



What Are My Options for Support?

Introduction

Seeking support at home can feel overwhelming. This guide outlines the key options, what to look for, and what to avoid when choosing a support agency or a Personal Assistant (PA).

First Steps

1. Be clear about your needs

Identify the specific tasks you want help with (e.g. personal care, medication, meals, cleaning, social support, specialist care). Write them down and focus on what makes daily life easier.

2. Choose how support is delivered

- Use a **support agency**, or
 - **Employ a Personal Assistant (PA)** directly (often via Direct Payments).
- There is no right choice only what fits your life and priorities.

3. Explore funding and entitlements

Ask about Direct Payments, Carer's Allowance, Attendance Allowance, council support, Blue Badges, equipment, and Occupational Therapy. Many people miss out by not asking.

If Using a Support Agency – What to Check

- **Management:** Visible, approachable, and responsive.
- **Recruitment:** DBS checks, references, proper training, and competency checks.
- **Supervision:** Regular reviews and ongoing training.
- **Continuity:** Consistent staff and clear cover arrangements.
- **Emergencies:** Reliable out-of-hours and on-call support.

Your Rights

- **Dignity and respect:** Support must be delivered in the way *you* choose.
- **Safety and risk:** Any restrictions or equipment must be properly assessed.
- **Right to complain:** Raise concerns without fear—silence allows poor practice.

- **Delegated tasks:** You have the right to know who trained carers and how competence is checked.

Agency vs Personal Assistant (PA)

Agency – Pros: Backup cover, managed recruitment, less paperwork.

Agency – Cons: Less control, rotating staff.

PA – Pros: Full control, continuity, tailored support.

PA – Cons: You manage employment and cover if they're absent.

What to Avoid

- Accepting rushed or poor care as “normal”.
- Thinking you're difficult for asking questions.
- Choosing solely on cost.
- Ignoring gut instincts.

Red Flags

Poor communication, no care plan or risk assessments, constant staff changes, invisible management, or feeling rushed and unheard.

Green Flags

Clear communication, gradual introductions, regular reviews, flexibility, and feeling respected and listened to.

Final Thought

Good support protects dignity, independence, and quality of life.

You are entitled to **choice, control, respect, safety, and continuity**.

Start small, ask questions, compare options—and trust your instincts.