

Supporting individuals to be more independent with paperwork

A commonly expressed concern by many professionals when working with vulnerable people is that “they need someone to help them with their paperwork”. Whilst there are services to help people with paperwork, it is not guaranteed that this will always be available at the time a resident needs it.

It also places the individual in the position of needing to seek support on a more regular basis, which could leave them feeling more stressed, anxious and worried. It could be useful to consider how to avoid being placed in this position in the first place.

The following questions may be helpful in order to best help someone longer term.

- Who is sending them the paperwork, and why?
- Do they have to receive it, or is it possible to opt out?
- Does the organisation sending the paperwork have the ability to send it in a more suitable format?
- Has the individual needing help, been given the opportunity to improve their skills to deal with the paperwork more easily in the future?

Below are some potential barriers, and how these can be reduced, or removed.

Literacy skills

Norfolk Reading Pathway

One in six adults struggles with reading. Research shows that when people read for pleasure they benefit from far greater opportunities in everyday life, education and employment.

The Norfolk Reading Pathway is a free programme which is available across Norfolk and is open to any adult who would like support to become a more confident reader.

We match learners with one of our volunteer coaches and they work through the ‘Yes we can read’ handbook together. Coaching sessions are usually weekly for up to an hour.

The Pathway is available in all Norfolk Libraries. If you know someone who needs support or would just like to find out more, [contact your local library](#) or email nrp@norfolk.gov.uk.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/libraries-local-history-and-archives/libraries/library-services/norfolk-reading-pathway>

Free English courses

Through our Adult Learning team. You can join one of our courses at any time. There are flexible study options – learn in the classroom or online.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-learning/courses/english-and-maths>

If you are working with an individual where they have a learning disability and a formal qualification course is not an appropriate first option, they may be interested in an independent living skills course, which is also run by Adult Learning. Do also have a chat with the Adult Learning team about what might be the best course, so they can advise which would be best for your customer.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-learning/courses/living-skills>

English not your first language?

We run courses for speakers of other languages who would like to improve their English.

The courses will help you improve your English speaking and listening, reading and writing skills.

An ESOL qualification could also improve your employment prospects or help you socialise and join in with your local community activities.

How to join

If you'd like to join a course, you need to come to a free information session.

You will have the chance to meet one of the tutors, find out your current level of English and make sure the course is right for you.

<https://www.norfolk.gov.uk/education-and-learning/adult-learning/courses/english-for-speakers-of-other-languages-esol>

Unnecessary paperwork

We all get paperwork we never requested or wanted. This is better known as "junk mail". You can opt out of receiving this.

Mail preference service

The MPS Consumer File is a list of names and addresses of consumers who have told us they wish to limit the amount of direct mail they receive. The use of the Consumer File by list-owners and users is a requirement of the British Code of Advertising, Sales Promotion and Direct Marketing administered by the Advertising Standards Authority. It is also a condition under the Code of Practice of the Data & Marketing Association.

The MPS will prevent the receipt of unsolicited direct mailings sent from member companies of the Data & Marketing Association and we will take steps to prevent the receipt of unsolicited direct mailings from companies which are non-DMA members. It will not stop mail that has been sent from overseas, un-addressed material or mail

addressed to The Occupier. You can expect to continue to receive mailings from companies with whom you have done business in the past. You may also receive mailings from small, local companies. If you wish these mailings to be stopped, you must notify these companies directly. It will take up to 4 months for the Service to have full effect although you should notice a reduction in mail during this period.

Registering with the MPS is FREE

<https://www.mpsonline.org.uk/>

Royal mail

How do I opt out of receiving any leaflets or unaddressed promotional material?

We are legally obliged to deliver all addressed mail, which includes mail that is addressed "To the Occupier" (or with any other generic recipient information), as well as mail that is personally addressed to you by name.

Opting out from Royal Mail Door to Door stops all unaddressed items from being delivered by us (although we do work with Government to get a message to every UK address in exceptional circumstances where delivery of the message is deemed to be in the national interest).

Things you need to know before choosing to 'opt out':

It is not possible for us to separate material you don't want from those you do want. For example: advertising offers or leaflets from material from Central and Local Government and other public bodies.

Opting out means no one at your address will receive unaddressed mail items. We deliver a minority of the total volume of unaddressed mail items in the United Kingdom. Our opt out does not cover any other distributors, who will continue to deliver unaddressed mail items to your property. Opting out of Royal Mail Door to Door deliveries will not necessarily reduce by a significant amount the number of items you'll receive.

Opting out from other unaddressed mail deliveries

To opt out from deliveries from other unaddressed mail distributors you may wish to register with the 'Your Choice' preference scheme run by the Data & Marketing Association. This will not stop unaddressed mail delivered by your post person.

They can be contacted at:

'Your Choice' Preference Scheme
Direct Marketing Association (UK) Ltd
DMA House
70 Margaret Street
LONDON
W1W 8SS

Telephone: 0207 291 3300

Email: yourchoice@dma.org.uk

Opting out of receiving charity appeal communications

The Fundraising Preference Service is a website-based service that can help members of the public control the communications they receive from charities.

