

EasierLiving

A guide for older and disabled
people living in London



ricability

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ABOUT THIS GUIDE

This booklet is about ways in which you can make everyday tasks at home easier to do.

Many people are surprised to learn that there are so many different gadgets to help with simple things like opening tins, reaching into corners or carrying things. And there are clever ways of adapting your home to get round any awkward features it may have.

Even better, there is lots of help and advice around. You may be able to get help towards the cost of adaptations or products. You may even be able to get what you need free. This guide gives you an idea of what is possible and tells you how to find out more.

Note: Prices in this booklet are given as a guide only. They vary from model to model. You may be able to get help towards their cost – see page 14. It also pays to compare prices – shop around! Prices don't include VAT because you may not have to pay it – see page 16.

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Ideas for your home

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Getting around

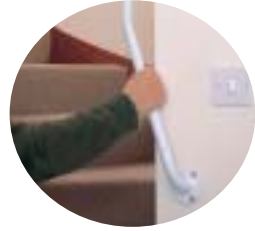
Getting into your home and moving around inside



▲ Stairlifts – can have a seat, a platform you stand on or a platform for a wheelchair (if your stairs are wide enough). From about £1900 for straight stairs. Through floor lifts go through a trapdoor in the ceiling and are more expensive. Not all houses are suitable



▲ You can sit and rest on this shopping trolley (£106)



▲ An extra banister – usually has to be made specially



▲ Some walking sticks fold (£12-£23) and some have seats (£20-£34)

Around your home

Products on this page may be useful anywhere in the house



◀ Easy to grip plugs (£6-£8)



▲ These reachers (£10-£13) are light and easy to use and can pick up most small items. Some have magnetic tips for picking up pins

An extra bell on a long lead (free for BT customers) helps if you can't hear the phone ring. You'll need a double telephone socket or an adaptor



▶ This handle (£4) makes turning keys easier



◀ Long handles for a window cleaner, cobweb brush and dustpan with brush (£5-£20)

All pictures: RNIB, except plug and long handle brush and pan: Nottingham Rehab, reachers: Keep Able, key handles and trolley: Sunrise Medical, big button phone: Robin Beckham



◀ ▼ This clock speaks the time (£27) ... and this has a big easy to read face (£7)



◀ Trolleys make carrying things easier (£75-£95). Some are sturdy and well balanced enough to lean on while you walk

▶ This big button phone (£25) is easy to see





◀ Stick these self adhesive bumps wherever they would be useful. They are often used to mark positions on a dial. They come in various shapes, sizes and colours (£4-£6 a set). Day-glo bumps stand out (£6 a set)

▶ This flashes when someone knocks on your door (£25)



▶ This flashes or makes a loud sound when the phone rings (£27)



BT services for older or disabled people gives details of telephone equipment and services. Dial 150 for a free copy. *It's your call* from Ricability (see back cover) compares the services of telephone companies.

▼ Go for firm chairs with arms high enough to push up on. Easy chairs with high seats cost from around £200, electric or hand operated reclining chairs cost from about £240 and chairs which help you stand up cost from £700 up. Prices vary a lot with designs and features

▶ You can use lifters like this with any chair (£56-£70+). They lower you gently into your chair and help you stand up again



◀ Chair raisers (£25-£45 a set) add height to your chairs to make them easier to get on and off



All pictures: RND, except chair lifter and chair raiser: Sunrise Medical, tilting chair: Keep Able

In the kitchen

A lot of thought has been given to kitchen equipment



◀ No need to lift the kettle to pour (£13-£17)
It works for teapots too



◀ Easy to grip cutlery (£4-10 each)



▶ You can hold this tray with one hand (£21), or hang it over your arm



▼ Two handles are better than one (£8-£11)



◀ Baskets like this (£7-£15) mean you don't have to lift a pan full of hot water

▶ An egg cup with suckers (£4) doesn't slide about



◀ A contour turner (£9-£11) fits most cooker controls. Or get permanent easy to grip controls fitted



All pictures: Keep Able, except cutlery: Sunrise Medical, One hand tray: Care and Mobility



◀ You can find thick grips on most kitchen implements (£5-£10)



◀ One of many ways of opening jars (£3-£9)

There are tap turners (£4-£12) to fit almost any tap



▶ You can use this opener with several different types of jar (£11-£13)



Non slip mats (£5+ depending on size) can be used under almost anything. Rolls can be cut to size – from about £13



