

JUST BECOMING A CARER?



Inside you will find information on:

- Finances
- Carer's Assessment
- Residential/Domiciliary Care
- Looking after yourself
- Caring whilst working
- Useful contact numbers

This leaflet has been produced by Croydon Neighbourhood Care to provide information and advice on issues affecting carers

Everyone needs information, support and advice at some time in their life.

THE POP SERVICE OFFERS:

Free, specialist advice from a number of experts working together

Up-to-date information, clarified and simplified

Time for an initial chat on what's bothering you

An opportunity for people over the age of 50 to consider their options for the future

Advice towards an overall healthier lifestyle

To find out when we are in your area or if you would like further information about the **POP Service** please contact the office on:

020 8654 4440

The POP Service

c/o Croydon Neighbourhood Care
Central Hall, Davidson Lodge
Freemason's Road
Croydon CR0 6PD

www.croydonpop.org.uk
info@croydonpop.org.uk

Individual leaflets on specific services are available from the POP Service

WHAT IS A CARER?

A carer is someone who looks after a partner, parent, child, relative, friend or neighbour and who does not get paid for caring. They look after someone who has:

- A long term illness
- A disability
- Mental health problems
- Learning disability
- Frailty due to old age which means they cannot be completely independent.

Some carers provide 24/7 care, others may only provide a few hours a week to help someone who is unable to do everything for themselves.



Many people do not consider themselves as carers and comments such as

“...I do mum’s shopping because she can’t get out now...” and
“...I keep an eye on the old man next door...” are commonplace.

Many people in need of help are supported by their families. Husbands and wives, sons and daughters, uncles and aunts just assume that it is expected that they will look after a loved one, but they are carers.

HELP IS AT HAND

Through our large network of neighbourhood care groups, CNCA and the POP service will try and make your life easier by helping you to plan for the future.



This booklet is designed to point you in the direction of support which you may require whilst you are a carer. If you cannot find the answer do not hesitate to contact the POP Service on 020 8654 4440 or visit the mobile advice service as it travels around the borough (please see back page for details).

The key questions-

Financial help	Page 4
Tell social services	Page 5
Take a break from caring	Page 7
Tell your GP you are a carer	Page 8
Look after yourself	Page 10
Caring whilst working	Page 16
Other useful numbers	Page 19

If you have any comments on this booklet or feel that there is something missing, please do not hesitate to contact us as we are regularly updating this booklet:

*Croydon Neighbourhood Care
Central Hall
Davidson Lodge
Freemason’s Road
Croydon CRO 6PD*

*Tel: 020 8662 1000
Fax: 020 8662 0444
Email: info@cnca.org.uk
Web: www.cnca.org.uk*



FINANCIAL HELP

The benefits system is complicated and what you might be entitled to can be difficult to understand.

As a carer you might be entitled to Carer's Allowance. You can get Carer's Allowance if the person you look after gets one of the following:

- Attendance Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance (the middle or higher rate of the carer component)
- Constant Attendance Allowance (at or above the normal maximum rate with an Industrial Injuries Disablement Benefit, or full rate with a War Disablement Pension)

You must also satisfy these conditions:

- You look after someone for at least 35 hours each week, and
- You are aged 16 or over, and
- You are not studying for more than 21 hours a week, and
- You do not earn more than £100 pw from work (after some deductions), and
- You satisfy UK residence and presence rules, and
- You satisfy immigration rules



Is the person you care for missing out financially?

Make sure that the person you look after is not missing out on any of their entitlements – as many carers pay out of their own pockets to pay their relatives' basic bills.

Ring the Carers UK advice line on 0808 808 7777 for a full check or contact the POP mobile advice Service, they will put you in touch with a professional who will carry out a full benefits MOT.

TELL SOCIAL SERVICES

Why? You may also need practical support to care. This could be someone to sit with the person you care for while you go out.

If you care for an adult, you are entitled to a carer's assessment to discuss the help that you need. **This can happen even if the person you care for refuses help or an assessment.**

If the person you are caring for is in hospital, you should make your request to the hospital staff before they are discharged.

A carer's assessment will look at your ability to care and continue caring but will not assume that you, as a carer, are willing to continue caring or can continue to provide the same level of support.



