

Taking a break



This factsheet offers lots of tips and suggestions to help you take a break from caring. Exploring the various options available, we also provide guidance on how to plan and fund your break. At the end, there is a list of organisations that can help you plan a break.

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Why breaks are so important

Caring for someone can be relentless and exhausting so breaks are vital for your own wellbeing and quality of life.

We all know that finding time to catch up with friends or family or to simply rest can make all the difference to how you feel. It's easy to neglect your needs though when you are focusing on those of another.

After a break, many people feel recharged and rejuvenated and with a more positive outlook it is easier to cope with challenging circumstances. The person, or those, 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

Understandably, not everyone is able to go away on a trip. You may find it helpful to watch our film series to hear carers talking about the different ways they've been able to take a break from caring even whilst staying at home. They also explain how they have overcome some of the hurdles to taking a break, from emotional barriers to practical issues:

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 relevant 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 or health and social care partnership will have a social work service that can arrange help to support you. Your local carers' centre may also have grants called *Time to Live* to help with breaks too (see page 4).
- *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(s) you are 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 at 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 14-19 to view our directory of organisations for further information.

Support from friends and family

Sometimes, friends or family members may be willing to step in to take on your caring responsibilities so that you can go on a short break or holiday.

This might involve them staying over for a visit, while you go away, or the person(s) you look after may go to stay with them for an extended period.

Organisations that can help

There are many useful organisations that can help you to organise a break. They may provide break services for carers or the person being looked after, or information to help you decide which alternative care services to use. Your local council or carers' centre should have information about local charities and organisations.

You can find details of your local council here: gov.uk/find-local-council.

Or in Northern Ireland you can contact your local trust:

nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/health-and-social-care-trusts. In Scotland, most carer centres have a grant fund for short breaks called *Time to Live*.

Shared Care Scotland provides information on available support including funding advice and a directory of short breaks by location:

sharedcarescotland.org.uk. See page 14 onwards to find details of other organisations that could help.

Getting help through social services / the social work department

Social services or social work departments can arrange (or fund through a direct payment) alternative care for the person you are looking after so that you can take a break from caring. This is often referred to as a short break or respite care. It may be possible to arrange respite care by having assessments, which are carried out by the relevant department of social services. There are different assessments for you and the person you are looking after – see pages 5-6 for further details.

To find out more about assessments, see our range of factsheets, which can be downloaded for free at carersuk.org/carersassessment.

We offer four versions tailored to each nation.

Arranging a carer's assessment

You can request a carer's assessment from the social services or social work department of the person you are looking after (or your own if you live in Wales). This applies to adult carers. In Scotland, it is referred to as an Adult Carer Support Plan or a Young Carer Statement for young carers and in Wales it is called a Carer's Needs Assessment. The term 'carer's assessment' is used throughout this factsheet for ease of reading. This 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 and leisure
- relationships, social activities and your goals
- housing
- planning for emergencies.

If the social services department decide they can offer you support following your carer's assessment, they may be able to provide direct support to you or services to the person you are looking after to give you a break.

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 to 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 (and if so how much) they would need to contribute towards the cost of this.

In Scotland, if respite care is provided as a service for the person you are looking after (as opposed to something to support you in your caring role), then the person you are looking after will be financially assessed to

determine whether (and if so how much) they would need to contribute towards the cost of this. However, if the respite care is an outcome of an Adult Carer Support Plan or Young Carers Statement or provided to support you to have a break from caring, 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 relevant social services department to carry out a reassessment. For more information about carers' assessments, go to carersuk.org/assessments and find out more about assessments for the person you care for here: carersuk.org/needs-assessment

Types of respite care

Respite care and short breaks can be provided through:

- **Residential or nursing care** – where the person you are looking after goes for a short stay in a residential setting or a nursing/care 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 for the alternative care they will need while their carer takes a break. To find out more, see: carersuk.org/direct-payments
- **Social and leisure activities** – to give you some time out for your own wellbeing.

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 provided to give a carer a break from caring).

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 an assessment is carried out and be provided with a copy of their charging policy.

Arranging care yourself

You or the person you are looking after may decide to recruit a paid care worker or to use an agency. You might also decide to arrange a short stay in residential care or a holiday for the person you are looking after. You may be able to do this through a direct payment or individual budget – or choose to fund it yourself. In Scotland, new guidance may also allow you to

use a direct payment to employ a close family member to look after the person you care for to take a break.

