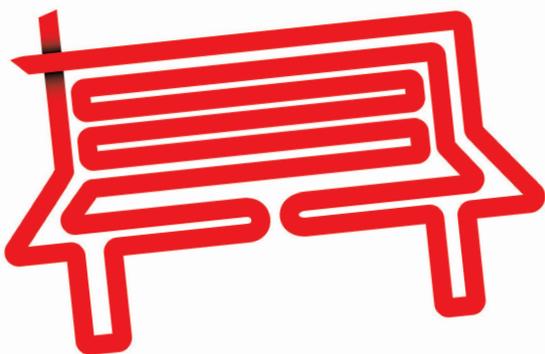


# Taking a break



This factsheet applies to Northern Ireland only.

Caring for somebody can be a full time job so breaks are vital to your own wellbeing and quality of life.

This factsheet outlines the different types of breaks that are available, how to get alternative care and how to plan and fund your break. It also includes a list of organisations that provide breaks or can help you organise a break.

This factsheet applies to people living in Northern Ireland.

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## Why breaks are important

Caring for somebody can be a full time job so breaks are vital to your own wellbeing and quality of life.

When was the last time you gave yourself a break? When did you last have an evening out, go for a swim, try something new, take a holiday? When did you last have a chance to do all the things you would like to do, but can't do while you are caring – everyday things such as meeting up with friends, visiting family or simply catching up with some sleep?

Taking a break also means that the person you are looking after may be able to enjoy new experiences, have a change of scene and routine and mix with other people.

## Different sorts of breaks

There are different ways in which you may take a break as a carer. Only you will know what type of break is best for you. You may need an hour each week, a day here and there, a week or two for a holiday, or a combination of all of these.

Think about the kind of break that you need as a carer and what kind of service the person you are looking after needs.

Some carers may choose to go on holiday with the person they are looking after or to go away alone – but a short break or holiday may not always involve going away. Some carers enjoy a short break from caring, which involves the person they are looking after going on holiday and the carer staying at home.

## Getting alternative care so you can take a break

There are different options for getting support for the person you are looking after while you are away.

### Social services

Your local Health and Social Care Trust social services department can arrange services to help support you. In order to get these services, you and the person you are looking after will need to have an assessment of your needs carried out.

### Finding care yourself

You may wish to make your own private arrangements such as:

- ▶ employing a paid care worker to care for the person you are looking after in their own home
- ▶ paying for short-term residential care
- ▶ arranging a holiday for the person you are looking after

There are a range of organisations which provide information and/or services which will help you to make private arrangements. A list of these is provided at the end of this factsheet.

### Friends and family

Some carers may be able to ask friends or family members to take over caring for the person they are looking after in order to go on a short break or holiday. Sometimes this may mean that friends or family visit the person being cared for to provide care while the carer is away. Alternatively, it may mean that the person being looked after goes to stay with friends or family for an extended period.

### Organisations that can help

There are many useful organisations that can help you get a break. They may provide break services for carers or provide information to help you to decide what alternative care services to use. Your local trust or carers' organisation should have information about local charities and organisations. A list of national charities and organisations is provided from page 13 onwards.

## Help through social services to get a break

Social services can arrange alternative care for the person you are looking after so that you can take a break from caring. This is usually called **respite care**.

### Arranging respite care

#### Carer's assessment

If you are providing regular and substantial care for someone, you have a legal right to an assessment of your needs through a carer's assessment.

You should be offered a carer's assessment from the local trust of the person you are looking after. However, if you are not offered one, you can request one.

Your carer's assessment should consider:

- your caring role and how it affects your life and wellbeing
- your health – physical, mental and emotional issues
- your feelings and choices about caring
- work, study, training, leisure
- relationships, social activities and your goals
- housing
- planning for emergencies

The assessment should take a holistic approach, looking at the support needs of the person you are looking after and you as the carer, identifying the outcomes desired by both.

Once the trust has decided that help is going to be provided, it may be agreed that the best way to help you as a carer is by providing services directly to you, or by providing services to the person you are looking after, or a combination of both.

In order to meet your need for a break the local trust may have to provide a service to the person you are looking after, and so will have to carry out an assessment of their needs.

