

The Carers Association Supports for Family Carers



Carers Information Pack

The Carers Association

National Office, Priors Orchard, Johns Quay, Kilkenny
Tel (056) 7721424 Fax (056) 7753531

National CareLine FREEFONE 1800 24 07 24

Carers Association Web Site <http://www.carersireland.com>



Supports for Family Carers

The Carers Association

The Carers Association is the national voluntary body of family Carers in the home. It is owned and controlled by Carers themselves and represents our interests as well as providing a range of supports and services. The Carers Association is totally dedicated to the needs of Ireland's 150,000 family Carers in the home.

The aims and objectives of the Association are to improve the quality of life of Ireland's family Carers, through the roles of advocacy, lobbying and service provision.

The Carers Association has a national network of sixteen Carers Resource Centres and two service bases.

The Carers Association provides the following services:

- Carers Resource Centre
- Home Respite Service
- Support Groups
- Training and Education
- Advocacy and Lobbying
- Information

Carers' Resource Centre

The Carers Resource Centre is an important service provided by The Carers Association. Carers Resource Centres are located in key towns and cities throughout Ireland (16 centres and 2 service bases). You can 'drop in' for a cup of tea or a chat, find out about your rights and entitlements or arrange to do the Care in the Home course, (see separate leaflet in this pack).

Each Centre also deals with telephone enquiries and personal callers on a variety of welfare, social care, health care, personal awareness and advocacy issues.

The National CareLine FREEFONE 1800 24 07 24

The National CareLine is the freefone telephone for Carers in the Home. The telephone is a vital link for the isolated Carer. The people who take your calls on the National CareLine fully understand how you feel. You can phone for advice or information or just a chat with someone who understands what you are going through.

Home Respite Service

There is a chronic lack of respite care facilities in Ireland. The pace of change is slow with Carers still under great stress. Many families want greater support at home and home-based respite care services which suit their family circumstances. The Carers Association has been providing its Home Respite Service since 1994. The home-based service is tailored to the needs of the Carer and the person cared for at home. The service is based on:

- Putting the Carer first
- Allowing time for the Carer, Cared for Person and Home Respite Worker to get to know each other
- The Carer being able to plan his/her short breaks away from home secure in the knowledge that a trained and trusted person will be there to care in his/her place
- Confidentiality, respect and dignity for all.

The philosophy underlying the service is one of dedication to meeting the needs of the Carers first and foremost.

Carers are facilitated to make the best use of the service. For example, the Carer may need the service at an agreed time to assist her/him in carrying out a particularly complex or difficult activity with the cared-for person. Or the Carer may use the period to go out of the family home to do other business while the cared for person and home respite worker remain at home. The Home Respite Worker may take over some of the domestic duties while the Carer tends to the cared for person, for example. Each caring situation is different and the home respite worker must be flexible.

Carers can contact the Association to refer themselves for the service. Referrals are also taken from family members, GPs, Public Health Nurse, Social Workers, and other professionals in the voluntary and statutory service. This service is subject to limited funding and therefore waiting lists may apply.

Supports for Family Carers

Support Groups

The Carers Association currently run Carers Support Group Meetings from our 16 Resource Centres and 2 bases around the country.

Support Groups allow Carers:

- share their experiences, feelings, ideas, concerns, information and problems
- feel a reduced sense of isolation
- have a sense of connection with other Carers in similar circumstances
- have a break from the caring situation
- have hope for the future
- let off steam
- relax
- socialise
- learn from other Carers
- Cope from day to day

Carers can share coping strategies and local information as well as offer emotional support and develop enduring friendships through support groups. Mutual support groups provide a valuable opportunity to meet Carers in the same position to share mutual experiences. For example support groups for parents of children with special needs can discuss issues specifically related to their caring situations such as dealing with difficult and challenging behaviour, high dependency issues etc.

Support groups also allow Carers to access information on their rights and entitlements. Guest speakers are invited to meetings to address Carers on issues of interest to them such as public health nurses, H.S.E. representatives, Social Welfare representative on Carers entitlements etc.

Pamper Days

The Carers Association organise pamper days for carers which temporarily takes them away from their caring situation allowing them to relax, socialise and be pampered. This pampering enables the carers to return to their caring role feeling less stressed and re-energised.

Training and Education

- Education and Training contribute to easing the burden at home as well as establishing, maintaining and improving standards of care.
- The Carers Association provides a national certified training course 'Care in the Home' for Carers and people working in caring profession. (See separate leaflet attached). This course covers practical caringskills such as feeding, washing, dressing and personal skills such as communication stress management and coping skills.
- The Carers Association runs personal development courses and offer courses as follows:
 - Caring for Children with Special Needs, Occupational First Aid, Carers Support Programme, Entitlement for Carers, Patient Handling Course.

Advocacy and Lobbying

The Carers Association:

- Lobbies Government and prepares Annual Pre-Budget Submission
- Lobby decision makers to effect social policy for Carers
- Publicises issues of concern to Carers
- Runs Carers of the Year Award
- Are represented on a number of consultative committees, State agencies and boards
- Are members of the Community and Voluntary Pillar of the Social Partnership

Information

The Carers Association:

- Publishes "Take Care" magazine
- Operates the National CareLine, the telephone helpline for Carers **1800 24 07 24**
- Produces the Carers Information Pack a set of leaflets on critical services, contacts and support for family Carers
- Provides the Carers Web Site **www.carersireland.com**
- Through 16 resource centres advises Carers on their rights and entitlements.



The Carers Association Centres/Services Locations



Supports for Carers from Department of Social and Family Affairs



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Financial Supports for Carers

How do I Qualify?

You will qualify if you the Carer are:

- Age 16 or over
- Have been employed for 8 weeks during the last 26 week period
- Satisfy the PRSI contribution conditions
- Give up employment to care for a person(s) on a full-time basis (this employment must have been for a minimum of 16 hours per week or 32 hours per fortnight)
- Are not employed or self employed outside the home (you may work up to 10 hours per week outside the home (due to increase to 15 hours per week from June 2006)
- Are living in the state
- Are not living in a hospital, convalescent home or other similar institution

PRSI Contributions for Carer's Benefit

For a first claim you must have

156 contributions paid since entry into insurable employment

and

A) 39 contributions paid in the Relevant Tax Year or,

B) 39 contributions paid in the 12 month period before the commencement of the Carer's Benefit or,

C) 26 contributions paid in the Relevant Tax Year and 26 contributions paid in the Relevant tax year Prior to that.

Example:

For claims made in	The Relevant Tax Year is:
2004	2002
2005	2003

PRSI contributions Classes A, B, C, D, H and E count.

For second and subsequent claims you:

- You do not need to satisfy the PRSI contributions conditions again.
- You do not need to satisfy the employment conditions in the three month period prior to commencement of your claim if you were in receipt of Carer's Benefit within this three month period.

Your payment is made up of a weekly personal rate for yourself and extra amounts for your child dependent(s). If you are providing care to one or more persons, you may be entitled to an extra 50% of the personal rate. For example if you are caring for one person and have no child dependants and meet the above criteria the maximum payment you will receive is €180.20 per week.

After Death

As per Carers Allowance, Carers Benefit is paid for 6 weeks should the person you are caring for pass away.

Bereavement Grant:

A Bereavement Grant may also be payable.

More Information:

Bereavement Grant Section
Social Welfare Services Office
Government Buildings
Ballinalee Road
Longford
Tel: (043) 45211
Dublin: (01) 704 3000

Carer's Leave:

If you are not eligible for Carers benefit, you may be entitled to temporary unpaid leave from employment in order to provide full-time care and attention to another person(s)

To enquire about your possible entitlement to Carer's Leave contact:

Employment Rights Information Unit
Department of Enterprise, Trade and Employment
Tel: (01)631 3131
Local: (from outside 01 are) 1890 201 615
www.entemp.ie
Email: erinfo@entemp.ie

How to appeal a decision:

If you do not agree with a decision on your claim you may appeal against it. Your appeal must be made in writing within 21 days from the date of decision, stating clearly the reasons for your appeal. You can send your appeal to:

Social Welfare Appeals Office:

D'Olier House
D'Olier Street
Dublin 2
Tel (01) 673 2800
LoCall: 1890 74 74 34



Financial Supports for Carers

What is Carers Allowance?