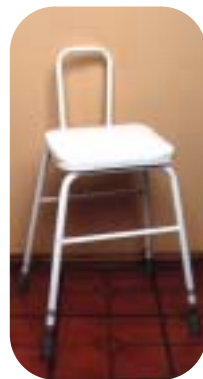
◀ This helps with ring pull cans (£3-£6)

All pictures: Keep Able, except tap turners and high stool: Terry Beddis; knife and bread holder: Nottingham Rehab, big timers: RMB; jar openers: Care and Mobility; talking microwave: Cobot Systems



◀ This is a non-slip tray with high sides and a beanbag so it rests on your knees (£25)

▶ A high stool (£40-£75) with a sloping seat lets you perch and is easy to get on and off. They are adjustable in height. This one has a backrest.



▶ Easy to grip knife (£14-£25) with a bread holder (£29-£66)



◀ An easy-to-see timer (£12) with a loud alarm

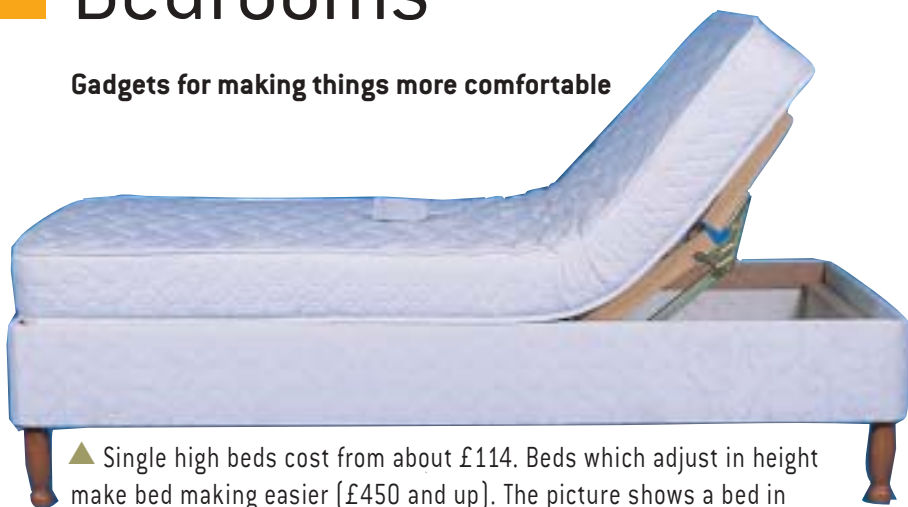


▶ A talking microwave (£195)



Bedrooms

Gadgets for making things more comfortable



▲ Single high beds cost from about £114. Beds which adjust in height make bed making easier (£450 and up). The picture shows a bed in which the shape of the mattress can be changed electrically – so that you can sit up (£900-£1700+). A powered mattress which helps you sit up in bed costs from about £400.



◀ **Adjustable back rests (around £30) make sitting up easier**

Your bed needs to be at a good height to get on and off. Bed raisers which fit under the legs (£13-£32) may do the trick.

▶ This simple rope ladder (£7) makes it easier to sit up from a lying position



▲ **You can adjust the volume and tone of this alarm clock. It has a vibrating pad too (£50)**

▼ Pillows (£17-£20) with different shapes can be moved to give you support where you need it



If dressing is a chore there are various gadgets which help with buttons, putting on stockings or socks or doing up zips. But it is usually easier to choose clothes which are easier to get in and out of in the first place. Velcro may be easier still

► A long shoe horn (£3) Elastic shoelaces never have to be untied

▼ These snap on to a zip to make it easier to pull (£5-£11).



▲ This bedside table has castors that slide under the bed (£54-86). It can be used for meals and tilts for reading



Bathrooms

There is probably more equipment to help in the bathroom than there is for anything else



◀ These boxes (£2-£12, depending on size) make it easy to tell if you have taken a medicine or not. The compartments are much easier to open than medicine bottles. Keep them out of the way of children



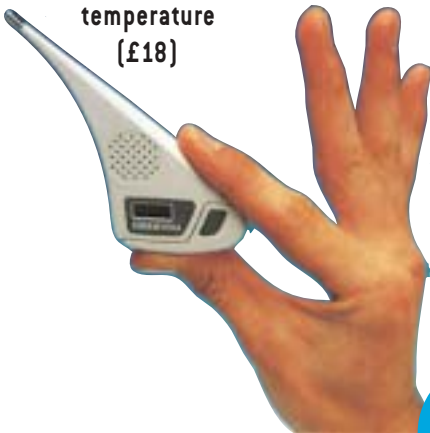
▲ Long handles come with sponges, combs, hairbrushes and more (£5-£11)



