

Homelessness and terminal illness

Where to get support if you're homeless and living with a terminal illness

This fact sheet includes information about:

- who can help
- where you can be cared for
- contacting family and friends
- letting people know how you want to be cared for
- planning ahead
- useful organisations
- how we can help

Contact details for the organisations listed in this fact sheet can be found on pages 4-6.

Who can help?

St Mungo's Broadway is a charity that can offer a place to stay, and it supports homeless people who are ill. **Dying Matters** helps people to speak openly about dying and to plan ahead so that their wishes are carried out. These two organisations have a leaflet called *My Life, My Choices*, which has lots of useful information for anyone affected by homelessness and terminal illness.

Shelter provides information for anyone living on the streets, from staying safe to getting legal advice. It can also give you information on dealing with your local council or health and social care trust in Northern Ireland, including how to register as homeless and get on a priority housing list. You'll need to visit the right site for your area:

- Shelter Cymru: **0845 075 5005**.
- Shelter England: **0808 800 4444**.
- Shelter Northern Ireland: **028 9024 7752**.
- Shelter Scotland: **0808 800 4444**.

We're here for people living with any terminal illness, and their families. We offer expert care, guidance and support to help them get the most from the time they have left.

mariecurie.org.uk

Charity reg no. 207994 (England & Wales), SC038731 (Scotland) A003



Care and support
through terminal illness

The **Marie Curie Support Line on 0800 090 2309*** can give information and support to anyone affected by a terminal illness.

Homeless UK can help you track down services near you, like day centres, hostels and local council advice.

Where can I be cared for?

If you're staying in temporary accommodation, like a hostel, it could be possible to be cared for there or maybe you'd prefer to stay at a hospice, care home or hospital. You'll need to be referred by a doctor or district nurse for some of these so it's important to register at your local GP surgery as soon as possible. Your social worker, local council or health and social care trust in Northern Ireland may also be able to help.

You can use a friend's place, a day centre or other temporary address to register with a doctor. You can visit your local surgery to register. Contact HSCNI (Northern Ireland), NHS 24 (Scotland), NHS Choices (England) or NHS Direct (Wales) to find one close to you.

At home

If you're homeless or might become homeless, the council or health and social care trust in Northern Ireland may be able to arrange housing or access to emergency housing while you're on a waiting list. In this case it might possible to be cared for at home with the support of social services, your doctor or hospice services. You should approach your local council to ask for assistance. Shelter, **Citizens Advice Bureau** or your local law centre may be able to help you make an application for emergency housing.

In your hostel

If you're living in a hostel you might prefer to stay there while you're being cared for. The staff may be able to arrange for you to remain there with advice from healthcare workers. A member of staff, a health worker or someone you know may be able to spend time with you or help you with appointments if you like.

In a hospice

Marie Curie Hospices specialise in caring for people living with a terminal illness. Along with managing symptoms they offer counselling and other therapies to help you be more comfortable. Hospice care is free but you will need to be referred by your doctor or district nurse. **Hospice UK** can help you find other hospices in your area.

In a hospital

Hospitals have palliative care teams that work with regular hospital staff to make sure that your needs are met. You may also be able to spend time here if you're waiting for a transfer to a care home or hospice.

Contacting family and friends

It can be comforting to get in touch with friends and family even if you haven't been in contact for a long time. This can give you a chance to tell them about your illness in your own way and avoid the shock that family and friends might go through if they learn about your death later on. If you find this difficult, **Relate** may be able to offer help with relationship counselling. If you're having trouble finding your friends and family, the **Salvation Army** can help you find them.

Help for family and friends after a death

Family and friends can struggle with their feelings after someone close dies. Grief is a natural process that's different for everyone and it can take time to pass. Marie Curie has lots of information that may help people to cope during this difficult time. Contact the Marie Curie Support Line on **0800 090 2309*** for more details.

Letting people know how you want to be cared for

It's important to let the people around you and those involved in your healthcare know how you want to be cared for ahead of time. This can stop delays in getting the treatment that you need so that you're as comfortable as possible.

Planning your care

Planning ahead lets you decide how you would like to be cared for and who you want to be involved. This can be written down in a document and can include information like:

- what you want to happen
- what you don't want to happen
- who'll speak on your behalf
- how you'd like to be remembered

Planning ahead

It may be difficult to think about but planning ahead can make sure that you're remembered how you want to be. It can also give you a chance to pass along some things that meant a lot to you.

Power of Attorney

You can set up a Power of Attorney so that if you become too ill to make decisions, another person can make them for you. This should be a person you know and trust. Depending on the type of Power of Attorney, they can make decisions about your finances or your healthcare, or both. Some legal professionals may be able to help you do this for free or at a reduced cost:

- **Bar Pro Bono Unit** (England and Wales)
- **Free Legal Services Unit** (Scotland)
- **Law Society of Northern Ireland**

Your Will

There may be some things that you'd like friends or family to have, even if you don't feel like you have much to pass on. A Will can be as simple as signing a note in front of a friend but it's best if you ask a legal professional to do it for you. Marie Curie's legacy advisers can help you with making a free Will. Other organisations, including **Will Aid** and **Cancer Research UK** offer free Will writing services too.

