age Concern England Tel: 0800 00 99 66.



Talk to
Discuss with a solicitor or your local Citizens Advice about making a will and fees involved. A solicitor does not need to be involved in writing a directive, but you should discuss your wishes with your family and your GP.



Prevention
Settling your legal matters in advance will give you peace of mind and will also make things a lot easier and less stressful for your family if you become ill or when you die.

- WEBLINKS**
- www.citizensadvice.org.uk
 - www.publicguardian.gov.uk
 - www.adviceguide.org.uk
 - www.ageconcern-eastsussex.org.uk
 - www.lawsociety.org.uk



- Contacts**
- Age Concern East Sussex 01273 476704
 - Citizens Advice:
Eastbourne 01323 413480
Lewes District 01273 473082
Wealden District 01323 842336
Hastings 01424 721420
Rother 01424 215055
 - Law Society 020 7242 1222
 - Find a solicitor 0870 606 6575
 - NHS Organ Donor Line 0845 60 60 400
 - Public Guardianship Office 0845 330 2900

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



Organising your will and legal matters

making your wishes known

- **A will means that your wishes will be followed**
- **Make sure that your wishes are known**
- **Drawing up a will doesn't have to cost a lot**
- **Get financial help for legal matters**
- **A living will states your wishes for future treatment**
- **Organising your legal matters will help your family**

Why make a will?

Even if you feel you do not have much to leave, it is important that what you do have is left to those you care about. If you do not make a will, this means you die 'intestate'. Your spouse will be the main beneficiary unless stated otherwise. If you are not married to your partner they will not automatically be a beneficiary, so make arrangements in advance. The absence of a will causes lengthy delays so organise things in advance. You should consider including Power of Attorney in your will.

Other legal matters

Visit www.lawsociety.org.uk to find details of a suitable local solicitor. Some solicitors may have funding schemes to help with the cost. Remember to check in advance what fees will apply.

Making your wishes known

Age Concern provides a document that gives details on your wishes for funeral arrangements. It has spaces where you can fill in information so your family and friends understand your wishes after your death. This document should be given to a trusted family member for safe keeping. It can not be used as a will.

Call freephone 0800 00 99 66 and ask for the form headed 'To my family, friends and executors...'

Living will

A living will, also known as an 'advance directive', usually takes the form of a written statement setting out what types of medical treatment the maker of the will does or does not want in specific circumstances should he or she be incapable of giving or refusing consent. It must be signed whilst the maker is mentally competent.

Power of Attorney

A Power of Attorney (POA) is a document by which one person ("the Donor") gives another person ("the Attorney") the power to act on his or her behalf and in his or her name.

Partnership rights

If you and your partner are not married you should seek advice because different rules apply around:

- Bereavement and registration of death.
- Inheritance.
- 'Next of kin' status and incapacity.
- Pension provision.
- Tenancy.
- Wills and intestacy (if you die without leaving a will).

Organ donation

If you wish to become an organ donor call the NHS Organ Donor Line on 0845 60 60 400 (7am to 11pm).

“ I was worried I would have to leave my lovely home as I had no savings to repair it and make it safer and more comfortable for me to live in. But I found out that this needn't be the case and was able to get a grant to help with the costs of some of the adaptations.”



Awareness

Many people think more about where they live as they grow older. Upkeep of the home can become a problem and there are grants available to help. Where we live has a great effect on the quality of our lives so it is wise to look at all the options very carefully.



Action

Seek advice and information about alternative ways of remaining independent in your home, maintaining your home or moving to another home. Talk things through with family and friends, or someone you trust such as your doctor or social worker.



Talk to

Talk to your local Age Concern, Citizens Advice, Sheltered Housing Team or Housing Advice Centre. National organisations like Help the Aged, Counsel and Care (see Contacts on page 26) and the Elderly Accommodation Council produce fact sheets and run a helpline. Their advice includes renting and purchasing options. Council or housing association tenants can talk to their housing officer at their local neighbourhood office or Housing Association.



Prevention

It is better to think ahead about your housing needs rather than making a decision in a crisis. Choosing where and how you live should be your decision and no-one should try and persuade you to do something that you are not sure about. If you are facing the possibility of losing your home you should contact the housing advice team at your Council.

