

**You** may have noticed a decline in the general well-being of your elderly parents and relatives: changes since a medical diagnosis or an emergency following a fall; the death of a spouse. You may be concerned about the NHS and social care. **Prepare to Care is a practical guide to help you all.**

Some of this may feel intrusive. Prepare to Care is about supporting your parents to remain living independently, happy and safe at home. Conversations can take time, and you may meet some resistance. But, better to tackle concerns than for parents and relatives struggling to maintain their quality of life when with often a little help they can continue to live independently.



## 1 Is everything ok?

If you're concerned about how things really are, here is our checklist to look out for:

- 1 **Are things how they always were?** Is the post piling up, laundry left undone, or the kitchen not as spotless as it used to be?
- 2 **Past its sell-by date?** Is there fresh food in the fridge and enough to suggest regular meals are being eaten?
- 3 **Hair and makeup?** Perhaps your Mum is looking a bit less groomed than she used to?
- 4 **Personal care and hygiene** – a delicate conversation but the solutions could be very practical, a nightlight, a grabrail in the bathroom; or maybe incontinence pads
- 5 **Are the bills being paid?** Are reminders piling up? Can you find out if spending has changed?
- 6 **Daily routines?** Buttons, socks and shoes, jars, locks becoming difficult for fumbly fingers; struggling with the stairs?
- 7 **Medication bingo** – is it being taken as prescribed? Are there repeat prescriptions, or GP appointments? Suggest a medication review with the GP.
- 8 **Still driving?** Do you need to have the "still driving" conversation?
- 9 **A social life and connections?** Are they still out and about seeing people and doing things they love? If they won't tell you, perhaps a cleaner or neighbour might know more.
- 10 **Safe at home?** Is the house cold? Has your parent been scalded or got small burns cooking or ironing? Is the garden in need of some work?
- 11 **Is it dementia?** If you think it's more than forgetfulness try and arrange for a diagnosis through the GP.

## 2 Having the care conversations

There are 3 important conversations to try and have. These may be difficult but will help shape the future particularly regarding care options:

### Where do you want to live as you get older?

Options include staying in their own home, downsizing to a retirement community, perhaps moving in with you, or another relative, or moving into a care home.

### What care would you like if you need it – care at home, a care home

Care such as home care or live-in care in their own home, or a move to a care home. Perhaps they're hoping you or a sibling will step in.

### How will you/we pay for the care?

Work out care how will be funded – selling the home, using savings, taking out an annuity or equity release mortgage – or perhaps care will be funded by the state.



## 3 Arrange for a diagnosis and a care assessment

### Make a GP appointment

An obvious first step. You will need agreement to gain access to your parents medical records.

### Arrange for a care assessment from the Local Authority adult social services

The GP should suggest this. You can also request/complete one on the local authority website to determine what your parents care needs are, and how it may be paid for. There may be a wait for a care assessment so get started as soon as you can.

## 4 Safe at home

To maintain independence and quality of life, and to give you and them peace of mind, there are adaptations around the home and some tech to help:

1

**Preventing falls at home** – from clearing the clutter, to improving the lighting and adding grabrails there are many cost effective adaptations worth investigating.

2

**Personal fall alarm and tech** – a fall alarms pendant/watch can be a life-saver, alerting you or a call-centre should a parent take a fall. There is other tech available such as motion sensors, heat detectors, video door bells to help them stay safe.

## 5 Important paperwork

There is key paperwork to encourage parents to sort out:

**Power of Attorney** – crucial for the future should they lose the mental capacity to make financial and health-related decisions

**Writing a Will** – particularly if they are funding their own care as it will clarify the finances

**Advance decision/Living Will** – which medical interventions they won't accept should they be unable to speak for themselves

**There is detailed information** on everything on this checklist on our website, [www.agespace.org](http://www.agespace.org) as well as a wealth of other guidance and resources regarding health, medical conditions, products and services, plus directories of local organisations to help.

**Join our mailing list** to receive newsletters, offers and discounts; or join our fb group caring for elderly parents UK to share info and seek guidance. We're also on Instagram and twitter.

## 6 Get Organised

Some useful things to try and do so you are well prepared should there be an emergency:

**List of medication** – keep an up to date list of their meds on your phone and one stuck to their fridge or somewhere visible.

**Contact details** – GP, neighbours and friends, the cleaner – particularly if you live far away.

**Spare house keys**, code for the keysafe

**Paperwork** – location of a copy of the Will, Advance Decision and Power of Attorney, bank details; computer passwords and other important information

**A what-if plan**; how to look after the house (including pets) should there be an emergency

**Care for the carer**: whether that's you or a parent or relative, so important not to forget the person who becomes the carer

**Family conversations** – don't try and do everything yourself; involve siblings and other relatives