

# CARERS Scotland

the voice of carers



"I am delighted to have this opportunity to lend my support to carers. I am fully aware of the demands both physical and mental this job entails. I hope there's always good quality respite available, allowing carers to take time for themselves – you deserve it – and the person you are caring for, will be glad of the break too! I promise."  
Best wishes, **Blythe Duff**



"Wider recognition and appreciation for what the thousands of carers in our communities do, is well overdue. Think about it – where would we be without them? Everybody in life needs to feel valued, I've put carers at the top of my list. They need to know that someone cares about them too."  
**Clare Grogan**



"Please support the fantastic work of Carers in Scotland. After all, we could all need their help one day."  
Best Wishes, **Colin McCredie**



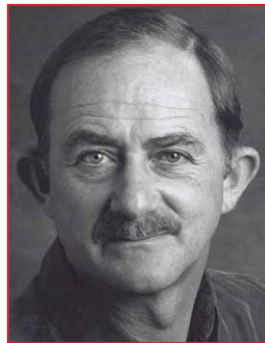
"Without the compassion, dedication and sheer hard work of the many, many individuals who give their time and energy to care for others in society, this world would be a much poorer place.  
  
When the world seems like a mixed-up, crazy, violent place, a glance at someone taking a disabled person round the shops, cleaning their house, providing comfort or simply conversation on a regular basis, makes clear in our eyes that the basic act of caring for each other or for the old, the frail or the sick is a much more powerful driving force."  
**Elaine C Smith**



"Being a carer can and does affect people's health. Not only does this create problems for carers as individuals, it can make the caring task even harder. Carers need access to clear, easy to read information to help them to look after their own needs. Carers Scotland's booklet on Carers and Health aims to provide this information. Well done for publishing this invaluable booklet!"  
**Kirsty Wark**



"Every time the word hero appears in a newspaper beside a picture of a footballer or a film star I want to weep. The real heroes in society are the ones who care and nurture and sacrifice so much to look after those they love. Carers Scotland recognise they need caring for too. Hooray for them!"  
**Muriel Gray**



Those who spend time caring for others can be susceptible to health problems of their own. Mental, physical and emotional stress are often part of the carer's life and they, too, need to be able to look after themselves.  
  
"Carers Resource to Health and Wellbeing" will help carers to address these problems and the booklet will also encourage friends and families of carers to give them full support."  
**Paul Young**

## To find out more contact:

# Finding the balance

## Promoting positive health

A Carers Resource Guide to Health and Wellbeing



# About Carers Scotland

Carers Scotland is the voice of carers.

Carers provide unpaid care by looking after an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner.

Carers give so much to society yet as a consequence of caring, they experience ill health, poverty and discrimination.

Carers Scotland is an organisation of carers fighting to end this injustice.

## Carers Scotland is here to improve carer's lives

- We fight for equality for carers. We want carers to have the same rights as everyone else to an ordinary life – a fair level of income, access to support to protect their health and wellbeing and access to the world of work, leisure and education.
- We seek to empower carers. We want carers to be actively involved in the design, development and delivery of services. We want carers to be recognised and involved as key partners in the provision of care.

## Carers Scotland achieves this by

- campaigning for the changes that make a real difference for carers
- providing information and advice to carers about their rights and how to get support
- mobilising carers and supporters to influence decision makers
- gathering hard evidence about what needs to change
- transforming the understanding of caring so that carers are valued and not discriminated against
- providing carer awareness training for staff in health, social care and the voluntary sector
- promoting training for carers to maximise their skills and experience.

# Foreword

Our health is precious.

However we know from a range of studies and a wealth of evidence that the onerous demands of caring can put carers' health at risk.

This booklet is designed to encourage all those involved in care-giving to take positive and practical steps to promote and safeguard their health and wellbeing.

It is very easy to forget to look after yourself when looking after a loved one. Remember the old adage "You can't give what you've not got".

We hope that this booklet will provide pointers to achieving a balance in your caring role and prompt you to be proactive in taking measures to maintain good health.