By registering your details with the Fundraising Preference Service you can choose to stop email, telephone calls, addressed post and/or text messages addressed to you personally from a selected charity or charities.

ore and register please visit the FRS website

<https://www.fundraisingregulator.org.uk/fundraising-preference-service> or call their helpline on 0300 3033 517.

https://personal.help.royalmail.com/app/answers/detail/a_id/293/~how-do-i-opt-out-of-receiving-any-leaflets-or-unaddressed-promotional-material%3F

Changing your contact preferences with companies you want to hear from

You can ask a business or organisation to only send you essential news and information, and ask to be opted out of any marketing or other non essential contact.

You can ask them if they can send information to you in another more suitable format. In some cases they can even record that you are a vulnerable customer, and can ensure you are made a priority in the event of an emergency, for example a burst water main, or a problem with your phone. Try asking if they have a “priority service register”. Alternatively can they add any notes to your account?

For example:

Anglian Water <https://www.anglianwater.co.uk/help-and-advice/water-care/>

Essex and Suffolk Water <https://www.eswater.co.uk/services/extra-support/>

TalkTalk priority fault repair <https://community.talktalk.co.uk/>

BT https://www.bt.com/content/dam/bt/help/including-you/BT_Free_Priority_Fault_Repair_Scheme.pdf

Virgin <https://www.virginmedia.com/help/accessibility>

Gas and electricity providers (Ofgem)

Getting extra help from the Priority Services Register

The Priority Services Register is a free support service to help people in vulnerable situations. Energy suppliers, network operators and water companies (including

Anglian Water) offer it. Each keep their own register. You need to contact the company directly to sign up.

You could benefit if you;

- have reached your state pension age
- are disabled or have a long-term medical condition
- are recovering from an injury
- have a hearing or sight condition
- have a mental health condition
- are pregnant or have children under 5
- have extra communication needs (such as if you don't speak or read English well).
- You might still be able to register for other reasons if your situation isn't listed. For example, if you need short-term support after a stay in hospital.

How to register

Apply by contacting your energy supplier, network operator and water company

Anglian Water have made it easy for customers and trusted 3rd parties to be able to sign people up on their behalf. This can be done online by visiting anglianwater.co.uk/priority, calling their dedicated Priority Services Team on 0800 232 1951 or via paper form (which can be requested from them)

You will need to provide contact details and information about your needs to ensure the utility companies are able to best support you.

When you register for energy's Priority Services Register, your supplier can pass your details to your network operator to add you to their register too. It's a good idea to ask them to do this if you rely on your energy supply for medical reasons.

If you have a different supplier for your gas and electricity, you need to contact them both. You'll need to register again with any new supplier if you switch supplier.

Help you can get

Advance notice of planned power cuts or interruptions to your water supply. If you rely on your energy or water supply for medical reasons your utility companies can tell you about planned outages. For example, when they plan engineering work.

Priority support in an emergency. Network operators could provide heating and cooking facilities if you are cut off supply and Anglian Water will prioritise your needs in the event of an unexpected interruption to your water supply and if you need it, may be able to deliver bottled water.

Identification and password scheme. This includes arranging a password or agreed on picture cards if callers need to visit or contact you. This way you can feel confident they are genuine. Remember, utilities will never say they're from the

‘water/gas/electric board’. If anyone says this, shut the door immediately and notify the company they’re claiming to be from.

Nominee scheme. You can nominate someone to receive communications and bills from your utilities. For example, a family member, carer or someone you trust.

For energy, you can receive help with prepayment meter access. For example, moving a meter if you can’t safely get to it to top up.

Regular meter reading services if you find this difficult.

Making bills easier. For example, bills in large print or braille.

Communicating in your preferred language through translation services, including British Sign Language e.g. Anglian Water’s Interpretation services which can be accessed through their contact centre. You just need to say your preferred language and they will get a translator on the phone to enable a 3 way conversation.

Utility company can offer other support services, including financial assistance, for example Anglian Water’s Extra Care Support which can help if you’re finding it difficult paying your water bill. You can call 0800 232 1951 and see how they can help you.

Similar support services

Suppliers can offer free gas safety checks every 12 months. You can request a safety check if you get a means-tested benefit and either:

- live with a child under five years old
- live alone or with others and have reached state pension age
- live alone or with others and are disabled or chronically ill
- live with others who have reached state pension age or are disabled, chronically ill or under 18 years old.
- Landlords are normally responsible for keeping your gas appliances safe if you don’t own your own home. Further information about landlord obligations is listed on the Health and Safety Executive website.

Free similar services to the Priority Services Register are available in the phone and public transport sectors. Ask your providers about them.

<https://www.ofgem.gov.uk/information-consumers/energy-advice-households/getting-extra-help-priority-services-register>

Other paperwork

Whilst there are advocacy support services, like Opening Doors (for people with a learning disability), Equal Lives (adults with a disability) and Age UK Norwich/Norfolk (older people) there are times when an expert is required.

Last reviewed 21/03/2022 by the Development Worker team Norfolk County Council

Most in depth legal paperwork for example, will require input from a paid trained professional. Please check your customer gets the appropriate advice and support from the relevant service to ensure they are given accurate and quality help.