

# Getting Help if you have a Learning Difficulty

A guide to getting  
support in Sheffield

**Mutual  
Support**





If you have a learning disability **AND** you need help to manage your daily needs, then, **BY LAW** you are entitled to a Community Care Assessment to see if you qualify for 'Adult Social Care.'

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## What is a Community Care Assessment?

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It is a detailed look at how big the impact of your disability is on your life and on anyone who helps you.

**To get a Community Care assessment in Sheffield and find out if you are eligible for support from adult social care;**



- telephone the Sheffield City Council Adult Access Team on 0114 273 4908
- go to First Point, (Sheffield City Council's one-stop shop) at Howden House, Union Street, Sheffield, S1 2HH
- visit the Council's website at [www.sheffield.gov.uk/sds](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/sds)

The council has produced a wide range of accessible leaflets and guides to social care and self directed support.

A council officer will take your details & do a check to see if you need an assessment/a different service.

Do insist on seeing someone for an assessment if you need help, assessments must be provided to all people who appear to have some need for care and support (even if it is a low need). The Law is for a “suitably trained or qualified” person to carry out an assessment before anyone can decide if you qualify or not for support. In Sheffield this will be a social worker or care manager.

After you have asked for the assessment, an assessor should contact you and usually arrange an appointment at your home. It is often a good idea to get support during the assessment from someone you trust and who knows you well. This could be a member of your family or a carer. You can also ask for help from someone who is paid to support you, an advocacy worker or from a peer support, disabled peoples or user led organisation.

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## About your assessment

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- Ensure all your needs (and the level) are clearly identified - otherwise they will not be funded
- If your support needs have changed check to see if you should have re-assessment of your needs, family/carers should be consulted over this. People’s needs change for all sorts of reasons,

including changes to do with support, circumstances and personal preferences.

- If a re-assessment has not been completed and your support or funding is reduced you can challenge this as it could be unlawful to reduce support or services without a re-assessment

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## Carer's assessment

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If you get help from a member of your family or a carer they should be asked if they want an assessment, as they have a right to one to help them to continue to care. They should be asked what support they are willing to give, about their other commitments, and if caring is influencing their health and their relationships.

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## Will I qualify for support?

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The assessor uses national guidance called **'Prioritising Need'** to decide if you are eligible for support, this depends on the extent of your assessed support needs. Ask for a copy of their eligibility criteria or see link below for more details;

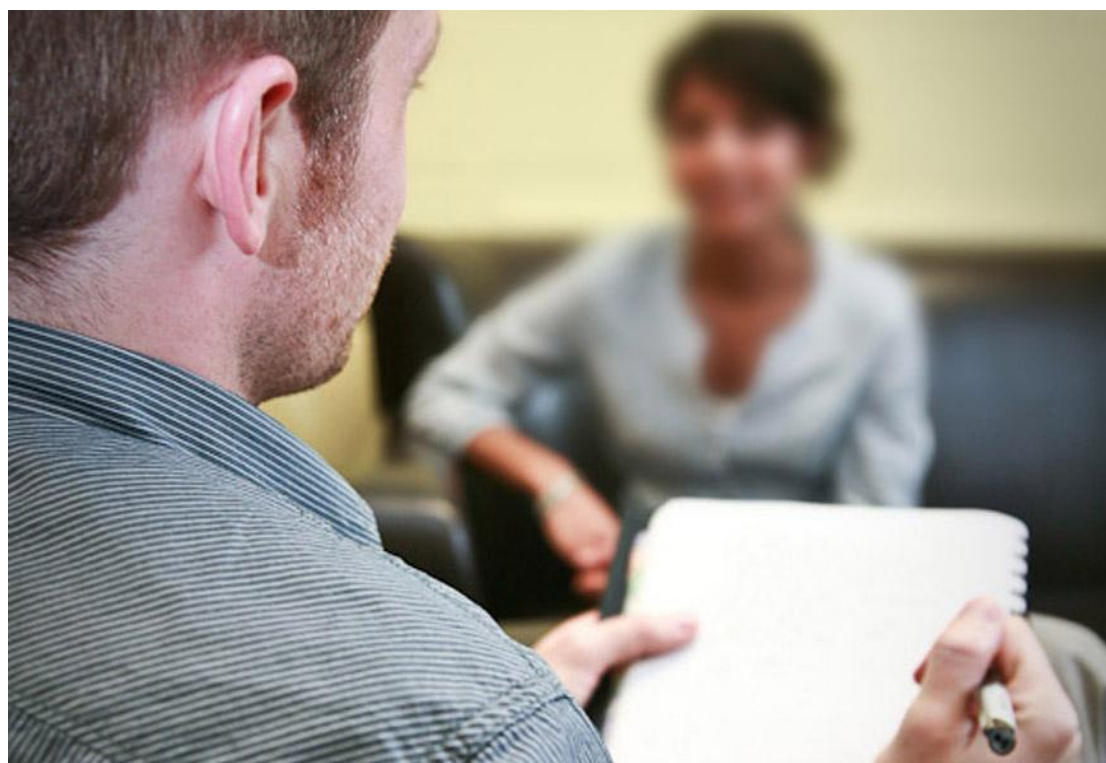
[www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/adult/how-get-support/am-i-eligible/eligibility-criteria.htm](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/adult/how-get-support/am-i-eligible/eligibility-criteria.htm)