Carers Scotland



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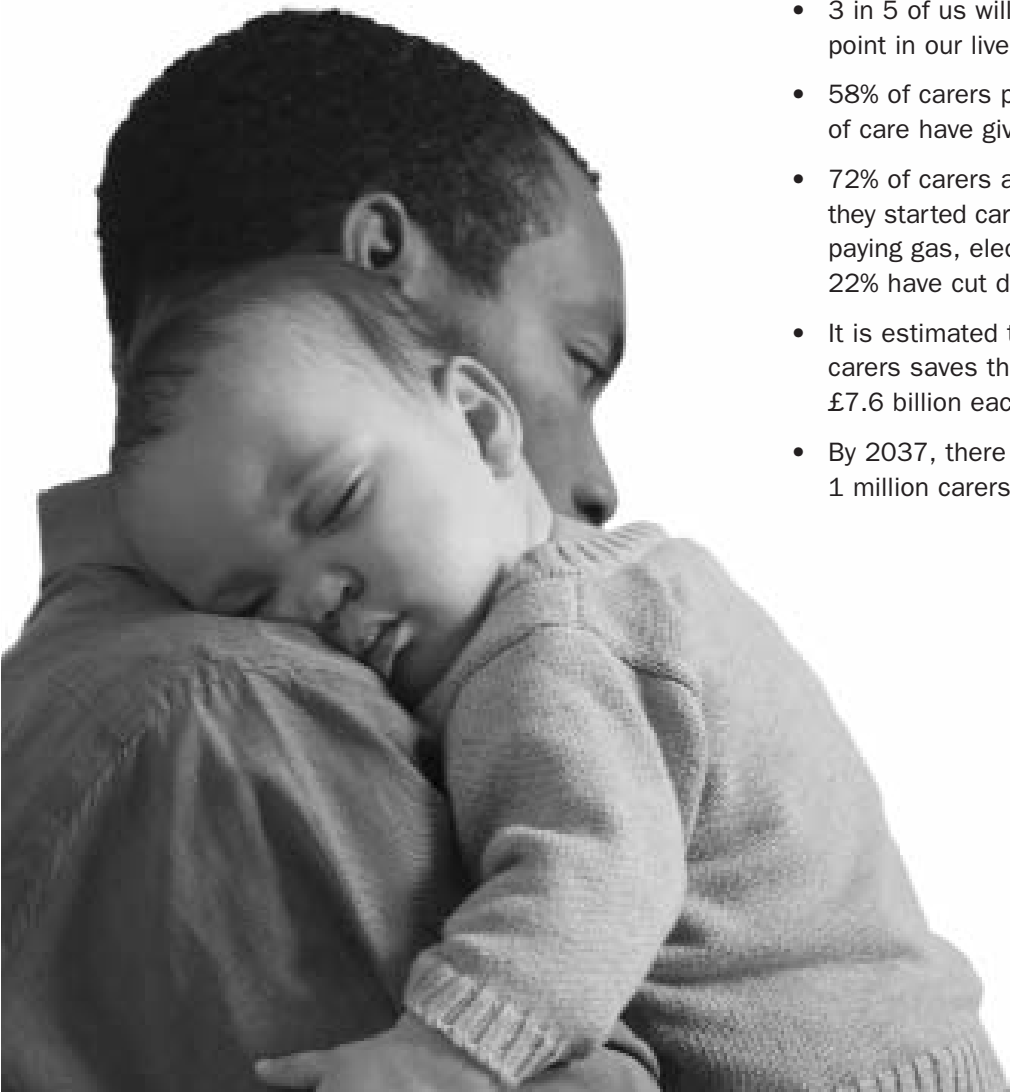
If you are uncertain about your health or your ability to take part in any of the activities or therapies listed, consult your GP before you begin.

# Are you a carer?

Carers provide unpaid care by looking after an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner. The word “carer” is often used incorrectly to refer to anyone who provides care, including nurses, care assistants, home care attendants and other care service workers. Throughout this booklet the word “carer” refers only to unpaid carers.

1 in 8 people in Scotland are carers and each carer’s situation is unique. You may be caring for someone constantly – perhaps your elderly parent becoming frail, your partner who has developed an illness or your disabled child. Or, you may be helping someone out on a regular basis by picking up prescriptions, doing shopping, cooking and housework and checking up everyday. You may also be juggling the demands of family life and a job or education with your caring role.

- 1 in 8 people in Scotland are carers
- 1 in 6 of carers provide 50 or more hours of care per week
- 178,000 people in Scotland become carers every year
- 3 in 5 of us will become carers at some point in our lives.
- 58% of carers providing substantial amounts of care have given up paid employment to care.
- 72% of carers are financially worse off since they started caring. 30% are having difficulty paying gas, electricity or telephone bills and 22% have cut down on buying food.
- It is estimated that the work of Scotland’s carers saves the economy more than £7.6 billion each year. (£87 billion in the UK).
- By 2037, there will be an estimated 1 million carers in Scotland.



# Keeping well

Carers are significantly more likely to be in poor health than non-carers. The physical and emotional demands of caring can have a major impact on your health and wellbeing. Research has found that 79% of carers felt that caring had made their health worse. 91% experienced stress and worry, 58% depression and 50% backache.

This Guide has been designed to illustrate some of the ways in which you can find the balance between caring and looking after your own health needs and ways in which you can improve your own wellbeing.

Not all the suggestions will be right for you – choose those that you are happy with but remember, the better your physical and emotional wellbeing, the better you will be able to cope with the demands of caring.

As a carer you need to be as healthy as possible. Your caring may be very demanding at the moment – perhaps you are one of the 1 in 6 carers who are caring for 50 hours or more – or, your caring may be gradually increasing as time goes by. Or you may be one of the 178,000 people each year who has just become a carer and are facing new challenges and demands. And, you may be juggling your caring responsibilities with paid employment or parental responsibilities, or indeed both.

