

Taking a break



This factsheet outlines the different types of breaks that are available, exploring your options and covering how to plan and fund your break. It also includes a list of organisations that provide breaks or can help you organise one.

This factsheet applies to people living in England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

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Why breaks are important

Caring for someone can be a full-time job so taking a break every so often is vital for your wellbeing and quality of life.

When was the last time you took some time out to have an evening out, go for a swim, try something new, or go on holiday? Finding time to meet up with friends, visit family or simply catch up on sleep can make the world of difference to your health.

After a break, many people feel stronger and rejuvenated to take on their responsibilities with renewed vigour and a more positive outlook. The person you care for could also benefit from enjoying new experiences, a change of scene and routine, and meeting other people.

Different sorts of breaks

There are many different ways to take a break. You might need an hour each week, a day here and there, a week or two for a holiday, or a combination of all of these.

You might choose to go on holiday with the person you are looking after or go away alone – but a short break or holiday may not always involve going away. Some carers enjoy simply taking some time out from caring, where the person they are looking after goes on holiday while they stay at home.

Tips from carers

- Try finding time to pursue an interest such as yoga, knitting or bowling.
- If it's difficult to leave the home, try to enjoy the garden, or try reading or volunteering remotely.

See our video series to hear how other carers describe what a break means to them and how they have achieved one: [carersuk.org/break](https://www.carersuk.org/break)

What are my options?

First of all, think about the kind of break that you need and what kind of support or service the person you are looking after needs. You could start by requesting help from the social services/social work department:

- *England and Wales:* your local council will have a social services department that can arrange services to help support you.
- *Scotland:* your local council will have a social work department that can arrange services to help support you.
- *Northern Ireland:* your local Health and Social Care Trust will have a social services department that can arrange services to help support you.

To benefit from these services, you and the person you're looking after will need to have your needs assessed. See pages 4-7 for more information.

Arranging care yourself

You may wish to make your own private arrangements, such as:

- employing a paid care worker (directly or through an agency) to care for the person you are looking after in their own home
- paying for short-term residential care
- arranging a holiday for the person you are looking after.

See pages 7-9 to find out more about arranging care yourself, or pages 14-18 to view our directory of organisations for further help.

Support from friends and family

Sometimes friends or family members may be willing to step in to take over caring for the person you look after, while you go away for a short break or holiday. This might involve them staying for a visit, while you're away, or it may mean that the person you look after would prefer to go and stay with family or friends for an extended period.

Organisations that can help

There are many useful organisations that can help you get a break. They may provide break services for carers or the person being looked after, or provide information to help you to decide what alternative care services to use.

Your local council/trust or carers' centre (or Carers NI if you are in Northern Ireland) should have information about local charities and organisations. See page 14 onwards to view our directory of organisations.

Getting help through the social services/social work department

Social services/social work departments can arrange alternative care for the person you are looking after so that you can take a break from caring. This is usually called *respite care*. To get respite care, you and the person you are looking after would need to get assessments from the social services/social work department.

There are different assessments for you and the person you are looking after – see pages 5-6 for further details.

For more information about assessments, see Carers UK's range of factsheets:

- >Assessments: Your guide to getting care and support (England)
- >Assessments: A guide to getting an assessment in Wales
- >Assessments and Carer Support: Your guide to getting help (Scotland)
- >Assessments: Your guide to getting help (Northern Ireland)

All our factsheets can be downloaded for free at carersuk.org/factsheets

Carer's assessment

Most carers can request a carer's assessment from the social services/ social work department of the person they are looking after (or your own if you live in Wales). Your carer's assessment should consider:

- your caring role and how it affects your life and wellbeing
- your health – physical, mental and emotional issues
- your feelings and choices about caring
- work, study, training, leisure
- relationships, social activities and your goals
- housing
- planning for emergencies

If the social services/social work department decide they can offer you support following your carer's assessment, it may be agreed that the best way to help you as a carer is by providing support directly to you; by providing services to the person you are looking after; or a combination of both.

Assessment for the person you are looking after (if they are an adult aged 18+)

Following your carer's assessment, the person you are looking after will then need to be assessed for the alternative care (called respite care) that they will need to allow you to take a break.

Respite care is provided as a service for the person you are looking after. In England, Wales and Northern Ireland this means that the person you are looking after will be financially assessed to determine whether they would need to contribute towards the cost of this (and if so how much).