WEBLINKS

- www.helptheaged.org.uk • www.housingcare.org.uk
- www.counselandcare.org.uk • www.stayingput.org.uk
- www.spkweb.org.uk • www.direct.gov.uk



Contacts

- Lewes District Council 01273 471600
- Wealden District Council 01323 443322
- Eastbourne Borough Council 01323 410000
- Rother District Council 01424 787878
- Hastings Borough Council 0845 274 1100
- Warmfront 0800 316 2814
- Eastbourne Homes Retirement Housing 01323 415358
- Rother Homes 01424 776600
- 1066 Housing Association 01424 728000
- Social Care Direct 0845 60 80 191
- East Sussex Supporting People Team 01273 482805
- Elderly Accommodation Council 020 7820 1323



Housing matters

staying in your home

- **Repairs may be needed to make your home safer or more comfortable**
- **There may be grants available to help with the upkeep of your home**
- **Where we live has a great effect on the quality of our lives**
- **Choosing where and how you live should be your decision**

*Where reference is made to 'your Council' this means your District or Borough Council.

Home improvements

Your home may need repairs to be safer or more comfortable. If you are a homeowner with savings, you will probably have to pay for these yourself. Your local Age Concern or Council can supply a list of tradespersons, or contact Consumer Direct.

If you are a homeowner getting means-tested benefits, or at least one person in the household is 60 or over or with a long-term illness or disability, you may qualify for a grant. If you rent privately you may still get a grant for work you are responsible for. Contact your Council's Home Improvement or Private Sector Housing team.

A warmer home

The Warm Front Scheme provides grants to make homes (owned or privately-rented) warmer, healthier and more energy-efficient for people receiving benefits. If you don't qualify for Warm Front your Council may offer energy-efficiency grants.

Handyperson schemes

There may be a Handyperson scheme in your area to help with odd jobs for older and disabled homeowners or private tenants. This is a low-cost service, or free if you receive benefits. Contact your local home improvement agency (see Maintaining independence on page 44).

Changes to your home to maintain independence

Alternatively you may need smaller items such as handrails fitted. Social Care Direct can provide information on sources of help for all of these.

Contact your Council to ask about grants. You will need an assessment by an occupational therapist. Ask Social Care Direct to arrange one.

Supporting People

This government programme pays for housing-related support to help you live independently in your own home, including sheltered housing. Contact your local Lifeline, Housing office or the Supporting People team.

Council and housing association tenants

If you live in a council or housing association property larger than you need, you may be interested in swapping homes or moving to another area. Contact your local Neighbourhood Office or Housing Officer.

Retirement housing or sheltered housing

Self-contained flats specifically designed for older people are available to rent or buy, with on-site or visiting support. Ask your local Council's Housing Department.

Extra Care housing

These are self-contained flats offering 24-hour care and support on-site, and usually some meals. Contact your local Housing Department about renting. The Elderly Accommodation Council can advise about purchase.

Care homes

Care homes provide 24-hour personal care and some provide nursing care. The Adult Social Care department can advise you on quality, cost, and suitability for your needs. Contact Social Care Direct, Counsel and Care or Age Concern.

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



“ I felt depressed after I retired and for weeks I hardly went out. But after a few months I realised things weren't getting better, so I went to my GP for help. It was difficult at first, but now I'm making the most of my life. ”



Awareness

If you feel you've lost confidence, haven't got the energy to go out, feel irritable, are sleeping badly, drinking more alcohol, and take little care over your appearance, you may be suffering from depression. If you are becoming more confused, forgetful or have sudden outbursts of emotion, you may be suffering from dementia. You should seek professional help.



Action

It may take time to realise that you are not behaving normally. Talk to family and friends. See if they have noticed any changes in your behaviour. Contact your GP if you are worried.



Talk to

Discuss your concerns with your GP, who will be able to assess you and advise you. Discuss any other symptoms you may have. Symptoms of dehydration and urine infections can often be mistaken for symptoms of dementia.



Prevention

Get the support of family, friends and your GP. The sooner you talk about any concerns, the more quickly you can be diagnosed, and treated if necessary, before the problem gets worse. If you are dealing with someone who has a mental health problem, talk to Care for the Carers or Rethink, who can offer help and support to carers.

WEBLINKS

- www.ageconcern-eastsussex.org.uk • www.activ8network.org.uk
- www.cftc.org.uk • www.rethink.org • www.alzheimers.org.uk
- www.farmcrisisnetwork.co.uk • www.samaritans.org.uk • www.mind.org.uk



Contacts

- East Sussex County Council Social Care Direct 0845 6080191
- Age Concern East Sussex 01273 476704
- Mind:
Lewes and Wealden 01273 488660
Hastings and Rother 01424 442435
Eastbourne 01323 645320
- Care for the Carers: Eastbourne 01323 738390
Hastings and Rother 01424 717931
- Rethink 01323 644027
- Alzheimers Society 020 7423 3500
- Dementia Helpline (24 hour) 0808 808 3000
- Farm Crisis Network 0845 367 9990
- Samaritans (24 hour) 08457 90 90 90

Keeping mentally healthy coping with change and new challenges

- **Ageing doesn't have to mean a decline in mental health**
- **Life changes can be positive**
- **Physical activity helps keep you mentally active**
- **Take steps to help prevent depression**
- **Make the most of growing older**

Coping with life changes

There are many changes in life that can trigger anxiety, loss of confidence and depression, such as:

- Retirement
- Bereavement
- Loss of health or mobility
- Moving home

Retirement can lead to a loss of self-worth and not feeling an active member of society. The reduction in income can also force unwanted lifestyle changes. Bereavement is particularly hard to bear - not only have you lost a loved one, but your lifestyle may completely change.