Whoever you are and whatever your caring commitment, it is important that you do not forget your own needs. Caring can be rewarding but it can also be very tiring, placing demands on your physical and emotional energy. It is easy when you are simply coping day to day and responding to the needs of others, to forget your own wellbeing. Try to keep well by being proactive:

## Tell your GP that you are a carer

As soon as you begin caring (or if you are already a carer, as soon as you can) tell your GP that you are a carer. If they know you are a carer and likely to be under pressure at times, they will find it easier to offer the advice and support you need and if necessary diagnose and treat you in the future. Your GP and other primary care staff can be an invaluable source of help and advice and can also put you in touch with other services that can support you and the person you care for. Carers of people with serious/chronic health conditions or who are frail can also qualify for an annual flu vaccination. Ask your GP or practice for more information.

## Have regular check-ups

Although your life is very busy and your attention focused on caring, don't ignore your own health needs. Try not to miss medical appointments and attend regular check ups and screenings. If you have not seen your GP for some time, why not arrange a health check? This is likely to involve checking your blood pressure, weight and urine as well as a general discussion about your health.

## Get support if you need it

There are many professionals and organisations that can provide support to you as a carer and to the person you are caring for. See "Getting Help & Support" section for more details.

## If you are ill, visit your GP

As a carer, you will probably carry on regardless through coughs, flu, stomach upsets and worse; but don't put off seeing your doctor if you feel faint or dizzy or have unexplained pains. The sooner you see your doctor, the more quickly and effectively you can be treated. Even with minor illnesses, try and take some time to rest. Your body will have a better chance of making a quick recovery and you will have less chance of the illness lingering on.

# Eating well

Eating a healthy, well balanced diet is important for everyone but for carers it may not be easy to achieve. You may simply feel that you don't have the time or that, after preparing a special diet for the person you care for, you are too tired to cook for yourself. However, a healthy diet will not only give you the energy you need for caring but will also protect your immune system and reduce the likelihood of you becoming unwell. Eating healthily may be easier than you think, just try to follow the simple guidelines below.

- **Fruit and vegetables –**  
protect against heart disease and cancer, help to reduce high blood pressure and control weight. Try to eat 5 portions of fruit and vegetables each day – these can be fresh, frozen, tinned or dried.
- **Bread, cereals and potatoes –**  
should be the main part of each meal. This includes all types of bread, pitta, chapattis, rice, pasta, breakfast cereals and potatoes. Wholegrain bread and cereals contain more fibre and are more filling.
- **Meat, fish and alternatives –**  
chicken, fish, meat, eggs, beans, lentils and nuts give you the balance of nutrients you need and add texture and flavour to meals. Try to eat at least two portions of fish each week, one of which should be an oily fish such as sardines, salmon, mackerel or herring. Fish can be fresh, tinned or frozen.
- **Milk and dairy products –**  
try to eat these in moderation every day and where possible pick lower fat types. Remember, a pint of skimmed or semi skimmed milk, low-fat yoghurt or fromage frais is good for you. Butter and cream are not part of this group because they are high in fat – they are part of the sweets etc. list below.
- **Sweets, snacks, fats and sugar –**  
try to avoid eating things like biscuits, chocolate, crisps and chips every day. Fat used in cooking and spreads should be used sparingly.

## Further information

### Healthy Living –

for more information on healthy eating, recipes and healthy living contact Healthy Living on **0845 2 78 88 78** or online at **[www.healthyliving.gov.uk](http://www.healthyliving.gov.uk)**

## How much should I eat?

### Fruit and vegetables –

A measure/portion is 1 small glass of fruit juice OR 2 tablespoons of vegetables OR 1 piece of fresh fruit OR small handfuls of fruit such as grapes or strawberries OR a small bowl of salad.

**EAT AT LEAST 5 MEASURES/PORCTIONS EACH DAY.**

### Bread, cereals and potatoes –

A measure/portion is 1 slice of bread OR 5 tablespoons of breakfast cereal OR 2 tablespoons of cooked rice, pasta or noodles OR 2 egg-sized potatoes.

**EAT 5 TO 14 MEASURES/PORCTIONS EACH DAY.**

### Meat, fish and alternatives –

A measure/portion is 60-90g (2-3oz) of meat, poultry or oily fish OR a small can of beans OR 240g (8oz) of cooked pulses OR 120g (4oz) of fish OR 1 egg.

**EAT 2 TO 3 MEASURES/PORCTIONS EACH DAY.**

### Milk and dairy products –

A measure/portion is 200ml (1/3 of a pint) of skimmed or semi-skimmed milk OR 1 small pot of yoghurt OR 12-g (4oz) of cottage cheese.

**EAT 2 TO 3 MEASURES/PORCTIONS EACH DAY.**

### Sweets, snacks, fat and sugar –

An occasional treat! Use fats and sugar sparingly.



