

# Social work with adults experiencing complex needs

Information for the public

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## Social work with adults experiencing complex needs: the care you should expect

Adults experiencing complex needs may need a high level of support with many aspects of their daily life, and so rely on a range of health and social care services to help them. This can be because of illness, disability, broader life circumstances, or a combination of these. It is often difficult for adults experiencing complex needs to live the way they wish, or to access support when they need it. Social workers are one of the main professional groups who support adults experiencing complex needs.

We want this guideline to make a difference to the lives of adults experiencing complex needs by making sure:

- they have a detailed assessment to ensure that they get the care and support they need
- they have the information and support they need to understand the assessment process, and that the information they are given is suitable for them
- they know where and how they can access information about their rights under relevant legislation, and are supported to understand relevant legislation
- they always feel listened to, are treated with respect and dignity and their decisions and choices are always recognised and supported
- organisations that employ social workers ask adults with complex needs and their families and carers for their views, and use these to train staff and improve services.

## Making decisions together

Decisions about care are best when they are made together. Social workers and other professionals who work with them should give you clear information, talk with you about your options and listen carefully to your views and concerns.

To help you make decisions, think about:

- What matters most to you – what do you want to get out of any care or assessment process?
- What are you most worried about – are there risks or downsides to the care or assessment that worry you more than others?
- How will a change in care or support affect your day-to-day life?
- What happens if you do not want to have an assessment, or do not want to take up support that is offered?

If you need more support to understand the information you are given, tell your social worker or care professional.

Read more about [making decisions about your care](#).

## Where can I find out more?

The organisations below can give you more advice and support.

- [Age UK](#), 0800 678 1602
- [Mencap](#), learning disability helpline 0808 808 1111
- [Mind](#), information helpline 0300 123 3393
- [Sense](#), information and advice helpline 0300 330 9256
- [The Brain Charity](#), neurological helpline 0800 008 6417

To share an experience of care you have received, contact your local [Healthwatch](#).

NICE is not responsible for the content of these websites.

We wrote this guideline with people who have been affected by complex needs in a social work context, and staff who treat and support them. All the decisions are based on the best research available.

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