The Carers Allowance is a payment for Carers who look after people in need of full-time care and attention

Carer's Allowance:

To qualify for the Carers Allowance the Carer must:

- Be aged 18 or over
- Satisfy a means test
- Live with the person(s) being cared for This is not always necessary provided a direct line of communication exists between your home and the cared for persons home e.g. telephone or alarm system
- Care for the person on a full-time basis
- Not be employed or self-employed outside the home for more than 15 hours per week (From June 2006).
- Not live in hospital, convalescent home or other similar situation
- Not be in receipt of any other social welfare payment
- Satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition *
**(Habitual residence means you have a proven close link to Ireland or other parts of the Common Travel Area.)*

For example, if you have lived in Ireland or other parts of the Common Travel Area (Great Britain, Channel Islands and Isle of Man) all of your life, you will likely satisfy the Habitual Residence Condition.

The most important factors for proving this link are the:

- Length of time you have spent in the Common Travel Area
- Continuity of your residence
- Length of time of your residence here

The Cared-for-Person(s) must:

- Be so disabled as to need full-time care and attention (medical certification is required)
- Not normally be living in a hospital, home or other similar institution
- Be 16 or over
Or
- Be under age 16 if Domiciliary Care Allowance is being paid from the Health Service Executive. You need to provide documentary evidence of this payment. The Carer of a child on Domiciliary Care Allowance need not be the person who receives that Allowance on the child's behalf.

What does full-time care and attention mean?

The person being cared for must be:

- So disabled as to require; continuous supervision and frequent assistance during the day in connection with their normal personal needs such as dressing, washing, eating, walking and getting about.
- Continuous supervision in order to avoid danger to themselves
- So disabled as to be likely to require full-time care and attention for at least 12 months.

The person being cared for may attend a non-residential course of rehabilitation training or a non-residential day care centre approved by the Minister for Health and Children.

You the Carer may:

- Attend an educational or training course or take up voluntary or community work for up to max. of 10 hours per week. (currently 10 hours will increase to 15 hours from June 2006)
- Work part time as a Home Help for the H.S.E. for up to 10 hours per week these earnings will not be assessed as means. (currently 10 hours will increase to 15 hours from June 2006)
- Engage in limited self-employment in your own home any income earnings will be assessed as means.
- Engage in employment outside your own home for up to 10 hours per week. (currently 10 hours will increase to 15 hours from June 2006)

Any income, with the exception of earnings from working part-time as a Home Help for the H.S.E. will be assessed as means.

During your absence adequate care for the person requiring full time care and attention must be provided for. The requirement to provide full time care and attention will be assessed on an individual basis. It is not intended nor is it desirable that a Carer would be expected to provide care on a 24hour basis.

In this regard the above arrangements will be applied in a flexible manner, having due regard for the needs of the Carer and the person requiring care.

Means test for Carers Allowance:

Your means are any income you or your spouse or partner have, property (except one's home) or any asset that could bring in money or provide you with an income. The first €7.60 of means assessed will not affect your payment, but for every extra €2.50 means you have, your weekly payment will be reduced by €2.50.

Note: The income disregard for a couple is €580 per week and for a single person is €290 per week as of April 2006 therefore this money will not be counted as means for the purpose of Carers Allowance.

What does not count as means?

The following items do not count as means:

- Your own home
- Child benefit
- Your spouse's or partner's payment from Dept of Social and Family Affairs or the H.S.E.,
- €133 a year (€2.56 a week) of your spouse's or partners earnings for each child dependent
- Income earned as a part-time Home Help with the H.S.E.
- Your spouse or partner's social security payment from another country equal to the maximum personal rate of the Irish Old Age Contributory Pension. Any amount greater than this is counted as means.

How much is Carers Allowance?

Your payment is made up of a personal rate for yourself and extra amounts for your child dependant(s) if any. The amount you may get depends on your means.

For example, If you are caring for 1 person and you

satisfy the means test and have no child dependants the maximum rate of Carers Allowance is €180 per week if you are a carer under 65 and €200 per week if you are carer over 65.

Secondary Benefit

All people getting a Carer's Allowance qualify for:

- A free travel pass for the Carer in his/her own right
- Electricity or natural Gas or Bottled Gas Refill Allowance
- Free Television Licence
- Telephone Allowance

Continuing Payment after Death

The Carer's Allowance will continue to be paid to you for 6 weeks should the person you are caring for pass away.

Bereavement Grant

A Bereavement grant of €635 may be payable. Application forms and further information are available from:

Bereavement Grant Section

Social Welfare Services Office
Government Buildings
Ballinalee Road,
Longford
Tel: Longford (043) 45211
Tel: Dublin (01) 704 3000

Respite Care Grant

Who is entitled to a Respite Care Grant?

The Respite Care Grant is an annual payment for Carers who look after person/persons who require full-time care and attention. It is available to Carers who provide full-time care and attention regardless of means and who satisfy the following conditions:

Carer must:

- be aged 16 or over,
- be ordinarily resident in the State,
- care for the person on a full-time basis,
- care for the person for at least six months. This period of care must include the first Thursday in June
- live with the person they are looking after or can be contacted quickly by a direct system of communication (for example, a telephone or alarm) between their home and the home of the person they are caring for.
- not be employed or self employed outside the home for more than 10 hours per week;
- not be in receipt of Unemployment Benefit or Assistance or be signing for credits
- not be living in a hospital, convalescent home or other similar institution;
- be fit to care.

Definition of person being cared for:

- Must be ordinarily resident in the State and is so incapacitated that he or she requires full-time care and attention.

A relevant person shall be regarded as requiring full time care and attention where:

- the person is so incapacitated that he or she requires from another person-
 - (i) continual supervision and frequent assistance throughout the day in connection with normal bodily functions, or
 - (ii) continual supervision in order to avoid danger to himself or herself, and the nature and extent of the person's incapacity has been certified in the prescribed manner by a medical practitioner.

You do not need to apply for a Respite Care grant if you are already receiving Carers allowance as it is automatically paid in June every year. However if you are not in receipt of Carers Allowance then you will need to do so.

The current rate of this grant is €1,200. (as and from June 2006) It is paid for each person you are caring for if you satisfy other qualifying conditions. The Respite Care Grant is paid for every person you care for provided you satisfy other conditions.

Homemakers Scheme

A Homemaker for the purposes of the Homemaker's Scheme is a man or woman who gives up work to take care of a child under age 12 or an incapacitated child or adult aged 2 or over on or after 6 April 1994.

The Homemaker's Scheme makes it easier for you as a Homemaker to qualify for an **Old Age Contributory Pension** when you reach age 66.

These arrangements apply to Old Age Contributory Pension only and do not involve payments while Homemaking. A person must have a minimum yearly average number of PRSI contributions paid or credited from the time he or she enters social insurance to pension age.

Before 6 April 1994, if you left the workforce to provide full-time care and attention for a child(ren) and or adult(s) as mentioned above, you could have gaps in your social insurance record which could affect your entitlement to an Old Age Contributory Pension.

Contact:

Homemaker's Section

Social Welfare Services Office
Gandon House
Amiens Street
Dublin 1.
Telephone: (01) 7043468, (01) 7043096,
(01) 7043299

Carer's Benefit

Carer's Benefit is a payment made to insured persons who leave the workforce to care for a person(s) in need of full-time care and attention. You should apply for Carer's Benefit 8 weeks before you intend to leave employment in order that your eligibility can be assessed prior to leaving your employment.

Supports for Carers from the Health Service Executive



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Supports for Carers from the Health Service Executive.

These services include:

Community Care Services

These services can include public health nursing service, home help, respite, day care etc. The rules about which community care can be provided differ in accordance with different services. In some cases, Health Service Executive areas are obliged to provide services while, in others, they are not. One of the reasons for this is the health services provided in your area reflects the population in the area i.e. older people, children, people with disabilities etc.