In Scotland, if respite care is an outcome of the assessment for the person you are looking after, then the person you are looking after will be financially assessed to determine whether they would need to contribute towards the cost of this (and if so how much). However if respite care is an outcome of a carer's assessment (which the local council has the power to do), the local council cannot charge for the respite care.

Assessments if you are looking after a child under 18, or if you are a carer under 18

If you are caring for a child under 18, you should be able to get an assessment for the whole family.

If you don't feel this assessment has taken your needs as a carer into account, you can request a separate assessment for yourself.

If you are a carer under 18, you should be able to get an assessment for yourself as a young carer.

▶▶ Note:

If you have already had any of these assessments, but you need more support, ask the social services/social work department to carry out a reassessment. For more indepth information about assessments, go to [carersuk.org/assessments](https://www.carersuk.org/assessments)

Types of respite care

Respite care can be provided through:

- ▶ **Residential or nursing care** – where the person you are looking after goes for a short stay in a residential or nursing home.
- ▶ **Day-sitting service** – where someone will come into your home to allow you a break to have time for yourself.
- ▶ **Night-sitting service** – where someone will come into your home to allow you to have a proper night's sleep.
- ▶ **Day care** – where the person you are looking after goes to a day centre or takes part in activities away from home, allowing you a break from caring.
- ▶ **Holidays** – help and support for when you want to go on holiday by yourself or with the person you care for.
- ▶ **Direct payments** – cash payments from the social services/social work department. A person with a disability or ill health can be paid

a direct payment following an assessment so that they can arrange and pay for their own care and support services. They can therefore receive a direct payment to pay for the alternative care they will need while their carer takes a break. You can find out more about direct payments at carersuk.org/direct-payments

Paying for respite care

The social services/social work department of the person you are looking after may charge them for any respite care services provided (although not in Scotland if the respite care is arranged through a carer's assessment).

They may also charge you for any carer's services they provide to you (although carers cannot be charged for support in Scotland and it is not common practice in England, Wales and Northern Ireland). If they do charge, they must follow guidelines about how income/capital is taken into account. You should be told about this when assessments are carried out. You can also ask for details of their charging policy.

Arranging care yourself

You or the person you are looking after may decide to recruit a paid care worker or use an agency. Another option would be to arrange a short stay in residential care or a holiday for the person you are looking after.

Recruiting help yourself

If you are thinking about employing a paid care worker directly, then it is important to realise that you will be taking on the responsibilities of an employer. Here are some examples of what you would need to do:

- check out your employees' references
- pay statutory sick pay if an employee is ill as well as maternity, paternity and adoption pay
- ensure that your employee's tax and National Insurance are paid correctly

- check that your employee has the right to work in the UK
- take out insurance to cover any accidents an employee might have in your home
- ensure that you comply with your auto-enrolment pension duties.

You would also need to be familiar with law on disciplinary and grievance procedures, redundancy procedures and health and safety requirements.

All of this may sound very complicated, but there is help available to guide you through the steps and it is a good idea to get advice before you start. See page 17 to find organisations that can help you make informed decisions about employing a paid care worker.

Using an agency

Before you start approaching agencies, you should be clear about the kind of care you are looking for and when you need it. Check that they deal with private clients like yourself and that they are able to provide the kind of care that you need.

Although using an agency is usually more expensive than recruiting a paid care worker yourself, it can make managing care easier because the agency will:

- take care of the paperwork (eg Disclosure and Barring Service checks)
- deal with an employee's tax and National Insurance
- check references
- provide a back-up if an employee is ill or unsatisfactory
- deal with auto-enrolment pension duties.

Short-term residential care or a holiday?

To arrange short-term residential care, the social services/social work department is a good place to start. They can provide information about available services and organisations to help you decide which to use.

In England, you can contact the Care Quality Commission, while in Wales, you would need to contact the Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales.

In Scotland, you can contact the Care Inspectorate, and in Northern Ireland, you can contact the Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority. See page 18 for contact details.

If you'd rather look into arranging a holiday, there might be an organisation or charity that could help arrange or fund this. See page 14 for a list of organisations and their contact details.

Planning your break

It can take some time and preparation to think through all the needs of the person you are looking after while you are away. Good planning will help you to relax and have peace of mind to make the most of your break. We've produced a checklist to help:

- Make sure that anyone who is providing alternative care has all the information they need to care for the person you are looking after. (Eg, what they like to eat, when their mealtimes are, information about the medicines they need to take, etc).
- Leave a list of key contacts. These should include the doctor's number and the numbers of any other medical/social care professionals involved in the care of the person you are looking after, those of nearby family members or friends, and your own number, in case of an emergency.
- If you have an emergency plan, then make sure you go through the details of this with the people who will be providing alternative care.

