

About this guide

This guide will help you if you need to make arrangements for your pets or property to be looked after if you are going into hospital or are planning a short stay in residential care.

It also explains how the Council will help you if you have been admitted into hospital or residential care in an emergency and you have not been able to make the arrangements yourself.

If there is anything in this guidance that you do not understand, please speak to your health or social care worker using the contact details provided at the end of the guide.

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1. What can I do myself to make arrangements for my property to be looked after?

Usually, a stay in hospital or a move into residential or nursing care is planned in advance with your health or social care worker. If you live alone, you will have time to make arrangements for someone to look after your property, pay your bills and take care of any pets until you return home. The most common option is to ask a trusted family member, neighbour or friend.

If you live in a rented property, you should tell your landlord that your property will be unoccupied for a while. Your landlord might be able to help you to make arrangements for your property to be looked after whilst you are away. You may have to pay for this service.

It is important to insure your property and its contents against damage or theft. If you need to arrange insurance you can do this online, arrange it through your mortgage provider or speak to an insurance broker. If you know that you are going to be away for more than a few days, you should speak to your home insurance provider to make sure that the property will have insurance cover if it is unoccupied.

If you have a pet, but no-one is able to care for it, you could contact your local cattery or boarding kennels. Usually kennels and catteries will only take your pet in if their vaccinations are up to date. Alternatively, you could arrange for a pet sitter to come to your property on a daily basis to feed and exercise your pet. You can find details of catteries, boarding kennels and pet sitters in the telephone directory, or on the internet. You could also ask your local vet for advice. You will need to pay any fees for boarding your pet or using a pet sitter.

If you are going into hospital or have a planned temporary stay in a care home and need help with making arrangements for your pets or your property, you can discuss this with your health or social care worker. If you do not have a health or social care worker, you can contact the Council's Adults Social Care service on 01642 771500.

2. What if I have not been able to make my own arrangements?

Sometimes people are admitted to hospital or residential care in an emergency and have not been able to arrange for their property or pets to be cared for. If this happens to you and you do not have anyone who is willing or able to look after your property or pets, the Council can help you.

The Council has a duty under the Care Act 2014 to protect any **moveable property**, if we think, there is a risk that your property might be lost or damaged. Moveable property includes pets as well as personal property, such as valuable personal possessions.

3. How will the Council protect my property?

Usually, a member of the Council's Property and Financial Affairs Team will need to go into your home to protect your property. For example, we may need to:

- Switch off electrical or gas appliances.
- Make sure that all of the doors and windows are locked.
- Temporarily re-home your pet.
- Remove your valuables, cash or bank books for safekeeping.

If we need to visit your home, your health or social care worker will talk to you about it first. You will need to sign a consent form to show that you have given us permission to enter your property. When we visit, there will always be at least two members of staff and they will carry a letter with them that shows they have authorisation to be there.

If we remove any items from your home, we will store them in a safe or in a locked cupboard and will keep a record of the items that we are safekeeping for you. We will also keep your key until you return home.

4. What if I cannot find my key?

If you cannot find your key, we will arrange for a locksmith to visit your property to change the locks. We will keep your new key safe until you return home.

5. What if I am unable to give my consent?

Sometimes people are not able to give their consent. This might be because they are too poorly, or because they lack capacity to make a decision. If you are unable to give your consent for these reasons, and you do not have anyone else who can act on your behalf, a social worker will make a decision in your best interest.

6. How long will the Council look after my property for?

The Council has a responsibility to protect your property until you return home or can make other arrangements. If you are unable to return home, your health or social care worker will talk to you, or to someone who is authorised to act on your behalf, to agree what to do with your property.

7. Will I have to pay anything?

Sometimes the Council will have to pay to protect your property. This could be for boarding or vet fees for your pet, secure storage or locksmith costs. If we have to pay something on your behalf, we will send you an invoice to cover the costs. We will talk to you about it first, and if you are concerned about paying, you can speak to your health or social care worker.

If you need help to read or understand this guide please speak to your health or social care worker or contact Adult Social Care on 01642 771500.

Contact Details Adult Social Care

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Relay UK (for deaf, hard-of-hearing and speech impaired people)

Office hours: Monday to Thursday: 8.30 am - 5.00 pm and Friday: 8.30 am - 4.30 pm.

If you need help in emergency when our offices are closed, you can contact the
Emergency Duty Team: 01642 524552.

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