

Balancing Life and Caring

...finding ways to live your own life

work... learning... leisure...



work... learning... leisure

Rose cares for her daughter



Linda cares for her husband



Terry cares for his son

Sam cares for her uncle

Are you a carer?

Six million people in the UK look after a partner, family member or friend who cannot manage without help because they are ill, frail or have a disability.

Everyone's situation is different and each person copes with caring in their own way. You may be caring for someone 24 hours a day, seven days a week. Or you may be helping someone out on a regular basis, by doing their shopping or cooking, for example.

For some people the caring role has evolved gradually, almost without their noticing. For others, a sudden crisis may have resulted in their becoming a carer. Others still may have chosen to become carers only after considerable thought and discussion.

About caring

Carers often juggle other demands such as family and a job with their caring role. When you are busy coping day to day and responding to others, it is easy to forget your own life, which can have significant consequences such as having to give up work or study.

Balancing caring and life

Many carers say that having a life outside of caring helps them to feel more able to cope with the stresses and strains. Working and other activities such as learning and leisure can seem like a welcome break from caring which can provide independence and social contact. For many carers, juggling work and care is a financial necessity.

At the same time caring may mean that it can be difficult to pursue what you want.

This leaflet is to ensure you know your rights and help you make a new law work for you in getting what you want.

Work

Three million people juggle work and caring.

For many carers, especially for over 1 million people who care for more than 50 hours a week work is not an option that can be reasonably considered. But work may be possible with a supportive and understanding employer, along with help with caring which suits your working hours. Your caring situation may have changed requiring you to reconsider your working hours.

Think about

- telling your employer about juggling work and care. An understanding employer can make all the difference to whether you feel able to seek support at work
- what practical help, including replacement care, would make a difference
- what changes to your working hours could help balance work and care
- what is right for you, as well as others. You have the right to choose, and that means choosing to give up work, as well as to stay. Options include a career break, voluntary retirement and redundancy. You may need help with some of the practicalities, including replacement care



If you receive Carer's Allowance it may stop if you work and earn more than £82 per week after certain deductions. However, there may be in work benefits you can claim. Get advice from a local Citizen Advice Bureau or welfare rights project.



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT WORK
**Juggling work and care:
information for carers.**
Carers UK booklet.



Sometimes coming to work was almost like an eight-hour break from caring at home.



I thought my working days were over. Talking about work with my social worker made me realise how important it is for me. I got some extra help from social services and my local carers' organisation which allowed me to go part time as well as continue caring for my husband.



Help with taxi fares has made all the difference. I can get Mum dressed and ready and be at work on time.



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I love being in my garden, and have a passion for flowers, so was really pleased when I found a course in growing and arranging flowers. It's not only about the course itself – which is fun and creative – it's about being with people who share my interests and who I can talk to. It's about being me...



Learning

Learning can be just about time for you, or about moving on to something else, like volunteering or paid work. It can be hard thinking about what is right for you when you might not have thought about yourself or your needs for a long time.



Carers Allowance stops if you start a course involving 21 hours or more of study per week.



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT LEARNING
Carers and learning... something for you.
Carers UK booklet.

For information about courses in your area, online course and distance learning opportunities telephone Learndirect on 0800 101 901



- whether you want to develop an existing interest or skill, or learn a new one?
- where you want to do your course – do you want to go to an adult education centre or college? Do you want to try distance learning or even courses through the internet?
- how much time do you want to spend? What help do you need to be able to carry out learning or pursuing your interest?



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New law

A new law – the Carers Equal Opportunities Act – has been introduced to make sure that carers are given support so that they can better balance different aspects of their life.

The law means that carers have a right to ask social services for an assessment of their needs. Social services must ask about your work, learning and leisure requirements.

Leisure

Having an interest outside of caring is important for your well being – but your own leisure interests might be the first to go when caring is taking up all your time.

If you are able to get the right support, try to make time for your own interests. Reading, meeting friends, golfing, or whatever it is you enjoy will not only help you to cope when caring becomes too much, but it will probably improve your health.

Many carers centres have activities for carers – aromatherapy sessions, days out, group meetings and opportunities to make friends who share similar experiences – also your local authority may have special concessionary fares or passes for carers and disabled people.

Contact your council to find out more.

“

Going fishing is time for me – time when I'm recharging my batteries so that I can continue looking after my daughter.

”

Getting help through social services

The main way to getting help through social services is to have a carer's assessment. The law says you have a right to an assessment if you look after a friend or relative who cannot manage without your help.

■ Purpose of an assessment

The purpose of a carer's assessment is for you, as a carer, to discuss with social services what help you need with caring. It should look at the help you need to help maintain your own health, and balance caring with other aspects of your life, such as work and family commitments. Social services use the assessment to decide what help to provide.