The right to an assessment only applies if you provide, or intend to provide, care on a substantial and regular basis. The term 'substantial and regular' will involve looking at your individual circumstances in the following areas:

- The tasks undertaken by the carer
- Support received from family, friends and neighbours
- The carer's other responsibilities (e.g. work and family commitments)
- The carer's emotional, mental and physical health
- Any particular stress factors

If you continue to care, you have the right to a further assessment when the person you care for is being reassessed. This means having their care plan reviewed following a change in their own circumstances or your circumstances as a carer.

Your assessment meeting

Before the meeting, talk things over with the person you are caring for. Agree, as far as possible, what kind of support you both need.

- You can have a friend or adviser at the meeting
- It is entirely your decision as to whether or not the person you care for should be present

You may find it useful to have a note of what you do every day and which times of the day are most stressful. The meeting is an ideal opportunity for you to explore alternative forms of care for the person you care for, if you are unable to continue to care.

Things to think about before the assessment meeting

The carer's assessment is your opportunity to talk about the things that could make caring easier for you. Some things you may want to think about in discussing your situation might be:

- Do you get enough sleep?
- Is your health affected in any way?
- Are you able to get out and about/follow your own interests?
- Do you get any time for yourself?
- Are your other relationships affected?
- Are you worried you may have to give up work?
- Do you want information about benefits?
- Is the person you care for getting enough help?

The numbers at Croydon council are:

Telephone
020 8726 6400

Minicom
020 8760 5797



CROYDON
www.croydon.gov.uk

TAKING A BREAK FROM CARING

There are a number of ways that you can take a break from your caring role. Some are suggested below, but you should not be limited by these as you can talk over your situation with a social worker or care manager and suggest other ways that might suit you better:

1. **Residential respite:** the person you care for is looked after by someone else for a while, either in residential or nursing care.
2. **Domiciliary care:** someone comes into your home and takes over care for a while (for a few hours or sometimes overnight) so you can go out or have some time to yourself.
3. You can sometimes get a break when the person you care for is involved in other activities, for instance at school or at a day care centre.



Personalised budgets

Local Authorities are now being encouraged to provide individual budgets for people with care needs and for carers. This means that you should be offered choice in the way that services are provided, and may be able to use the funding to organise services yourself.



TELL YOUR GP THAT YOU ARE A CARER

Let the reception staff know that you are a carer and ask if this could be registered on your medical record. You may also wish to inquire if the surgery has any carers' support services for you to make use of.

If you are experiencing any stress or anxiety, you may wish to tell your GP. Some surgeries offer a range of information and support for carers.

Preparing for the appointment

It may be necessary to ask the surgery if they can take any special needs into account for your appointment, such as arrangements for the waiting room. The person you care for can also confirm to the surgery that she/he is happy to share health information about their condition.

If you know that you will be discussing the person you are caring for, to save time you should let the receptionist know that his/her notes will need to be available.



Before your appointment you may wish to write down any questions you want to ask the GP on two separate lists, one for yourself and one for the person you are caring for.

Home visits - If you are the carer of someone who is housebound and has difficulty getting to the surgery, you can request a home visit. This is especially helpful when you are experiencing problems in booking respite or transport. The GP is able to help the patient and support your valued work as a carer.

During the appointment - It may be useful to avoid discussing both of you at the same time. It might be an idea to make brief notes of the conversation you have too.

After your visit to the GP - Where prescriptions are needed, ask the GP if he/she can send it to the local pharmacist. Pharmacies can be very helpful and are now recognised by the Primary Care Trust (PCT) as a service provider for carers and may be able to deliver the medication to you or the one you are caring for if needed.



Hospital visits - If the GP refers either you or the person you are caring for to the hospital, transport can be arranged by the GP. If more than one referral is necessary, ask if it is possible to have the appointments on the same day. This will ease the stress involved in multiple hospital visits.



LOOK AFTER YOURSELF

This is probably the most important chapter as caring can become a full time role, it is therefore important that you look after yourself. Here are a few tips.

Don't feel under pressure to do everything - not all the suggestions will be right for your particular way of living or even your personality. Choose the things you feel comfortable with, but remember that the fitter and healthier you are, the better you will be able to cope, both physically and emotionally, with the demands of caring.



