

## PBS Helpline Resources

### Accessing local services

It can feel quite difficult to access services if you've not done this before. Here are some suggestions to help you do so.

Be clear about what your local area offers. This is important because services can look different in different areas. Look on your local authority website, NHS trust website, or ask at your GP practice.

It's worth doing a bit of research, finding out what the local authority and health trust have a legal responsibility to provide. One example is the Care Act, which highlights carers assessments, advocacy, and the need to focus on wellbeing as well as physical needs. You can find out about this on the Government website. Or try looking at the SCIE website [www.scie.org.uk](http://www.scie.org.uk) where they have one page summaries. You don't have to be an expert but it's useful to have a general idea.

Whatever happens, you should be actively involved. Services aren't something they do to you, it's something you do together.

If you are approaching a team such as the community learning disability team, see what sort of people work there (nurses, psychologists, occupational therapists, speech and language therapists, behaviour specialists) and what they do. Find out what the referral process is. Then be really specific about what you need and what the issue is. Make sure you have the name of who the referral went to and ask when it will be looked at.

When making phone calls, always ask who you're speaking to, ask for timescales, and keep a record of what has been agreed. Ask people to recap the main points at the end, and keep asking questions until you're clear (make sure you know what is going to happen, by when, and who's doing it). Keep a record of all these conversations. If you like, you could ask for confirmation by letter/email.

If you're on a waiting list, ask what you should do if things get worse while you're waiting. While you're waiting, keep details and records of the issue (so for example if it's a behaviour, record when and where it happens, how long for etc). Giving the services detailed information helps them to act quicker.

Remember its ok to go back to them and ask more questions. If they say they can't help, ask them who can, and request contact details.

Carers voices and experiences are important. If you are struggling to find the resources to do all this, then find out if there is a local carers advocacy or support service that can help you.