Public Health Nurses

Health Service Executive Areas are obliged to provide a free nursing service to medical card holders. This service is not confined to medical card holders but they do get priority as they have a legal entitlement. The services provided by Public Health Nurses include:

- Home Help for practical assistance with homemaking duties
- Home Care including help with dressing, feeding and other personal care duties. Some H.S.E. now offer a flexible Home Support Service combining elements of home help and home care.
- Liaison service between hospital care and home for further care which may be needed on discharge from hospital
- Visits to homes, including practical advice on care techniques
- Referral for training in care skills, such as lifting and handling and strategies for coping
- Advice and assistance on continence management
- Referral to day care, respite care, meals on wheels and other local services
- Advice on women's health issues such as breast care and cervical smear testing
- Referral to The Carers Association and to local Carers Support Groups
- Respite Care usually for a week or two at local residential centre.
- Transport services provided on a varying basis may include access to day hospitals and day centres and access to outpatient departments and other hospital services.

Availability of services varies from area to area. The services provided by public health nurses are free to all citizens over 65 years old, to people with medical cards and people with long-term illnesses. Other Carers may have to pay towards some services.

Other H.S.E. Supports include:

- Physiotherapy to look at the needs of the cared-for-person and to provide services and advice to improve the person's condition, prevent future problems and enhance activity and mobility. Waiting lists operate in many areas. Home services are available in a small number of cases.
- Occupational Therapy to provide advice on technical aids and appliances, adaptations to

home and various forms of rehabilitation to improve the cared-for-person's daily living skills. Waiting lists operate in most community care areas.

- Chiropody it is important to keep feet as healthy as possible. Factors include cleanliness, nail care, suitable footwear, effects of cold and heat and proper treatment of conditions e.g. corns.
- Speech and Language Therapy to assist, diagnose and treat disorders affecting the person's communication capacity. Many illnesses and disabilities severely disrupt communication, including hearing disabilities, strokes, head injury and tongue cancer.
- Social Workers hospital and community based to provide assessment, family counselling and management of stress.
- Psychological Services to provide assessment, family counselling and management of stress
- Health Promotion advice on healthy lifestyle and nutrition.

Note:- Statutory entitlement to community-based care services is limited. You need to check your entitlement with the H.S.E. Generally, these services are available to people with medical cards, people aged over 65 years and children referred from child health clinics and schools medical examinations.

Nursing Care Subvention:

Any person who is sufficiently dependent to need nursing home care, who satisfy a means test and who is unable to pay the cost will have a subvention grant paid towards the cost of this care by the local H.S.E. The subvention is paid directly to the registered nursing home on behalf of the person. A designated officer of the health board carries out the assessment.

There are different weekly rates of subvention which may be paid, with a maximum of € 190 per week, depending on the degree of nursing home care assessed as required. Assessment of income includes that of the applicant and his/her spouse, but not of other family members.

Application forms for the Nursing Homes Subvention are available from the H.S.E. You can decide which registered nursing home you prefer. The same rate of subvention is paid regardless of which nursing home you choose. Applicants need a letter from your family doctor stating the nature of the illness and the care needs.

Carers have a range of services available to them from H.S.E.

Home Care Subvention:

Home care packages deliver a wide range of services and have been piloted successfully in several regions in recent years. They include the services of nurses, home care attendants, home helps and the various therapists including physiotherapists and occupational therapists. A home care package will vary according to the care needs of the person so that, for example, there might be a greater emphasis in some packages on home care assistants while other packages may require a greater level of therapy and nursing.

The priority will be older people living in the community or who are inpatients in an acute hospital and who are at risk of admission to long term care. The home care packages will also be available to those older people who have been admitted to long term care and who now wish to return to the community. In addition, the packages will be offered to people who are already using existing core services, such as home helps, but need more assistance to continue to live in their community.

The packages are delivered through the HSE, by a range of providers including the Health Service Executive itself, voluntary groups and the private sector. The scheme will be as flexible as possible and highly responsive to the real needs of the individual so that where a family or friends of an older person wish to provide these services, they will be encouraged to do so, with support, and linking in with the HSE, voluntary or private sectors.

About 1,100 home care packages are provided to people at present.

By the end of next year a total of 2,000 additional home care packages will have been provided.

The 2,000 packages will support more than 2,000 persons as, for example, individuals could in some cases need a care package on a temporary basis. The major thrust of this initiative is to be directed at older people. However, there will be some flexibility, so that a person who is under 65 and may need home care may receive it, as appropriate.

Medical Cards:

If you have a medical card you are entitled to a range of free health board services, including hospital care, medicines, treatment by your family doctor and technical aids and appliances.

From July 2001 all citizens aged over 70 years are entitled to a medical card, regardless of means. The general regulations for qualifying for a medical card vary from time to time and are available from your local health board.

The H.S.E. has discretion in granting a medical card and can take into account your circumstances, such as heavy medical expense and the cost of your rent or mortgage.

Hospital Care:

All citizens are entitled to in-patient and out-patient services in public hospitals regardless of their means. You have to pay the full cost of services if you opt for private or semi-private treatment in a public hospital. Generally speaking, unless you have a medical card, you have to pay a daily charge for in-patient service. A charge is made for attendance at Accident & Emergency departments of public hospitals unless you are referred by your doctor.

Drug Payment Scheme

Under the Drug Payment Scheme an individual or family pays the first €78 per month of the cost of prescribed medicines approved for this purpose by the Minister for Health and Children. GMS eligible persons are unaffected by the Scheme. People or families must register with their local health board to avail of the Scheme. Registration forms area available from the health board.

Personal Payments from H.S.E.

(a) Domiciliary Care Allowance

A Carer of a child with a disability may be paid a monthly Domiciliary Care Allowance from the H.S.E. The allowance is paid because of the level of care, which is considerably in excess of that required for a child without a disability of the same age. The means of the Carer(s) are not taken into account, but those (if any), of the child are.

The Domiciliary Care Allowance rate is €225.20 euro per month. There is no restriction on the number of children in respect of whom you may claim Domiciliary Care Allowance. (In other words, if you are caring for more than 1 child who qualifies for Domiciliary Care Allowance, you may claim the monthly allowance for each).

The allowance is payable from the time of diagnosis of the child's disability. The child must be living at home.

Note:- Carers on Domiciliary Care Allowance may also qualify for Carer's Allowance, subject to the mean's test and other qualifying criteria. (See leaflet on Social Affairs supports in this pack).

(b) School Transport Grant:

If you have to bring your child to school because s/he has a disability, you may qualify for a grant towards these travel costs. Whether you qualify depends on the circumstances, such as whether your child is unable to avail of the school bus service and distance from the school.

(c) Mobility Allowance

If the person with the illness/disability is unable to walk but could benefit from getting out of the family home from time to time s/he may qualify for a Mobility Allowance. The allowance is paid monthly, a lower rate is payable to people who are availing of The Disabled drivers and Disabled passengers scheme. The rates in effect since January 2005 are High rate:€156 per month and Low rate: €78 per month.



Carers have a range of services available to them from H.S.E.

There are a range of services available to Carers through their local H.S.E.

(d) Supplementary Welfare Allowance:

If you are in difficult financial circumstances and finding it hard to pay all the extra costs because the person you care for needs a special diet or additional heating, you may apply to the Community Welfare Office of the H.S.E. for this allowance. Other costs which you may be assisted with include household equipment or expenses due to a sudden hospitalisation.

(e) Back to School Clothing and Footwear Scheme:

You may be able to avail of this scheme to help towards the cost of school uniforms and footwear for your children. The scheme is means-tested, but many Carers in receipt of Carers Allowance could qualify. To be eligible for the Back to School Clothing and Footwear Allowance, the applicant (parent or guardian) must meet a number of conditions.

- You must be receiving certain social welfare payments or payments for training, employment schemes or adult education.
- Your total household income must be below a certain amount.
- The child/student must be between 2 and 22 years before 1st October of the year you apply and must be in full-time education at a recognised school or college.

Health Service Executive (Eastern) Area www.erha.ie

Pembroke electoral area in Dublin City, Dun-Laoghaire-Rathdown County, and County Wicklow, (except for the Baltinglass electoral area)
Telephone: 01-6201600.