A loss of health or mobility may mean getting out less or becoming more dependent on others. If you have to move home, for instance into a smaller flat or into a care home, you may find it hard to cope with the loss of friends and independence.

But there are steps you can take to help cope with these life changes (see Coping with loss - page 42). Make sure you have other activities and hobbies in place when you retire, so that you are not suddenly faced with long, empty days. Use the support of family, friends and local services if you are looking after a sick partner - you will appreciate and need the support network especially if your partner dies. Keeping physically and mentally active will help reduce the risk of illness and disease. If you have to move home, try to stay within your local area, so that you can maintain contact with friends and family.

Looking after yourself

Physical activity is not only a good way of keeping healthy - it also helps to keep you mentally alert, and can help with stress and anxiety too.

A well-balanced diet is also vital to your health and well-being. This should include plenty of fruit and vegetables - and remember tinned and frozen can be as good as fresh. Drink plenty of fresh water - especially in warm weather - to keep yourself hydrated. Dehydration can cause dizziness and confusion. Make sure you get plenty of rest too.

Recognising there's a problem

There are many factors that can lead to depression, such as bereavement, loneliness and ill health. Symptoms may include a loss of appetite, insomnia, weight loss, lack of motivation and little energy. It's normal to feel one or two of these at any time, but if you are affected by a combination of them, talk to your GP about diagnosis and treatment.

Dementia or progressive brain dysfunction is a common concern for many as they grow older. Symptoms, such as forgetfulness, confusion, and emotional outbursts, may not be recognised as dementia at first, but will gradually worsen. If you think you, or your spouse or partner, is being affected by dementia, talk to your GP.

Remember suicide can affect older people as much as young people. If you're concerned that someone is thinking of harming themselves support and advice is available. As the carer of someone with a mental health condition you may be entitled to support yourself (see page 38).



“ My husband and I have a wonderful relationship - but we've both had to adapt to our changing roles. Since my stroke, he feels more like a nurse than a husband, while I feel helpless rather than being the one in control. ”



Awareness

Being a carer has its rewards, but it is also hard work. Make the most of any support offered by family, friends, Adult Social Care or relevant voluntary organisations, and other carers.



Action

Do not feel you have to cope alone. If you are caring for someone, you may be entitled to benefits and services provided by Adult Social Care and other organisations, to help you manage and make life easier for you and the person you are caring for.



Talk to

Talk to Social Care Direct or Care for the Carers about your situation - they can advise you on what help you may be entitled to and also give you advice about contacting other helpful organisations.



Prevention

Looking after another person who is ill or disabled can be very stressful and can take a toll on your own health, mentally, physically and emotionally. If you feel under pressure, there are people you can turn to. Carers' organisations offer support and information. Try to get help before you feel overwhelmed.

WEBLINKS

- www.eastsussex.gov.uk • www.cftc.org.uk
- www.ageconcern-eastsussex.org.uk • www.alzheimers.org.uk
- www.rethink.org • www.crossroads.org.uk



Contacts

- East Sussex County Council Social Care Direct 0845 60 80 191
- Care for the Carers 01323 738390
- Age Concern East Sussex 01273 476704
- Crossroads: Lewes 01273 483620
Seaford, Eastbourne and Wealden 01323 848422
- Hastings and Rother 01424 444964
- Rethink East Sussex 01424 716712
- Disability Benefits Enquiry Line 0800 88 22 00

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



Caring for someone else

shifting responsibilities and adjusting roles

- **I in 10 of the population is a carer**
- **Get support from family, friends and other carers**
- **A Carer's Assessment helps to decide what benefits and support you are entitled to**
- **Adjust to your changing role**
- **You are not alone - ask for help**

Adjusting to the role of carer

If you are looking after your spouse, partner, parent, friend or other relative because of age, sickness or disability, you are a carer. As you probably already know, becoming a carer can mean making major changes to your life and the life of the person you are caring for. While some of these changes may bring their own rewards, others may take time to adapt to.

In becoming a carer you will be facing issues that you may not have had to deal with before. It can be hard to adjust to becoming a carer and someone being dependent on your support. An independent spouse or partner may now need constant attention, both physically and emotionally, and you may need to deal with problems such as confusion or loss of memory, incontinence and immobility. You may have been caring for a younger person, maybe a son or a daughter, for many years and are now finding it more difficult to cope.