# Sleeping well

Carers can often find it difficult to have a good night's sleep. You may be looking after someone who needs care during the night or you may have too much on your mind to relax. It is important to find out the reasons behind a lack of sleep and to try and find ways around the problem. Lack of exercise, an unhealthy diet, stress and depression can be factors in an inability to sleep. The tips below may help with sleeping problems but, if sleeplessness becomes intolerable, a visit to your GP may help.

- Try to keep a regular pattern of going to bed and rising at the same time every day, even if you are not tired.
- Ensure that your bedroom is comfortable – not too hot, cold or noisy.
- Ensure that your bed is supportive. It should be not be so firm that your hips and shoulders are under pressure or so soft that your body sags. You should try to replace your bed every 10 years so that it maintains maximum support and comfort.
- Try and take some regular exercise (see “Exercise” section). Or, try complementary therapies such as aromatherapy or massage, or relaxing exercise classes such as yoga or tai chi. These may help you cope with worries and stress, which may be contributing to your lack of sleep.
- Try to cut down on tea and coffee in the evening. Try drinking a milky drink such as hot chocolate instead.
- Try not to eat or drink a lot late at night. Try to have your evening meal earlier.
- If you have not slept well the night before, try not to sleep during the day... it can make it more difficult to sleep the following night.
- As a carer, you may find it difficult to unwind properly and get a good night's sleep. Try and take some time to relax properly before going to bed – a warm bath or some relaxation exercises may help. There are many different relaxation techniques. You could try tapes and books available in your local library or you could join a class (ask your local stress, carers or healthy living centre for details of activities in your area).
- If you cannot sleep, try not to lie there worrying. Get up and do something you find relaxing like reading, watching TV or listening to quiet music. After a while you may feel tired enough to go to bed again.
- If your sleep is disturbed – for example, if you are having to get up during the night to help the person you care for go to the toilet or to turn them to prevent sores, you may consider asking for some support during the night or a regular respite break. (See “Getting Help & Support” section for more details).

## Further information

- **“Sleep Well”** – single copies available free of charge from the Leaflets Department, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PG) T: **020 7235 2351** ext **259** or online at **www.rcpsych.ac.uk**
- **“Sleep Good Feel Good”** – free copies available by calling the Sleep Council on **0800 018 2923** or online at **www.sleepcouncil.com**
- **“Sleep Matters Insomnia Helpline”** – aims to advise those who are having trouble sleeping. Call **020 8994 9874** (Mon-Fri, 6-8pm)
- **“How to Cope with Sleep Problems”** – single copies available costing £1 each from MIND on **0845 766 0163** or free online at **www.mind.org.uk**
- **National Sleep Foundation** – online resource about sleep and sleep problems including tools and quizzes and an A-Z of issues affecting sleep. **www.sleepfoundation.org**

# Caring for your back

As a carer, you may find that lifting the person you care for, helping them dress or move around may place a strain on your back. If you are currently experiencing pain or strain, contact your GP. S/he may prescribe anti-inflammatory medication to relax your muscles or suggest physiotherapy or an alternative therapy such as chiropractic (see “Complementary Therapies” section). It may be impossible to avoid lifting and handling the person you care for but you can get advice on guidelines to follow that may reduce the risk of injury. There are also ways to minimise strain and, equipment and support available:

## Equipment

Ask your GP, district nurse or social work department to advise on lifting, turning or moving aids to assist you. These could include:

- Lifting equipment such as a hoist to move the person you care for from their bed to a chair.
- Mobility aids to help the person you care for move around the house more easily without your assistance.
- Bath aids such as a motorised bath seat that raises and lowers the person you care for in and out of the bath or, a walk-in shower suitable for wheelchairs.
- Grab rails beside the bed or toilet to help the person you care for stand or pull themselves up.

## Practical training

Most carers centres offer practical training for carers. This can include learning how to lift in ways that reduce the risk of harming your back. Contact your local carers centre for more information. (See “Getting Help & Support” section for more information)

Alternatively, your district nurse may be able to show you ways to lift and move more safely. Ask your GP or practice manager for more information.

## Support

Your local social work department may be able to arrange for someone to help the person you care for. There are a number of ways that they can help minimise the amount of lifting and handling you may have to do. These could include helping the person you care for to have a bath, get up in the morning or go to bed. (See “Getting Help & Support” section for more information)

## Further information

- **“A Carer’s Guide to Safer Moving and Handling”** – single copies available costing £3.00 (+ £1 p&p) each from Back Care – National Back Pain Association, 16 Elmtree Road, Teddington, Middlesex, TW11 8ST Tel: **0845 130 2704**.
- **“Basic Back Care”** – single copies available costing £1.00 each (+ 70p p&p) from Back Care (contact details as above).
- **“Managing Back Pain”** – single copies available costing £1.00 each (+ 70p p&p) from Back Care (contact details as above)
- **“Care for Your Back”** – available free online at **[www.backcare.org.uk](http://www.backcare.org.uk)** from Back Care (contact details as above)
- **“Back Care booklet set”** – set of 9 booklets (Back in bed, Back in the garden, Back in the office, Back on the couch, Back care, pregnancy and children, Basic back care, Back to posture, Managing back pain, Guide to protecting young backs) £7.00 (+ £2 p&p) from Back Care (contact details as above)
- **“Low Back Pain in Adults”** – available free online at **[www.patient.co.uk](http://www.patient.co.uk)**

# Exercise

Building more exercise into your daily life can help you keep healthy but, because of your caring responsibilities, you may feel tired or that you simply do not have the time. However, being more active makes you feel better both physically and mentally. It has many benefits – giving you more energy, a lift if you are feeling down, helping you to sleep better and, if you join a class or more organised activity, the chance to meet new friends and have time to yourself.