## Community care assessment

To allow you to take a break from caring, the person you are looking after may need to be assessed so they can be provided with the alternative care (called respite care) needed to allow you to take a break. This assessment is called a community care assessment. Respite care is provided as a service to the person you are looking after and as such means that they will be financially assessed to determine whether (and if so how much) they would need to contribute towards the cost of this.

## For disabled children and their parents

A Children (NI) Order or UNOCINI assessment looks at the needs of disabled children and their families as a whole and can also provide services for young carers. The assessment should consider all the help that the disabled child needs, the needs of any other children in the family and the help that you may need to care for the disabled child.

There is specific guidance for trust staff on how to carry out a carer's assessment using UNOCINI. If you feel that a UNOCINI assessment has not addressed the help that you need as a carer you can still ask for a separate carer's assessment.

▶▶ **Note:** If you have already had any of these assessments, but you need more support, ask the local trust to carry out a reassessment.

▶▶ **Note:** If the local trust does not decide to provide help, or not enough help, then you can make a complaint about this – contact Carers NI for further information on making a complaint – see final page for contact details. You could also explore the other options for getting a break such as finding care yourself, using friends and family or trying to find an organisation which could help.

## Types of respite care

Respite care can be provided through:

- **Residential or nursing care** – where the person you are looking after goes for a short stay in a residential or nursing home.
- **Day-sitting service** – where someone will come into your home to allow you a break to have time for yourself.
- **Night-sitting service** – where someone will come into your home to allow you to have a proper night's sleep.
- **Day care** – where the person you are looking after goes to a day centre or takes part in activities away from home allowing you a break from caring.
- **Holidays** – help and support for when you want to go on holiday by yourself or with the person you are looking after.
- **Direct payments** – cash payments from the local trust. A person with a disability or ill health can be paid a direct payment following a community care assessment so that they can arrange and pay for their own care and support services instead of receiving them directly from the trust. They can therefore receive a direct payment to pay for the alternative care they will need while their carer takes a break. You can find out more about direct payments at [carersuk.org/direct-payments](https://carersuk.org/direct-payments)

## Paying for respite care

The local trust of the person you are looking after may charge them for any respite care services provided. If they do charge, they must follow guidelines about how income/capital is taken into account – you should be told about this when the assessments are carried out. The law does allow for charges to be made for services to carers following a carer's assessment. However, to date this is not common practice.

## Finding care yourself

You or the person you are caring for may decide to recruit a paid care worker or to use an agency. You might also decide to arrange a short stay in residential care or a holiday for the person you are looking after.

### Recruiting help yourself

If you are thinking about employing a paid care worker directly, then it is important that you realise that you will be taking on the responsibilities of an employer. Some of the things you will need to do as an employer are:

- check out your employees' references
- pay statutory sick pay if an employee is ill as well as maternity, paternity and adoption pay
- ensure that your employee's tax and National Insurance are paid correctly
- check that your employee has the right to work in the UK
- take out insurance to cover any accidents an employee might have in your home

You should also be familiar with law on disciplinary and grievance procedures, redundancy procedures and health & safety requirements.

All of this may sound very complicated, but there is help available to guide you through and it is a good idea to get advice before you start. See page 13 onwards to find organisations who can help you make informed decisions about employing a paid care worker.

### Using an agency

Before you start approaching agencies, you should be clear about the kind of care you are looking for and when you need it. Check that they deal with private clients like yourself and that they are able to provide the kind of care that you need. Although using an agency is usually more expensive than recruiting a paid care worker yourself, it can make managing care easier because the agency will:

- take care of the paperwork (eg Disclosure and Barring Service checks)
- deal with an employee's tax and National Insurance
- check references
- provide a back-up if an employee is ill or unsatisfactory

## Short-term residential care or a holiday for the person you are looking after

If you are going to arrange short-term residential care, local trusts can normally provide a list of local care homes or you can contact the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA), Northern Ireland's independent health and social care regulator.

If you are going to arrange a holiday there might be an organisation or charity which could help to arrange and/or fund this. See page 13 onwards for a list of organisations and their contact details.

## Planning your break

Being a carer means that you have to think about the needs of the person you are looking after while you are away. Good planning will ensure you can relax and have peace of mind to make the most of your break.

