

Your Rights as a Carer

Becoming a Carer:

Carers take on their role through a variety of circumstances. Many may not recognise that they have done so, or have been given a chance to consider the options beforehand.

This Factsheet considers the circumstances under which you may take on a caring role and also details the responsibilities of the statutory authorities to provide help and support to you if you do.

Hospital Discharge:

Many Carers take on their role when the person they are to care for is discharged from hospital, maybe after the birth of a child who is found to have a disability, or after a relative has had a stroke or been diagnosed with some other illness requiring your help and care. This can be a difficult time, as family and friends are often under pressure to make important decisions such as taking on a caring role. Hospital staff may make assumptions about the amount of help that partners, family and friends can offer.

Take time to think what *you* want as well as what may be best for your loved one.

Planning for a person's discharge from hospital should start as soon as possible. A named member of staff should have the responsibility for ensuring that action has been taken to organise the care the patient needs in the community. Ask who this person is and how to contact them. As the possible Carer, you should be consulted along with the patient about their future care and important points should be confirmed in writing, eg medication and symptoms. You may be given a checklist or leaflet which should give you information on this, as well as those people and services you may need in the early days after someone's discharge into your care.

See Factsheet 8 if you are considering residential care for your relative.

If you decide to take on the caring role, you should be put in touch with the Social Care Team who will make an assessment of the patient's needs and arrange services and support if required. *See below for details of this*

process. You are also entitled to an assessment of your own needs (a Carer's Assessment) and you should make sure that these are fully taken into account before agreeing to the discharge of the patient into your care. There should be a 'Discharge Planning Meeting' for everyone involved, including you, before the patient is discharged. Things may be very different once you are caring first hand at home and you are entitled to request a further review if the situation is not as you had planned.

If you do agree to provide some or all of the care to the patient when they return home, you will also need information on some or all of the following:-

- How to provide the care – specific training in techniques, eg personal care/continence care
- Medication collection/administration
- What equipment might be provided and how to use it
- Adaptations to property, eg lifts/ramps/major building works, etc
- What Welfare Benefits are available and how to collect them
- How Charges for Care are made
- How to access help to stay in or return to employment, eg Action for Carers and Employment project
- What practical support is available and how to access it – Voluntary Organisations, private services, Community Care Support – personal care, shopping, cooking, housework, gardening
- What transport is available: from the hospital to home, to outpatient hospital appointments, to GP and other clinics and how to get help in accessing it
- Signposting to Carers Support, disability and/or age related organisations
- How to and who to contact re professional help and advice, eg CPN, District Nurse, Continence Nurse, Health Visitor, Occupational Therapist
- Information to Carers who do not live near the patient and possible cross border co-ordination in supporting Carers.

Community Care:

Community Care Assessments

Assessments are the first stage in sorting out what is needed and will be performed by a Care Manager. An assessment can be requested by yourself or the person you care for, or by another professional, such as your GP or Community Nurse.

The assessment should take the form of a discussion with a Care Manager from The Social Care Team, preferably in your own home. You can have someone with you if you are unsure about what is required. It may be helpful

to write down beforehand all the tasks that require your help and those with which you would like some assistance, as well as anything that you need for yourself such as regular time off, help with domestic tasks, equipment, support to enable you to work.

Both you, and the person you care for, are entitled to separate assessments.

The Care Manager will ask questions about the health and living conditions of the person you care for, what tasks require help, etc. As a Carer, you should be asked separately about your caring role and your own physical mental health and emotional health. You should be given the opportunity to do this away from the presence of the person you care for, if you wish. It is important to be honest and realistic about your own needs and not to gloss over any difficulties.

Part of the assessment may involve asking questions about income and benefits for the person you care for, which is needed later on if services are provided.

Care Plans

Following an assessment a Care Plan will be drawn up, which should show details of the support needed and how those needs will be met, taking into consideration your own needs as well as those of the person you care for. You will be asked to sign this but **do not sign it** if you are unhappy about any aspect of the care plan.

The plan should also name a contact person, usually the Care Manager, who will be responsible for managing your care plan and to whom you should notify any changes in circumstances or problems. Your caring situation should be reviewed annually, a review meeting should be arranged at a time and place to suit you and the person you care for, and you can have anyone you wish present at the meeting to support you. The cared for person should always receive a copy of the care plan and of the review sheet.

Problems with the Assessment process

If you are unhappy about any part of the assessment process, from being refused an assessment to not receiving a service which you have been assessed as needing, you have the right to challenge the decision. You should try to sort out the problem informally first by contacting your Care Manager, if you have one. If this fails, put your complaint in writing. The Social Care department must respond, in writing, within 28 days.

Charging for Services (Financial Assessment by Social Care)

The person you care for may be charged for the services provided to them, such as Home Care or Day Care or equipment. You must be given full information about this. If you are unhappy about any charges, you can appeal to Social Services for a reduction in the charges. The amount charged will depend on the financial circumstances of the person you care for, but if this is your partner the situation is more complex. The Social Care Team should explain their policy to you and help you to complete the form if you wish.

Hospital or Community Health Services

If you are not happy with the treatment and care you receive:

- 1 Discuss the issue with a representative of the NHS who is close to the source of your concern. This may be the Modern Matron, Ward or Service Manager
- 2 If you are still dissatisfied, contact the Chief Executive of the Primary Care Trust for more formal action to be taken. Following a formal complaint you will receive an acknowledgement, usually within 2 working days. On completion of enquiries, a formal response will be made by the Chief Executive, usually within 20 working days.
- 3 If you still feel your concerns have not been addressed satisfactorily you have the right to ask the Healthcare Commission to review how your complaint has been dealt with.

You may contact the Healthcare Commission on 020 7448 9200. The Health Care Commission will advise you of any further actions they plan to take and will continue contact with you.

Should you experience any difficulties with services, contact the Complaints Manager Jan Wigmore on 01372 201700. She can offer advice and act as a guide through the complaints procedure.

Independent Complaints Advocacy Service (ICAS): if you have a complaint about your care or treatment by the NHS – tel 0845 600 8616.

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Note: please photocopy if required. All information was believed to be correct at the time of production. Inclusion does not imply recommendation. Please advise us if you should find any errors, in order that we can update the information

Produced by Carers Support Guildford and Carers Support Waverley

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