Health Service Executive (South Eastern) Area www.sehb.ie

Lacken, Dublin Road, Kilkenny 056 - 7784100
Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South Riding, Waterford, and Wexford.

Health Service Executive (Northern) Area www.hsenorthernarea.ie/

Dublin City north of the river Liffey and the community of Fingal County

Health Service Executive (South Western) Area www.erha.ie

Dublin City south of the River Liffey (except for the Pembroke electoral area) South Dublin County, County Kildare and the local electoral area of Baltinglass in County Wicklow

Health Service Executive (Midland) Area www.mhb.ie

Longford, Offaly, Westmeath, Laois
Telephone: 0506-21868

How to Contact the Health Service Executive:

Your local public health nurse is an important person to advise you on supports and services. The head office of the health service executive will be happy to give you her/his name and telephone number.

Head Office Health Service Executive:

Oak House
Limetree Avenue
Millenium Park,
Naas,
Co. Kildare
Tel: (045)-880400

Health Service Executive (Mid-Western) Area www.mwhb.ie

Limerick, Clare and Tipperary North Riding
Telephone: 061-483286

Health Service Executive (North Eastern) Area www.nehb.ie

Louth, Meath, Cavan and Monaghan

Health Service Executive (North Western) Area www.nwhb.ie

Donegal, Sligo and Leitrim

Health Service Executive (Eastern) Health Board www.sehb.ie

Carlow, Kilkenny, Tipperary South Riding, Waterford, and Wexford

Health Service Executive (Southern) Area www.shb.ie

Cork and Kerry

Health Service Executive Western Area www.whb.ie

Galway, Mayo, and Roscommon

Technical Aids, Transport and Housing Support for Carers



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Technical Aids, Housing and Transport

Technical Aids, Housing and Transport

As a Carer, an important part of our work is ensuring that the person we care for has the best quality of life possible through enhanced independence and dignity. Technical aids and appliances, as well as the right modifications to the home and accessible transport are all vital elements in independent living.

It is also most important that the Carer looks after her/his own health. Carers assist the person who needs care on a daily basis as follows:

- **Getting from one room to the other**
- **Safety getting up and down stairs**
- **Taking a bath or a shower**
- **Getting onto and off chairs**
- **Getting in and out of bed**
- **Using the toilet**
- **Security**
- **Getting to and from the home**
- **Making sure you do not injure yourself**

Refund of VRT and VAT on Disabled Person's Vehicle:

Severely and permanently disabled persons are entitled to repayment of Vehicle Registration Tax (VRT) and Value Added Tax (VAT) paid on specially constructed or modified vehicles. Repayment of VRT and VAT is not available on a leased vehicle. The scheme may apply to an adapted vehicle for use by the person with the disability as a passenger.

An Original Primary Medical Certificate from the local health service must be provided confirming that the person's disability falls within the rules. These generally require that the person is wholly or almost wholly without the use of both legs, or without the use of both hands or arms. Other categories of disability are also included. The completed Form is returned to the Revenue in Co Monaghan and if they are satisfied, a letter of Authorisation is issued to the person exempting them from VRT.

On receipt of the completed application form, invoice for the cost of the vehicle and cost of adaptation and Vehicle Registration Certificate (or log book), VRT and VAT will be refunded.

The vehicle must not be disposed of within 24 months.

Fuel Repayment Scheme:

Excise Duty paid on fuel actually used in the disabled driver's vehicle may be repaid, up to an annual limit of 2728 liters (600 gallons). Claims are made every four months.

Disabled Person's Parking Card:

The person with the disability may park his/her vehicle at parking meters, in disk parking areas and designated areas. This card, once issued to the person with the disability, can be carried with them and allows their own car or a car in which they are a passenger to be parked in designated areas.

Driving Lessons:

People with disabilities can get driving lessons at specialist driving schools at the Disabled Drivers Association and the Irish Wheelchair Association.

Health Service Executive Grant towards a Vehicle:

If you as a person with a disability need a grant towards buying and or adapting a vehicle to enable you to take up work, you may get a grant from the local H.S.E.

Contacts:

Disabled Drivers Section,
Revenue Commissioners,
FREEPOST, Coolshannagh, Monaghan,
Co. Monaghan.
Tel (047) 82800.

Disabled Drivers Association of Ireland
Ballindine,
Co Mayo
Tel (094) 64266/64054.

Irish Wheelchair Association
Blackheath Drive,
Clontarf, Dublin 3.
Tel (01)8338241.

Technical Aids, Housing and Transport

Technical Aids and Appliances:

Information for Independent Living

Comhairle have developed a website titled www.assistireland.ie which is an online resource providing information on assistive technologies for people with disabilities, older people and their Carers.

Information Sheets from the website are available from Assist Ireland on **1890 277478**.

Contact:

Comhairle,
7th Floor,
Hume House,
Ballsbridge,
Dublin 4
Ireland
Tel: (01) 6059000

Orthopaedic Boots and Shoes:

For children under 18 years of age, two pairs of orthopaedic boots or shoes are paid for annually to people with medical cards or on the long term illness scheme. Children over 18 years qualify for one paid annually. These are supplied on prescription from your orthopaedic surgeon.

Contact

Irish Association for Spina Bifida and Hydrocephalus,
Old Nangor Road,
Clondalkin, Dublin 22.
Telephone: (01) 4572326.

Hearing Aids:

Hearing testing and the fitting and repair of hearing aids are services provided by the H.S.E., having previously been provided by the NRB which has been abolished. Advice and information on hearing difficulties are also provided. Services are targeted to school children and adults with medical cards.

Disabled Persons Grant Scheme

The Disabled Person's Housing Grant Scheme assists those who require alterations to their homes as a result of physical disability, a severe intellectual disability, or a severe mental illness for which they are receiving treatment. Alterations could include making a dwelling wheelchair accessible or installing a ground floor bathroom and toilet. The grant is funded jointly by the Department of the Environment and Local Government, and local authorities.

Application for the grant is made to your local authority which will provide guidelines in relation to procedures and information on works that will be grant aided. Procedures may vary between local authorities.

You must not do any of the work until your application

is approved. Applications to the local authority must be accompanied by a detailed itemised estimate from the contractor together with specifications of the proposed work. The contractor's Income Tax Number and VAT number must be included.

When the local authority receives your application it will ask your H.S.E. to arrange a call from an Occupational Therapist who will be required to provide a report back to the local authority.

Owner Occupied Homes

Application for the grant is made to your local authority which will provide guidelines in relation to procedures and information on works that will be grant aided. The cost of the proposed works must be more than €254 for the local authority to consider your application. The maximum grant available is €20,320 and the grant will cover up to 90% of the cost of the works to private houses.

The local authority may enquire as to how you intend to meet your portion of the cost of the adaption. You may fund your share of the cost from your own resources or by means of a loan from a bank, building society, etc. If you are unable to obtain a loan from a bank or building society, your local authority may be able to advance you a house improvement loan to cover your share of the cost.

New House or Building your own House

Where a house is less than one year old or where a new house is being specifically provided and suitably designed to meet the needs of a disabled person the grant will not normally exceed €12,700.

Rented Accommodation

The grant is not available to people in rented accommodation

Local Authority House

If you live in a local authority house the local authority will meet the full cost of approved alterations. The disabled person must occupy the house as his/her normal place of residence.



The Carers Association Centres/Services Locations



Training for Family Carers



Carers Information Pack

The Carers Association
National Office, Priors Orchard, Johns Quay, Kilkenny
Tel (056) 7721424 Fax (056) 7753531

National CareLine FREEFONE 1800 24 07 24
Carers Association Web Site <http://www.carersireland.com>



Training for Family Carers

Course Title

- Care in the Home (Accredited by City & Guilds Institute, London)

Duration

- 42 hours over 12 sessions

Target Group

- Family Carers
- Former family Carers
- People interested in exploring a career in Caring
- Home Helps
- Personal Assistants

Locations

Through our 16 Resource Centres and a number of outreach venues nationwide.