This is our checklist to help you plan for your break:

- Make sure that anyone who is providing alternative care has all the information they need to care for the person you are looking after. This may be something as straightforward as what they like to eat, and when their mealtimes are, or more complex information about the medicines they need to take.
- It is important to leave a list of contacts. These should include the doctor's number and the numbers of any other medical professionals involved in the care of the person you are looking after, those of nearby family members and friends, and your own number, in case of emergencies.
- If you have an emergency plan (which sets out what should be done in an emergency) then make sure you go through the details of this with the people who will be providing alternative care.
- Residential care homes and nursing homes can provide you with short-term care for the person you look after. It is a good idea, if you can manage it, to visit the care or nursing home beforehand, so that you can see what it is like, make sure that you are happy with it and reassure yourself that they will be able to properly care for the person you look after.
- If the person you look after needs specialist medical or nursing help while you're away, you should arrange this through their GP.

## Funding the break

If you are assessed as needing a break as an outcome of your carer's assessment, the trust may be able to provide you with some financial help towards it. This is called a carer's direct payment.

You may be able to get help with the cost of going on holiday, either alone or with the person you are looking after, from a charity or benevolent fund (see our list of organisations from page 13). Your social worker or local carers organisation should be able to provide you with more information on local benevolent funds and other possible sources of funding.

## How a break might affect your benefits

Payment of benefits can sometimes be affected if you take a break or you or the person you are looking after goes into hospital or residential care.

### Taking a break

You can have up to a total of 4 weeks break in any 26 week period and be paid Carer's Allowance during these breaks. The breaks can be for any reason.

You must have been providing 35 hours or more of care a week for at least 22 of the past 26 weeks. Up to 8 weeks of a stay in hospital (for either you or the cared for) can be included in the 22 weeks.

The person you have been looking after must have been in receipt of the middle or higher rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), or either rate of Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance for that period.

### Going into hospital

You can continue to get Carer's Allowance for up to 12 weeks in any 26 week period if you or the person you are looking after has to go into hospital. 12 weeks is the maximum, so if you have had breaks in caring for other reasons Carer's Allowance may stop sooner.

You must have been providing 35 hours or more of care a week for at least 22 of the past 26 weeks. Up to 8 weeks of a stay in hospital (for either you or the cared for) can be included in the 22 weeks.

The person you have been looking after must have been in receipt of the middle or higher rate of the care component of DLA, or either rate of Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance for that period.

In practice, if you are caring for an adult, you will only be able to get Carer's Allowance for 28 days if it is the person you are caring for who is in hospital. This is because to get Carer's Allowance the person you are looking after must continue to receive DLA, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance, and this will stop after 28 days.

If you are looking after a child under 16 their DLA will stop after 12 weeks in hospital.

Stays in hospital that are separated by 28 days or less are added together when deciding whether DLA or Attendance Allowance should stop.

## **Going into care**

The DLA care component and Attendance Allowance will stop after 28 days in residential care if social services have arranged the placement and help with the costs. Stays in residential care that are separated by 28 days or less are added together when deciding whether DLA or Attendance Allowance should stop.

Your Carer's Allowance will stop once the DLA or Attendance Allowance of the person you are caring for stops. However, if you have also had breaks from caring for other reasons your Carer's Allowance may stop sooner.

Always let the Disability and Carers Service know if you take a break or you or the person you are looking after go into hospital or residential care.

You should also let the DLA or Attendance Allowance Unit know about any time spent in hospital or a care home.

Other benefits can also be affected by a stay in residential or hospital care. For more information contact the Carers NI Adviceline – see back cover for contact details.

## Going abroad

DLA and Attendance Allowance can continue for up to 26 weeks of a temporary stay abroad. You can continue to get Carer's Allowance whilst you are abroad if you meet any of the following conditions:

- ▶ You go abroad with the person you look after, and s/he continues to receive their qualifying disability benefit, and the purpose of your trip is to look after them. In this case, Carer's Allowance can be paid for up to 26 weeks.
- ▶ In any other circumstances, Carer's Allowance can be paid for up to 4 weeks.

Income Support/Pension Credit can continue to be paid for up to 4 or 8 weeks if you go abroad for on a temporary basis. To check this and eligibility for other benefits when you go abroad, seek advice from your local advice centre or from Carers NI – see back cover for contact details.

You may be entitled to benefits that you are not claiming and which might help to pay for extra care. Ask your local advice centre or Carers NI to do a complete benefits check for you – see final page for contact details.