You will also need to get used to other people's new perceptions of you. Your spouse or partner, family, friends and new people you meet may see you solely as a carer, rather than the individual

you always have been, or as a mother, father, wife or husband. Don't be afraid to remind them you have your own hobbies and interests beyond caring. It's important that you seek help in order to continue your previous activities.

Your role can often be a difficult one and it's natural at times to feel resentment, anger or guilt. These are normal reactions to demanding circumstances, so don't be too hard on yourself. Make the most of support from family, friends and local organisations, and take a break when you can - even a few minutes to yourself can sometimes help.

It is often very stressful caring for someone else, however much you love them, and stress lowers your immune system, leaving you more susceptible to injury and illness. It's important that you look after yourself as well as the person you are caring for, which means eating a healthy, balanced diet and trying not to take on more than you can cope with. You should let your GP know that you are a carer, so that they can support you in looking after your own health. Information is available locally to assist you in your caring role (see Contacts).



Making practical changes

Caring for someone may mean having to make some practical changes. You may need adaptations and improvements to your home to make life easier for both of you. This may mean simple adjustments, or more major changes such as installing a hoist over the bath, or making a home suitable for wheelchair access. In some cases it may be necessary to think about moving to a new home, more suited to your current needs.

Moving or handling the person you are caring for may be physically difficult for you and must be done correctly to prevent injury to yourself. Care for the Carers will be able to tell you what is available in your local area to help you with this. Social Care Direct can assist with sources of information and advice regarding equipment that may help.

Assistance and benefits

As a carer, you are legally entitled to a Carer's Assessment to find out your needs and what services might be available to help you. You can have this at any time, even if the person you care for has refused an assessment or support services. The carer's assessment is an essential 'first step' in getting support services. Contact Social Care Direct for more information.

Discussing how caring affects your life can be a valuable experience in its own right. It can also give you lots of information about other services that could help you, and other ideas for helping and supporting you as a carer.

There are also grants and benefits, in the form of allowances, which you or the person you are caring for may be entitled to, so it's important to contact the Disability Benefits Enquiry Line, or Age Concern, who will be able to advise you.

Care homes

If you, or the person you care for, are considering a care home or moving to more suitable accommodation, the Adult Social Care department can advise you on quality, cost, and suitability for your needs even if you expect to bear the full cost yourself. You may also consider contacting the Commission for Social Care Inspection (CSCI) on 0845 015 0120 for detailed reports on care homes and other regulated care services.

Family life

It's good to have the support of family and friends, so try and keep in contact, even if you live long distances apart.

Getting support

Carers often need support themselves, not only to help cope with the workload, but to deal with their own associated problems, such as stress and depression.

You may not label yourself a carer, and see it as your duty to look after a family member or friend. However, you may be entitled to support services that can greatly improve the quality of your life and that of the person you are caring for. Use the contact numbers in this section to get in touch with local organisations who can advise you.

“ I always thought it would be me that went first. I'd feel completely helpless if it weren't for my friends and family there to support me. ”



Awareness

Losing someone close to you is often a highly traumatic event. Although each person will deal with loss in their own way there are several recognisable emotions and reactions that many people go through. This is an entirely normal part of grieving.



Action

In the earliest days of your bereavement do ask someone to help you with the practicalities, such as informing friends and family, choosing a funeral director and getting the death certificate from the Register Office. The National Association of Funeral Directors may be helpful at this time. Many people find these practical tasks help them cope with the sorrow - painful though they are.



Talk to

Getting used to the loss of a loved one is not easy. Allowing yourself to express your feelings can help you get used to it. Talking about death and the person who died helps too. As does dealing with the practical aspects of your new life. If you continue to find it very difficult then speak to your GP. Cruse can put you in touch with bereavement support services.



Prevention

Grief can really knock you for six. It may affect your emotional, physical and mental health. Slowly you will probably find a new way of living whilst remembering the person you've lost. Grief is a natural process, take as long as you need to come to terms with your loss.