Course Aim

The course is aimed at giving participants a thorough basic introduction to caring skills.

Learning Outcomes

By the end of the course participants should have:

- Greater confidence in their role as Family Carers.
- Increased knowledge on their rights, entitlements, services and supports
- Enhanced caring skills i.e. practical caring skills such as feeding, washing, dressing, toileting, lifting.
- Enhanced personal skills such as communication, stress management and coping skills.
- A greater number of social contacts
- Devised strategies for coping with the pressures of being a family carer or care worker

Course Content

The course is divided into three modules with a module containing a number of units.

Caring for Yourself

- Safety in the Home
- Inanimate and patient handling
- Healthy Lifestyle
- First Aid and Emergencies

Caring at Home

- Practical Care Skills
- The Person with Dementia
- The Terminally Ill Person and Bereavement

The Carer As A Person

- Stress in Caring
- Communication and Listening Skills
- Carer-Centred Approach
- Support Services for the Carer
- Introduction to IT

Other Training courses available to family Carers include:

- Caring for Children with Special Needs
- Occupational First Aid
- Carers Support Programmes
- Entitlement for Carers
- Patient Handling course

For further details please contact:

Fergus Timmons (Training Unit Manager).
training@carersireland.com

Managing Health and Medications



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Managing Health and Medications

Getting the best from Health Professionals

As a Carer you will most likely have a lot of contact with health care professionals. One way of thinking about working with them is to consider yourself as an important part of the team. This team can include public health nurses, pharmacists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, social workers as well as GPs.

Some tips for Carers dealing with health professionals include:

- Know who the health professional is. Get information about names, organisation, titles and the role they have in the treatment of the person you care for
- Take someone with you to appointments
- Make a list of questions so you won't forget anything
- Keep a diary of the person's problems or symptoms
- Ask for information to be written down, particularly about diagnosis or about medications
- Ask your doctor for any printed material on support available or additional information on cared for person's condition.

Your own health is important

Your health is very important and your doctor can be an important person in your own support network. If at all possible find a doctor you have confidence in, can talk to and feel comfortable with. Make sure your doctor knows about your caring role and the demands it makes on you. It is important to arrange regular health check ups for yourself.

Medication

There are two types of medication; those that require a doctor's prescription and those that do not. It helps to have an understanding of why the person you care for needs to take medication and be aware of any side effects associated with same.

Some questions you might want to ask the doctor or pharmacist about medications are as follows:

- What is the name of the medication and what is it for?
- Are there any possible side effects? What should I do if there are any side effects?
- How long will the person need to take this medication?
- Will the medicine affect other medical problems the person has?
- What should I do if a dose is missed?
- Will the medicine interfere with other medicines taken?
- Is there anything the person should avoid while taking the medicine such as alcohol, cigarettes, driving?
- Check that the person is taking the lowest possible effective dosage

The person you care for may be on more than one type of medication and knowing when to take each one can be confusing. A pharmacist can divide the week's medication so that it makes it easier to monitor the dosage.

What about over the counter and alternative medications?

These are available at supermarkets and local shops as well as at pharmacists. If the person you care for is already on prescription medication or you have any doubts about the medications you are buying you should always seek the advice of a pharmacist or doctor.

Drug Payment Scheme

The Drugs Payment Scheme allows individuals and families who do not hold medical cards to limit the amount they have to spend on prescribed drugs. Under the Drugs Payment Scheme, no individual or family will have to pay more than 78 euro in any calendar month for approved prescribed drugs, medicines and appliances.

Family expenditure covers a nominated adult, their partner and children under 18 years. Dependents over 18 years and under the age of 23 years who are in full-time education may also be included. A dependent with a physical disability or a mental handicap or illness who cannot look after themselves fully, who lives in the family home and who does not hold a current medical card, may be included in the family expenditure under this scheme regardless of age.

All those who are ordinarily resident in Ireland are eligible to apply for the Drugs Payment Scheme as long as they do not hold a current medical card. You can use the Drug payment scheme in conjunction with a Long Term Illness Book.

The application forms can be obtained in your local Pharmacy. Families should be registered by a nominated adult family member. The completed form should be returned to your Health Service Executive.

Once the registration form has been processed, each person named on the form will receive a plastic swipe card which they must present when having prescriptions filled at a community pharmacy.

All members of a family should use the same pharmacy throughout a month to obtain prescribed medication. A national database for pharmacists is in the planning stages, but until it comes about, the whole family will have to attend the same pharmacy all the time and keep receipts for prescribed medication. These receipts can then be returned to the pharmacist at the end of the month. In return, the family will get back any money over 78 euro spent in that month.

Managing Finances



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Managing Finances

Financial Assistance Available

Many Carers do not apply for financial assistance because they are unsure who to contact or are put off by the procedures. Don't feel ashamed or embarrassed about asking for assistance. If you do not, you and the person you care for could lose out on money specifically allocated by government for helping people who are ill, have a disability or who are frail.

A good starting point for assistance and information on entitlements is your local Carers Association Resource Centre (Carers Allowance, Carers Benefit information leaflet attached under Social Welfare payments and H.S.E. Section)

A Guide to Managing your Money taken from MABS website. For further information see www.mabs.ie

Take Control

Many of us are so busy with our everyday lives that we give little or no attention to planning our finances. It is very important to take control of our finances. The following are steps to help control your finances.

Make a Budget

A budget is a simple way to make sure that the demands you place on your income can be met. There are some simple things to bear in mind when you start to look at your income and spending:

- List all the income into your house
- List all the bills you have to pay
- If you are paid weekly, budget for the week. If it is monthly, budget for the month.
- Count all spending even bills that occur only occasionally or once a year.
- Include the costs of special occasions in your budget e.g. Christmas, Birthdays
- A once off unexpected expense can blow a budget plan apart therefore it is advisable where possible to have an emergency fund to meet these unforeseen costs.

Reducing your Outgoings

Try to identify areas of your spending that you could possibly cut back on.

With your budget in front of you see if the following plan might help:

- Put a mark against payments that cannot be changed e.g. your rent
- Look at bills or payments that could be reduced e.g. electricity, gas, telephone.
- You may be able to negotiate lower mortgage payments
- Consider how you might budget for weekly essential items such as groceries, clothing etc.
- Look at items such as entertainment, although it might make sense to have total cutback here it is necessary to leave room for a social life for you and your family.

Being in Debt is:

- A difficult place to be
- A lonely place to be
- And it can be a desperate place to be

Debt problems are more often than not solved with time and effort. You have probably taken the most important and difficult step in recognising that you might have a money problem.

Your money difficulties can have arisen for various reasons.

The most common reasons for Carers are:

- Changes in life's circumstances
- Illness of loved one
- Having to leave employment to provide full time care

Managing Finances

Other reasons may include:

- Relationship breakdown
- A drop in income
- Increased expenditure
- Just not enough to go around

Take the Following Steps:

List and Evaluate Your Debts

- Take a look at what debts you need to give immediate attention to because of the serious consequences attached like losing your home (Priority Debts)
- Highlight the debts where legal action has already taken place. Mark the ones where legal action is pending. These debts need your immediate attention as the consequence of ignoring them could be severe.
- Have you arrears on electricity, gas or phone bills. If they are not attended to you will be disconnected. Credit agreements not secured on your property which are in arrears could mean you receiving a court summons or goods being repossessed.

It is very important that you, without delay, make contact with those to whom you owe money in order to explain your financial situation. You can do this in person, by phone or by letter. Our advice is to make contact by letter. Do remember to keep a copy.

What are Priority Debts?

Some debts are more important than others. Important debts such as mortgage arrears, rent arrears, fines and maintenance payments are called priority debts.

They are called this because:

- Your home may be at risk
- You may be evicted
- Your electricity, gas or telephone may be disconnected
- Your failure to pay a fine or a civil debt may result in a prison sentence
- Your car or goods on hire purchase could be repossessed.

What are your Secondary Debts?