Sheffield City Council helps people with **critical and substantial needs only**. Otherwise they should provide you with information and advice about community-based services that can help you.

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## How will they decide how much help to give me?

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The assessor helps you fill out an assessment questionnaire. There are 13 support ‘domains’ which score points according to the level of support needed. The more points awarded in relation to each question the more money is allocated to your support. This is called the **Resource Allocation System** or RAS.

The assessment also asks about any care that is not paid for, support provided by family and friends you receive and how this is working for you and your carer/s. **Any support you currently have should not be taken into account in the assessment.**

Following your assessment you will get a letter from the Council detailing the amount of money you have been awarded, this amount is referred to as “indicative budget”.



The amount in your budget is an **indication of the money needed** to meet your assessed needs. This means that sometimes people will spend less than their indicative budget and sometimes more funding may be needed. It is not always clear as to how the 'RAS' system convert assessments into cash entitlements. Do ask for clarification and an explanation as to how your budget was worked out if you feel it is insufficient to meet your assessed needs.

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## Developing a Support Plan

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Now you have a copy of your assessment and an "indicative budget" you can write up a plan about how you will use your budget, get the plan agreed by the Council & make arrangements to develop and maintain your package of support and/or services.

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## What is a Support Plan:

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A Support Plan describes what a person wants to change about their life and how they will use their Budget to make these changes happen. **Remember to plan for contingencies or short-term needs** to cover emergencies or crisis, and the occasional things like in holiday periods or

if a carer gets sick. (For more information on support planning see resources section on page 16)

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## What kind of things can I use the money for?

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Support to live at home and get out and about (options include employing your own staff, using an agency or service provider), learn new things, a community course, some gadget or technology that helps you stay safe or independent, help with getting a break or with staying well, for example joining a gym or weight loss club.



Everyone has different routines and ways they want to live their lives and therefore everyone's support plans will be different. There are lots of different ways that you might like to secure your support, and this fine as long as it obviously meets your needs, is lawful and affordable. Personal budgets can only be used to support you with your care needs (not used for something you would normally buy yourself) and must be agreed by the Council. Unless there are exceptional circumstances, you can't use the money to employ a close relative or person living in your home.

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## Can I change my support plan?

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Yes, as long as it still meets your needs, outcomes and is within budget – e.g. for example switching from one community activity to another. **If in any doubt always check with the Council.**

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## What about carers' expenses?

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Put these in your plan as “disability-related expenses”; if you pay them, they are allowed in your financial assessment but aren’t usually contributed to as part of your personal budget.

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## Who agrees the plan and the budget?

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Once your assessor agrees the plan, they take this to a “Funding Panel” or a senior council worker, so that the support you have planned can be agreed and your budget released. If you are unhappy with their decision you can request that the Council looks again at their decision. In their response ask them to include details about how the Council will fulfil its duty to meet your assessed need.



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## What is a personal budget?

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A personal budget is the amount of money the Council pay to meet your support needs. It is the amount that has been agreed in your support plan for the cost of your support. The Council have been encouraging more and more people to switch to or use personal budgets to arrange their care. Councils should only do this if they have fully involved the disabled person. A new personal budget arrangement cannot be an excuse for making a cut in an established package of support - 'personal budgets' are about improving the quality of and your control over your support and services and nothing more.

If switching to a personal budget results in a cut to your support, when your needs have not changed or have been re-assessed, you can make a formal complaint on these grounds (see below)

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## How is the personal budget paid?

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Sheffield City Council will pay it in the way that is agreed in the support plan.

This can be as a direct payment to you or to someone who can represent you, such as a member of your family, an agent, a broker or a trust

established to manage your budget. The Council can also receive and manage your budget for you or you can arrange for a service provider to do this. They may also provide some or all of your support.

It is worth spending some time thinking about how you will manage your budget and the level of choice and control this decision will give you over your care. You should be able to access a range of information, advice and support that will help you make a decision that suits you.