And, it needn't take up too much of your time. There is a common misconception that only intense exercise like going to the gym or jogging are of benefit. But, taking part in moderate activities that add up to 30 minutes each day can show real health gains. Try taking a brisk walk each day – round the block, to the park or shops – it's free, accessible and helps build up stamina. Or, activities like gardening or dancing are ideal, easy ways to keep active and healthy. If you find it difficult to leave the person you are caring for alone, why not try an exercise or fitness video in your own home or, put on some music and have a dance!

There are loads of different types of activity you can take part in from fitness classes or gym sessions to more unusual activities such as tai chi or line dancing. Some activities are described in more detail below. Remember, if you have not exercised for some time, are over 50, have health problems or would like some advice on the best exercise for you, ask your GP or practice nurse.

Some local authorities offer concessionary rates for carers in their leisure facilities. Contact your local authority's leisure and recreation department for more information on what they can offer.



## Swimming

Swimming is an excellent activity and, as your body weight is supported by the water, is recommended if you are overweight, have arthritis in the hips or legs, stiffness or a disability. It builds up fitness and stamina and is suitable for people of all ages and abilities. If you can't swim and would like to learn, your local swimming pool may run swimming classes. They may also offer special rates if you are unwaged or retired or if you book several swimming sessions in advance. Your local pool may also offer other activities such as water aerobics. They may also have a sauna or jacuzzi, which are great ways to relax and unwind after your swim.

## Further information

- **“Hassle free exercise”** – available free from Health Scotland online at [www.healthscotland.com/topics](http://www.healthscotland.com/topics)
- **“Getting fitter is easier than you think”** – available free from Health Scotland online at [www.healthscotland.com/topics](http://www.healthscotland.com/topics)
- **Healthy Living** – online resource including a comprehensive section on physical activity at [www.healthyliving.gov.uk/physicalactivity](http://www.healthyliving.gov.uk/physicalactivity) or call the Healthy Living helpline on **0845 2 78 88 78**.

## Tai Chi

Tai Chi is an ancient Chinese form of martial arts that involves slow graceful movements accompanied by rhythmic breathing. Tai Chi can improve posture, balance, muscle tone, flexibility, stamina and strength and can also reduce stress and provide the same benefits as moderate exercise.

Many local sports centres and community centres now offer tai chi classes and your carers centre or healthy living centre may also help you find a local class.

## Yoga

Yoga involves a program of movement, breathing exercises and meditation. It can help some symptoms associated with chronic diseases such as arthritis and heart disease and, can lead to increased relaxation and physical fitness. There are different kinds of yoga. Try to find a yoga style that suits you.

Many local sports centres and community centres now offer yoga classes and your carers centre or healthy living centre may also help you find a local class.

## Further information

- **Yoga Scotland** – information on yoga in Scotland with links to local organisations online at [www.yogascotland.org.uk](http://www.yogascotland.org.uk)
- **The Tai Chi Union for Great Britain** – for information on tai chi and classes, write to The Secretary, 5 Corunna Drive, Horsham, West Sussex RH13 5HG (enclosing a SAE) or visit [www.taichiunion.com](http://www.taichiunion.com)



# Good emotional health

As a carer, it is important that you pay attention not only to the wellbeing of the person you care for but also to your own emotional health and wellbeing. The following pages look at some aspects of your emotional health and offer ideas on ways to tackle difficulties and develop your own wellbeing.

Carers often have to cope with difficult feelings. Being a carer can be rewarding but can also be emotionally and physically demanding. For example, you may be finding it difficult to cope with the level of care you are providing and don't know where to turn – perhaps feeling resentful that you have little time to yourself. Or, you may be facing the fact that you have suddenly become a carer after the illness of your partner – perhaps feeling anxious and depressed about these changes in your life. It is important to acknowledge these feelings – they are normal. Sharing these feelings can also help. This could be with a friend or family member or another carer, carer support worker, GP or counsellor.

## Stress

Stress is part of everyday life and, for many carers, stress can be a major factor. Stress is caused by the many demands made on our time and energy and the expectations we have of ourselves.

Not all stress is negative – stress can alert you to potential dangers and can also spur you on to achieve a goal or complete a task. However, sometimes the balance tips too far, and the pressure becomes so intense or so persistent that you may feel unable to cope.