These are debts where money has been loaned to you without you having to provide any security. These include lots of different types of debts where the creditor hasn't got extra powers e.g. they cannot take your home. The most common Secondary debts include:

Examples:

- Bank Overdraft
- Catalogue Debts
- Credit Card Debts
- Credit Sales Agreements
- Credit Union Loans
- Personal Debts to friends and family
- Personal Loans with Finance companies

Though you can be taken to court if you have failed to keep up the agreed payments, as long as you don't ignore the problem and you respond to court documents with details of your financial circumstances, you will generally only have to pay what you can afford in line with your budget.

Who can help me?

- Money Advice and Budgeting Service (MABs)
- A Financial Advisor
- Solicitor
- Bank
- Other family members

For further information and advice go to www.mabs.ie



The Carers Association Centres/Services Locations



Caring Safely in the Home



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Caring Safely in the Home

Carers face many safety issues depending on the needs of the persons they care for and their level of dependency.

If the person you care for has a mobility problem:

- Equipment such as rails and ramps may make the home safer for you both.
- Arrange furniture simply and consistently and keep all areas uncluttered
- Remove loose rugs and seal carpet edges that may prove to be safety hazard.

If a person needs to be lifted:

- Ask the health care workers you normally deal with to arrange an assessment of your situation.
- An Occupational Therapist, Physiotherapist or Public Health Nurse will be able to work out a safe way of lifting or transferring the person you care for.
- The Carers Association Care in the Home course provides certified training on lifting and handling for Family Carers and other health workers.

If the person you care for is confused:

- Try not to make any changes to the familiar environment
Consider checking medication as this can be a common cause of confusion
- Easy to read clocks and large calendars can be helpful reminders of time and date

If the person you care for has memory loss:

- It is important at all times that they carry identification with their name and address and emergency contact details.
- Display emergency and commonly used telephone numbers near the phone

If the person you care for is aggressive:

- Make sure that all professionals involved with person know of any aggressive behaviour
- Always protect yourself in advance if possible from aggressive outbursts. Plan safe places in the house to protect yourself.
- Remove or hide any items in the house that could be used to hurt you.
- Seek support from someone you trust after an outburst such as a family member, friend or a health professional familiar in dealing with cared for person's condition.

If the person you care for has a problem with their sight:

- Leave all items as they were left. If something has to be moved, tell the person where it has been placed.
- Shut doors completely or leave them fully open, a half opened door is a hazard.
- Furniture should be kept in the same position to avoid confusion.

Hazards and Risks

A Hazard has the potential to cause harm. Risk on the other hand is the likelihood of harm and usually qualified by some statement of severity of the harm. The Risk can be high or low.

The first step in safeguarding your home is to identify examples of hazards when caring in the home:

Physical Hazards

- Manual Handling
- Falling Objects
- Electricity
- Fire
- Poor Housekeeping
- Slips/Trips

Health Hazards

- Noise
- Dust
- Unsuitable lighting

Fire Safety in the Home

If you care for someone with limited mobility it is vital you have early warning if fires do occur. The following are ways to protect your home from a fire:

- Fit smoke alarms on each level in your home. Keep them free from dust and test them once a week.
- Make a fire action plan so that everyone in your home knows how to escape if there's a fire.
- Keep the exits in the home clear so that people can escape if there is a fire.
- Take extra care in the kitchen.
- Never leave candles lit in rooms that nobody is in.
- Make sure cigarettes are stubbed out properly.
- Close all doors at night.
- Don't overload electricity sockets.

Your local fire authority can help you with advice about installing smoke detectors and evacuation techniques.

Stresses of Caring Carers Choices Coping Skills



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Stresses of Caring Carers Choices Coping Skills

Stresses of Caring & Coping Skills

Stress in Caring:

The constant demands of caring and the many changes in family life for a Carer may bring about a range of feelings and emotions. There are no right or wrong feelings. All Carers respond to the demands of caring in their own way. Below are some of the feelings that family Carers often say they experience:

Feeling overwhelmed, confused and shocked

Feeling love and commitment

Feeling guilty

Feeling angry and frustrated

Feeling stressed

Caring for a severely incapacitated person at home is not easy. Carers can feel a deep sense of satisfaction in doing a very important job of work at home which maintains the independence and dignity of the person being cared for. The Carer can feel that the work he/she is doing at home is unrecognised and unappreciated by the state. Depending on family circumstances, attitudes within the home can vary from supportive words and actions to lack of interest to criticism of the Carer and the quality of care provided.

The relationship between the Carers and the person being cared for varies from family to family. Factors affecting the relationship between both include the nature of the relationship (daughter-mother, son-mother, mother child, and so on), and the quality of the relationship before the caring situation arose. Issues centered on the 'control' exercised by one party over another can be crucial. The need for the Carer to assist the cared-for person in independent living has to be balanced with the expectations of both and the perceptions of both of the role of the Carer. The tendency to 'exert control' over the other person applies to both parties. The context in which the caring takes place is also important. For example, if the Carer has to give up work to care at home, the financial strains of being a Carer, the expressed or implied longer-term financial benefits for the Carer (such as 'understandings' on property inheritance rights) and many other 'hidden' factors can come into the equation.

Important also are the caring duties involved and the health of the Carer. The physical and emotional stresses caused by very intensive long-term care at home can be high. Many Carers suffer a range of physical and emotional difficulties, with in some cases, serious deterioration in the Carers' health.

Choice for Carers:

In short, there are many issues which contribute to the build-up of stress, anxiety and worry and a general sense of being 'taken-for-granted'. Carers feel that the extent of their work and contribution in providing over 90% of all social and health care in local communities is grossly underestimated.

With greater awareness of the existence of Carers, there is a general feeling of goodwill towards Carers amongst the general public and policy-makers. Carers can become angry however, when they see the lack of the 'follow-through' policies and supports they need.

Carers should have choices. If the Carer wishes to remain working at home adequate supports need to be provided. These supports include practical assistance with caring duties, respite care (residential and home-based), training and education opportunities for social interaction, involvement in the planning and delivery of services supporting Carers and finance to recognise the value of their work and to cover the additional costs of providing care at home.

It is also important that Carers have their own personal and self fulfilment needs recognised and supported.

Successfully Managing Stress:

Key issues for Carers in providing choice and coping with stress include:

Family/Supports

- It is important to involve family members from the beginning so that all the responsibility does not fall on you. If they cannot give day-to-day care they may be able to give you a break from caring or financial contributions towards the cost of caring.
- Accept help from friends or neighbours if they offer.

Health

- Visit your GP regularly for check-ups and make sure they are aware of problems or stress you are going through.
- Make sure you maintain a well-balanced diet as this will help you to feel and cope better.
- It is important to exercise regularly by taking a walk or exercising in the home.
- Try to get enough sleep.
- Visit your doctor as soon as possible if you feel anxious or depressed.
- Take care when lifting the cared for person to ensure you do not damage your back.

Other areas include

- Practical problems
- Emotions
- Coping strategies
- Sense of recognition as a Carer

Coping Strategies and Compensations:

In devising strategies for coping with the stresses of caring at home, important issues to consider include:

- The Carer's reasons for caring
- How and why the Carer is confined to the home
- Each Carers way of keeping in touch
- Public and Personal appreciation
- The way in which the Carer as an individual copes with difficult situation
- Carers worst fears

Health and Emotions:

In addressing the Carer's health and emotional needs, issues to be considered include:

- What are the conflicting demands?
- Being on call 24 hours-a-day for years
- The dependency of other people on the Carer
-
- Lack of choice
- When and where does the duty of the Carer stop?

The expectations and understandings of Irish society of 'family', 'Carer' and the role of the Carer in society
- The dignity of the Carer and the cared-for-person

The physical health of the Carer, e.g. back care and muscle strain
- The patronising of Carers by people who mean well
- The denial of the Carer's right to be angry

The sense of isolation and having to 'soldier on because we are powerless'

The fine line between being seen as having a legitimate right to complain and being seen as whinging.

