

Carers Rights Day 2013

Carers UK Advice line: 0808 808 7777

Email: advice@carersuk.org

Web: www.carersuk.org

Carers UK's Adviceline provides free and confidential expert advice on: benefits and tax credits, carers employment rights, carers' assessments, the services available for carers, and how to complain effectively and challenge decisions. Each year, Carers UK put together a comprehensive guide to caring called Looking after Someone – with advice and information on all aspects of caring and a range of contact details for other organisations.

Get advice, and seek support. These are the three steps every carer should take to find out about their rights as a carer.

Get a Benefits check

Carer's Allowance is the main carers' benefit – offering a small income now and National Insurance contributions to contribute towards your State Pension if you have given up work to care. But even if you can't get Carer's Allowance you should make sure you get a full benefits check. Carers often end up paying for things for the person they care for – so a benefits check can also ensure that the right disability or older people's benefits are being claimed. Other support might include council tax discounts, tax credits or help with fuel costs. For information on the financial support available, visit www.carersuk.org or ring the Carers UK Adviceline or your local Citizens Advice Bureau.

Practical support

Carers are entitled to a carer's assessment from their local council that could lead to them or the person they are caring for getting social care services to help with caring. Carers might even get different kinds of help if the person who needs care refuses support, and the assessment should also let carers know about other sources of support like carers' groups, disability and older people's groups in the area. Contact your local council social services department for a carer's assessment or visit www.carersuk.org for a directory of local support.

Helpful technology

Many councils provide telehealth and telecare services – equipment which as well as monitoring the vital health signs of the person being cared for, can monitor other risks (like falls or forgetfulness). This can help carers get out of the house, get a good night's sleep or even to juggle work and care. Carers should ask their council if they provide this, and even if they don't carers should ask why not and encourage their council to look into it! Many carers also find carers online forums a huge source of support – Carers UK's forum is at <http://forum.carersuk.org>

Carers can order free copies of the full guide from Carers UK by calling 0800 808 7777 or visiting www.carersuk.org.

Carer's rights

This section includes a brief overview of the important areas of carers' rights – more detail is included in our complete guide to carers' rights and benefits, called 'Looking after Someone'.

Carers can order copies for free or speak to an advisor for a full benefits check by ringing Carers UK's advice line on 0808 808 7777

Entitlements to benefits

Research has shown that as many as a third of carers took over five years to realise they were a carer, whilst often struggling to pay basic bills. Carers UK recommends that all carers have a full benefits check to ensure they are claiming all the financial support they are entitled to – to ensure their family is not missing out on carers' benefits, council tax discounts or credits towards their State P Pension.

Carers UK has a huge amount of information, advice, tips and downloadable factsheets at www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/help-with-money and carers can get a benefits check from our Adviceline on 0808 808 7777.

The Gov website is an excellent online source of information on benefits and pensions www.gov.uk Carers Direct also provides information on caring, www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect

The Pensions Advisory Service is an independent nonprofit organisation that provides free information, advice and guidance on the whole spectrum of pensions, including state, company, personal and stakeholder schemes.

Rights to assessments

Social services can offer a range of support for disabled people and carers. To determine what help is needed, and how they can help, social services will first need to carry out an assessment. This is called a 'community care assessment' and is done for the person who needs the care.

The assessment will focus on their needs, but should also look at the role of the carer and the help they provide.

Carers' assessments are for people who provide 'regular and substantial' care for someone such as a partner, friend or relative. No definition of 'substantial' is given, so if carers feel they devote a lot of time to caring for someone and they do this regularly, you can have a carer's assessment.

Carers can have a carer's assessment whether or not the person they care for has had an assessment or wants one themselves. Carer's assessment should look at the carer's capacity to lead a life of their own, including employment, education, leisure, emergency planning and free time. Factsheets and a guide to carer's assessments can be found at www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-help

Pension rights

With carers giving up work to care and often missing out on years of benefits they can end up with big gaps in their National Insurance contributions for their State Pensions.

As a result, it is vital that carers get advice and information when they become carers, and throughout their time caring, about pensions.

