

Carers Information Pack

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Introduction to caring

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

Who is a carer?

A carer is a person who, without remuneration, gives support and assistance to a relative, friend or neighbor, who needs help because of a long term health condition, illness, disability, or old age.

The way anyone cares depends on a range of factors including:

- the carer and their personal choice and abilities
 - the person they care for and their disability or health condition
 - the family they have and the friends who understand
 - the support available to them
 - the professionals linked to them
 - their GP network and/or the hospital they may use
- Everyone at some time becomes or is dependent, and everyone at some time becomes or is a carer, although many do not recognise the roles. A person may be both at the same time or may 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 also be taking the needs of someone else into consideration.
 - A parent may be caring for a child with a disability. Although there may be other children with the same identified disability or condition, 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.
 - A parent may also be caring for his/her parent and/or partner and have torn loyalties. A parent of a child with disabilities may develop a disability and become a parent carer who is also dependent on a relative or friend.
 - The 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.

Carers Fact Sheets

The Carers Fact Sheets do not contain all the answers to the individual needs of every carer, as everyone is different. They give a general picture of some of the concerns that may arise and try to point carers 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 his/her own individual needs and finds the solution that is best for them.

At any given time, one in six people is 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 older, 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 or supporting someone else who needs help, so remember you are not alone.

There is a right to choose not to care

- Looking after someone is not always easy or satisfying
- Caring can be physically, emotionally and financially draining.
- Every person has the right to decide if they cannot take on the role or need to give it up.
- Although it may be emotionally difficult, carers must make the decision that is best for them as well as 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.

Support for carers

- Carers are all different - they are individuals with individual needs.
- The differences between each carer and their needs means that carers support and service provision must be varied, flexible and ever evolving.
- It is not sufficient to expect carers or the people they care for, to fit into one service or a small number of services, which, though often excellent, do not give them what they need.
- The number of carers and their 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.

The Carers Information Pack tries to reflect the many facets of caring and aims to provide a comprehensive individual support package and signposting to other services that may help.