Carers Are Important:

The Carers Association can help to overcome the sense of isolation and despair. Life can be better especially if you can get some time to yourself away from the caring situation. Your association can help with:

- **National CareLine** - for a confidential chat with someone who cares about you
- **Pamper Days** - 'treat yourself' to a day off and enjoy yourself with other Carers
- **Recognition and Awards** - Carers of the Year Awards
- **Surfing the Net** - come in to our local Carers Resource Centre and have a look at the Internet.
- **Resource Centre** - if you are in town, drop in and have a cup of tea, leave your shopping with us for a while, relax, make a few telephone calls you might not be able to make from home and find out what other Carers are doing.
- **Empowerment** - Information is power. We can provide you with information and contacts which you need e.g. on how to get Carer's Allowance, an adaptation or extension to your home, grant-aid towards an adapted vehicle for a person with a disability, education and training services, medical cards.
- **Coping with Loss** - help with coming to terms with the loss of the person for whom you cared.
- **Back to Work** - after your work at home as a Carer ends, you may be able to avail of the Back-to-Work Allowance Scheme to get into paid employment
- **Work Opportunities** - Carers on Carer's Allowance can work in paid employment for up to 15 hours per week. We may be able to provide supports which allows you to take up part-time work.
(Note: Income from work may be considered as means).
- **Support Groups** - Where Carers can meet other Carers in similar situations, gain information on entitlements, legal issues, health and nutrition etc., gain support and advise from the Carers Association. These meetings help to reduce isolation that Carers feel both socially and geographically.

Carers need to consider their own needs as well as those of the person they care for. If their health begins to suffer, caring will become more difficult and it will not be easy or possible in some cases to do the things they need to do.



The Carers Association Centres/Services Locations



Taking Care of the Carer and Feelings Associated with Caring Role



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Taking Care of the Carer

Taking Care of Yourself

The caring role makes many demands on you the Carer, it is therefore extremely important to look after your own physical and emotional health.

Below are some tips on how to take better care of yourself:

Getting Out

Continue, if possible with activities you enjoy outside the home as it is important to follow your own interests outside your caring role. Some Carers feel guilty when they leave the house to enjoy an activity without the person they care for. If you are finding it difficult to get out, talk to other family members, your local Carers Resource Centre manager, your Public Health Nurse or your G.P.

Reduce the Isolation

It's easy to become isolated when you are a Carer. You may become too busy to keep up with friends and family, people may visit you less and thus loneliness often becomes the worst part of being a Carer. Sometimes just talking to someone who understands what you are going through can be a great help. Your local Carers Association Resource Centre and support groups can put you in touch with other people who share similar experiences. When ideas, feelings, concerns, information and problems are shared, the experience of caring can seem less isolating.

Keep Healthy

By making time for regular exercise this will help you feel more energetic and provide a break from your daily activities. Always try to have healthy and regular meals. It is not always easy to do but in the long term it is important for your health and well being. Tiredness and exhaustion can often add to the stresses of caring it is vital to try and get enough sleep and rest. Take special care of your back especially where lifting is involved. Get professional advice on how to lift properly and avail of any technical aids such as hoists where possible.

Take time for yourself

Getting in the habit of making time for yourself as a regular part of the day is important. Don't feel guilty about this time as it is for you. Planning ahead and pacing yourself will also help. If possible plan activities such as housework for times when you are feeling at your best.

Although it can be easier said than done you need time to yourself every day to relax. It does not need to be long, even fifteen minutes can do wonders. Try to take time to sit and relax, listen to music or read a book.

Take a Break from Caring Situation

Breaks can be taken in your home or away from it. They might be for a few hours, a day, a week. You can use this time to sleep, do shopping, have a holiday yourself or just to "do nothing" - luxury that Carers rarely if ever enjoy.

Respite Care is provided by many different organisations and is depending on the age and condition of the person being cared for as well as the location where you live.

Respite can take many forms

- In Home Respite Care
- Caring Safely in the Home
- Day Care
- Residential Respite Centres
- Weekend/Holiday programs
- Respite beds in Public and Private Hospitals/Nursing homes

Some services are free while others charge a standard fee. For further information on services in your area contact your local Resource Centre or The Carers Association free phone number **1800 24 07 24**.

What if I am not coping?

Most Carers will tell you that they have times when they feel weighed down and unable to cope. If you are feeling this way it is vital to speak with someone about it your family, friends, GP or contact your local Carers Association Resource Centre. Call our Freephone number **1800 24 07 24**.

Feelings Associated with Caring Role

Feelings

Carers, throughout their caring role experience a range of different feelings. There are no right or wrong feelings as they are a normal and natural reaction to caring.

Each Carer responds differently to the demands of caring. Feelings are always individual. It is important to regard your feelings as signposts as they will tell you when things are not going well and may need attention.

The following are some of the feelings Carers often experience:

Love and Commitment for:

- The person you are caring for
- The opportunity to care for your loved one at home
- The opportunity to give back the love to a parent who cared for you all your life

Frustrated and Angry at:

- The person you are caring for
- Others in the family who don't share the caring
- Having to be a Carer
- Lack of supports and services
- The loneliness and isolation
- Friends that no longer contact you.

Guilt for:

- Not wanting to be a Carer
- Believing you bear some responsibility for the illness or disability
- Losing your temper with the cared for person
- Needing a break from caring
- Placing the person you care for in residential care (either short or long term)

Sadness for:

- Loss of a relationship with the parent, husband or wife or child you once knew
- Loss of the life you once had
- Loss of the life you planned
- Loss of a sexual relationship with your partner
- Loss of opportunities for the person you are caring for.

Overwhelmed, Confused and Shocked by:

- The diagnosis of illness or disability
- Finding yourself caring and realising the changes this will bring to your life

Afraid about:

- What will happen if you don't cope
- Picking up your life after the caring role ends
- What will happen to your loved one if you die.
- Who will care for him/her?

Feeling Stressed

Stress is a part of all our daily lives but too much stress can lead to physical and emotional exhaustion. Carers are very vulnerable to stress due to the demands of caring. Stress may cause physical symptoms such as headaches or problems sleeping. Some people become emotional or anxious.

Feeling Depressed

Sometimes being a Carer can be overwhelming. Over time you may stop feeling sad or angry about your situation and just feel numb. Even happy times don't seem to lift you and simple tasks seem to take too much energy. You may find you are sleeping too much or waking early or during the night, feeling worthless or agitated most of the time and have difficulties making decisions.

These changes may be signs you are suffering from depression. Depression is a serious illness which is often overlooked. It is common and treatable. Talk to your doctor, who will help find the best treatment for you.

How can I deal with difficult feelings?

Feelings are individual and so too are ways of dealing with them. However, there is a way to deal with difficult feelings that many Carers say is very helpful that is by talking to someone. This can be to family and friends, other Carers in a support group or to a qualified counsellor.

Support Groups

Support groups provide carers with the opportunity to:

- Meet other Carers in a similar situation
- Have a break from their caring role
- Access Information
- Share their feelings in a non judgemental situation
- Reduce isolation

Sometimes family and friends do not understand the condition of the person you care for but people in the support group will understand.

Support groups bring together Carers in local areas. Your local Carers Association Resource centre holds regular support group meetings. **Call 1800 24 07 24** for more information.

Counselling

Counselling involves talking to someone who understands the stresses and emotions involved in caring and can work with you to give you the encouragement, support and ideas to improve your situation. It may assist with the many changes in your relationships and roles as well as dealing with the strong feelings associated with caring.

Counselling is usually one-to-one so it is important you feel comfortable with the counsellor you choose. Anything said is completely confidential, so it's a good chance to talk about those things you may feel you cannot raise with family or friends.



The Carers Association Centres/Services Locations



Loss and Bereavement



Carers Information Pack

The Carers Association

National Office, Priors Orchard, Johns Quay, Kilkenny
Tel (056) 7721424 Fax (056) 7753531

National CareLine FREEFONE 1800 24 07 24

Carers Association Web Site <http://www.carersireland.com>



Loss and Bereavement

Everyone experiences loss during life. However, for Carers many of the changes and losses experienced come quickly and often. These losses can lead to feelings of grief.