WEBLINKS

- www.eastsussex.gov.uk • www.crusebereavementcare.org.uk
- www.the-bereavement-register.org.uk • www.ageconcern.org.uk
- www.helptheaged.org.uk • www.nafd.org.uk



Contacts

- Register Offices:
Crowborough
01892 653803
Eastbourne
01323 415051
Hastings
01424 721722
Lewes
01273 475589
- Age Concern
East Sussex
01273 470706
- Cruse (helpline)
0844 477 9400
- The Pension, Disability
and Carers Service
0845 60 60 265
- The Bereavement
Register
01732 460000

Coping with loss

your changing emotions

- **Even an expected death can come as a shock**
- **Ask your funeral director for advice on arrangements**
- **Expect emotional mood swings, grieving takes time**
- **Look after yourself in your grief, get as much support as you can**
- **Help those closest to you by preparing legal matters and wills in advance**

Your feelings

You may think you should be able to cope, especially if the death was expected, but you still find you can't. You may think you've done all your grieving and then find you haven't. You may think that having other people who care for you will make everything alright but it doesn't - no-one can fill the gap in your life. If other people were not aware of the nature of your relationship with the deceased you may feel excluded. Anger is a common part of grieving - anger at yourself, anger at the person who died, anger at friends and family, anger at the system and anger at your god. Everything you took for granted has gone and you feel bereft and maybe worthless. You may feel you have nothing to look forward to. Talking helps. Allow yourself to express your feelings and talk about the person who has died.

Your life may indeed have changed. Your financial circumstances may be very different. You might be living by yourself for the first time. You might find that you have to manage tasks around the home that you've never had to do before. You may have no-one to share memories or special jokes with.

Being practical

- There are a number of practical things to be done following a death. If you can, ask a family member or friend to help out.
- A doctor will need to issue a death certificate.

- You should appoint a funeral director to make the arrangements. You may be entitled to help with funeral expenses.
- You must register the death within 5 days. You will need to take the death certificate with you to the Register Office.
- Tell family members, friends and colleagues.
- There may be organisations to notify too. If the deceased was receiving any welfare benefits then you should inform the benefits office. Other organisations to be informed include DVLA, the UK Passport Agency, Inland Revenue, and any bank or building societies. You may also need to contact their personal or occupational pension provider, insurance companies, mortgage provider, housing association or council housing office, social care services, and utility suppliers.
- It can be upsetting to continue to receive post, especially junk mail, in the deceased person's name. You may want to register the name and address of the deceased person with the Bereavement Register who try to stop post being sent to people who have died.
- Read the will if there is one.

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk

“ I needed help, but was worried about contacting Social Services in case they said I had to leave my flat. But they were very helpful and sent someone to assess my situation. I now have regular home care to lend a hand with things I find difficult which means I can continue to live in my own home. ”



Maintaining independence

dignity and choice

- You can maintain your independence at home
- Asking for support will help you to cope
- Many local organisations can help
- You may be entitled to payments to meet your needs
- Contact your GP or district nurse to find out about community health services
- Consider whether you want to move to a smaller or sheltered property

Living in your own home, surrounded by possessions and years of personal history, is important to all of us. But looking after yourself and maintaining a home - cleaning, shopping and cooking - can become more difficult as age affects speed and mobility. That's why it's important to seek help early on. With regular support and assistance, you are more likely to be able to maintain your independence and enjoy life in the security of your own home.

The Navigator service is free and helps older people to live independently in their own home for as long as possible. The trained team of Navigators visit people at home and assess the kind of help and support they may need. This might include getting small jobs done around the home or getting out to a local exercise group. Navigators have in-depth up-to-date knowledge about activities and services that exist in your area.

Keep active!

The best way to maintain independence in your own home is by staying mentally and physically active. Get out and about as much as possible, meet friends, take up hobbies and eat healthily.

Getting the right services

There is a wide range of services that you may be eligible for. Adult Social Care, or your GP and primary care team, can provide services, either directly or by arranging for services to be provided by another organisation. Adult Social Care do have to make a charge for their services. The actual cost will depend on your individual financial circumstances.

Assessing your needs

If you are having problems coping with daily activities but don't want to give up the independence of living in your own home, contact Social Care Direct or the Navigator service. They will arrange an assessment of your situation to decide what sort of help would best suit your needs.



Awareness

Do you manage to eat healthily and cook yourself hot meals? Do you shop regularly and keep on top of the cleaning? If this is difficult for you, the sooner you get help, the easier your life will be and the less likely it is that you may need to leave your home because you cannot look after yourself.



Action

There are many services available and organisations ready to help - they just need to know you need their assistance! As a first step, contact East Sussex Adult Social Care by calling Social Care Direct for information on services that might suit your needs.



Talk to

Social Care Direct will arrange for an assessment of your needs to see if you are eligible for services from Adult Social Care. Once the assessment has taken place they can provide you with information about services that best suit your needs. You could also speak to your local GP, District Nurse or Community Matron, or contact the Navigator service.



Prevention

It is better to seek help early on and get the help you need, rather than leaving it too late and not being able to manage in your own home. No one wants you to leave the security of your own home, if that is what's best for you.