## Getting help to organise and fund a break

**3H Fund** provides subsidised group holidays in and around the UK for people with disabilities. You may also be able to apply for a grant to help towards the cost of a holiday. **w:** [www.3hfund.org.uk](http://www.3hfund.org.uk) | **t:** 01892 860 207  
**e:** [info@3hfund.org.uk](mailto:info@3hfund.org.uk)

**The Calvert Trust** offers fun packed holidays for disabled people, their families and friends. **w:** [www.calvert-trust.org.uk](http://www.calvert-trust.org.uk) | **t:** 01598 763 221 (Exmoor), 01434 250232 (Kielder), 017687 72255 (Lake District)

**Caravan Able** is a caravan and camping club for disabled people and their carers. **w:** [www.ablecaravanandcampingclub.co.uk](http://www.ablecaravanandcampingclub.co.uk)

**Centre for Independent Living** provides information and advice on getting direct payments, using personal budgets and employing carers and personal assistants. **w:** [www.cilbelfast.org](http://www.cilbelfast.org) | **t:** 028 9064 8546 | **e:** [info@cilni.org](mailto:info@cilni.org)

The **Children’s County Holiday Fund** provides holidays for young carers aged 7-11 years and disadvantaged children and young people.

**w:** [www.cCHF-allaboutkids.org.uk/welcome.htm](http://www.cCHF-allaboutkids.org.uk/welcome.htm) | **t:** 01273 847770  
**e:** [kathryn@cCHF-allaboutkids.org.uk](mailto:kathryn@cCHF-allaboutkids.org.uk)

**Diabetes UK Support Holidays** is a scheme aimed at children aged 7 to 18 years old with diabetes. Holidays are low cost and a bursary can be offered to families who cannot afford the travel costs to the UK holiday site.

**w:** [www.diabetes.org.uk](http://www.diabetes.org.uk) (search for young people’s holidays)  
**t:** 020 7424 1000 (ask for the Care Events team)

The **Disability Aid Trust** pays towards the cost of a holiday care assistant for young people and adults with a physical disability (who are aged 17 and older) if they are unable to go on holiday without one.

**w:** [www.disabilityaidtrust.org.uk/index.html](http://www.disabilityaidtrust.org.uk/index.html) | **t:** 0800 028 0647  
**e:** [secretary@disabilityaidtrust.org.uk](mailto:secretary@disabilityaidtrust.org.uk)

The **Disabled Holiday Directory** is an online directory of organisations and venues, around the UK and abroad, which cater for children and adults with disabilities. **w:** [www.disabledholidaydirectory.co.uk](http://www.disabledholidaydirectory.co.uk) | **t:** 0800 993 0796

The **Family Fund** provides grants towards the cost of holidays and other services for families on a low income who are caring for a child with a severe disability. **w:** [www.familyfund.org.uk](http://www.familyfund.org.uk) | **t:** 01904 621 115  
**e:** [info@familyfund.org.uk](mailto:info@familyfund.org.uk)

**The Family Holiday Association** provides breaks at holiday sites, or grants to help with the cost of a holiday, to low income families in need of a holiday away from home. **w:** [www.fhaonline.org.uk](http://www.fhaonline.org.uk) | **t:** 020 3117 0650  
**e:** [info@FamilyHolidayAssociation.org.uk](mailto:info@FamilyHolidayAssociation.org.uk)

The **Holiday Homes Trust** is a national charity, dedicated to providing self-catering caravan accommodation for families, groups, and their carers. They cater for people with a disability or illness and low or single-income families. **w:** [www.holidayhomestrust.org](http://www.holidayhomestrust.org) **t:** 020 8433 7290 | 020 8433 7291

**Holidays for All** is an umbrella website for various specialist tour companies and disability charities. **w:** [www.holidaysforall.org](http://www.holidaysforall.org) | **t:** 0845 1249971

**Leonard Cheshire Disability** provides a range of practical support services for people with disabilities and their families and carers. They run Carers Breaks, Residential Respite Care and Short Break services to allow carers to have either a short break or a longer holiday. **w:** [www.lcdisability.org](http://www.lcdisability.org) | **t:** 028 9024 6247

**Livability Holidays** is a charity which offers a wide range of accessible hotel and self-catering holidays in the UK, located by popular seaside venues. **w:** [www.livability.org.uk](http://www.livability.org.uk) | **t:** 020 7452 2000

