

CARERS FACT SHEET 11

Useful contacts

Remember that there are many people in the same situation as you, and the growing network of carers across the county and the country can be of help to you, if you wish. You don't have to join any group or organisation but can just make contact to find what you need. You are unlikely to be the first person in a particular situation and finding someone who has been through it before could be the best help you will ever receive.

There are more than 100 local groups of carers across the county and cities, which meet together for mutual support and help. Many also develop a social programme and stay in touch with members through a local newsletter. While it may cost to join, you could benefit from access to up-to-date information and communication with others. Contact Carers Together or your local carers worker for details.

- Carers Together is a countywide organisation run by carers for carers. It offers a confidential listening ear to carers, a support network of people in similar situations to yours as well as information, signposting and help. It produces a regular newsletter, provides training for carers, and, with local centres, supports local carers forums where you can have your say on what should be done.
- Carers Together works directly with Health and Community Care, Health Authorities and others to develop better services for carers
- Your local Carers Workers may provide information, advice, individual support and contact, people to speak on your behalf and support for local groups of carers. Carers Workers are based all over Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton.
- The Health and Community Care Department, who can carry out your assessment for you, may decide that they can offer you services. Among the support that your local office may be able to offer or signpost you to are day care services, residential care, home care, specialist help for the deaf or hard of hearing, specialist help for those with sight problems, skills training and equipment that may make life easier at home. The A to Z in this pack can help or you can find the telephone number in your local telephone directory under local authority and then community information, or speak to your own GP.
- Your own doctor can help you to access services such as district nursing, speech therapy, health visiting, chiropody, mobile assessment, incontinence support and counselling, as well as offering referral to specialists. Since 1 April 2004 your GP has a duty to record the number of carers in his/her surgery and to ensure the right services are offered.

- Make sure you tell your GP that you are a carer. You can do this by telling the receptionist or by using a form available from Carers Together. Since 2004 most out of hours cover is provided by the Primary Care Trust.
- The Education Department, who can offer help and advice on educational issues and provide you with special leaflets.
- The Employment Service, www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk for advice and information relating to work and training.
- NHS Direct on 0845 46 47 - a lo-call telephone help line staffed by specially trained nurses, who can offer information or advice, or arrange emergency support if necessary.
- The hospital social work team, who can arrange for services if the person you care for is about to leave hospital. The hospital staff should refer you to them, but you are free to make contact with them yourself, and it is important to remember that any arrangements for support should be made before the person you care for leaves hospital.

When you talk to any of these services, make sure you understand what they are saying to you. It is easy for people to use jargon you can't follow, so the trick is to be persistent and ask anyone you come into contact with to explain things clearly in a way that you can understand. Whoever you talk to, it can take some time to sort out the help you need, and you need to hang on in there and not give up.

Useful Publications from Social Services

- Guide to Care at Home a guide to community services in Hampshire, Portsmouth and Southampton
- Guide to Residential Care a list of registered residential care/nursing homes in the area
- Pinpoint a directory of services for children with disabilities and their families.

You can obtain a free copy of the above publications (which are updated annually) by calling 0800 028 0888 or by contacting your local Health and Community Care Social Care office. They are updated annually.

Some useful Publications from Carers Together

- Carers Pack – a folder of information about aspects of being a carer
- An A to Z of local and national contacts and organisations
- Carers Guide to Assessments
- Useful Benefit Numbers
- Regular Newsletter
- Leaflets about Direct Payments, Carers emergency arrangements etc

You can obtain a free copy of the above publications by calling 01794 519495.