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## What if my needs change?

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At any time, you can ask for a reassessment/to review your plan. By Law, the Council should review your support plan at least annually, but if your circumstances change and you think you need extra support you may need a reassessment so contact your social worker or social services department to discuss if this applies to you.

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## Charges

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If Sheffield City Council gives you money/support, you may have to pay something towards it. Everybody who receives social care support has a financial assessment to assess their ability to pay some of their own

money towards the costs of their support. In the financial assessment, make sure you include your “disability-related” expenses (extra costs due to your disability). Disability related expenditure is money that the Council consider as not taken into account when assessing your ability to pay towards your care costs.

In order to make informed decisions about taking up any support package try to get a good indication of the charges you will be expected to pay early in the support planning process.

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## What do you do if you are not happy at any stage?

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You should raise your concerns with the assessor formally. If you are still unhappy you can make a formal complaint by contacting the Council’s Complaints Team on 0114 273 4660 or write to:

**Complaints Team, Customer Services,  
Sheffield City Council,  
Town Hall, Pinstone Street,  
Sheffield S1 2HH  
Email: [socialcarecomplaints@sheffield.gov.uk](mailto:socialcarecomplaints@sheffield.gov.uk)**

If you are still not happy and believe that the Council may have acted improperly, you can raise this again with a senior Council Officer and ask

them to look again at your complaint or, consult a community care lawyer or go to the ombudsman.

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## **How to plan your support and create a great support plan.**

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There are several ways, described below, to develop your support plan in Sheffield. It is important you think about the best option for you and know where to go for advice and support if you need it.

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## **Doing your own planning or with family and friends**

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For many people writing their own plan, or partly writing it, is the best way of securing a plan that is right for them. You will have to spend time thinking about the kind of support you need and then research how you secure this in your community, including issues about who would provide and maintain any support and how you can stay in control. When you finish your plan your social worker/ assessor will then check it with you and help you to get it signed-off.



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## Can Sheffield City Council help me with my plan?

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Unless there are complex issues around how your support needs and preferences can be met in the community then it is unlikely that a Council social worker or support planner will be able to support you. The Council policy is that someone who is independent from the Council should help with or complete the plan with you.

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## Planning with a non-council support planner

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There are lots of people who are able to help people write their support plans. They will work for a range of different organisations across the city including charities, service providers, disabled peoples and user led organisations and private businesses. They should be able to provide you with good information about their services and the person that would support you.

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## Peer Support

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Some organisations will also be able to put you in touch with other people who share some of the same issues as you and may be able to help



you with your plan or give you some advice and information. This is often called 'Peer Support.'

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## Choosing your support planner

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Because support planning is quite new in Sheffield there is no tried and tested advice on how best to choose your support planner. Do think about the kind of experience, approach and knowledge you would want from the person you will plan with and try and get some recommendations from people that have used support planners. Some support planners will offer to help with challenging decisions so make sure you check out that you can get some help from them if things don't work out as you have planned.

Sheffield City Council have a list of Support Planners and details of their services and costs; available from your social worker, direct payments team (0114 273 5985), libraries or from: [www.sheffieldhelpyourself.org.uk/communities1](http://www.sheffieldhelpyourself.org.uk/communities1)

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## Drawing up your support plan

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The Council have developed a support plan template for people that want one but there is no preferred way of drawing up a support plan. You can decide how your plan looks using different tools and techniques, including pictures, video, tape recording, as long as it covers the 7 essential criteria, and it is **lawful**, **effective** and **affordable**.

**The 7 criteria for a support plan, accepted nationally and promoted by the Council, are that your plan should include:**

1. What is important to you?
2. What do you want to change or achieve?
3. How will you be supported?
4. How will you use your personal budget?
5. How will your support be managed?
6. How will you say in control f your life?
7. What are you going to do to make this happen?

There will usually be an action plan, which states when and how things are going to happen. Plans should also be detailed and specific ensuring that all your assessed needs are being met in ways that are right for you.

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## More information, advocacy and advice about community care issues

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If you want some support, as well as local support, with your care and support issues or with getting an assessment the following people, services and information should be able to help:

- **Mencap's advocacy service in Sheffield 'Your Say'** – 0300 330 0631
- **Sheffield CIL Advocacy Service** – 0114 253 6750
- **Age Concern Advocacy Service** for people with a learning disability who are over 65: 0114 250 2850

For general information or advice on local support services for disabled people phone Sheffield CIL Information Service 0114 253 6745; Monday to Wednesday between 9am and 3pm.