- Residential care homes and nursing homes can provide short-term care for the person you look after. If you can manage it, it is a good idea to visit the care or nursing home beforehand, so that you can see what it is like, make sure that you are happy with it and reassure yourself that they will be able to meet the needs of the person you look after.
- If they need specialist medical or nursing help while you're away, you should speak to their GP or hospital team.

Help with the cost of a break

If you want to go on holiday, either alone or with the person you are looking after, there may be some help you could get towards the cost. You could bring up the need for financial help during your carer's assessment to see if there is any help the social services/social work department can give.

You could see if there are any local grants or schemes to help carers with the cost of a holiday. Your social services/social work department or a local carer's centre (or Carers NI in Northern Ireland) should be able to let you know if there is anything locally that might help with the cost. Have a look through the list of organisations on pages 14 to 18 or see our directory for carers' organisations:

carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-support/local-support

How a break might affect your benefits

Your payment of benefits can sometimes be affected if you take a break or if you or the person you are looking after goes into hospital or residential care.

Taking a break

Carer's Allowance can be paid during breaks in care. You can have up to a total of four weeks' break in any 26 week period and be paid Carer's Allowance during these breaks. The breaks can be for any reason. However, you must have been providing 35 hours or more of care a week for at least 22 of the past 26 weeks. Up to eight weeks of a stay in hospital (for either you or the cared for) can be included in the 22 weeks.

The person you have been looking after must have been receiving the middle or higher rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA), either rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP), or Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance for that period.

Going into hospital

You can continue to get Carer's Allowance for up to 12 weeks in any 26 week period if you or the person you are looking after has to go into hospital. 12 weeks is the maximum, so if you have had breaks in caring for other reasons, Carer's Allowance may stop sooner.

You must have been providing 35 hours or more of care a week for at least 22 of the past 26 weeks. Up to 8 weeks of a stay in hospital (for either you or the cared for) can be included in the 22 weeks. The person you have been looking after must have been receiving the middle or higher rate of the care component of DLA, either rate of the daily living component of PIP, or Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance for that period.

In practice, if you are caring for an adult aged 18 or above, you will only be able to get Carer's Allowance for 28 days if it is the person you are caring for who is in hospital. This is because to get Carer's Allowance, the person you are looking after must continue to receive DLA, PIP, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance, and this will stop after they have been in hospital for 28 days (if they were 18 or over when they went into hospital).

If you are looking after a child who was under 18 when they went into hospital, their DLA or PIP can continue to be paid for the whole time they are there.

Stays in hospital or residential care that are separated by 28 days or less are added together when deciding whether DLA, PIP or Attendance Allowance should stop (often referred to as the 'linking rules').

Going into care

The DLA care component, the PIP daily living component, and Attendance Allowance will stop after 28 days in residential care if the social services/ social work department have arranged the placement and help with the costs. Stays in residential care/hospital that are separated by 28 days or less are added together when deciding whether DLA, PIP or Attendance Allowance should stop (called the 'linking rules').

Your Carer's Allowance will stop once the DLA, PIP, or Attendance Allowance of the person you are looking after stops. However, if you have also had breaks from caring for other reasons, your Carer's Allowance may stop sooner.

Always let the Carer's Allowance Unit know if you take a break or you or the person you are looking after go into hospital or residential care.

If your Carer's Allowance stops due to a break in care, you may be able to claim Carer's Credit to protect your National Insurance contribution record during the break. You can find out more about Carer's Credit at [carersuk.org/carerscredit](https://www.carersuk.org/carerscredit)

You should also let the DLA/ PIP/ Attendance Allowance Unit know about any time spent in hospital or a care home. Other benefits can also be affected by a stay in residential or hospital care. For more information, seek advice from your local advice centre, which you can search for at [advicelocal.uk](https://www.advicelocal.uk)

Going abroad

DLA, PIP and Attendance Allowance can sometimes continue for up to 26 weeks of a temporary stay abroad. You can continue to get Carer's Allowance while you are abroad if you meet any of the following conditions:

- You go abroad with the person you look after, and they continue to receive their qualifying disability benefit, and the purpose of your trip is to look after them. In this case, Carer's Allowance can be paid for up to 26 weeks.
- In any other circumstances, Carer's Allowance can be paid for up to four weeks.