▲ Grab rails (£5-£25+) are a must. Make sure they are fixed firmly in the right place. Choose the right shape and a size which is easy to grip – textured rather than smooth. There are dozens of designs – here are some

All pictures: Sunrise Medical except long handle sponges and grab rails: Keep Able, thermometer: RNIB

▼ I speak your temperature (£18)



◀ A portable bath lift (£300-£980) fits most baths, and lifts you in and out



◀ Bath boards (£18-£40) and seats (£16-£32). A bath board gives you somewhere to sit while you lift your legs over the bath rim. A bath seat means you get into the bath in two stages – or bathe from the seat.



▼ Specially designed baths include shallow models (£190+), built in seats and built in powered seats which lift in and out (£1200+). Walk in baths with doors in the side cost from about £1200 and up



◀ A shower can be easier to get in and out of than a bath. If you fit one with a level floor you can get into it on a wheeled shower chair (£55-£300+)

▶ A shower seat or stool makes using the shower easier (£25-£200)



◀ A raised toilet seat (£12-£40) makes low loos easier. Types like this have arms to push on when getting up (£50-£105+)

Some loo seats have a spring (£150 and up) which support you as you sit down and have enough gentle pressure to help you stand up again

You can get loos which wash and dry you (£400 and up)

Hobbies

Whatever your hobby, there may be a gadget to help



▲ Padding cushions your knees and the handles help you get up (This one costs £37)



◀ These gardening tools have thick handles (£7 each) These can be gripped without straining your fingers or wrist (£12-£50) And long handled rakes and forks reduce the need to bend (£8-£30)



▲ You don't need a strong grip to use these scissors (£9-12)



▲ Large print playing cards (£5-£16) and a card holder (£5)



◀ Fat pens are easier if you have stiff hands or a weak grip (£7-£11)



▲ You don't need good eyesight to use these needle threaders £4)



◀ Magnifiers come in many shapes and sizes. You wear this type round your neck (£7-£23) and this type leaves both hands free (£26-£31) – useful when writing

Thrive

Get free expert advice on easier gardening from Thrive. They have opportunities for volunteers in various London gardens. **Tel: 0118 988 5688.** www.carryongardening.org.uk gives lots of practical information.

Computers

If you would like to use a computer but would have difficulty because of a disability, contact Ability Net 0800 269 545 www.abilitynet.org.uk



▲ A talking spirit level (£25)

Making your home safer

LIGHTING

As we get older we need more light to see clearly. Try to get the same level of light in each room as eyes take time to adjust. Pale walls help because they reflect light. Avoid gloss paint because shiny surfaces can dazzle.

Have lights at the top and bottom of stairs, which you can switch off at both ends.

Low energy light bulbs are cheaper to run and last longer so won't need replacing as often. They are more expensive to buy, however.

If your sight is poor, contrasting colours on edges and steps help you avoid tripping and make door surrounds, switches and plugs easier to find.

GENERAL LAYOUT

Arrange furniture so you can move around easily. Be careful where you put low objects.

Keep your telephone in reach. A cordless phone makes this easier. Have a telephone extension by your bed.

The bathroom door should open outwards – if you fall inside you can be reached more easily.

Replace awkward door knobs with easy to grip lever handles

If you have steps to your door, consider a handrail. If the steps are steep, consider having half steps built.

Make sure any rails are fitted properly – some types of wall may need special fittings.

Keep routes to the front door, fuse box and mains water clear so they are easy to get to.

ELECTRICS

Don't overload electric sockets – fit double points if you don't have enough. Don't have electric flexes trailing across the floor

SMOKE AND GAS DETECTORS

Smoke alarms are a must – around £5. If you can't hear you can get alarms which flash and vibrate under a pillow (from about £80). Carbon monoxide detectors alert you to a

blocked flue or faulty gas appliance. From about £6 for a simple detector.

CALLING FOR HELP

Emergency alarm systems use your telephone line to call for help in an emergency. All you do is press a button which you wear or carry. Local authorities often provide these at low cost – contact your social services or housing department. If you want to buy privately, Ricability (see back cover) has a free guide.

FLOORS

Floors should be slip-resistant. If you can, get rid of loose rugs, worn carpet, slippery or uneven surfaces, specially in the bathroom. Avoid rugs on polished floors or fix them in place with carpet tape. Don't have a loose rug at the top of the stairs.