### **Carers' Support**

- **Sharing Caring Project** based at Sheffield Mencap – 0114 275 8879
- **Sheffield Carers Centre** – 0114 272 8362

**Sheffield Law Centre** maybe able to help with issues around accessing community care phone their Enquiry Line 0114 273 1888 Monday to Friday - 10am to 2pm

**Sheffield City Council.** If you think you may be entitled to social care funding or services talk to your Social Worker/ Care Manager/ Care Coordinator if you have one or contact First Point at Howden House. Talk to a First Point Advisor on: Tel: 0114 272 6444

A range of guides and leaflets about getting support to have been produced by the council. Ask about the kind of information they have that will help support you they can provide you with leaflets or visit [www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/adult/how-get-support](http://www.sheffield.gov.uk/caresupport/adult/how-get-support). Signpost Sheffield also has a lot of useful information about services, self directed support and making choices; [www.signpostsheffield.org.uk](http://www.signpostsheffield.org.uk)

**Disability Law Service:** Provides telephone or email advice on community care law. Free to disabled people and their family/carers

<http://www.dls.org.uk/>

Tel: 020 77919800 E-mail: [advice@dls.org.uk](mailto:advice@dls.org.uk)

**National Autistic Society:** If you or someone you support has an Autistic Spectrum Condition you can contact the National Autistic Society Community Care Service which offers advice and information about Community Care

<http://www.autism.org.uk/>

Tel: 0808 800 4104 Email [communitycare@nas.org.uk](mailto:communitycare@nas.org.uk)

**Learning Disability Helpline:** Provides advice and information on community care in England, Wales & Northern Ireland. England:

Telephone: 0808 808 1111 Email: [help@mencap.org.uk](mailto:help@mencap.org.uk)

**Carers and their Rights**, (2010). Professor Luke Clements.

This resource is available on the internet

[www.lukeclements.co.uk/publications/index.html](http://www.lukeclements.co.uk/publications/index.html) also by the same author and The Challenging Behaviour Foundation see 10 top tips for ensuring good support and services at:

[www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/cbf-resources/information-sheets/ten-top-tips](http://www.challengingbehaviour.org.uk/cbf-resources/information-sheets/ten-top-tips)

**Using the Law to Fight Cuts to Disabled People's Services**, (2012). A timely paper on community care and disability issues written by Steve Broach and Kate Whittaker. Available on the internet free of charge:

<http://www.disabilityrightsuk.org/usingthelawtofightcuts.htm>

**Get your rights: What to do if your service is cut?** (2011). MENCAP.

Available on the internet [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

**Know Your Rights** is an internet guide about rights for people with learning disabilities including information on rights to health and social care [www.know-your-rights.org.uk](http://www.know-your-rights.org.uk)

**Support Planning;** resources, information & example plans

[www.supportplanning.org/](http://www.supportplanning.org/)

**Making a complaint:** Ask for a copy of the Council complaints

procedure and make sure you follow it. A template letter to help you structure your complaint is available from:  
[www.lukeclements.co.uk/search.html?query=complaint](http://www.lukeclements.co.uk/search.html?query=complaint)  
(click on 'precedent complaint letter')

**Local Government Ombudsman;** Contact LGO Advice Team on 0300 061 0614 or 0845 602 1983

Talk things through with **Enable** and **Mutual Support**, phone Tom Whittaker on 07881 244 805 or email you enquiry to **TomW@enable-group.org.uk**

*Special thanks to Disability Equality North West for providing the original format and Sheffield City Council for their support and suggestions.*

This booklet was produced by **Enable Care and Home Support** and **Mutual Support**.



**Enable Care and Home Support** grew as a response to the needs and preferences of people moving from institutional care to developing lives in the community. Since then we have been providing a range of housing and support options for people with learning difficulties for over 20 years

Our priority is to focus on people getting a life not a just a service in the community and discovering what 'living your own life' means to each person we work with.



# Mutual Support

**Mutual Support** is a co-operative owned by its members providing services for its members. We are developing a new model of home and social support services for older and disabled people in South Yorkshire.

Mutual Support co-operative is made up of three groups:

- People who need support to live in their community
- Paid care staff
- Family members/ unpaid carers/ friends

In partnership we will provide great services in our communities

**Find out more about Enable Care and Home Support and Mutual Support:**

Visit our Websites

<http://mutualsupport.coop/>  
[www.enable-group.org.uk/](http://www.enable-group.org.uk/)

or contact Tom Whittaker at:

The Enable Group  
Sheffield Area Office  
Unit 2  
Burton Street Foundation  
57 Burton Street,  
Sheffield  
S6 2HH  
07881244805



Enable Housing Association Ltd  
Enable Care & Home Support Ltd

# Mutual Support