Grief is a natural reaction to a loss. It is not an illness. It is as much a part of your emotions as joy, sadness etc. Grief can occur not only through death (bereavement) but also from major changes and losses in our lives, such as:

- **Separation or divorce;**
- **Changing or losing your job;**
- **Moving or migrating;**
- **Children leaving home;**

Everyone experiences loss sometime during their life. Losses such as the death of a family member may be very obvious to other people. Personal or private losses may be less obvious and not always recognised by other people yet still very painful. Some of the losses that Carers talk about include:

- Being a Carer and losing your sense of being and individual. You may also lose your independence, privacy and time for yourself
- Missing out on employment and career opportunities and your financial security being affected;
- Not seeing friends or family due to caring commitment;
- Missing the relationship you used to have or might have had with the person you care for;
- The person you care for going into residential care so you feel you are no longer valued or needed.
- These kinds of losses may affect your self esteem and confidence and your hopes and dreams about the future. You may also experience grief before an actual loss occurs. This may happen when someone you care for has a terminal illness and you know you will have to face a loss.

Feelings of Grief

Everyone responds to grief differently. If you are grieving you may sometimes feel physically unwell as well as emotionally upset. Physical symptoms can include shortness of breath, dryness of mouth, loss of appetite, crying, tiredness and sleep problems. Grief can also cause deep feelings of loneliness, anger, fear, guilt, rage and resentment, confusion, ongoing sadness, not wanting to go out or do the things you used to do. These symptoms can be frightening but are normal reactions to grief.

Recognising your grief and talking about how you're feeling can help. Making some time for yourself each day and having some plans in place for those bad times may make it easier to cope.

Some of the signs described above may also be symptoms of other problems so it's a good idea to talk about them with your doctor. Make sure your doctor knows about your caring role and how it affects you. If you feeling very anxious or fearful, have trouble looking after yourself or think about hurting yourself, it is very important to get professional help from your doctor, a counsellor or a psychologist.

Ongoing grief

There may be no clear beginning or end to your feelings of grief. In some cases, loss may be felt for years or sometimes for a lifetime. The constant reminders may make it difficult or impossible to resolve your feelings of grief.

Carer support groups can help you get through times when your grief seems overwhelming. They can also be a safe place to talk about feelings such as anger and resentment. Walking or any form of exercise, deep breathing or writing in a journal are other safe ways to release angry feelings, blame or resentment. For some people crying can be a great release.

Relationships

Caring for a partner

Caring for a partner can mean changes to your relationship. It can be hard to feel romantic when it seems that you've become more like a nurse or parent, and less like a spouse, lover or friend. These changes can be difficult to adjust to and it may take a long time for some Carers to feel comfortable in these new roles.

Caring for a parent

For some people caring for a parent is an opportunity to repay the care they received as a child. For others, finding themselves in the role of caring for a parent can be very upsetting. You may miss having someone you can turn to for support or feel uncomfortable about providing personal care such as bathing and toileting.

Caring for a child

Caring for a child with special needs can be both rewarding and challenging. Parents expect that their children will grow up to become adults and start their own lives. Parents may grieve for the hopes they had for their child for the future. Carers may feel frustrated they can't stop what is happening to the child or solve the problem. They may feel guilty about having less time and energy to spend with other members of the family. They may worry there are not enough services to support their child.

Support groups

Whatever your situation there is a support group you can join to meet other Carers with similar experiences. Support groups can be a safe place to talk about your worries and to hear how other Carers have coped with difficult situations. Carer support groups offer different types of support and if you find that one particular group doesn't suit you then ask about others in your area.

Your Carer Resource Centre can help put you in touch with Carer support groups in your area. Contact them on **1800 24 07 24**.

Loss and Bereavement

Stages of caring

When you first become a Carer

Becoming a Carer may be a slow and gradual transition or it may happen over night. If you have gradually taken on a caring role by doing a few extra tasks it may have taken a long time for you to become aware of the changes in your life.

If you became a Carer as the result of an accident, the birth of a child with a disability or a sudden illness the immediate changes in your life and your relationship with the person you care for may be very frightening and stressful. You may have mixed feeling about the changes in your life. These are normal feelings and reactions.

After you've been caring for a long time

If you have been a Carer for a long time you may have stopped thinking about the things you would like to do and instead spend all of your time thinking about the things you have to do. You may have forgotten what your life was like before you were a Carer or you may think about it all the time. Other people might expect that you are used to being a Carer and you don't need their help and support anymore. You might not remember the last time anyone asked about you.

Trying to maintain your interests and activities is an important part of looking after yourself. It's not selfish to be healthy and happy. In fact it can make it easier to continue caring.

When your situation changes or you stop being a Carer

In the future your role as a Carer may change. The transition of moving someone into residential care or adjusting to the death of the person you cared for is not easy. There will be changes in your routine and lifestyle. You may miss the companionship and at the same time be relieved to have more time for yourself. You might feel guilty or worried about what to do next.

If you are considering residential care you might wonder if you are making the right decision:

- Will the person I care for be looked after properly?
- What will other people think of me?
- Have I done everything I could?
- Am I a failure because I can't care for them at home anymore?
- What will I do with my life when I am not so busy?

It can be hard to think about your own needs but it's important to be realistic and try to decide what's best for everyone including you. Only you can decide if the responsibility of caring is too much for you. Remember there are still many ways to help care for your relative or friend even if they are living in a nursing home.

If the person you cared for dies your whole life can change.

Other people may understand that you feel grief for the person who has died but they may not realise that you can also feel the loss of not being a Carer anymore.

Good days and bad days may come and go. It may take a long time for you to get used to a new routine. You may miss all the things you used to do and the workers you used to see and life may seem very lonely.

If you feel it's been a long time since you had the energy to do things you like to do, or if you feel you're not really interested in anything, then a bereavement counsellor may be able to help. Talking to them about your loss and what it was like being a Carer may help you start to feel like trying to get out and about again.

Where can I get more information?

You can contact your local resource centre who can provide you with more information on available supports and services or contact our Careline **1800 24 07 24**.



The Carers Association Centres/Services Locations



Membership Application Form



The Carers Association

National Office, Priors Orchard, Johns Quay, Kilkenny
Tel (056) 7721424 Fax (056) 7753531

National CareLine FREEFONE 1800 24 07 24

Carers Association Web Site <http://www.carersireland.com>



Membership Application Form

Membership:

By joining The Carers Association;

You will become a member of an organisation dedicated to advocating your rights and interests as a family Carer. You will help to enhance our organisation's profile and position and help to shape social policy on Carers' issues.

How to become a member?

To become a member of The Carers Association, **Freefone 1800 240724**, log onto **www.carersireland.com** with your credit card details or complete the application form below and Freepost it to: **The Carers Association, FREEPOST, Priors Orchard Johns Quay, Kilkenny.**

Value for Money

For just €25 The Carers Association's Membership programme represents excellent value for money. Members are able to save their membership fee many times over through the extensive range of discounts, special offers and preferential rates on offers to our members.

Members benefits at a glance

1. €100 discount off any Sunway holiday package as featured in the Summer 06 and Worldwide 06 brochures.
2. Jurys Doyle Hotels are offering The Carers Association members two nights for the price of one at 12 of their hotels located around Ireland and the UK.
3. Are you in need of a new stair lift or wheelchair repairs? Mobility Solutions are offering members 10% discount on all products and a free yearly service on all new products.
4. "The Care Company" clothing solutions for caregivers and seniors are offering 20% discount on their clothing range.
5. Irish Stairways are offering members €150 off the price of a straight stair lift and €300 off the price of any curved stair lift.
6. VHI are offering 10% discount for new members.
7. Emergency Response are offering 10% discount on all products.
8. Preferential Banking for members from Bank of Ireland.



Mr Mrs Miss Ms

Surname Home Tel No.

First Name Mobile Tel No.

Email Date of Birth

Address

Payment Methods:

Please enclose cheque, postal/money order or bankers draft made payable to the Carers Association (see address above). No Cash please.



Cost

Carers and individuals €25.00 - Organisations €50.00

Payment by:

Cheque Bankers Draft Credit Card Money/Postal Order

Credit Card Number Expiry Date / /

Name on Card Type of Card  

I am a Carer Ex Carer Professional Organisation

Other Give Details

Condition / illness of cared for person:

Application Form

Application Form