SECURITY

Secure door locks are a must. You may also need window locks or a burglar alarm system.

Crime Prevention Officers give advice on ways of making

your home secure. Your local police station will arrange for a free visit. Some home improvement agencies may be able to help – also see Warm Front (page 19).

Help the Aged (page 20) run *HandyVans* in four areas in London. Expert fitters will advise you and fit such things as door chains and viewers, locks, bolts and smoke detectors. You have to be of pensionable age. There may be a small charge. So far this service is available in Havering, Hackney, Hammersmith & Fulham and Redbridge.

Fridgesavers

If you have a fridge or fridge freezer which uses too much electricity you may be able to get a new one at very low cost from London Electricity. You need to be getting benefits and your fridge or fridge freezer must be in poor condition.

Call 0131 554 2532 for an application form.

Getting equipped

Social services

They are part of your local council and have many useful services. It's worth contacting them to find out what they offer and because they know what else there is locally.

They will give you information about aids and adaptations and may supply them free or at a low cost.

They may arrange for you to have an *assessment* – see opposite.

If it shows you need any aids, social services should see that you get them. In some areas there's a small charge. If you can't afford it, they should find a way of providing the equipment anyway.

Health authorities

Medical and nursing aids such as wheelchairs, walking frames and commodes can be provided through your health authority.

They also provide services to you at home. Ask your GP.

Loans of equipment

Local branches of the British Red Cross lend equipment – free but you may have to pay a deposit.

To find the nearest branch:

Tel: 020 7793 3360

Assessment

This sounds very formal but all it means is that someone – often an occupational therapist (OT) – will come to chat about what kind of help you need.

The OT will have a look at your home and will work out what might be helpful. The assessment will cover all the services that social services provide. This is worth having. Even if you don't go on to get equipment from the social services, you will get lots of useful information.

Some areas have a waiting list. Ask how long it is and if there are priorities. If your case is urgent explain why – you may get seen sooner.

Some OTs work privately. You have to pay but you won't have to wait long. Some social services may provide aids or services recommended privately. Ask the OT what your Borough does. The College of OTs have a list of private OTs.

Tel: 020 7450 2309

Shops and suppliers

Some chemists sell easier living aids and there are specialist shops in some areas. Ask social services or look under 'disability equipment' in the yellow pages.

Keep Able is a large shop which specialises in aids. It has therapists who will advise you. There are two in or near London:

Mill Hill, NW7
Tel: 020 8201 0810
Fax: 020 8201 0840

Staines, Middlesex
Tel: 01784 440044
Fax: 01784 449900

Buying by mail order

Larger mail order companies are listed right. They all have free catalogues. You can shop from your armchair but you can't see or try the product out first.

- Get independent advice first – try the DLF (page 20)
- Ask if they'll make a refund if the product doesn't suit you
- Check postage charges and delivery times.

Mail order catalogues

Ability, British Red Cross
Tel: 0116 270 1462

Care and Mobility
Tel: 012687 71191

Help the Aged
Tel: 0870 770 0442
www.helptheaged.org.uk

Keep Able
Tel: 08705 202122
www.keepable.co.uk

Nottingham Rehab
Tel: 0845 6060911
www.nottinghamrehabsupplies.co.uk

Partially Sighted Society
Tel: 01302 323132

Promedics
Tel: 01254 619000

RNIB
(for visually impaired people)
Tel: 0845 7023153
Text: 0845 7585691
www.rnib.org.uk

RNID
(for hearing impaired people)
Tel: 01733 232607
Text: 01733 238020
www.rnid.org.uk

Smith & Nephew Homecraft
Tel: 01623 757955

You can hire equipment from some manufacturers and suppliers. This is useful if you want to try something out before buying. Some take the hire charge off the price if you go on to buy – check before you start.

VAT

Equipment which has been designed or adapted for people with disabilities is exempt from VAT. Your supplier should give you a form which you sign to say you have a disability.

Seeing and trying

Disabled Living Centres have exhibitions of aids and give independent expert advice. You need to make an appointment to make sure someone is on hand to help. London DLCs are at the Disabled Living Foundation in W9 **(0870 603 9177)**, in Beckenham **(020 8663 3345)** and, for locals, Hillingdon **(01895 233691)**.

Manufacturers of major items of equipment such as stairlifts or bath lifts may arrange demonstrations. Telephone numbers from social services, DLCs (see above) or the DLF (see page 20).