Stress can make it hard to cope with the day-to-day demands of caring. You can become more and more exhausted, tense and irritable. This can make you feel you are losing control over your life and that there is no way of regaining this control. BUT, there are a number of steps you can take to help reduce stress and cope more effectively with its effects:

- Work out what is making you stressed and what you can do about it. There may be some things you cannot change, or not immediately. But there may be other things that you can alter. For example, if you feel you need some help in your caring role, your local social work department can help (see “Getting Help & Support” section)
- Find ways of relaxing. You can find out more about relaxation techniques from your local stress or health living centre, from your GP or, from some of the organisations listed below. Your local library may have books or tapes about relaxation.
- Allow yourself some breathing space. For example, try to take a break from caring – even if just for a couple of hours each week (see “Getting Help & Support” section) and treat yourself to something you enjoy.
- Take up a physical activity like yoga, tai chi, walking or swimming to help relieve tension (see “Exercise” section).
- Try to eat a sensible diet and get enough sleep (see “Eating Well” and “Sleeping Well” sections)
- Find someone you can talk to and use their support to talk through your feelings. Not everyone finds this easy but it may be a surprise to find that others feel the same way as you. For example, your local carers centre can put you in touch with a carers group to share your experiences or, their carers support worker can also help. If you are not the sort of person who finds it easy to talk about your feelings, why not try talking online at the Carers Forum at **[www.carerscotland.org](http://www.carerscotland.org)** or **[www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)** where you can meet other carers anonymously, share experiences and find support from other carers.
- Try to pace yourself and tackle one thing at a time. Be realistic about what you expect of yourself. Learn to say “no” to other people, some of the time at least. Set aside time for yourself to do what you enjoy.

You can also get help from others too, further information on support and help from other sources, see “Other Support” later in this section.

## Depression

At some point in our lives many of us will suffer from some form of depression. Usually this is a temporary low (perhaps linked to bereavement, the illness of a family member, redundancy or divorce)– gradually improving until things are back to normal. However, sometimes depression can go on to play a large part in lives.

Do you find you have:

- Poor concentration
- Disturbed sleep patterns
- Affected appetite
- Physical aches and pains
- A disinterest in other people and events.

If you have ticked some or all of these boxes, you may be affected by depression. However, there are steps you can take to help tackle it and move on.

What works will be different for each individual but, here are some ideas:

- **Don't keep it to yourself...**  
if you are depressed, try telling someone about it. It often helps to talk things over with someone else.
- **Do some exercise –**  
get out of doors, even if only for a walk. This will not only help to keep you fit but may help aid sleep. Try to keep active – whether that is housework, DIY or your normal routine. Or, give yourself a treat or do something really interesting. All of these can help take your mind off thoughts that may make you more depressed.
- **Eat well –**  
try to eat a balanced diet, even though you may not really feel like eating. Depression can make you lose weight and run short of vitamins, which only makes matters worse.
- **Try to tackle the cause –**  
if you know what is behind your depression, it can help to write down the problem and then think of things you could do to tackle it. Pick the best things to do and try them.

- **Keep hopeful –**

remind yourself that you are suffering from an experience that many other people have gone through. You will eventually come out of it – although you may find it hard to believe at the time.

You can also get help from others too, further information on support and help from other sources, see “Other Support” below.

- **One in five people will be affected by depression at some stage in their life**
- **Depression is one of the most common medical conditions in Britain today**
- **More than 2.9 million people in the UK are diagnosed as having depression at any one time**
- **3-4% of men and 7-8% of women suffer from moderate to severe depressive illness at any one time.**

Source: Depression Alliance and Sane

## Other support

**Your GP –** Many people will turn to their family doctor when they are experiencing stress or depression. Your doctor may prescribe a short course of medication – for example, if you are experiencing depression, your GP may recommend a short course of anti-depressant drugs to help lighten your mood to allow you to cope more effectively. Or s/he can put you in touch with someone to talk to such as a counsellor, therapist or psychiatrist or advise you about stress management or self-help groups in your area.

**Counselling and psychotherapy –** It can be helpful to talk things over with someone outwith your family and friends. Counselling and psychotherapy give a chance to talk through difficulties and feelings and can help you to learn how to manage your stress or depression by using a variety of techniques.

**Self-help –** You might find it helpful to meet with other people who have experience of stress or depression and hear how they coped. Self-help groups can often provide advice

and training in relaxation and information on complementary therapies. You might find joining your local carers support group could also help. The NHS Helpline (listed in “Further Information” at the end of this section) or your local carers centre can advise of local groups in your area.

**Information and advice organisations** – To help you tackle some of the stresses in your life, local information and advice organisations can help. These include:

- Money advice centres to help you sort out financial matters and ensure that you are claiming all the financial help to which you are entitled.
- A carers centre to help you find out what help is available to support you in your caring role.
- Your local social work department to help by providing services to support you in your caring role. (See “Getting Help & Support” section).

