

Fact Sheet 4

Breaks from Caring

Caring is like any other work – you need time off regularly to rest and look after your own needs. You also need someone to cover for you if you're not well.

Taking a break from caring, or “respite” as it is sometimes called, is important for your own health and well-being and can often benefit for the person you care for too.

There may be friends or family members who could provide some care, either on an occasional or regular basis. It can be difficult to ask family members to share in caring, especially if they have come to rely on you to do it. Until you ask, you don't know if someone would like to help - perhaps they are just not sure how to or if their help is wanted.

Arranging a break from caring might make you feel guilty about wanting time to yourself or you might be worried that something will go wrong while you are away. You want to carry out your caring role to the best of your ability and the way to do this is to have regular breaks and time to attend your own needs.

Another dilemma might be the person's attitude to being cared for by someone else. It can be difficult for the person you care for to trust and accept help from others. It may be a good idea to try to get others involved in caring, even in small ways, whenever you can. Having someone depend on you alone can be a strain.

Carers of East Lothian can give you support and advice about arranging breaks from caring. We have compiled a directory of respite options for people in all types of caring situation in East Lothian which is available on-line on our website, www.coel.org or you can request a printed version by telephoning us on 0131 665 0135.

The next section will give you information about arranging a break and types of respite that are available.

Don't forget that other carers are a great source of information and support when finding out about services and generally coping with the demands of your caring role.

How can I get a break?

You can contact:

- The GP, if the person you look after is considered to be in need of medical attention, for attendance at a day hospital or respite break in a hospital.
- Voluntary or private agencies if the person you care for has the means to pay for care at home or care in a residential setting.

- The community care duty worker at the local social work centre or the named worker, if the person you care for has one. They will discuss your circumstances and the respite options available.

Paying for Respite Care Services

Respite within the National Health Service is free but is limited to people who are considered to be in need of medical or psychiatric attention that cannot be provided elsewhere.

If the community care worker arranges respite, either at home or in a care home, a financial assessment will establish how much it will cost. Day care services are free. For people over the age of 65 in Scotland, personal care is free.

Even if the person you care for is on a low income, they may be asked to make a financial contribution. If this is the case, but they feel unable to do so, ask the community care worker for details of possible alternative sources of funding such as trust funds which may be able to help meet respite costs. Ask at your local library for a copy of "A Guide to Grants for Individuals in Need" produced by the Directory of Social Change or the "Directory of Grant Making Trusts" produced by the Scottish Council for Voluntary Organisations. Sometimes charities set up to support people with particular conditions e.g. multiple sclerosis, cancer etc have funds to help with respite costs.

What types of respite are available?

There are different types of respite, depending on the length of time involved and whether the person will be looked after at home or away from home.

Respite Care at Home

The social work department offer this service, as do a number of private agencies. The help available can include personal care such as help with getting in and out of bed, washing, dressing etc and/or a home help service for shopping, cleaning etc.

You can arrange and pay for private agency services directly - this gives you more control and choice over which agency to use. Someone from the agency will do an initial visit to meet the person you care for and find out their needs. Alternatively, you could ask a community care worker to arrange respite. This might take longer to organise and offer less choice. The social work department will either use its own domiciliary care workers and home helps or buy in services from a private agency.

Day Hospitals

Day hospitals usually cater for people with the medical needs associated with conditions such as dementia, mental illness or frailty in old age. People usually attend day hospitals on one or two days a week, depending on need and the availability of places. People have to be referred by GPs or other health professionals.

Lunch Clubs and Day Centres for Older People

Lunch clubs are available in many towns and villages in East Lothian. They provide hot meals and companionship for older people. Transport is usually available. There is a small charge for this service.

Day Centres for older people are available for 4-6 hours per day. They allow people to meet socially and to take part in activities to help them remain independent. As well as providing meals, some day centres also provide other services such as hairdressing, bathing or chiropody.

Day Centres for Disabled People

Day Centres for people with learning disabilities, physical disabilities or mental health difficulties are referred to as Resource Centres. They are designed to encourage people to develop their confidence and abilities. Opportunities include: activities at the Centre, such as help with literacy, arts and crafts etc, as well as access to supported employment and college courses.

There are currently three Resource Centres for people with learning disabilities in East Lothian: Tynebank in Haddington, Mansfield Road in Musselburgh and Port Seton.

There is a Disability Resource Centre in Prestonpans and a Mental Health Resource Centre at Tynepark, Haddington.

All of these services are free, although there may be a small charge for lunches and teas. Staff at any of these centres will welcome your enquiries and help you to access the centres.

Day Care in Care Homes

Some private care homes offer day care. For further information, contact care homes directly (listed in telephone directory) or The Care Commission (0131 653 4100). Alternatively, contact the community care duty worker at your local social work centre.

Respite in Care Homes

Some care homes provide short stays from a few days to a few weeks. During this time, the person you care for gets a change of scene and the stimulation of new company whilst you can get a rest from caring or go on holiday. Contact the care home directly or through a community care duty worker as above.

Share the Care

Respite care in a paid carer's home is a service run by the social work department and can be arranged for older people or those with a learning disability. This is an alternative to group living and the care is provided by assessed, approved and trained carers. The length of time is negotiable from a few days to a few weeks. Contact the community care duty worker for more details.

Taking a holiday

If you would like to go on holiday with the person you care for, or if they want to go on holiday independently of you, speak to the community care duty worker who may be able to offer advice about special needs holidays.

Some charities are set up to support people who have specific health problems or who are disabled as a result of service in particular occupations and can sometimes offer holiday accommodation at a reduced cost. Contact Carers of East Lothian or your local Citizen's Advice Bureau for more details.