From time to time there are exhibitions of equipment in London – the DLF have details.

Buying second hand

There are ads for second hand equipment in *Disability Now*, the monthly newspaper for disabled people **(01454 642444 www.disabilitynow.org.uk)**

Newsletters produced by disability organisations also have ads – The DLF (page 20) has a free list of them.

The Disability Equipment Register have a monthly magazine which has ads for second hand equipment. A six months subscription costs £10
Tel: 01454 318818

Nothing fits the bill?

If you have a problem and no equipment exists to help with it, REMAP's engineers may be able to make something which helps, free. Branches in and around London are:

Barnet: **020 8366 0491**
Brent & Harrow: **020 8868 3461**
Croydon: **020 8657 6037**
Essex West: **020 8505 2641**
Kent West: **01732 866105**
London West: **020 8570 2482**

ADAPTATIONS

These include such things as stair and grab rails, ramps, widening doors for a wheelchair, fitting a shower or stairlift as well as major work such as making it possible to live on one floor.

Social services sometimes carry out minor work themselves. They may put you in touch with the housing department of your Council as part of an assessment (see page 14) if they consider building work is required. They will ask for your permission before they do so.

Other sources of information and advice are:

Home improvement agencies

Sometimes called Care & Repair or Staying Put, they are not-for-profit organisations that help vulnerable homeowners or private tenants who are older, disabled or on low incomes to improve, maintain or adapt their homes. They can arrange surveys, organise reliable contractors and make sure any work is carried out properly. They can also help find different ways of paying for the work needed.

Some schemes help with home security, energy efficiency or may have people who will carry out small DIY jobs (there may be a small charge for this).

For more information contact **Foundations** who coordinate home improvement agencies. They will give you the telephone number of your local agency.

Tel: 01457 891909

Fax: 01457 869361

www.foundations.uk.com

Building advice

If you, a builder or an architect, need advice about making your home easier to get into or move around in, the Housing Service at the RNIB (page 20) or the Centre for Accessible Environments have information on adaptations and building work.

Centre for Accessible
Enviroments

Tel/text: 020 7357 8182

Fax: 020 7357 8183

www.cae.org.uk

The National Register of Access Consultants have a list of specialist architects.

Tel: 020 7234 0434

Help with money

FROM THE STATE

If your income is low you may be able to get Income Support, free or cheaper dental treatment and eye tests. Older people get free prescriptions. If you need help with things like dressing or personal care and became disabled aged 65 or over, you may get Attendance Allowance. Younger disabled people may get Disability Living Allowance.

Community care grants can be given for minor repairs, internal decoration, essential equipment such as cookers if they mean you can stay at home rather than go into a hospital or home.

Crisis loans are to deal with emergencies which are a serious risk to the health and safety of you or your family.

The Benefits Agency have details on who qualifies for these and other benefits. Their clear and useful leaflets are available from local offices and some post offices. Note that most benefits are means tested.

Benefits enquiry line for people with disabilities: **0800 88 22 00**
Text: 0800 24 33 55

FROM THE COUNCIL

You may be able to get a grant towards building work. There are rules about who qualifies – details from social services, housing or the renovations grants department at your local authority. Grants have to be approved before work starts.

Renovation grants are for such things as repairs, insulation or changing the layout of your home to make it fit to live in or so you can use it more easily.

Disabled facilities grant. For improvements and adaptations needed because of a disability. Apply if you have trouble getting into your home, moving around in it or have problems using essential facilities such as the bathroom.

Home repair assistance. For minor but essential repairs or adaptations. You have to be over 60, disabled or getting some form of benefit or are adapting your home so that an older person can live with you. The top limit is £5,000 for any one application. This grant is not available for Council tenants.

KEEPING WARM

Warm Front grants. For disabled people or homes with children. You must be getting an income related benefit. Provides up to a £1,000 worth of such things as insulation, draught proofing and better heating.

The Warm Front Plus grant is for people aged 60 or over who get certain benefits. The top limit is £2,000 and the grant can be used to pay towards the cost of installing central heating. If you live in a high crime area, they may also provide equipment, such as door and window locks.

These grants are now given to private tenants and home owners only.

Freephone: 0800 316 6011

Text: 0800 072 0156

Also worth checking:

Energy efficiency advice centre – free advice and details of local grants. **Freephone: 0800 512012**

Keep Warm Keep Well. Free leaflet:

Freephone: 0800 555777

Winter fuel payments helpline:

Tel: 08459 15 15 15

RAISING MONEY ON YOUR HOME

If you own your home you may be able to use it to raise extra cash, or to pay for adaptations and repairs. Typically you get a lump sum or an income plus the right to live in your home for as long as you need to. Age Concern (page 20) have a factsheet.