## Further information

- **“Help is at Hand series”** – series factsheets covering depression, anxiety and stress available online at [www.rcpsych.ac.uk/info](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk/info)
- **“Depression”, “Men and Depression”, “Depression in Older Adults”** – single copies available free of charge with A5 SAE (1st class stamp) to Leaflets Department, Royal College of Psychiatrists, 17 Belgrave Square, London, SW1X 8PG) or online at [www.rcpsych.ac.uk](http://www.rcpsych.ac.uk)
- **“Mind Guide to Managing Stress”** – single copies available costing £1 each from MIND on **0845 766 0163** or free online at [www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)
- **“All About Anxiety and Dealing with Depression”** – single copies available free by the Mental Health Foundation on **0141 572 0125** or writing to the Mental Health Foundation, Scotland Office, Merchants House, 30 George Square, Glasgow G2 1EG or online at [www.mentalhealth.org.uk](http://www.mentalhealth.org.uk)
- **Stresswatch Scotland** – produces a range of information leaflets and self-help tapes. For a publication list, telephone **01563 574144** or write to Stresswatch Scotland, 23 Campbell Street, Kilmarnock, KA1 4HL or visit [www.stresswatchscotland.org](http://www.stresswatchscotland.org)
- Depression Alliance Scotland produces a range of information about depression including online life-skills training at [www.dascot.org](http://www.dascot.org). For a publication list telephone **0845 123 23 20** or write to Depression Alliance Scotland, 3 Grosvenor Street, Edinburgh, EH12 5JU, [www.dascot.org](http://www.dascot.org)
- **NHS24.com** – online health library including a section to request further information from a health information advisor. Visit [www.nhs24.com](http://www.nhs24.com) NHS 24 can also be contacted for health information and advice on **0845 4 24 24 24**.



# Complementary therapies

Complementary therapies – or alternative therapies – may work well alongside more conventional treatments and help improve your health and wellbeing. Complementary therapies use a holistic method, where the “whole” person is looked at, not just a particular symptom or illness.

Now more than at any time, complementary and conventional medicines are working more closely to improve the health and wellbeing of patients. The National Health Service may offer some therapies through, for example, pain clinics or its homeopathic hospital in Glasgow. Your GP may be willing and able to refer you to a practitioner in your area. In addition, many areas now have stress or healthy living centres that can also offer therapies freely or at reduced rates.

## Homeopathy

Homeopathy is a therapeutic system, which may be used to treat many common acute and chronic conditions. It works on the principle that 'like treats like'. An illness is treated with a medicine, which could produce similar symptoms in a healthy person. Homeopathic remedies come from a wide variety of sources – mineral, herbal and organic – and are diluted and vigorously shaken many times over. A range of remedies can be bought in most pharmacies and health stores but are likely to be most effective if a homeopathic practitioner has prescribed it specifically for you.

## Chiropractic

Chiropractors treat problems with your joints, bones and muscles and the effects they have on your nervous system. Working on all of the joints of your body, concentrating particularly on the spine, they use their hands to make specific adjustments to improve the efficiency of your nervous system and release your body's natural healing ability. All chiropractors are registered by law.

## Aromatherapy

Aromatherapy uses oils distilled from plants, called essential oils, to improve mood or health. These oils can be inhaled, added to bathwater or applied as oils during massage. There are around 40 essential oils commonly used in aromatherapy; amongst the most commonly known are lavender, rosemary, eucalyptus and peppermint. Aromatherapy is promoted as a natural way to help people cope with, for example, chronic pain, depression and stress and can produce a feeling of wellbeing. It may also help relieve, for example, bacterial infections or stimulate the immune system. Fragrances from different oils are promoted to have specific health benefits – for example, lavender oil may relieve muscular tension, anxiety and insomnia.

Aromatherapy can be self-administered or applied by a practitioner. For example, a few drops of certain oils can be added to bathwater, diffusers or burners. Or, a practitioner may combine oils with a carrier, usually vegetable oil, for a massage. Your local carers centre or healthy living centre may be able to offer you the opportunity to try out aromatherapy through regular sessions or special “pampering” days for Carers. Alternatively, your local library will have books available on using aromatherapy at home. Remember, essential oils are very strong and must never be swallowed or used undiluted. Please note: if you are pregnant, always seek advice before using any essential oil as some oils are unsuitable during pregnancy.

## Acupuncture

Acupuncture is a system of healing which has been practiced in China for thousands of years. Although best known as a means of pain relief, it is also used to treat people with a wide range of illnesses and focuses on improving wellbeing, rather than isolated treatment of specific symptoms.

The philosophy behind acupuncture is that health is dependent on the body's motivating energy – known as Qi – moving in a smooth and balanced way through a series of meridians

(channels) beneath the skin. This energy consists of equal and opposite qualities – Yin and Yang – and when these become unbalanced, illness may result. By inserting fine needles into the channels of energy, acupuncture can stimulate the body's own healing response and help restore its natural balance.

