

Information for Carers

CARER SUPPORT

Who is a Carer?

A carer is someone who supports or looks after a relative, friend or neighbour because they are unable to manage without help due to sickness, age or disability.

If you are providing (or intend to provide) physical, practical or emotional support to someone on a regular basis you are a carer.

You may be providing support for someone who needs caring for because they are ill, they have a mental health problem, a drug or alcohol problem or a physical or learning disability.

Many people do not see themselves as carers. They think of themselves as family members or friends and often do not realise there is help and support available to them in addition to the person they are caring for.

Your role as a carer may be very time consuming and stressful. You may need support not only to look after the person you are caring for but also to enable you **to live your life and do the things that are important to you** such as go to work, take up training, education or leisure activities.

What help is available?

If you are a carer help is available in many forms:-

We may be able to provide special equipment to assist with access, mobility or personal care.

We may offer practical help in the home, assistance with personal care or look after someone on a regular basis while their carer has time to themselves

Day Services can provide a place for a person needing care or support to mix with others and develop skills or interests. At the same time this can offer the carer an opportunity to take a break or to have time to do other things.

Carers who look after someone with a high level of dependency may need a break or a holiday. Residential Respite Care may be an option. This could be a “one off” or arranged on a regular basis in advance throughout the year.

Carers can also call for advice on other matters or information such as details of Carer Support Groups or Benefits Advice.

Carers can register with the Sitting Service which provides care to enable carers to take time out on an irregular basis e.g. to attend a wedding or hospital appointment.

Direct Payments can be available to enable people to arrange their own support services whether support for the cared for person or support for the Carer.

There may be other options or services that you can think of that would help you in your caring role. We'll be as reasonable and as flexible as we can to make our service meet your needs, so do talk to us about your situation if you are unsure whether we can help.

How to find help.

If the person you care for does not have a Social Worker contact our **First Contact Team** who will take details and arrange for someone to contact you and the person you care for to discuss what support may be provided to the person you care for. Support to the person you care for will help not only them but also help you in your caring role.

First Contact Team

Bath Lane Advice Centre
Bath Lane
Stockton-on-Tees
TS18 2DS
Tel: (01642) 527764
Minicom: (01642) 527769

Office hours are:

Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5.00pm

Friday 8.30am to 4.30pm

As a Carer You Have Needs Too...

Carer's Needs Assessment

Contact the Social Worker of the person you are caring for and say you want to discuss what support you might receive in your role as a carer and to help you live your life outside of your caring role.

An assessment is not about assessing the care or support you are providing. It is about assessing the support that you need to help you not just in your caring role but to help you live your life the way you want to and to stay healthy.

The assessment is simply a meeting between you and your Social Worker to discuss the kind of support you may need to help you in your caring role. This may include support to help you do the things that are important to you such as stay in work, take up education or leisure activities and generally maintain your own health and well being.

The meeting can take place wherever you are comfortable. You might want to meet somewhere you can talk freely without upsetting the person you are caring for.

You may wish to have the support of a friend or relative at this meeting. You also have the right to an independent Advocate who can speak on your behalf.

During the meeting you will discuss:

- The tasks you undertake as a carer
- Your emotional and physical well-being
- Any support you get from family and friends
- Your other caring responsibilities
- Your benefit entitlements
- Your right to work, take up education, training and leisure activities
- Suitable accommodation
- Any charges for services

Other things you might want to talk about:

- How to take regular breaks from your caring role

- Help with making your GP aware that you are a carer and may need appointments at times that suit you
- Help with planning for emergencies

Sometimes your Social Worker may need to meet with you more than once to complete the assessment. It is better to take time to get things right than rush and miss something important.

After you have discussed your needs with your Social Worker a Support Plan will be completed which will record:

- What your needs are
- How the needs can be met
- If your needs can't be met, why
- Who is responsible for making things happen

When the Support Plan is completed you need to:

- Sign to agree that your information can be shared with others who may be able to help
- Make sure any charges are explained to you
- Say if you are not happy with the way your needs have been recorded and / or the support you have been offered
- Agree when the review will take place

You can request an earlier review if your circumstances change.

Not everything in your Support Plan will be something the Social Care Department can provide directly. Your Social Worker may refer you to another agency that may be able to meet your needs such as the Stockton Carers' Centre or a local support group.

Will it cost anything?

Your needs assessment is free.

To work out charges for support services we carry out a financial assessment, which is designed to be as fair as possible. It also includes advice to help maximise benefits. Our leaflet "Fairer Charging for Home Care and Other Non Residential Services" gives more information about this and is available from Social Services offices.

Charges are dependent on the financial circumstances of the person who receives the service. Some people will not pay anything for the support services they receive and others will be charged. Where services are provided directly to a carer they would be liable if a charge arose. Likewise, services to the person cared for would make them liable to any charge that arose.