WEBLINKS

- www.eastsussex.gov.uk • www.stayingput.org.uk
- www.ageconcern-eastsussex.org.uk
- www.carefinder.org.uk • www.esda.org.uk
- www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk



Contacts

- Age Concern East Sussex 01273 476704
- Navigator service 01323 442618
- Home Improvement Agencies:
Wealden and Lewes 01323 441013
Eastbourne 01323 415355
Hastings and Rother 01424 464880
- East Sussex Disability Association 01323 514500
- Social Care Direct 0845 60 80 191
- A4e (Direct Payments advice) 01323 414674
- Lifeline (personal alarm system):
Wealden and Eastbourne 01323 644422
Hastings and St Leonards 01424 728000
Rother 01424 776640
Lewes 01273 611227

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk



Home care and day care services available include:

- **Home support**

You may be offered help with personal care, such as bathing, dressing and some domestic tasks that you are finding difficult.

- **Day care**

Day care offers the chance to meet other people outside your home, share activities and have a meal. To attend, you may have to be assessed as needing the service. It may be possible to have help with transport to and from the day centre.

- **Personal alarm schemes and assistive technology**

If you live alone or find it difficult getting out and about, an alarm system gives you the security of knowing you can contact someone in an emergency. New developments have huge potential to support people to live in their own homes and to complement traditional care. Technology can provide you with more freedom and give carers more time to concentrate on the human aspects of support. There is a range of equipment that might help you with everyday activities and help you to feel safer, without intruding into your independent life. Contact Social Care Direct or your local Lifeline for further information.

- **Respite care**

If you are a carer, or are being cared for by another person, respite care offers the chance of a short break. This could mean someone coming in to take over care in the home for a limited period, or having a short stay in a care home.

- **Meals at home**

You can have meals delivered to your home if you are having difficulty in cooking for yourself. Special diets and diets to meet your cultural needs can be catered for. Frozen meals can also be provided, so that you can defrost, heat and eat when you wish.

Other forms of help

If you are finding it difficult to cope on your own, but don't want to move, you may want to consider 'live-in help'. Contact Social Care Direct who can advise you on how to go about arranging this safely.

Direct payments and individual budgets

The Direct Payments scheme means that, if you qualify for services, East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care can give you money to arrange your own care and support. This enables you to choose the service you want for yourself. Contact the support service, A4e (See Contacts on page 44), for more information.



Individual budgets are a new idea and add further flexibility to Direct Payments-style schemes. Individual budgets include social care money and potentially a number of other sources of funding - like community equipment and disabled facilities grants - which are brought together to give the individual a more joined-up package of support. Their flexibility means people are in the centre of the support-planning process; it recognises that they are the person best placed to understand their own needs and how to meet them. Individual budgets will start to be available in late 2008.

Contacting your GP

If you have any health problems, contact your local GP. If necessary they can refer you to someone in the community health service, such as a district nurse or physiotherapist, community psychiatric nurse, or continence advisor. Minor problems can often be solved by talking to your community pharmacist. Problems such as corns or bunions can cause real difficulties in getting around, so don't feel you are being a nuisance by asking for help with minor ailments. You can also contact NHS Direct 0845 46 47, if you have a question about a health problem.

Keeping well in winter

It is important to keep warm during cold weather. There are useful tips in leaflets from organisations like Help the Aged or from local 'Keep Warm Keep Well' campaigns. Details of this scheme are on the website www.dh.gov.uk or ask at Age Concern or your local council. Ask your GP about the flu vaccination - if you are over 65, or have a long-term medical condition such as asthma or diabetes, you are entitled to a free 'flu jab'. Flu can be a serious illness and older people are more susceptible to its effects. It is important therefore to take up the opportunity to be vaccinated each year.

Time in hospital

Whether you have to stay in hospital due to an accident, sudden illness or a planned admission, you will be asked for information about your home circumstances and how you managed at home previously. From the point of admission your hospital care team start planning for your discharge to ensure that, when you are recovered and ready to be discharged, any support you need has been arranged. Ask ward staff for more information.

Adapting your home

There are all kinds of disability equipment available, such as grab rails, stair rails, rails in the bathroom or raised toilet seats. You may also want to get advice on altering your home. Contact Social Care Direct who can direct you to sources of information and advice.

Looking at alternatives

Consider a more suitable type of home if you are struggling. There may come a time when you realise that your current home is no longer practical for you and should begin to consider the alternatives. See 'Housing matters' section on page 35 for options available.

Continuing health care

This is considered when a person has a long-standing illness, a severe disability, or a complex physical or mental health care problem. There is specific national guidance on the eligibility for continuing health care. Following an assessment with input from all the people involved in your care, it will be decided if you are eligible for continuing health care funding. If you meet the criteria, the necessary services will be paid for and arranged by the National Health Service.