■ What should happen at the assessment

The social worker or person carrying out the assessment should ask whether you are able and willing to carry out the range of tasks involved in your caring role. You may be finding it too difficult to continue caring. There may be some tasks which you find difficult. You may still care about someone, but find it difficult to care for them.

Carers have the same rights as anybody else to pursue work, learning and leisure. The law says that the social worker should ask you specifically about work, learning and leisure and how these aspects of your life are affected by your caring role. It is important to tell the social worker if you are finding it difficult to juggle work and caring. Other things that should be talked about include your own health, how often you get a break and what would happen in an emergency. You can have someone with you at the assessment.

■ Making the decision about what care to provide

Once they have assessed your needs, social services must take them into consideration when deciding what help to provide to you and the person you care for. This could mean, for instance, more help at home to allow you to attend an adult education course or help with taxi fares so





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you can get to work on time if, for example, you have had to get the person you care for washed and dressed in the morning.

It is helpful to think about what prevents you from undertaking work, learning or leisure. A good social worker will explore with you solutions which might make it possible to participate in these activities.

You should be given a written copy of what services they have decided to provide, sometimes referred to as a care plan.

■ Charging

Social services can charge for services. Charging policies vary across the country, but there are certain rules that they must follow, including earned income (i.e. a wage or a salary) should be disregarded when calculating how much someone should be charged.



MORE INFORMATION ABOUT ASSESSMENTS, SERVICES AND CHANGES
How do I get help: carers assessment made clear. Carers UK booklet

For Carers UK factsheets, booklets and other publications call **020 7566 7626**

10 ways to get support

Caring covers such a range of different situations, conditions and disabilities that we are only able to provide an overview of the help available to support carers and the people they look after. Here are 10 different suggestions.

1 Help from family and friends

Many carers rely on family and friends to help with everyday tasks like shopping, or to step in and look after the person cared for so they can have a break. Perhaps those around you do want to help but are worried it might seem like interfering – so do ask! An informal support network can make all the difference.

2 Private arrangements such as home help agencies

The United Kingdom Homecare Association can give details of homecare agencies in your area, tel 020 8288 1551. Your local social services should also have this information.

3 Seeking help through social services

Social services can provide a range of help to disabled people and carers – practical services in the home, short-term breaks (sometimes called respite care), aids and equipment, adaptations to the home, etc. Telephone your local social services department and ask for an assessment, both of the person you care for and of you as their carer. For more information order our free booklet 'How do I get help?'. Speak to your GP for a referral or contact direct – the number will be in your local directory.

4 Carers organisations

Your area may have a carer's organisation. This could be operated by your local authority, the Princess Royal Trust for Carers (Carers Centres) or another voluntary organisation. They provide a range of support to carers including support groups, where you can meet other carers, information and advice on all aspects of caring and on the disability or illness that affects the person you care for and help with applying for benefits. Some have training opportunities covering topics to assist you in caring such as first aid, lifting more safely, stress reduction and general interest topics such as computing.

5 Voluntary organisations

Many voluntary organisations offer advice and support to disabled people and their carers. For example, Crossroads provides replacement care to allow you a break. Contact a local disability project or carers' organisation (see 4) for details of organisations in your area.

6 GP and primary care

GPs are often the gateway to getting all kinds of help. You can ask your GP to refer you to other medical services, community nursing, counselling services, and to your local social services department. Your GP surgery should keep a register of carers. Make sure your GP knows you are a carer.

7 Carers' services

These can be anything which will help the carer to look after the person or help maintain their health and well being. Examples are a mobile phone to give a carer peace of mind when they are away from the person they look after; help with taxi fares so that the carer can get to hospital appointments or get to work on time; counselling or alternative therapies to deal with emotional issues and stress. This type of support can be provided as a direct payment (see below). These kind of services are relatively new and vary a lot in different areas. To find out what's available contact social services (see 3).

8 Direct payments

A Direct Payment is money given to you, or the person you care for, by your social services department. You use the money to buy the services you need, instead of social services providing them directly. The benefit of having a Direct Payment is that it can help you buy support that is both timely and appropriate. Direct Payments can only be spent on getting the support you and the person you care for have been assessed as needing. The government wants as many people as possible to benefit from Direct Payments. But you don't have to have a Direct Payment if you don't want to – you can opt to have services instead.

9 Job Centre Plus

Job Centre Plus is your local benefits office for people of working age. As well as administering benefits, staff can provide advice and assistance with returning to work, and help with training opportunities and jobsearch. Each office has a disability adviser who can help people with health problems or disabilities overcome barriers to work and training.

10 Benefits

There are a number of different benefits and tax credits. Some benefits may be payable because you are a carer (eg Carer's Allowance) and others might be payable for different reasons. For example, you may be eligible for Income Support (or Pension Credit if over 60yrs) because you have a low income. A local Citizens Advice Bureau or welfare rights project should be able to do a full benefits check for you to make sure you get all your entitlements.

