

Section 3

Carers - taking a break

Most people have the opportunity to take 'time out', have fun, a rest, read, daydream, do what they want to do. But when a person has caring responsibilities it can seem almost impossible to take a break.

We know how important it is to have a break from the demands of caring. Having time to yourself will give you the chance to relax, meet friends, and maybe get those jobs done that you've not had time for because you have spent so much time caring.

The person you care for may also benefit from you having your break, because you will both have new things to talk about and maybe an increased circle of friends.

So, what sorts of breaks are available?

There are many types of short-term breaks, from a stay in a more formal residential care environment for the person you care for, to a short break away with the person you care for, or 'sitting' services that provide support in the home. Breaks do not have to involve long periods of separation and can be for a few hours, a couple of days or for a week or more.

Carers should be properly supported so they do not have to cope alone.

Talking through what you need and what will make a difference to you will allow the people who provide or arrange services to consider the state of your health, your wishes and your ability to care. This is called an

assessment and should consider your circumstances, age, views, preferences and the amount of help that you may already receive. It should not assume that you want to continue providing the same amount of care.

If you would like a **Carer's Assessment** you should contact **Community Care Services** or talk to the Care Manager if there is one already involved with the person you care for.

There are two ways in which your needs can be assessed, jointly with the person you care for or you can have a separate Carer's Assessment. You may prefer to have a separate assessment if it is difficult for you to speak freely in front of the person you care for or if you simply want to discuss your own needs more thoroughly.

Contact details of each specialist Community Care Services Team can be found in Sections 7-14. Ask for a community care assessment for the person you care for and/or a carer's assessment for yourself. The need for a break for you as a carer should be considered as part of the assessment of need carried out on the person you care for.

You will need to think about the type of break that would be right for you. It is important to consider what would help you and the person you care for. Do you want help with personal care for the person you care for, a regular break of a few hours a week for yourself or an occasional two-week break?

Kingston Carers' Network or Community Care Services can give more details about the services available in the Royal Borough of Kingston.

Caring for Carers: a National Strategy

In 2000 the Government set out new measures towards giving carers the quality of life they deserve. Since then, money has been made available to help carers up and down the country to take a break.

Providing breaks for carers is one of the key elements of the National Carers' Strategy and Local Authorities have set up more flexible approaches for carers to make use of services and support.

In the Carers' Strategy, whilst stopping short of a legal entitlement to a short break, the Government states how it wants carers to have more control over the type and timing of the services they need. This is emphasised with services designed to give carers a break.

Your rights under Community Care Legislation

The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995, the Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000 (introduced to compliment the 1995 Act), the Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004 and the Work and Families Act 2006 have been introduced to improve the services and support for carers around the country.

The main messages in these acts are that:

- carers must be informed of their right to have their needs assessed whether or not the person they care for is having an assessment;
- only those carers who provide, or intend to provide, a substantial amount of care on a regular basis are entitled to an assessment;
- the carer's age is irrelevant;

- Community Care Services must take the carer's needs into account when making decisions about what services the person being cared for can receive;
- carers must be informed of their right to an assessment of their ability to care;
- services must be considered to meet the carer's assessed needs, including the option of having money instead of services (Direct Payments);
- a carer's desire to start or continue to work, to undertake education or leisure activities should be taken into account when organising services for the person they care for;
- working carers have the right to ask their employers to work flexible hours to help them balance their work, family and caring responsibilities.

You can find out more about carers' rights by looking at the government website www.carers.gov.uk or by contacting Carers UK on **0808 808 7777** and asking for a Carer's Fact Pack or visit their website www.carersuk.org

If, after having an assessment, services and support are arranged, it is important that we keep in contact with you to make sure things are going smoothly. We will also make sure that services are provided as planned. A review should happen at least once a year. However, please remember that your needs and/or the needs of the person you care for may change in the meantime. If this happens, please contact the Community Care Services Team responsible for your support **and ask for a review.**