Looking after your health - as a carer you need to be as healthy as possible, keeping an eye on your health will make a real difference to the way you cope and how you feel.

Stay in control - your health is in your hands. Although your life is busy and your attention focused on the health of the person you care for, do not ignore your own health needs. Try not to miss your own medical appointments; attend regular check-ups and screenings when you are called.



Eat well - a good, well-balanced diet will not only give you the energy you need to carry on caring, it will also boost your immune system and reduce your risk of falling ill. Obviously, your priority is to ensure that the person you care for has nourishing meals.

The cost of food may be a problem or it may be hard to get to the shops regularly. Essential foods, no single food or food group contains all the nutrients your body needs so the key is to eat a variety of different foods. Each day choose foods from the following four main groups:

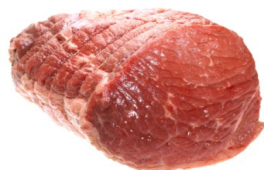
- Starchy foods – breads, breakfast cereals, potatoes, pasta, rice. Try to centre your meals on these. They are filling, a good source of nutrients and cheap and they don't provide too many empty calories that may make you put on weight. Choose wholegrain varieties, if you can, for extra nutrients.



- Dairy foods – milk, yogurt, cheese. Try to have two or three servings a day. A serving is a third of a pint of milk, a pot of yoghurt, a small piece of cheese.



- Meat, poultry, fish and other proteins. Keep portions small – two to three ounces of meat or four to five ounces of chicken or fish. Non-animal proteins (beans, nuts, lentils) are a cheap and healthy option. If you cannot get out to buy fresh fish, tinned fish is a good alternative.



- Vegetables and fruit. Try to eat five portions each day – fresh, frozen, tinned or dried. This may sound a lot, but if you eat some fruit with your breakfast, two vegetables with your main meal, fruit for pudding and a piece of fruit or raw vegetable for a snack, you can easily achieve five helpings.



- You don't have to have three meals a day – snacks can be just as nutritious and perhaps less stressful than trying to eat a main meal at the same time as you supervise the person you care for.

- Choose raw fruit and vegetables, toast, sandwiches, dried fruits, nuts and seeds for snacks rather than biscuits, cakes, crisps or chocolate.

Try to make one meal of the day a relaxed occasion when you sit down quietly to eat. It need not be a main meal; a bowl of home-made soup or a mixed salad with a chunk of bread will give you the nutrients you need.



A good night's sleep - carers often go short of sleep – either because the person they care for needs attention during the night or because they have too much on their minds to be able to relax, however, try the following:

- If you have trouble getting to sleep, don't go to bed too early.
- Don't snooze during the day unless you know you are going to be kept awake at night.
- Establish a good bedtime routine. Avoid alcohol, have a warm drink and a bath and make sure the bedroom isn't overheated.
- If you like to read before going to sleep, choose something soothing. If you like to listen to the radio, play some music rather than listen to the late-night news.



- After you switch out the light, try some visualisation techniques to occupy your mind. For instance, imagine an idyllic beach scene. The sun is warm, the sea is blue, and you can feel the sand on your bare feet.
- If you wake in the night and find your head is full of worries, try spending an hour or so out of bed, or sitting up with the light on if you sleep alone.
- You can read, do the ironing, watch television or write down everything that's on your mind. You'll find these are preferable to tossing and turning in the dark.



Be fit to care

- Try to make time for yourself every day. Perhaps you can get up a little earlier for a peaceful cup of tea on your own before everyone else wakes, or it may suit you better to go to bed after everyone else, but still have time for an undisturbed soothing bath.
- If that's not possible, see if you can make time for a quiet cup of coffee after you've finished your morning routine.
- Share your feelings with other carers by joining a local carers' group. CNCA can provide you with numbers.



- Take up a hobby. You may not be able to go out to classes but many things can be enjoyed at home.
- Lower your standards occasionally – try not to aim for perfection.
- If it is difficult to get out, keep your social life going by using the telephone or writing letters to keep in touch with friends and family. If you hesitate to leave the person you care for, it's worth considering whether perhaps they too may need time to themselves.

Stress - Recognising the signs - We all need a certain amount of stress in our lives to give us the stimulation to keep going. In a positive way, stress keeps us alert and interested. Eventually the effects of bottled-up stress are felt both emotionally and physically.