“ Because I can't drive any more, using buses around East Sussex has opened up my whole life. I enjoy concessionary travel as well as the beautiful East Sussex countryside. ”



Transport

staying mobile

- Free bus travel
- Dial-a-ride and community transport
- Blue Car Badge scheme
- Travelling to medical appointments

Bus travel

Many of the public bus routes are operated with easy-access, low-floor buses, reducing the height between the pavement and the bus entrance, which helps if you have a mobility problem. The buses have space for wheelchair passengers too.

Everyone who is over 60, or with an eligible disability, is entitled to a bus pass allowing free off-peak travel on local buses anywhere in England. You should contact your local District or Borough Council to apply for this.

Traveline provides information on bus services and timetables for East Sussex and the rest of the UK.

Dial-a-ride and community transport

Dial-a-ride provides door-to-door transport for anyone who finds it difficult to use ordinary bus services, including disabled people or anyone with a temporary disability, such as a broken leg.

You will need to register with Dial-a-ride by phoning for a registration form. Once you have completed and returned the form you will be able to make a booking by phone. The minibus will collect you from your door and take you to your chosen destination. There is usually a charge for this service.

A large number of volunteer driver schemes operate in East Sussex. Many only cover a specific geographical area. Action in rural Sussex can provide more information.

Rail travel

Many rail stations now have step-free access to platforms. For further information about rail accessibility contact Southern or visit their website.

If you're 60 or over, you can buy a Senior Railcard. You will save 1/3 on Standard and First Class rail fares throughout Great Britain for a whole year.

Blue car badge scheme

If you can't walk very far you might be eligible for a blue car badge. You can use the badge whether you are a driver or a passenger. It means you can park nearer to your destination, and in restricted parking areas. Blue car badges are part of a nationally recognised disabled parking scheme but unfortunately cannot be issued for a temporary mobility problem. Contact Social Care Direct to apply.

Travelling to medical appointments

Hospitals and GP surgeries try to be flexible with the allocation of appointments where transport difficulties may arise. Do contact them if you are having trouble arranging suitable transport. You may be entitled to further assistance, either financially or of a practical nature, to help you get to your appointment.

Some parishes have voluntary car schemes for this type of journey. Information is available from Action in rural Sussex.



Awareness

East Sussex County Council co-ordinates a wide range of public transport services. This includes specialist transport for people with mobility difficulties. There are also many voluntary schemes operating in the county.



Action

Contact the numbers on this page and ask for details on the different schemes available. The sooner you find out the information you need, the sooner you can get out and about.



Talk to

If you are applying for a concessionary travel scheme or Blue Badge, ask whether you will need a mobility assessment or if your doctor needs to send information to support your application.



Prevention

It can be isolating and depressing when you find it hard to get out and run daily errands or meet friends. The assisted transport services are there to help you - so find out now whether you are eligible.



Contacts

- Dial-a-ride:
Lewes, Peacehaven and Seaford areas
01273 517332
Bexhill
01424 224278
Hastings
01424 424583
Rye area
01797 227722
- Social Care Direct
0845 60 80 191
- Action in rural Sussex
01273 405458
- Traveline
0871 200 22 33
- National Rail Enquiries
08457 484950
- Southern Assisted Travel team
0800 1381016
- NHS Patient Services Helpline
0845 850 1166

WEBLINKS www.eastsussex.gov.uk • www.traveline.org.uk
www.southernrailway.com • www.nationalrail.co.uk
www.direct.gov.uk

See East Sussex County Council website for latest contact details
www.eastsussex.gov.uk

Advocacy and support

finding someone to speak for you

There are organisations that can support you to make a complaint or help you to access services if you are having difficulties. They are often called advocacy organisations.

What is advocacy?

Advocacy is about helping people to express themselves. People who do this are called advocates. Advocates can support and help you to:

- Say what you want
- Represent your interests
- Understand the complaints process

Advocacy organisations in East Sussex

A national number is given for many of the organisations listed below. They will give you contact details for your nearest group where one exists. East Sussex Community Information Service (www.escis.org.uk) can supply details of other groups able to offer advice or support. Printed ESCIS directories are available in libraries.

General advocacy

Citizens Advice:	
Rother District	01424 215055
Eastbourne	01323 413480
Hastings	01424 721420
Lewes	01273 473082
Wealden	01323 842336

There are other local offices and outreach services in East Sussex.

Website: www.adviceguide.org.uk

Advocacy Finder Helpline - A national helpline for people looking for advocacy or help.