More information from Carers UK



Benefits: What's available and how to get them. Factsheet
Direct Payments for carers. Booklet.

You can find out your nearest carers organisation by visiting our website www.carersuk.org

CarersLine – free helpline on all aspects of caring. Wed and Thurs 10am–noon and 2pm–4pm. Tel: 0808 808 7777

Useful Organisations

CITIZENS ADVICE BUREAU – check your local telephone directory or visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk/bureau for details of your nearest CAB. The Citizens Advice Bureau service helps people resolve their legal, money and other problems by providing free, independent and confidential advice.

CROSSROADS ASSOCIATION

10 Regent Place, Rugby, Warwickshire, CV21 2PN
Tel: 0845 450 0350
www.crossroads.org.uk
Email: communications@crossroads.org.uk
Crossroads provides care in the home to give carers a break through a network of local services.

PRINCESS ROYAL TRUST FOR CARERS

London Office, 142 Minories, London EC3N 1LB,
Tel: 020 7480 7788
www.carers.org
Email: help@carers.org
PRTC provides information, advice and support services across the UK through a network of carers centres.

MENCAP

123 Golden Lane, London, EC1Y 0RT,
Tel: 020 7454 0454 helpline: 0808 808 1111, www.mencap.org.uk
Email: information@mencap.org.uk
Mencap provides info and advice for people with a learning disability and their families and carers.

CONTACT A FAMILY

209–211 City Road, London, EC1V 1JN
Tel: 020 7608 8700
Helpline: 0808 808 3555
www.cafamily.org.uk
Email: info@cafamily.org.uk
Contact a Family provides support and advice to parents whatever the medical condition of their child.

DISABLED LIVING FOUNDATION

380 –384 Harrow Road, London, W9 2HU
Tel: 020 7289 6111
www.dlf.org.uk
Helpline: 0845 130 9177 (local rate)
Provide advice and information on equipment for independent living.

VITALISE (formerly the Winged Fellowship Trust),

Angel House, 12 City Forum, 250 City Road, London EC1V 8AF
Tel: 0845 345 1972,
www.vitalise.org.uk
Provides breaks for carers and holidays for people with physical disabilities

Join Carers UK today

Carers UK is an organisation of carers – people who look after partners, family or friends with an illness or disability.

We are putting pressure on decision-makers at all levels to win a fair deal for carers. By joining Carers UK your support will help us sustain that pressure. Adding your voice will strengthen our power to make a difference for the UK's six million carers.

Carers UK welcomes carers, former carers and others who support our aims, as members.

As a member you will receive regular updates on our work, a free copy of our magazine Caring, along with information about your rights and practical help.

I want to make a difference by joining Carers UK

Please tell us whether you are a Carer or a Supporter 320000/BLC05

The annual cost is £30. Our suggested minimum subscription is £10. We realise you have many calls on your finances, but please give as generously as you can.

£10 £15 £20 £25 £30
over £30 please state

tick here for free membership if you would like to join us, but your income is low

Carers UK takes data protection very seriously. We promise we will not pass your details on to other organisations. If you do not wish to receive further mailings from Carers UK about our work, please tick the box.

I'm sending a donation

I wish to make a donation towards Carers UK's vital work, of 310100/BLC05

£10 £25 £50 £100 or £

I enclose a cheque/postal order payable to Carers UK

Master card/Visa/Switch number
(please delete as applicable)

Valid from / / Expiry date / /

Issue no. (Switch only)

Date Signature

Gift Aid

Help make your donation make more money for Carers UK.

Taxpayers – if you Gift Aid your donation we can make sure your money is worth almost a third more – at no extra cost to you. To qualify you must pay an amount of income tax or capital gains tax at least equal to the tax that Carers UK reclaims on your donations.

Please Gift Aid my donation. This will cover all donations I've made to Carers UK since 6th April 2000 and all donations I make in the future until I notify you otherwise.

Please send me details of how I can help with fundraising

My details

(Please fill in your details below)

Name [Mr/Mrs/Miss/Ms]

Address

Postcode

Email address

Phone number

Please detach this form and return to: Carers UK, FREEPOST NAT 8132, Crawley RH11 7BR.

Help us make a difference to carers' lives.

Membership Hotline **020 7566 7602**

CARERS UK

20-25 Glasshouse Yard,
London, EC1A 4JT

Tel 020 7490 8818
Fax 020 7490 8824
info@carersuk.org
www.carersuk.org

CARERS Wales

River House, Ynys Bridge Court
Gwaelod y Garth, Cardiff CF15 9SS

Tel 029 2081 1370
Fax 029 2081 1575
info@carerswales.org
www.carerswales.org

Registered charity no. 246329
Registered in England and Wales as Carers National Association No. 864097

This information is correct as of April 2005.

This booklet has been produced through the support of the Department of Health
and British Gas/Nwy Prydain.

Nwy Prydain  **British Gas**

Equal