

The expert's guide to obtaining funding, by Don Keiller Jr



Never give up: Vicki Keiller's son Don and her husband, who is also called Don DON KEILLER

Get lasting power of attorney

If your relative is suffering from Alzheimer's or another form of dementia, it is vital to get lasting power of attorney (LPA). This allows you to make decisions in their best interest, access their medical records and speak for them. It is then much easier to apply for continuing healthcare (CHC) on their behalf.

Ask whether your relative is entitled to funding

If a relative requires nursing or medical care at their home or in a care home, they may be entitled to CHC funding. You will probably need to ask for an assessment.

Make sure the correct procedures are followed

Your relative cannot be ruled ineligible for CHC without a "checklist" assessment. If you have LPA, the local clinical commissioning group (CCG), which holds the purse strings, has to inform you when and where this will happen, and you have the right to be there.

Before the assessment, download the checklist (tinyurl.com/forms-CHC) and fill it in based on your own view of your relative's needs. You can then compare the list with that of the assessors, who have to give you a copy. If you don't agree with their assessment, tell them why.

If you are convinced the assessors have got it wrong, complain to your local patient advice and liaison service (tinyurl.com/pals-complaint).

Get a continuing healthcare assessment

If your relative "passes" the checklist, there will be a further assessment by the CCG to determine whether they have a "primary healthcare need".

This is done using a decision support tool (DST). Again, complete the assessment form yourself (it can also be found at tinyurl.com/forms-CHC) based on your view of your relative's needs.

With LPA you have the right to attend the assessment and argue your relative's case. Take notes or have a friend do it on your behalf.

Work together

Make friends with the nurse in charge of your relative's care. Ask them to come to the CHC assessment. Their input can be vital. If necessary, ask the nurse to describe your relative's medical conditions to the assessment panel.

Get a copy of the assessment

You should receive a copy of the assessors' DST form. Compare it with your own. If you disagree with it, tell your CCG contact why.

If you genuinely believe the conclusions do not fit your relative's medical condition, lodge an appeal with the local resolution dispute panel(tinyurl.com/dispute-panel).

Prepare your case

Before the meeting, send the appeal panel a summary. Bring someone with you to take notes. You are entitled to see the reasons for the appeal's success or failure. Ask for complete details rather than a summary.

Ask for a review

You can appeal to the NHS England* independent review panel (tinyurl.com/review-panel). Note any flaws in the CHC assessment and send all information to the panel in advance. You will be asked to present a case, so rehearse your arguments and facts.

Don't worry about the good and bad days

If your relative is assessed on a "good" day, this can actually be helpful, as one of the assessment criteria is "unpredictability". Remember too that "well-managed needs are still needs", according to the NHS. It is only because of the skilled medical treatment that your relative's condition might have "improved or stabilised". Again this shows that medical intervention is required.

No one on the review panel will meet your relative, so take photos of them to personalise your case. If this appeal fails, ask for a transcript and the rationale for the decision.

Complain to the ombudsman

Your last "official" option is to make a complaint to the Parliamentary and Health Service Ombudsman (ombudsman.org.uk).

Talk to your MP and the press. Anecdotally, the ombudsman is more likely to find in your favour if your MP is involved and the case has been publicised.

** Funding rules are different in Scotland (tinyurl.com/funding-scotland) and Wales (tinyurl.com/funding-wales).*