This is subject to a discussion on the needs of the person you can for and how best to meet them. This would be similar to employing a care worker as described below. Contact your social work department/social worker to discuss.

Recruiting help yourself

If you are thinking about employing a paid care worker directly, 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 and it is a good idea to get advice before you start. See pages 18-19 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

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

Other useful sources of information:

England – [Care Quality Commission](#)

Scotland – [The Care Inspectorate](#). You can also contact [Shared Care Scotland](#), as they provide information on a wide range of organisations and services providing short breaks.

Wales – [Care Inspectorate Wales](#)

Northern Ireland – [The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority](#)

See pages 18-19 for contact details.

Planning your break

Some organisations can provide short breaks that are tailored for those with caring needs and others can help with funding – see pages 14-17 for a list of options with their contact details.

It can take some time and preparation to think through all of someone's needs and how you will ensure they are comfortable while you are away. Good planning in advance can help you to relax and make the most of your break. We've produced some tips 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. This may be something as straightforward as what they like to eat, and when their mealtimes are, to more complex information about the medicines they need to take.
- It is important to leave a list of 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 and friends, and your own number, in case of emergencies. The Jointly app could help with this: carersuk.org/jointly
- 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 you with short-term care for the person you look after. If possible, it is a good idea to visit the care or nursing home beforehand. You can see what it is like, ask questions and find out how suitable it is.
- If the person you look after needs specialist medical or nursing help while you're away, you should speak to their GP.
- If you are going away with the person(s) you care for, check catering and accessibility arrangements well in advance, and make a list of all their needs.

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 you can receive from your local authority or trust.

You could see if there are any local grants or schemes to help carers with the cost of a holiday. One example is the grant fund for short breaks called 'Time to Live' in Scotland (see page 4). Your local authority or trust (in Northern Ireland) or a local carers' centre should be able to let you know if there is anything available locally that might help with the cost.

Our directory of local support organisations for carers may be useful:

carersuk.org/local-support

How a break might affect your benefits

Payment of benefits can sometimes be affected if you take a break or 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. For at least 22 of the past 26 weeks, you must have been providing 35 hours or more of care a week. Up to eight weeks of a stay in hospital (for either you or the person you look after) can be included in the 22 weeks.

The person you have been looking after must have been in receipt of the middle or higher rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) or Child Disability Payment (CDP), either rate of the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Adult Disability Payment (ADP), 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. The maximum is 12 weeks 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 eight weeks of a stay in hospital (for either you or the person you look after) 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 or CDP, either rate of the daily living component of PIP or ADP, or Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance for that period.

In practice, if you are caring for an adult aged 18+, you will only be able to get Carer's Allowance for 28 days if the person you are caring for is in hospital. This is because to get Carer's Allowance the person you are looking after must continue to receive DLA, CDP, PIP, ADP, Attendance Allowance or Constant Attendance Allowance, and this will stop after they have been in hospital for 28 days.

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

Stays in hospital/residential care that are separated by 28 days or less are added together when the assessor decides whether certain disability benefits should stop (this may be referred to as the 'linking rules').

Going into care

If the social services / social work department have arranged the placement and help with the costs, the DLA/CDP care component, the PIP/ ADP daily living component, and Attendance Allowance will stop after 28 days in residential care. Stays in residential care/hospital that are separated by 28 days or less are added together when a decision is made as to whether the care and daily living parts of DLA/CDP and PIP/ADP or Attendance Allowance should stop.

Your Carer's Allowance will stop once the care and daily living parts of DLA/CDP and PIP/ADP, or Attendance Allowance of the person you are looking after stop. 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 (or the Disability and Carers Service in Northern Ireland) if you take a break. For example, you must let them know if the person you're looking after has to stay in hospital or residential care, or if you go into hospital.

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

You should also let the relevant disability benefit office 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 advice.local.uk

Going abroad

Certain disability benefits (DLA, CDP, PIP, ADP and Attendance Allowance) can sometimes continue for up to 26 weeks of a temporary stay abroad. You can continue to get Carer's Allowance whilst you are abroad but the duration will depend on the circumstances:

- 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 4 weeks.

Income Support, Pension Credit, Universal Credit, Employment and Support Allowance and Housing Benefit can continue to be paid for up to 4 or 8 weeks if you go abroad on a temporary basis. To check this and your eligibility for other benefits when you go abroad, seek advice from your local advice centre or search for a local centre: advice.local.uk

Getting a benefits check

You may be missing out on some benefits that might help to pay for extra care.

