

Section 22

Being prepared for an emergency

Emergencies can happen at any time of day or night and can be traumatic, confusing and chaotic.

The next section in this directory gives you contact telephone numbers for emergency services to do with health and home, but this section contains a checklist of things you might wish to consider if something were to happen to you or the person you care for.

Thinking through and planning ahead might help to ease the sense of panic and chaos we feel in a crisis.

Some carers have a good network of friends and family willing to step in at a moments notice, other carers have no one they could rely on.

The tips overleaf are there to help you think through what might be needed, getting your own plan in place and preparing people who you might need to call upon.

You may find it useful to imagine an emergency situation and think through what you would need to do.

Tips for carers

- **Help the emergency services find you easily**
Make sure your house number is visible from the road
- **Have a spare key handy**
Do you have a neighbour who you could trust to have a key? Or would a key safe be good idea?
- **Getting help quickly if you tend to have falls**
If you are vulnerable to falls, ask about Telecare for you to have at home (see Section 4), particularly if the person you care for could not call for help.
- **Avoid your own health problems if you can**
If you have health needs that might flair up, ask your doctor if there is anything s/he can do to help prevent this? Tell your GP you are a carer.
- **Be ready to leave the house at short notice**
If you need to leave the house in an emergency, what will you need to take with you? You could prepare a bag ready in case this ever happens.
- **Charge your mobile phone regularly**
- **Have a list of contact numbers handy**
Keep a list by the phone or, if possible, programme them into your landline or mobile - putting ICE (In Case of Emergency) before their name.
- **Ask others to help get word out**
If you need to contact more than a couple of people, is there someone you can ask to ring round for you?

- **Set up a “group” on email and/or mobile**

This could make life easier to get a message out.

- **Prepare others who may take your place.**

Speak to friends and relatives who might be able to step in at short notice to look after the person you care for:

- ⇒ Check they are OK with a call at any time of the day or night in an emergency;
- ⇒ Ask if they are happy for you to share their contact details with other people who might step in;
- ⇒ Make sure they know what the person you look after needs and where to find medication, incontinence pads, hearing aid, and anything else they might need (sometimes writing out a task list can be useful—include routines, likes and dislikes);

If you do not have friends or relatives able to do this, speak to the care manager, if there is one involved, about what the person you care for would need.

- **Join the Emergency Alert Card Scheme**

You can register your details and the needs of the person you care for with a 24 hour call centre so that if you were involved in an accident away from home, the alarm would be raised to the fact that there is someone who will need help. The service is free.

For more details see Section 4 or register online at www.kingston.gov.uk

- **Plan for other responsibilities you have**

Do you have anything else you need to prepare for such as contacting work, making arrangements for your children or other dependents, pets, etc.

What if the emergency involves the person you care for?

- **Try to stay calm**
- **Call for help** - is there anyone in the house/nearby?
- **If you need an Ambulance ring 999 or 112**

The operator will ask you which service you require. Tell them 'Ambulance'.

They will need to find out more and will ask you questions like, 'where do you need the ambulance?', 'what happened', 'is the person breathing and conscious?'

As soon as they have worked out how urgently the ambulance is needed, they will dispatch a vehicle and, if need be, will stay on the phone to give you advice about what to do.
- **You may not need an ambulance.** Can you or someone else get the person to hospital? NB: if you are in doubt about their condition, please call an ambulance
- **Keep a list of medication handy** to take with them to the hospital. (If there is one, you could use the repeat prescription form)

Remember - do not lift someone off the floor.

You may injure yourself or them.

Remember - concentrate on what is essential.

If things can wait, let them.

Basic First Aid training is available for carers through Adult Social Care, ring 020 8547 6124.