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Factsheet G11B Backing You Up – Making your own contingency plan

Carers UK have highlighted that 96% of carers are worried about how they would cope with unexpected events. They say that often they don't take part in social events in case 'something happens and they can't get back'.

With all the other pressures on carers, it is not easy to find the time to sit and think through who could be called on in case of an emergency, or to ensure that the right information is available to someone stepping into your shoes on a temporary basis.

Carers in Hertfordshire can help you to draw up a contingency plan that works for you and gives the reassurance of knowing that arrangements can be put in place to at least hold the fort in case of your unexpected absence. Knowing that there is a back up plan and that those who will stand-in for you have the information they will need, can do a great deal to relieve the anxiety of 'what if?'. If you are an adult caring for a adult with a physical or learning disability (not a mental health problem) then you may find it useful to also read our factsheet 11A 'Backing You Up – making a contingency plan with ACS' to help you decide which is the right approach for you.

How can Carers in Hertfordshire help you make your own contingency plan?

A Carer Support Worker will help you consider the tasks that you do to support the person you care for and how you would want them provided in your absence. We cannot help you find good people in an emergency, but through the process of thinking through what might happen before a crisis occurs, we can support you to identify family, friends or neighbours, who would be prepared to help out if needed. You can then draw up your contingency plan in consultation with them.

We supply a contingency plan template with helpful questions and prompts to help you write down what would be needed in your absence and will photocopy as many copies as you wish of your completed plan so that you can give one to each of your agreed stand-ins.

We also suggest that you carry a card in your purse or wallet to indicate that you are a carer and that someone at home relies on you. This should include the phone number of someone who knows your caring situation and will know what to do in case of your unexpected absence. Additionally, if you have a mobile phone you could label some important contacts as ICE (in case of emergency). Multiple contacts can be entered as ICE1, ICE2, etc.

Example format for your own emergency card:

**Please note that
I AM A CARER**
and someone's safety depends on me.
In an emergency where I am unable to
give instructions please contact:

Other sources of Carers emergency cards

Some disability specific organisations have schemes. For example:

Mencap Carers Card (www.mencap.org.uk)

MS Society Carers Emergency Card (www.mssociety.org.uk)

If you do not have internet access we can look up this information for you and please let us know if you discover any others.

In Hertfordshire, Adult Care Services (ACS) can supply a card if the person you care for is an adult with a physical or learning disability. Once you have drawn up your own plan *Carers in Hertfordshire* can arrange for the contact details of your stand-ins to be logged with ACS (they will need to give written consent for their details to be held on ACS records) and for you to be issued with a Carers Card. This card gives a unique ID number and the ACS phone number, available 24 hours per day, 7 days per week. Emergency services can use this information to call ACS who will then contact your nominated stand-ins and so trigger the contingency plan you have agreed with them.

However if you are currently receiving services from ACS or are likely to need their help in an emergency, please see factsheet 11A 'Backing You Up – making a contingency plan with ACS'.

Other useful emergency contacts and information:

'Out of hours' health and social service help and advice in Hertfordshire can be contacted on the following numbers:

Adult Care Services	0300 123 4042
Mental Health Services	01438 843322
Children Schools and Families	0300 123 4043
GP out of hours service	03000 33 33 33

The '**Message in a Bottle**' scheme (www.lions.org.uk) can also be useful in an emergency. A bottle is available from your GP surgery, pharmacy, health centre or local Lions club. You put vital personal and medical information inside it and keep it in the fridge. Emergency services will know there is a bottle by two labels. One fixed to the inside of the front door and the other to the door of the fridge.

'Lifeline' and Community alarms systems can be installed in the homes of vulnerable people by your local district council. An emergency button is supplied to be worn on a pendant around the neck or on a wristband so that the person you care for can alert an operator at the other end to a problem situation at home. There is usually a small weekly charge for this service. Contact your local district council for details of the scheme in your area.

Adult Care Services can arrange for a 'keysafe' to be installed at the home of the person you care for. This is a secure way of storing a key, accessed by a pincode, so that trusted people who have been given the code can enter without the person having to come to the door to let them in.