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Factsheet G8 New to Caring? Caring for someone who is elderly or physically disabled

If you have recently taken on caring responsibilities for the first time, or your caring role has become more demanding and you need more help, this fact sheet will highlight the areas of support that could be available to you.

Assessments of need

The person you care for may be entitled to help from social services, including things such as personal care, adaptations or equipment for the home. Having their needs assessed (called a Community Care Assessment) is a very important step in making sure you have the help available from statutory services. After the assessment you will be told what services are available and any charges involved. A 'care package' can then be set up with your agreement and that of the person you care for. And if your caring role changes and/or the needs of the person you care for become greater then a re-assessment can be requested.

Yourself: If you are caring for someone or about to start caring for someone, and the care you provide is regular and substantial you will be entitled to have a Carers Assessment. This is your opportunity to talk to a member of Adult Care Services (ACS) staff about your caring role and how it impacts on your life. It will look at among other things; potential help with breaks from your caring role, support through providing services, and help to plan for the future and emergencies.

More information is available on our factsheet **G3 Carers assessment**.

An assessment can be requested through the County Council call centre on **0300 123 4042** or online at www.hertsdirect.org.uk And if you find any of this process a bit daunting, or hit difficulties, we can help – so give us a call.

Tell your GP you are a carer

It is important that you register as a carer with your GP surgery. If your surgery is aware that you have caring responsibilities, it should enable the team there to support you more fully. For example, appointments can be arranged at more suitable times, you can be offered a free flu vaccination and have your own health monitored.

Look after your own health

Carers often neglect their own health as they focus on the needs of the person they care for. Caring can be stressful, so be aware of this and look for activities that help you relax and take time out, and for sources of emotional support to you personally – and use them. It is not selfish to do so, but a necessary part of maintaining your own health.

Carers can hurt themselves by moving the person they care for incorrectly. If you are struggling, it may be that Adult Care Services need to provide more services, so don't be afraid to ask for a re-assessment of the situation. There may also be courses to enable you to learn effective and safe moving and handling techniques.

Don't ignore your own health issues. If you feel unwell visit your doctor and don't put it off for another time.

Take a Break

Sitting services can sometimes be provided to enable you to have a short break from caring. Someone will stay with the person you care for while you go out for a while or take a few hours to do something that you enjoy. This may be for a few hours but can sometimes be longer. Contact us for more information on sitting services in your area.

Respite care over a longer period can be provided to give you a break from your caring role – maybe for a holiday. This could be arranged at home by an increase in the regular care package being provided. Alternatively a temporary stay in a residential home could be arranged for the person you care for while you have your break. It is possible to privately arrange a stay in a residential or nursing home or for a care agency to visit at home, but this can be very expensive, so in most cases it is advisable to contact ACS and ask them to assess the situation and arrange the care. There is still likely to be a charge, but this will be based on the financial situation of the person you care for.

Benefit Entitlement

The most important benefits to be aware of are Attendance Allowance (AA) for people over 65, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people under 65 and Carers Allowance (for carers). If your cared for person receives AA or DLA you may be able to claim carers allowance. These are all in addition to the benefits available to anyone on a low income, which many carers (or their cared for) are also entitled to.

More information is available on our factsheet **G2 Benefits for carers**.

Sometimes filling in the forms can be difficult. Contact us for information on help available in your area with form filling or for general hints and advice on what to include.

Advice, Information, Support

You may find it helpful to talk to other carers in similar situations, or to simply take some time out for yourself to have a chat with other people. There may be carer support groups meeting in your area. Call us to find out when and where.

We also hold information on what's available in your area from the many organisations in Hertfordshire which provide help and support to carers. So whatever your query related to caring do give us a call and we'll do our best to help.

For those who are internet users there are some very useful websites for carers. And if you do not have access to the internet let us know and we will print off any useful information for you.

www.direct.gov.uk - lots of useful information including on all state benefits

www.carersuk.org and www.carers.org
-excellent sites for all matters related to caring

www.hertsdirect.org - useful local information and contact numbers