**Options Holidays** is a not-for-profit organisation which runs escorted group holidays for adults with learning difficulties. Holidays take place throughout the year around the UK, Mediterranean and other overseas destinations. **w:** [www.optionsholidays.co.uk](http://www.optionsholidays.co.uk) | **t:** 01285 740 491

**RADAR** is part of Disability Rights UK and publishes a guide called *Holidays in the British Isles*, listing more than 1,500 places to stay in the UK and Ireland. The RADAR National Keys Scheme also provides special keys for registered disabled people to access locked public toilets around the UK. The guide can be ordered at <https://crm.disabilityrightsuk.org/catalog/4>

**Saga Respite for Carers Trust** can provide free holidays for carers. To qualify you must be over 50, have been caring for over a year and not taken a significant holiday away from your caring responsibilities for more than a year. **w:** [www.saga.co.uk/saga-charitable-foundation/saga-respite-for-carerstrust.aspx](http://www.saga.co.uk/saga-charitable-foundation/saga-respite-for-carerstrust.aspx) | **t:** 01303 774421 | **e:** [carerstrust@saga.co.uk](mailto:carerstrust@saga.co.uk)

**Tourism for all** provides holiday and travel information for people with disabilities and their carers. **w:** [www.tourismforall.org.uk](http://www.tourismforall.org.uk) | **t:** 0845 124 9971  
**e:** [info@tourismforall.org.uk](mailto:info@tourismforall.org.uk)

**Traveleyes** offers group holidays for blind, visually impaired and sighted people to a wide range of holiday destinations around Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Americas. **w:** [www.traveleyes-international.com](http://www.traveleyes-international.com)  
**t:** 0113 887 4275

**Turn2us** is an independent charity that can help you to find sources of financial support based on your particular needs and circumstances.  
**w:** [www.turn2us.org.uk](http://www.turn2us.org.uk) | **t:** 0808 802 2000

**Revitalise** has holiday centres for people with disabilities and their carers. You may also be able to apply for a grant to help towards the cost of a holiday.  
**w:** [www.revitalise.org.uk](http://www.revitalise.org.uk) | **t:** 0303 303 0145

## Arranging care privately

**Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority (RQIA)** is Northern Ireland's independent health and social care regulator.  
**w:** [www.rqia.org.uk](http://www.rqia.org.uk) | **t:** 028 9051 7500 | **e:** [info@rqia.org.uk](mailto:info@rqia.org.uk)

Contact your **local Health and Social Care Trust** to find out about local care agencies.

## Benefit helplines

**Attendance Allowance** **t:** 028 9090 6178 (textphone: 028 9031 1092)

**Carer's Allowance** **t:** 028 9090 6186 (textphone: 028 9031 1092)

**Disability Living Allowance** **t:** 028 9090 6182 (textphone: 028 9031 1092)

**Social Security or Jobs & Benefits office** for Jobseekers Allowance, Income Support and Employment and Support Allowance. The address can be found in the phone book under Government – Social Security Agency – or find them online. **w:** [www.nidirect.gov.uk](http://www.nidirect.gov.uk)

**Pension Credit** **t:** New claims 0808 100 6165 (textphone: 0808 100 1165) or Enquiry line 0345 601 8821 (textphone: 0845 601 8841)

**Tax Credits** **t:** 0345 300 3900 (textphone: 0345 300 3909)

This factsheet is designed to provide helpful information and advice. It is not an authoritative statement of the law. We work to ensure that our factsheets are accurate and up to date, but information about benefits and community care is subject to change over time. We would recommend contacting the Carers UK Adviceline or visiting our website for the latest information.

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### **Carers UK Adviceline**

For expert information and advice about caring.



**0808 808 7777**

(open Monday to Friday,  
10am-4pm)



**advice@carersuk.org**

### **Carers NI**

For information and advice about caring from your experts in Northern Ireland.

028 9043 9843  
info@carersni.org

### **Carers UK**

20 Great Dover Street  
London SE1 4LX  
020 7378 4999  
info@carersuk.org

### **Carers NI is part of Carers UK, working together to make life better for carers.**

Caring will affect us all at some point in our lives.

With your help, we can be there for the 6,000 people who start looking after someone each day.

We're the UK's only national membership charity for carers. We're both a support network and a movement for change.

Visit us at our website to join us, help us or access more resources:

**carersuk.org**