

SOUTHAMPTON CARERS FACT SHEET 3

Help at Home Matters

Introduction

If a health specialist has decided you need health care or treatment you will receive it, although you may have to wait for it.

Any other service you approach will have to decide whether you qualify for help and whether it is able to give it. Health and Community Care and voluntary organisations have a fixed amount of money to spend, and they have to make sure that it is spent on the people most in need.

Even if they are unable to help straight away, organisations must explain why they have made their decision, and suggest an alternative if they are unable to help.

You may be able to arrange help for yourself, or to receive Direct Payments

Help at home

Caring for someone who is dependent on you can place extra demands on your day-to-day life, and you may need some more help around the home to enable you to cope. Most of the help available will be designed for the person you care for, but it should always help to take the strain off you a little too. Help at home can come from:

- the Health and Community Care Department
- your doctor or the hospital
- a private agency, with whom you can make your own arrangements.

You may not be able to get everything you would like, but if you don't ask, you don't receive. You do not have to accept what is offered if it isn't really what you need.

Full details of all the organisations that can help you at home are contained in the Guide to Care at Home, and you can obtain one by calling 0800 028 0888. The Guide is updated every year, so make sure you get the up-to-date version! The important thing to remember is that none of these organisations may actually say they give time off for a carer, but, by looking after the cared-for person, they effectively do.

If you decide you need to have some changes made to your home to help you cope, you should contact an Occupational Therapist (OT) for advice first. You can do this through the Contact Centre (Telephone number 023 8083 4567), or through one of the private OTs listed in Yellow Pages.

Once you have got an idea of what equipment is available, you can often try it out at a specialist equipment centre e.g. The Josian Centre and much of it is available to buy on the High Street or through specialist suppliers.

Taking a break

Whatever we do, everyone needs to be able to take a break from time to time, and, as a carer, you are no exception. If you don't take some time off, you may find that your ability to cope with caring starts to fade. Recharging the batteries is a very sensible idea!

Don't feel guilty about wanting some time to yourself – you may want a few hours to relax and catch your breath, or you may want a weekend (or even longer!) to go away without the person you care for.

If you are taking a break, though, you need to know that the person you care for is being looked after, and the Health and Community Care Department has some money to provide what is known as respite care, to let you do this.

However there are lots of different ways of taking a break, and it is important to choose the one that is right for both you and the person you care for. You may want to take a break from the daily routine with the person you care for and there are places that offer supported holiday care. Breaks can be one-off or regular.

A break can take some time to arrange, so think about making arrangements in advance of actually needing it!

Full details of all of organisations to help can be found in the Guide to Care at Home, or by calling the Contact Centre.

Care at home

Friends, relatives, local church or community groups may be able to provide short periods of respite care, and, although you may not like to ask, many of your closest friends and relatives will probably be only too pleased to help out.

Sitting, companion and visiting services will send volunteers or paid workers (in which case you may have to pay) to keep the person you care for company for a short while.

Home carers and care attendants can offer help to the person you care for at certain times of the day and be a much-needed 'different face' around the house.

Night sitting and nursing services can be arranged by your doctor for situations where nursing care is necessary, for example where the person you care for has an advanced illness and you cannot cope with their needs overnight.

Private care services, for which you will have to pay, offer a full range of help and support – be clear what it is you need when you contact them.

Care away from home – Options Available

Take a Break – special funding for additional or special breaks for carers – can be a holiday with the client, special quality time apart or extra support in times of need or social occasions – to give carers a real break to suit them - this does not have to be a statutory or regular service but can be innovative and different.

Carers Break – holiday break when alternative care is available for the client to allow the carer to have a holiday – usually consists of a respite care stay in a residential establishment, but can be care at home for the client while the carer goes away

Lunch clubs are for adults only and are usually open from 11am until 2pm – they provide a meal and companionship but no personal care.



Social clubs may run at any time, and will usually be targeted at specific groups of people – they will offer a chance for companionship but no personal care.

Day care centres offer a range of activities, as well as a chance to meet other people. They will usually be able to provide personal care, and attendance can be arranged through your local Health and Community Care office, which, after assessment, will find a place in one of their own day centres or work with an agency to find a place. You may approach some agencies direct, but, in most cases, you will have to pay towards the cost.

Day hospitals provide assessment and specific therapy for particular problems – your doctor can help you to arrange this.

Adult Placement and Family Link are two schemes, for adults and children respectively, where a family or carer, approved and vetted by Health and Community Care or Children's Services, will look after the person you care for at specified times.

Holiday play schemes for children with individual needs and are organised by voluntary groups – you need to make sure that the activities on offer are right for your child.

Residential care

Residential and Nursing Homes are able to provide 24-hour care or nursing care for those who need it and it is often possible to arrange short breaks as well as permanent stays. See the Guide to Residential Care for more details and make sure you visit in advance.

Taking a holiday together is a possibility and the Holiday Care Service may be able to help you organise a break specifically designed for people who are disabled or ill.

Adult Placement and Family Link may be able to arrange longer periods of care.

Hospital admission is usually a last resort for those in serious medical need – talk to your doctor if you think this is what the person you care for needs.

Getting out and about with the person you care for

- There is no reason why you shouldn't go out with the cared-for person and there are schemes to help you do this. Nobody likes to be stuck indoors all the time.
- There are transport schemes, concessionary travel, the disabled persons permit scheme (known as the Blue Badge Scheme) and paid adaptations can be made to a private car. If you need transport to hospital by car or ambulance your doctor / consultant may be able to arrange this.
- There is a range of voluntary transport schemes - a small mileage fee may be payable.
- Sporting and leisure facilities offer support for disabled or older people to take part.
- Specialist holidays are available at home and abroad. Contact your local council, the Holiday Care Service, RADAR or one of the specialist voluntary agencies.