Prolonged exposure to stress can cause headaches, insomnia and digestive problems. It can raise blood pressure and contribute to the development of heart disease. It can make an existing problem such as eczema or asthma worse. It may also lower resistance to infection. Emotionally, when you are constantly under stress you may feel exhausted, confused, depressed and agitated and find it hard to make decisions.

What you can do - There may be problems that need solving and feelings that need to be expressed, but in the mean time both exercise and relaxation techniques can help relieve stress. Exercise allows you to channel some of that pent-up frustration into physical activity and can help overcome tension and sleep problems.

CARING FOR SOMEONE WHILE WORKING

You may be working when you start your caring role. It may be helpful to tell your employer about your situation, it is not an easy step and you might feel it depends on whether your employer is likely to be supportive.



Talking to your employer - Caring for a disabled relative is often unpredictable and care arrangements can be complex, so you will need to talk to your employer about your concerns and commitments.

Think about how your employer could best help you and talk to them about your needs. If you want to work, it is in your employer's best interest to consider making reasonable changes to your work pattern to help you work and continue caring.

Many employers offer help to carers. This could include:

- Talking to a welfare officer or occupational health adviser who knows about carers
- In-house information and advice or counselling
- A subscription to a carers' organisation, or employee services



Flexible working arrangements - there are many different ways of working flexibly. You could work from home or have flexible starting or finishing times.

Other working arrangements might be:

- Compressed working hours (where you work your normal number of hours in a shorter time - typically fitting five days working time into four days)
- Working during school terms
- Job-sharing
- Part-time working
- Flexible holidays to fit in with alternative care arrangements

You have the legal right to ask your employer for flexible working if you are caring for an adult who is a relative or lives at the same address as you.

Special leave arrangements and time off in emergencies - Most carers know they can get emergency leave, but there are other leave arrangements that your employer might be able to offer. They include:

- Compassionate leave
- Borrowing or buying leave
- Career breaks

If you have legal parental responsibility for a disabled child under 18, you may have the right to take up to 18 weeks unpaid parental leave.



OTHER USEFUL CONTACTS



A right to time off in emergencies - You are entitled to take a reasonable amount of time off if you have worked for your employer for at least a year and there is an emergency relating to the person you care for.

Emergencies could include:

- A breakdown in care arrangements
- The person you care for falls ill or has an accident - this can be emotional or physical pain
- Your child is involved in an incident during school hours
- You need to make longer term care arrangements
- You need time off following the death of a dependant

The new Equality Act came into force in October 2010. It brings together various pieces of legislation on equality into one single act and extends some rights to groups not previously covered. For the first time, carers have protection from direct discrimination. This means that employers and providers of goods and services must not treat carers less favorably than those without caring responsibilities.

Further advice and support can come from either your trade union and/or the POP information service.



Information for carers –

Carers information service - 020 8649 9339

Crossroads Croydon Carers Support Service - 020 8667 9893
(will do house visits if required)

Croydon POP Information and advice service – 020 8654 4440
(venues across the borough) – timetable available on line at www.croydonpop.org.uk

Carers UK – 0808 808 7777 (national helpline)

Other useful numbers -

Age UK Croydon – 020 8680 5450

Aztec Centre - 020 8664 8860

Citizens Advice Bureau – 01689 846 890

Croydon Council – 020 8726 6000

Croydon Hearing Resource Centre – 020 8686 0049

Croydon Job Centre – 020 8700 8300 – 0800 055 6688 (claims line)

Croydon Mencap – 020 8662 9201

Croydon Neighbourhood Care – 020 8662 1000 (umbrella body for neighbourhood care in Croydon and publisher of this leaflet)

Croydon University Hospital – 020 8401 3000

Croydon Welfare Rights – 0800 731 5920 (part of Croydon council)

MIND in Croydon – 020 8668 2210

National Debt line – 0808 808 4000

Rethink Croydon Carers Support Service – 020 8649 9339, option 3

Samaritans – 08457 909090

Soldiers, Sailors, Airmen and Families Association (SSAFA) - 0845 1300 975)

South East Cancer Helpline Centre – 020 8668 0974

St Christopher's Hospice – 020 8768 4500

Young Carers Support Project – 020 8649 9339, option 2