Phone: 0845 1 228633 (Mon-Fri, 2-5pm)

Website: www.advocacyresource.net

Older people

Age Concern East Sussex

Phone: 01273 476704

Website: www.ageconcern-eastsussex.org.uk

Help the Aged

Phone: 020 7278 1114

Website: www.helptheaged.org.uk

Mental health

Alzheimer's Society

Phone: 0845 300 0336 (National Helpline)

Website: www.alzheimers.org.uk

MINDinfoLine

Phone: 0845 766 0163

Website: www.mind.org.uk

Rethink - Working together to enable everyone affected by severe mental illness to recover a better quality of life.

Phone: 0845 456 0455

Website: www.rethink.org

MindOut - Advocacy, information, advice and support for lesbian, gay, bisexual and transgender people with mental health problems.

Phone: 01273 739847

Website: www.lgbtmind.com

Statutory bodies - getting a better service

Contacts for complaints about a service from Adult Social Care or the NHS.

A leaflet called 'IL03 Comments, compliments and complaints' explains how to make a complaint about Adult Social Care.

Phone: 01273 481242

Website: www.eastsussex.gov.uk

Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS)

Help to settle concerns or problems when using Primary Care, Hospitals and Community Health Services.

Phone: NHS Direct 0845 46 47

Website: www.pals.nhs.uk

Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS)

Advocacy for people who want to complain about their NHS health-care service via an independent organisation.

Phone: 01892 540490

Website: www.seap.org.uk/icas

Learning Disability

My Choice

Phone: 01424 441562

Website: www.seap.org.uk/mychoice

East Sussex Advocacy Service

Phone: 01323 739768

Website: www.mencap.org.uk/eastsussexadvocacy

Domestic violence

CRI Domestic Abuse Project - Specialist information, advocacy and support for women and men experiencing domestic violence.

Phone: 01424 716629 or 01323 414224

Website: www.crinet.co.uk

Other useful contacts for information and support in East Sussex

Action in rural Sussex (AirS) - Co-ordinates and supports the work of statutory and voluntary agencies working for and on behalf of rural areas of Sussex.

Phone: 01273 473422

Website: www.ruralsussex.org.uk

East Sussex Disability Association (ESDA)

Phone: 01323 514500

Website: www.esda.org.uk

Care for the Carers - Helps carers to access the services and support they need.

Phone: 01323 738390

Website: www.cftc.org.uk

East Sussex Association for the Blind (ESAB)

Phone: 01323 832252

Website: www.eastsussexblind.org

Hastings and Rother Association for the Blind

Phone: 01424 853711

Website: www.hastingsandrblind.org

Eastbourne Blind Society

Phone: 01323 729511

Website: www.eastbourneblind.org.uk

East Sussex Hearing Resource Centre (ESHRC)

Helps people who are deaf or hard-of-hearing to achieve independence.

Phone/textphone: 01323 722505

Website: www.eshrc.org.uk

Sussex Deaf Association

Phone: 01273 671899 or 01424 421987

SMS mobile: 07958 655119

Website: www.sussexdeaf.co.uk

Friends, Families and Travellers (FFT) - Serves the whole of the Traveller community, traditional and new, providing an advice and information service.

Phone: 01273 234777

Website: www.gypsy-traveller.org

Sompriti - Working towards the empowerment of Black and minority ethnic people, and race equality.

Phone: 01273 477550

Website: www.sompriti.com

Rother Race Action Forum

c/o Rother Voluntary Action

Phone: 01424 217259

Website: www.rothervoluntaryaction.org.uk/projects/rother_race_action_forum

Eastbourne Cultural Communities Network

Phone: 01323 735772

Website: www.eccn.org.uk

Hastings BME

Phone: 01424 204683

Website: www.hastingsbme.org.uk

Stonewall - Working to achieve equality and justice for lesbians, gay men and bisexual people.

Phone: 020 7593 1850

Website: www.stonewall.org.uk

Polari - Working for better services for older lesbians, gay men and bisexuals.

Phone: 020 7255 4480

Website: www.polari.org

Brighton Gay and Lesbian Switchboard - For information and support.

Phone: 01273 204050

(5pm-11pm every night)

Website: www.switchboard.org.uk/brighton

Hastings Borough Council 0845 274 1066

Rother District Council 01424 787999

Eastbourne Borough Council 01323 410000

Wealden District Council 01323 443322 or 01892 653311

Lewes District Council 01273 471600

Website: www.direct.gov.uk

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Hastings and St Leonards Seniors' Forum

Rother Seniors' Forum

Meridian Mature Citizens' Forum

Lewes District Seniors' Forum

Hastings and Rother Rainbow Alliance

Hastings and Rother Gay Helpline

Sompriti

East Sussex Disability Association

Care for the Carers

Age Concern East Sussex

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You can get this handbook in large print, in Braille, on audio tape, on CD or in other languages if you ask us. Please phone Social Care Direct on 0845 60 80 191.

It is also available in PDF format, which you can download from our website at www.eastsussex.gov.uk