

## Personal Support– Maintaining Our Dignity & Independence

### Supporting Independence and Managing Change

#### Introduction

This help sheet is designed to empower Thalidomiders and people with similar disabilities to maintain their dignity and independence and navigate changes that may occur throughout life. Whether you are considering accepting assistance, exploring personal assistants, or using care agencies, this guide offers practical tips and reassurance to help you live the life you want.

#### 1. Embracing Independence

Independence means different things to different people. For some, it's about living in their own home; for others, it's about making decisions regarding their daily routines. It's important to recognise that seeking support does not diminish your independence—rather, it can enhance it by enabling you to focus on what matters most to you.

#### 2. Accepting Help: Overcoming Barriers

Accepting help can be challenging, especially if you are used to managing on your own. Here are some tips to help with this transition:

- **Change your perspective:** View support as a tool that empowers you to do more, not less.
- **Talk openly:** Share your thoughts and feelings with family, friends, or a support group.
- **Take it step by step:** Start with small tasks and gradually build up to more support as you feel comfortable.

#### 3. Using Personal Assistants

Personal assistants (PAs) can offer dedicated, flexible support tailored to your needs. They can assist with daily activities, personal care, or support with work and hobbies. When considering a PA:

- **Identify your needs:** Make a list of tasks you need help with and when you need support.
- **Recruitment:** You can find local agencies or advertise directly for a PA through disability networks or online platforms.
- **Training and Boundaries:** Provide clear instructions and set boundaries regarding your preferences and privacy.

#### 4. Working with Care Agencies

Care agencies provide trained staff who can offer a range of support services. Here's how to make the most of their services:

- **Research agencies:** Choose agencies with good reputations, reviews, and appropriate accreditations.
- **Personalised care plans:** Ensure the agency develops a care plan tailored to your needs and preferences.
- **Communication:** Keep in regular contact with your agency to address any changes or concerns promptly.

## 5. Managing Change Positively

Changes in life—whether due to health, living arrangements, or support needs—can be daunting. Here are strategies to help you manage change positively:

- **Stay informed:** Seek out information, advice, and peer support groups to learn from others' experiences.
- **Plan ahead:** Anticipate potential changes and have a plan in place for support and adjustments.
- **Look after your wellbeing:** Pay attention to your mental and emotional health. It's okay to ask for counselling or support if needed.
- **Celebrate successes:** Acknowledge the steps you've taken and the independence you maintain.

## 6. Useful Contacts and Resources

- **Local Authority Social Services:** For assessments and support planning.
- **Disability Advocacy Groups:** For advice, peer support, and rights information.
- **Online Forums:** Such as Scope, Disability Rights UK, or Mencap for community support and advice.

## Conclusion

Managing your independence is a journey, not a destination. Remember, accepting help and adapting to change are strengths that enable you to lead the life you choose. Reach out for support when needed, explore your options, and know that you are not alone on this journey.