To check what would happen to other benefits when you go abroad, seek advice from your local advice centre or search for a local centre on this website: advicelocal.uk

Getting a benefits check

You may be entitled to benefits that might help to pay for extra care. As a starting point, you could get a personalised benefits check online (they can take about 20 minutes to complete). Turn2us provide useful guidance around using theirs:

turn2us.org.uk/Get-support/Benefits-Calculator/Using-the-Benefits-Calculator

These online benefits check tools are not suitable for everyone. You may be able to get face-to-face benefits help from a local advice centre such as your local Citizens Advice, Age UK, carers' organisation or disability charity. Search for local advice centres at advicelocal.uk

Directory of useful organisations

Unless otherwise specified the organisations cover England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland.

Getting help to arrange a break

3H Fund provides subsidised group holidays in and around the UK for people with disabilities. You may also be able to apply for a grant to help towards the cost of a holiday.

w: 3hfund.org.uk | **t:** 01892 860 207 | **e:** info@3hfund.org.uk

AccessAble brings together accessibility feedback from 10,000s of venues across the UK including shops, pubs, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, railway stations and hotels. **w:** accessable.co.uk | **t:** 01438 842 710

The Calvert Trust offers outdoor adventure activities in the countryside for disabled people, their families and friends.

They also provide care packages to enable the carer to go separately on holiday while they look after the person who's cared for. A couples or family holiday can also be arranged with the support of their care team. The trust runs three purpose-built centres with full-board or self-catering accommodation around the UK offering a range of sports and recreational activities.

w: calvert-trust.org.uk (Exmoor & Kielder) | calvertlakes.org.uk (Lake District)
t: 01598 763 221 (Exmoor), 01434 250232 (Kielder), 017687 72255 (Lake District)

Caring Breaks (Northern Ireland only) provides regular short respite breaks for the family carers of adults with a learning disability.

w: caringbreaks.com | **t:** 028 9070 9118

Centre for Independent Living (Northern Ireland only) provides information and advice on getting direct payments, using personal budgets and employing carers and personal assistants. **w:** cilni.org | **t:** 028 9064 8546
e: info@cilni.org

Diabetes UK Support Holidays is a scheme aimed at children aged 7 to 18 years old with diabetes. Holidays are low cost and a bursary can be offered to families who cannot afford the travel costs to the UK holiday site.

w: diabetes.org.uk (search for young people's holidays) **t:** 020 7424 1000 (ask for the Care Events team)

Disability Aid Trust pays towards the cost of a holiday care assistant for young people and adults with a physical disability (who are aged 17 and older) if they are unable to go on holiday without one.

w: disabilityaidtrust.org.uk/index.html | **t:** 0800 028 0647

e: secretary@disabilityaidtrust.org.uk

Disability Rights UK publishes a guide, 'Holidays in the British Isles', about where to stay, what to do and what's accessible.

w: disabilityrightsuk.org/shop/holidays-british-isles

Family Fund provides grants towards the cost of holidays and other services for families on a low income who are caring for a child with a severe disability.

w: familyfund.org.uk | **t:** 01904 550 055 | **e:** info@familyfund.org.uk

Family Holiday Association provides breaks at holiday sites, or grants to help with the cost of a holiday, to families on a low income in need of a break. Grants are given to families who have not been on holiday for the past four years. The family must have at least one child of three years of age or over.

w: familyholidayassociation.org.uk | **t:** 020 3117 0650

e: info@FamilyHolidayAssociation.org.uk

Hospice UK provides a hospice information service with a directory of local hospices around the UK offering short or longer term breaks for people with a terminal illness. **w:** hospiceuk.org | **t:** 020 7520 8200

e: info@hospiceuk.org

Holiday Homes Trust provides self-catering caravan accommodation for families, groups, and their carers. They cater for people with a disability or illness and low or single-income families.

w: holidayhomestrust.org **t:** 020 8433 7290 | 020 8433 7291

Leonard Cheshire Disability provides a range of practical support services for people with disabilities and their families and carers. They run carers' breaks, residential respite care and short break services to allow carers to have either a short break or a longer holiday.

w: leonardcheshire.org

t: 020 3242 0200 (England) | 0131 346 9040 (Scotland) 01633 422 583 (Wales) | 028 9024 6247 (Northern Ireland)

