

Fact Sheet 1

Who's Who and What They Do

General Practitioners (GPs)

GPs help people with health problems or related matters. You may have a lot of involvement with GPs through the person that you care for, or for your own health needs.

- GPs can put you in contact with a district/community nurse or specialist if practical help or advice is required to manage someone's medical condition at home.
- GPs can put you in contact with community care services including the community alarm service, meals on wheels, chiropody, home care or respite care.
- Talk to your GP about any health concerns that you have – if the GP can't help, they will be able to refer you to someone who can.

District Nurses

District nurses are based in local health centres. They visit people at home and offer nursing care as well as help and advice on the practical and medical aspects of caring.

This includes:

- Skilled nursing care such as caring for wounds, giving injections and monitoring any medical problems.
- Taking blood samples for medical tests.
- Lending equipment such as commodes, Zimmer frames, specialised bedding equipment and continence aids.
- Giving information and advice – such as dealing with incontinence or pain control.

- Putting you in contact with other people who can help – such as the social work department and voluntary organisations.
- Bereavement care and general support to carers.

Health Visitors

Health visitors visit people at home. They assess the health needs of young children and people over the age of 75.

- Health visitors are usually based at health centres.
- They provide advice on a wide range of health related issues and can put you in touch with other organisations which might help. They also offer bereavement care and a listening ear.

Community Psychiatric Nurses (CPNs)

CPNs offer support to people who have a mental health problem including dementia and to their families.

- They monitor wellbeing and arrange for any specific help needed in relation to the illness.
- They can be contacted through the GP, hospital or social worker.

Community Care Workers

Community care workers work in teams consisting of social workers, occupational therapists, and community care assistants.

- Community care workers are based at social work centres, hospitals and some health centres.

- They assess the needs of individuals who are having difficulties living at home and arrange packages of care to enable people to live as independently as possible.
- They offer information and advice about a wide range of services including support after hospital discharge.
- They can arrange for services such as: frozen meal deliveries, homecare, respite care and special equipment
- They carry out Carers' Assessments.

Occupational Therapists (OTs)

OTs have specialist knowledge of the effects that a disability has on a person and their carer's life. They provide equipment and can help the person to learn new skills to enhance their independence. They also assess the need for aids and adaptations within the home.

Physiotherapists

Physiotherapists work with people to help them to maintain or improve their physical strength or abilities following illness or injury.

- They work with people in a variety of settings – in hospital, in day centres or clinics or at home.
- Physiotherapists help with mobility problems and can advise on walking aids.

Communication Therapists

Communication therapists used to be known as speech therapists.

- Communication therapists work with children and adults who are having difficulties with their speech and communication.
- They also help with eating, drinking and swallowing difficulties.

Mental Health Officers (MHOs)

Mental health officers are social workers specially trained in the area of mental health.

- MHOs will be involved in assessing the need for specialised hospital care and guardianship orders.
- They offer support, advice and information to individuals and families regarding mental health.
- MHOs can be contacted through the social work centre.

Home Helps

Home helps do practical tasks such as shopping, cooking, laundry for people who are no longer able to do them. They can be contacted through social work centres.

Domiciliary Care Workers

Domiciliary care workers help with personal care such as getting in and out of bed, washing, dressing etc.

Pharmacists

Pharmacists can tell you all you need to know about medicines, whether prescribed or purchased over the counter, and offer advice on the treatment of common ailments.

- Pharmacists may also be able to supply special equipment for people with physical disabilities or continence problems and can provide special containers to help people to remember to take their medicines at the correct time.
- Many offer a prescription collection and delivery service to people who are housebound or infirm. They may also arrange for the safe disposal of medicines which are no longer required.