

HOW TO ARRANGE SHORT BREAK (RESPIRE) CARE

Date: August 2009

You can contact your local authority for information and assistance on taking a short break. If you are seeking financial help, a Community Care Assessment (sometimes known as a Single Shared Assessment or an Integrated Assessment for children) will be carried out to determine what support you need, how often and whether you are eligible for financial assistance. To ask for an assessment you should contact your local authority Social Work office. Most carers will be entitled to an assessment of their own needs and this includes the need for a break.

Getting an assessment can take time and so we would advise that you make contact as early as possible. Some local authorities will ask you to fill in a short self-assessment form which will help them decide whether a more in depth assessment is required and how quickly this needs to happen. In emergency situations timescales will be short.

Local authorities have different policies and procedures in place for allocating support and it's likely you will have to meet certain eligibility criteria. This is to help local authorities use their resources effectively and ensure those most in need are helped first.

You can ask your local authority for details of their eligibility criteria and assessment procedures. Your local Carers Centre is also a good source of help.

Carers Scotland has produced a useful guide to Carers Rights which includes information on how the law interprets people's rights to short breaks and respite care. You can download this guide from their website: www.carers.org.uk – or you can obtain a copy from Shared Care Scotland.

Even if you choose not to ask for an assessment or seek help with paying for the break, your local authority should still be able to offer you advice and information. In other words you shouldn't have to fend for yourself.

In some cases, the NHS may be able to provide short-term care, particularly if there are healthcare needs involved. You can speak to your GP about this.

Funding a Short Break

There are three ways that short break services can be funded:

- self funded - you arrange and pay for a short break service
- partially funded - the costs of the break may be shared between you and the local authority
- *fully funded - the break may be fully funded by the local authority.

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*It is unlikely that a fully funded break will be provided by the local authority, except for Children Services. Local authorities carry out a financial assessment for short breaks and would only waive the charge in exceptional circumstances. There is no charge for NHS services, but benefit payments may be affected by longer stays in hospital, or any registered care home funded by health or social work.

Direct Payments & Self Directed Support

The costs for receiving a short break service may be paid directly to an approved provider by the local authority or, if you are eligible, you can receive money in the form of a Direct Payment or Voucher (in some areas) that can then be used more flexibly to purchase a service of your choice.

At present, in Scotland, Direct Payments are paid to people using services rather than carers, except where the carer has parental responsibility, power of attorney or legal guardianship.

Direct Payments are a form of 'Self Directed Support' which include other means to give people more control of the services and support they need to live the life they choose.

- For further information about Self Directed Support see the website: www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk

Here's what the Guide has to say about Direct Payments and Short Breaks...

"Can I (use Direct Payments to) buy occasional short breaks?"

Yes, respite is a short break which is to act as a positive experience for the person with support needs and the carer, where there is one. The term includes a wide range of different services of limited duration. "

"The common factor is not what service is provided, but its purpose. Respite can be offered in a wide variety of settings, including breaks in residential homes, respite-only units (e.g. specialist guest houses), breaks in the home of another individual or family who have been specially recruited, breaks at home through a support worker or sitting service, or holiday type breaks."

All local authorities are now expected to provide information, support and advice about Self Directed Support.

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Holiday Funds

You may be eligible to apply to a charitable trust for help to pay for a break. Examples of national charities providing financial support include:

- The Family Fund - www.familyfund.org.uk
- Family Holiday Association - www.fhaonline.org.uk
- Saga Respite for Carers Trust – www.saga.co.uk

Local charities that support short breaks or organisations that focus on particular disabilities or conditions may also be able to help. Again the Citizen Advice Bureau, Carers Centre or the local branch of a disability organisation should be able to offer further information and advice.

Not getting the service you think you are entitled to?

If you feel that you are not getting a service that you think you are entitled to or you're unhappy about the service that is being delivered, you can submit an official complaint to your local authority.

If you have a concern or suggestion about a service, write or speak to a member of staff or the service manager in the first instance. Contact information for this, and other council services is listed on your local authority's website or in the phone book.

If you're uncertain about what do you can also contact your local Citizen's Advice Bureau for advice.

- Citizen's Advice Bureau Scotland – www.cas.org.uk

If you are not happy with your reply

A service manager normally sends you a written reply within a certain number of working days from receiving your complaint.

If you are still not happy, you can contact your authority's complaints officer. The complaints officer will confirm that they have received your complaint and, after investigation with the department concerned, they will send you a written reply.

Your local authority will be committed to responding to a complaint within a set number of days. Again, local circumstances vary slightly and you should contact your local authority for full details.

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Taking your complaint further

The Scottish Public Service Ombudsman is an organisation that deals with complaints about councils, the National Health Service and most Scottish public bodies.

You can complain directly to the Ombudsman at any time, but they usually only consider your complaint after the routes described above have been tried. You can contact the Ombudsman's advice line on 0800 377 7330 for general help and assistance before submitting a complaint.

Further information about making a complaint can be found at:

- Scottish Public Service Ombudsman: www.spsso.org.uk

Other information leaflets in this series

- What is meant by short break (respite) care?

About Shared Care Scotland

Shared Care Scotland is a national charity which exists to support the development and improvement of short break services for carers and the people they care. Our services include:

- An online and telephone enquiry service to help put carers and service users in touch with short break services that best match their needs
- General information and advice on all matters relating to short break services
- Events, networks, publications and learning resources to share knowledge, experience and successful practice.

Please contact us if you require further information or advice.

w www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk

t: 01383 622462