Always get independent financial advice. You need to check out such things as fees, what happens if you want to move and whether it affects any benefits you get.

Home Improvement Trust is an independent agency that helps older home owners raise money to fund repairs, improvements or adaptations. They will arrange for you to get free independent financial advice, by post.

Tel: 0115 934 9511

Fax: 0115 934 9501

www.hitrust.org

Otherwise, to find a local independent financial advisor contact IFA Promotion.

Tel: 0117 971 1171

Helpful organisations

Age Concern

Age Concern have useful factsheets. They also have local groups in London which may have services such as transport, day care or, for example, help with such things as shopping or household tasks. To find the nearest group see Age Concern in the phone book: **0800 009966**
www.aclondon.org.uk

Citizens Advice Bureaux

Give local advice on everything, including money. To find the nearest CAB contact the **NACAB**
Tel: 020 7833 2181.
www.nacab.org.uk

The Disabled Living Foundation

has a free information service and lots of useful booklets.
Helpline: 0845 130 9177
www.dlf.org.uk

Greater London Action on Disability (GLAD)

Have information on local services and disability groups.
Tel: 020 7346 5819
Textphone: 020 7326 4554

Help the Aged

SeniorLine gives free advice on benefits and on such things as housing. They aim to give you enough information to be able to take the next steps yourself. If necessary they will put you in touch with other agencies. The service is confidential.
Freephone: 0808 800 6565,
www.helptheaged.org.uk

Many other organisations have valuable information and services. They include:

Arthritis Care: **080 8800 4050**

Royal National Institute for the Blind: **0845 7666 9999**

Royal National Institute for Deaf people: **0808 808 0123**

For details of others, and for much more beside, see:

A practical guide for disabled

people. A comprehensive guide to organisations and services.

Includes a list of organisations of and for people with particular disabilities. Free from

NHS phonesline: 0541 555 455

Local contacts

Borough	Disability group	Social services
Barking & Dagenham	020 8592 8603	020 8227 2915
Barnet	020 8446 6935	020 8359 2000
Bexley	01322 350988	020 8303 7777
Brent	020 8451 3822	020 8937 1200
Bromley	020 8663 3345	020 8313 4015
Camden	020 7387 1466	020 7974 6666
City of London	none	020 7332 1224
Croydon	020 8760 9927	020 8686 4433
Ealing	020 8840 8573	020 8579 2424
Enfield	020 8373 6239	020 8366 6565
Greenwich	020 8305 2221	020 8854 8888
Hackney	020 7923 1962	020 8356 4200
Hammersmith & Fulham	020 7610 9666	020 8576 5090
Haringey	020 8801 5757	020 8489 0000
Harrow	020 8861 9920	020 8863 5611
Havering	01708 476 554	01708 432000
Hillingdon	01895 231 677	01895 250111
Hounslow	020 8577 3226	020 8583 2000
Islington	020 7226 0137	020 7527 4072
Kensington & Chelsea	020 8960 8888	020 7937 4564
Kingston on Thames	020 8255 2444	020 8547 6008
Lambeth	020 7738 5656	020 7926 4538
Lewisham	none	020 8314 6000
Merton	020 8543 5433	020 8543 2222
Newham	020 7473 9655	020 8430 2000
Redbridge	020 8514 2565	020 8478 3020
Richmond on Thames	020 8831 6080	020 8891 7609
Southwark	020 7701 1391	020 7525 5000
Sutton	020 8770 4065	020 8770 5000
Tower Hamlets	020 8980 0447	020 7364 2248
Waltham Forest	020 8509 0812	020 8496 1999
Wandsworth	020 8333 6949	020 8871 7707
Westminster	020 8960 5056	020 7641 5710

Whatever you need, good starting points are your local social services and local disability groups. If they can't help, they will know who can

Ricability is very grateful to the Bridge House Estates Trust Fund for funding this booklet.

About Bridge House Estates Trust Fund

The original purpose of the Trust Fund was to maintain London Bridge. The fund now has a grant-making arm supporting charitable activity across London. It is an independent trust whose trustee is the Corporation of London.

About Ricability

Ricability is a charity that researches and publishes information on products and services for older and disabled people. Publication list from:

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