For more information, including details of the Carer's Credit (launched in April 2010) and advice for carers who are already claiming their pension you can download our Pensions factsheet at www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/help-with-money/caring-for-your-pension

Employment rights

Carers who juggle work and care have won a series of rights in the workplace, including flexible working rights and time off in emergencies.

Most working carers now have the legal right to request a flexible working pattern from their employer to help them to balance their work and caring responsibilities. There are certain criteria carers must fulfil in order to be able to make a request, but flexible working could include flexible starting and finishing times, home working or part time working.

Carers UK has produced a booklet called Carers and employment: a guide to the right to request flexible working, which is available free from www.carersuk.org.

For further information about juggling work and care, including details of rig rights to time of in emergencies and the support Jobcentre Plus can give carers can visit www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/looking-after-you/your-work-and-career

Rights under the Equality Act 2010

The Equality Act 2010 gives carers protection from direct discrimination in association with the person they care for. This means that employers and providers of goods and services must not treat carers less favourably than those without caring responsibilities.

Contact the Equality Advisory and Support Service (EASS) if you need expert information, advice and support on discrimination and human rights issues and the applicable law, especially if you need more help than advice agencies and other local organisations can provide.

The contact details for the EASS are: Phone:0808 800 0082, Textphone: 0808 800 0084 Website: www.equalityadvisoryservice.com

Leaflets from Government Departments - Carer's Allowance

Leaflets and forms can be downloaded from:

www.direct.gov.uk/en/CaringForSomeone/MoneyMatters/CarersAllowance/index.htm, you can apply online or the Government's Carer's Allowance Unit can be called on 01253 856123 and can send carers claim forms or answer questions about claims.

Pensions

A good starting point is the Government guide at: www.gov.uk/browse/working
The Pensions Service provide some useful downloadable resources, available at www.pensionsadvisoryservice.org.uk/publications

What is telecare?

Telecare is a system of wireless sensors placed around the home, which immediately detect risks such as fires, floods and falls. The moment a risk is detected an alert is sent to a telecare monitoring centre, summoning instant help 24 hours a day, 365 days a

year. Although telecare isn't intended to replace a care worker or carer, it can help you in many ways. For example, it reduces the need to make 'just in case' checks for falls or incontinence, as these will be automatically alerted. The best thing about telecare is that it benefits both the cared for person and the carer, offering round the clock reassurance, giving carers the chance to enjoy some much needed 'me' time.

What is telehealth?

Telehealth supports people with long-term conditions, by enabling them to measure vital signs such as heart rate, blood pressure, oxygen saturation and temperature in their own homes, on a daily basis. An easy to use monitor and supporting medical devices relevant to the person's condition are installed in their home, and the person simply answers a series of tailored questions about their symptoms when prompted. The information is automatically sent to a monitoring centre for technical and clinical triage. If results are outside the parameters set for that individual, their doctor or nurse can be alerted. Telehealth enables potential crises in patients with long-term conditions to be detected early and treated, avoiding unnecessary hospital admission.

How can carers get telecare for the person they care for?

The first thing carers should do is to contact their social services department and ask to be assessed for a community care assessment. Depending on that assessment and whether the local authority offers a telecare service, carers may be offered telecare as part of an overall package of care and support.

Do families have to pay for telecare?

When carrying out your assessment, the council may also make a financial assessment and depending on the families' finances, they may be eligible for telecare free of charge, or there may be a small charge to pay (on average £4 a week).

What if councils do not have a telecare service? If carers find that these services are not offered they should tell their council that they should be! But it may also be possible for families to buy the services themselves.

How is telehealth accessed?

If carers are caring for someone with a long-term condition and feel they could benefit from telehealth then they should speak to their GP, specialist nurse or hospital consultant to see whether a telehealth service is available in their area.

Tunstall is a provider of telecare that has produced a carers' guide to telecare and telehealth Help for Carers. To order copies, contact 01977 660206 or visit <http://uk.tunstall.com/carers> Carers UK's information and advice pages on technology Carers UK has devoted a dedicated section to carers and technology on our website which can be linked to here: <http://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/focus-on/item/2531-can-technology-help-us-care?>

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