Being remembered

You may be uncomfortable about the idea of planning your own funeral but it lets you make sure that you're remembered how you want to be. It can also be a time for friends and family to get together and celebrate your life.

There are some costs around a funeral which the local council or health and social care trust in Northern Ireland may be able to help with if there isn't enough money. Sometimes, they will take responsibility for the funeral, so it can help to let someone close to you know your wishes so they can be carried out.

Useful organisations

Bar Pro Bono Unit

020 7092 3960

barprobono.org.uk

Free legal services in England and Wales, provided by volunteer barristers.

Citizens Advice

03454 04 05 06

03454 04 05 05 (Welsh)

adviceguide.org.uk

Find for your nearest bureau, or get legal information and advice on the website.

Dying Matters

dyingmatters.org

A charity that helps people to speak openly about dying and to plan ahead so that their wishes are carried out.

Free Legal Services Unit (Scotland)

0131 260 5689

advocates.org.uk/FLSUwebsite/index_flsu.html

The Free Legal Services Unit was established by the Scottish Bar to provide free legal advice and representation in deserving cases for those who can't afford it.

Homeless UK

homelessuk.org

Information on over 9,000 services for homeless people around the UK.

Hospice UK

020 7520 8200

hospiceuk.org

A UK and international directory of hospice and palliative care, plus other information for people with a terminal illness.

Law Society of Northern Ireland

028 9023 1614

lawsoc-ni.org

Find a pro bono (volunteer) solicitor or barrister in Northern Ireland.

Relate

0300 100 1234

relate.org.uk

May be able to offer relationship counselling if you're having trouble with your family.

Salvation Army

0845 634 4747

Has a family tracing service to help you track down members of your family.

Shelter England

0808 800 4444

england.shelter.org.uk

Advice on housing rights and housing law in England.

Shelter Cymru

0845 075 5005

sheltercymru.org.uk

Advice on housing rights and housing law in Wales.

Shelter Northern Ireland

028 9024 7752

shelterni.org

Advice on housing rights and housing law in Northern Ireland.

Shelter Scotland

0808 800 4444

scotland.shelter.org.uk

Advice on housing rights and housing law in Scotland.

St Mungo's Broadway

020 8762 5500

mungosbroadway.org.uk

A charity that can offer a place to stay, and supports homeless people who are ill.

HSCNI Service Finder

servicefinder.hscni.net

Find health and social care providers in Northern Ireland.

NHS 24

111

nhs24.com/findlocal

Find local health services in Scotland.

NHS Choices (England)

111

nhs.uk/service-search

Find local health services in England.

NHS Direct

0845 46 47

nhsdirect.wales.nhs.uk/localservices

Find local health services in Wales.

Will Aid

0300 0300 013

willaid.org.uk

Offers a free Will writing service.

How we can help

We help everyone affected by a terminal illness get the information and support they need, whether you have an illness yourself or you're a family member or friend.

Marie Curie Support Line

0800 090 2309*

Ask questions and find support. Open 9am to 5pm Monday to Friday. (Your call may be recorded for training and monitoring purposes.) *Calls from landlines are free, but there may be a charge if you're calling from a mobile. Check with your mobile provider for details. Calls from any type of phone will be free from 1 July 2015.

Marie Curie Community

community.mariecurie.org.uk

For anyone affected by terminal illness to share experiences and support each other. Available 24 hours a day.

More information and further support

We also have an extensive range of information materials available to view online or in print. Visit **mariecurie.org.uk/help** where you can also find film guides, information about our services, and links to further support.

Marie Curie Nurses

Marie Curie Nurses work night and day, in people's homes across the UK, providing hands-on care and vital emotional support. If you're living with a terminal illness, they can help you stay surrounded by the people you care about most, in the place where you're most comfortable.

mariecurie.org.uk/nurses

Marie Curie Hospices

Our hospices offer the reassurance of specialist care and support, in a friendly, welcoming environment, for people living with a terminal illness and their loved ones – whether you're staying in the hospice, or just coming in for the day.

mariecurie.org.uk/hospices

Marie Curie Helper

We know the little things can make a big difference when you're living with a terminal illness. That's where our trained Helper volunteers come in. They can visit you regularly to have a chat to over a cup of tea, help you get to an appointment or just listen when you need a friendly ear.

mariecurie.org.uk/helper

Did you find this information useful?

If you have any feedback about the information in this leaflet, please email us at review@mariecurie.org.uk or call the Marie Curie Support Line on 0800 090 2309*.

This fact sheet was produced by Marie Curie's Information and Support team. It has been reviewed by health and social care professionals and people affected by terminal illness.

If you'd like the list of sources used to create this information, please email review@mariecurie.org.uk or call the Marie Curie Support Line on 0800 090 2309*.

Notice

The information in this publication is provided for the benefit and personal use of people with a terminal illness, their families and carers.

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