Masonic Charitable Foundation offers grants for the cost of respite care for Masonic family carers who provide vital support for a loved one. Their grants can support short-term residential care breaks, domiciliary care in an individual's own home or day centre care. **w:** mcf.org.uk/support/

t: 020 3146 3333

Options Holidays runs escorted group holidays for adults with learning difficulties. Holidays take place throughout the year around the UK, Mediterranean and other overseas destinations.

w: optionsholidays.co.uk | **t:** 01285 740 491

e: office@optionsholidays.co.uk

Phab England promotes the integration of people with and without physical disabilities. They run a variety of residential projects and holidays. **w:** phab.org.uk | **t:** 020 8667 9443 | **e:** info@phab.org.uk

Revitalise has holiday centres for people with disabilities and their carers. You may also be able to apply for a grant to help towards the cost of a holiday.

w: revitalise.org.uk | **t:** 0303 303 0145 | **e:** bookings@revitalise.org.uk

Shared Care Scotland (Scotland only) has a range of services including information and a directory of break services.

w: sharedcarescotland.org.uk | **t:** 01383 622462

e: office@sharedcarescotland.com

Tourism for all provides holiday and travel information for people with disabilities and their carers.

w: tourismforall.org.uk | **t:** 0845 124 9971 | **e:** info@tourismforall.org.uk

Traveleyes offers group holidays for blind, visually impaired and sighted people to a wide range of holiday destinations around Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia and the Americas.

w: traveleyes-international.com | **t:** 0113 834 6094

Turn2us is an independent charity that can help you to find sources of financial support based on your particular needs and circumstances.

w: turn2us.org.uk | **t:** 0808 802 2000

Finding care yourself

England

The Care Quality Commission – which is the health and social care regulator for England – has an online directory of registered independent care services. It also provides an independent quality rating to help you decide which service to use. **w:** cqc.org.uk | **t:** 03000 616 161

The United Kingdom Homecare Association is a professional association of home care providers. It has a 'Homecare Agency Finder' directory of home care organisations, many of which provide short-term care. Also see their guide on 'Choosing Care in Your Own Home'.

w: ukhca.co.uk | **t:** 020 8661 8188 | **e:** enquiries@ukhca.co.uk

Wales

The Care and Social Services Inspectorate Wales – which is responsible for inspecting social care and social services in Wales – has an online directory of registered care services. It also has inspection reports to help you decide which service to use.

w: careinspectorate.wales | **t:** 0300 7900 126

Scotland

The Care Inspectorate – which regulates and inspects care services in Scotland – has an online directory of registered care services. It also has inspection reports to help you decide which services to use.

w: careinspectorate.com | **t:** 0345 600 9527

Northern Ireland

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority – which is the independent health and social care regulator for Northern Ireland – has an online directory of registered care services. It also has inspection reports to help you decide which services to use.

w: rqia.org.uk | **t:** 028 9536 1111

England, Wales, Scotland

ACAS (Advisory, Conciliation and Arbitration Service) provides advice and information to employers and employees including information on employing personal care workers

w: acas.org.uk | **t:** 0300 123 1100

Give us a break – campaign

On behalf of the UK's 6.5 million carers, we are campaigning for increased breaks for carers.

In September 2019, Carers UK released a research report revealing that a third of unpaid carers in England would use a break from caring to see the doctor.

Of those who did manage to take some time off, 44% used it to attend a medical appointment. Find out more about the campaign: carersuk.org/give-us-a-break



This factsheet is designed to provide helpful information and advice. It is not an authoritative statement of the law. We work to ensure that our factsheets are accurate and up to date, but information about benefits and community care is subject to change over time. We would recommend contacting the Carers UK Helpline or visiting our website for the latest information.

Give us your feedback on this factsheet by emailing your comments to info@carersuk.org
This factsheet was updated in November 2019. Next review due November 2020.

Carers UK Helpline

For expert information and advice about caring.

0808 808 7777

(Monday – Tuesday 10am-4pm)

advice@carersuk.org

Carers UK

20 Great Dover Street

London SE1 4LX

020 7378 4999

info@carersuk.org

Carers Wales

029 2081 1370

info@carerswales.org

Carers Scotland

info@carerscotland.org

Carers Northern Ireland

028 9043 9843

advice@carersni.org

However caring affects you, we're here.

Caring will affect us all at some point in our lives.

With your help, we can be there for the 6,000 people who start looking after someone each day. We're the UK's only national membership charity for carers: join us for free at carersuk.org/join

We're both a support network and a movement for change.

Visit us at our website to join us, help us or access more resources: carersuk.org

**This information can be requested
in large print or as a text file.**