

## ***Carers Information Pack***

### ***Southampton 2007/08***

#### ***Introduction to caring***

Caring is not an exact science because no carer is the same as another.

The way anyone cares depends on a range of factors including the person, their personality, the support they get, the family they have, the friends who understand, the professionals linked to them, their GP network, the hospital nearest to them, the person they care for and their disability.

In his/her lifetime a carer can readily interchange between dependency and caring.

Everyone at some time becomes or is a dependent, and everyone at some time becomes or is a carer, although many do not recognise the roles. Any individual can be both at the same time or can move backward and forward between the roles.

Undertaking to 'care' for another person is not easy and is very often the cause of stress or illness in the carer. Your life changes as you are unable to choose freely what you will do and when, as you will be taking the needs of someone else into consideration as well.

A parent may be caring for a child with disabilities and, although there may be other children with the same identified disability, every person is an individual with some of the inherited genes of their parents and some of the inherited genes of the disability so they are all different, and their care needs are also different.

The parent may also be caring for his/her parent and have torn loyalties, or one parent of a child with disabilities may develop a disability and become a parent carer who is also dependent on the other parent or a relative or friend.

The computations and variations are ever changing and endless. It is impossible to create a single simple description of a typical carer because there is no average carer to fit the mould.

Similarly the Carers Fact Sheets do not contain all the answers to the individual needs of any carer, as everyone is different. They give a general picture of some of the concerns that may arise and try to point to some of the sources of help and support available.

There is no single right or wrong answer to any situation. It is essential that each person and their carer looks at their own individual needs and finds the solution that is best for them.

At any given time, three in five people are taking responsibility voluntarily for looking after, supporting or assisting someone else who needs help because of a long-term illness or disability. It could be a family member, who is getting old, or who has a disability; it may be a friend who needs a helping hand; it could be a young person looking after a sibling or parent. Most people will at some time take responsibility for looking after someone else who needs help, so remember you are not alone and this guide may help you.

There is a right to choose not to care.

Looking after someone is not always easy or satisfying, and caring can be physically, emotionally and financially draining. It is every person's right to decide if they cannot take on the role or need to give it up. Although emotionally difficult, carers must make the decision that is best for them and the person they are expected to care for. Struggling on can often lead to the carer's own health being badly affected and that does not help anyone.

The differences between all carers and their needs means that service provision must be varied and flexible and ever evolving to help and support them. It is not sufficient to expect carers or the people they care for to fit into a small number of services, which, though often excellent, do not give them what they need. The number of carers needs is as different as the number of people caring and it is therefore essential that carers are able to access a wide range of facilities and services for their support.

This Carers Information Pack tries to reflect the many facets of caring and aims to provide a comprehensive individual support package.