You can arrange a benefits check by contacting our Carers UK Helpline team by email: advice@carersuk.org. They will need to ask you a number of questions about your current circumstances to help.

►► **Note:** You can also get a personalised benefits check online, for example at: carersuk.org/benefits-calculator. This will take about 20 minutes to complete.

These online tools are not suitable for everyone. Special rules apply to some groups of people, for example students, people under 18, people in permanent residential care, UK nationals who live abroad and people who are not British or Irish citizens.

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 advice.local.uk

Directory of useful organisations

Unless otherwise specified, these organisations cover England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland. You may also find our local directory of carers' organisations a useful source of reference:

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

Getting help to arrange a break

3H Fund provides subsidised group holidays in and around the UK for disabled people. 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 lots of venues across the UK including shops, pubs, restaurants, cinemas, theatres, railway stations and hotels.

w: accessible.co.uk **e:** hello@AccessAble.co.uk

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 providing care for the person who's cared for or a couples or family holiday can 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) | **e:** exmoor@calvert-trust.org.uk (Exmoor), enquiries@calvert-kielder.com (Kielder), enquiries@calvertlakes.org.uk (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 Family Weekenders. These are organised trips for children and young people with type 1 diabetes and their family. They are organised by professionals and trained volunteers to offer support and time out. Some limited funded places are available.

w: diabetes.org.uk/how_we_help/type-1-events/family-events | **t:** 0345 1232 399 | **e:** Type1Events@diabetes.org.uk

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 | **t:** 0800 028 0647

e: secretary@disabilityaidtrust.org.uk

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 Fund "Take a Break" (Scotland only) provides grants for short breaks for the carers of disabled children, young people (up to aged 20) and their families in Scotland.

w: takeabreakscotland.org.uk | **e:** info@takeabreakscotland.org.uk

Family Holiday Charity 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 holiday away from home. Grants are given to families who have not been on holiday for the past four years. The family must have at least one child under the age of 18.

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

e: hello@familyholidaycharity.org.uk

Hospice UK provides an information service with a directory of local hospices 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.info | **t:** 020 8433 7290 | 020 8433 7291

e: holiday.homes.trust@scouts.org.uk

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)

07895 207 659 (Northern Ireland) **e:** info@leonardcheshire.org (England)

e: scotlandoffice@leonardcheshire.org (Scotland)

e: walesoffice@leonardcheshire.org (Wales)

e: northernirelandoffice@leonardcheshire.org (Northern Ireland)

Masonic Charitable Foundation offers grants for the costs of respite care for Masonic family carers who provide vital support for a loved one. Their grants can support short-term residential care breaks, or care in an individual's own home or day centre.

w: mcf.org.uk/support **t:** 020 3146 3333

Options Supported 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

Scope offers tips and support on travel options for disabled people.

w: scope.org.uk/advice-and-support/holiday-tips/ | **t:** 0808 800 3333

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

Shared Lives Plus is a charity that supports around 150 schemes across the UK where carers are matched to adults who need support. They can support someone in the day, provide breaks for other carers or provide longer-term support.

w: www.sharedlivesplus.org.uk | **t:** 01512 273499

e: info@sharedlivesplus.org.uk

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 Asia, Europe 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 | **e:** enquiries@cqc.org.uk

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. They also have a guide called 'Choosing Care at Home'.

w: homecareassociation.org.uk | **t:** 020 8661 8188

e: enquiries@homecareassociation.org.uk

Wales

Care 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 | **e:** ciw@gov.wales

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

e: enquiries@careinspectorate.gov.scot

Shared Care Scotland – has a range of services including a directory of break services. Some also have a scheme called Respitality and Scotspirit, where local businesses and tourist attractions provide breaks and activities free of charge for carers.

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

e: office@sharedcarescotland.com

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 | **e:** info@rqia.org.uk

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

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.

We would welcome your feedback on this factsheet – please email: info@carersuk.org

This factsheet was updated in April 2023. Next review due April 2024.

Carers UK Helpline

For expert information and advice about caring.



0808 808 7777

(Monday – Friday 9am-6pm)



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

0141 445 3070

info@carerscotland.org

Carers Northern Ireland

advice@carersuk.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.**