## Further information

- **Homeopathy –**  
your GP may be able to refer you to a NHS practitioner or, the British Homeopathic Association can provide details of your nearest registered practitioner. Contact at Hahnemann House, 29 Park Street West, Luton, LU1 3BE Tel: **0870 444 3950** or visit **[www.trusthomeopathy.org](http://www.trusthomeopathy.org)**
- **Chiropractic –**  
for more information and details of your nearest registered practitioner, contact British Chiropractic Association, 59 Castle Street, Reading, Berkshire, RG1 7SN Tel: **0118 950 5950** or visit **[www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk](http://www.chiropractic-uk.co.uk)**
- **Aromatherapy –**  
for further information or details of local practitioner, contact the Aromatherapy Council, PO Box 6522, Desborough, Kettering, NN14 2YX Tel: **0870 7743477** or visit **[www.aromatherapycouncil.co.uk](http://www.aromatherapycouncil.co.uk)**
- **Acupuncture –**  
for further information on acupuncture or for details of a local practitioner contact The British Acupuncture Council, 63 Jeddo Road, London, W12 9HQ Tel: **020 8735 0400** or visit **[www.acupuncture.org.uk](http://www.acupuncture.org.uk)**
- **Complementary Medicine –**  
for further information on all aspects of complementary medicine contact the British Complementary Medicine Association, P.O. Box 5122, Bournemouth, BH8 0WG Tel: **0845 345 5977** or online at **[www.bcma.co.uk](http://www.bcma.co.uk)**
- **“Making Sense of...” –**  
series of leaflets on topics including homeopathy, herbal remedies, Chinese medicine. Single copies available from MIND on **0845 766 0763** or online at **[www.mind.org.uk](http://www.mind.org.uk)**
- **“A-Z of Complementary and Alternative Therapies” –**  
single copies available costing £1 (please enclose an A5 SAE) from MIND Publications, 15-19 Broadway, London, E15 4BQ, Tel: **020 8221 9666** or email **[publications@mind.org.uk](mailto:publications@mind.org.uk)**
- **BBC Healthy Living –**  
information on various complementary therapies, links and book lists available online at **[www.bbc.co.uk/health/complementary](http://www.bbc.co.uk/health/complementary)**

# Keeping well at work

As well as your caring responsibilities, you may also have the added pressure of trying to remain in employment. There are things you can do to help you cope with the pressures of work and care. As a carer you are likely to need a range of support in the workplace, and often different levels of support at different times – from access to a telephone to check on the person you care for, to leave arrangements that work around a hospital discharge.

## Changing your work pattern

You may find that the best or only way to manage your work and caring responsibilities is to change your work arrangements. Carers now have more statutory rights at work that help to meet these needs. Employers may also be able to offer additional flexibility through their own policies and procedures.

Carers have the right to request flexible working. If you are an employee with 26 weeks continuous employment and you are either a parent of a disabled child under 18 or a carer of an adult, you can request that your employer consider an application to work flexibly.

To qualify as a carer under the legislation, you must be, or expect to be, caring for a spouse, partner (who you live with), civil partner or relative, or live at the same address as the adult in need of care. 'Relative' includes parents, parent-in-law, adult child, adopted adult child, siblings (including those who are in-laws), uncles, aunts or grandparents and step-relatives.

The law gives you the right to make one application per year for flexible working. However, your employer may be sympathetic if you find your circumstances have changed and you need to make a further application.

Examples of flexible working include term time working, compressed hours, flexible start and finish times, job sharing or home-working. Further information on each of these options and on how to make an application for flexible working can be found in Carers Scotland's "An Employees Guide to Work and Caring" (see "Further Information" at the end of this section).

## Time off for emergencies

If you need time off to deal with an emergency, you have a right to take a reasonable amount of time off work to deal with this. This right is called the "right to time off for emergencies" or "time off for dependents".

An emergency could be, for example, where there has been a disruption in care arrangements or when the person you care for becomes ill or, when you to make longer term arrangements for a dependent that is ill.

You should contact your employer as soon as is practicable after the emergency has happened. Whether the time off is paid or not is at the discretion of your employer.

## Parental leave

You may have additional responsibilities as a parent. If you have at least one year's continuous service with your employer and are responsible for a child aged under five, or under 18 if your child is disabled, you are entitled to 12 weeks unpaid leave per child (18 weeks per child for a disabled child).

The leave must be taken by the child's fifth birthday, or for disabled children, by their 18th birthday. For parents who have adopted a child, the leave must be taken during the 5 years from the date of placement or before the child's 18th birthday, whichever is the sooner. Leave can be taken in blocks of a week (and usually up to 4 weeks in a year), or blocks of a day if the leave is to care for a disabled child (again, usually up to maximum of 4 weeks a year).

## Support from your employer

In addition to the statutory rights your employer must give you, they may offer more support. This will be outlined in your contract and your employer's policies. For example, you may be able to use leave arrangements, paid or unpaid, at the discretion of your employer to cover intensive periods of care or to accompany the person you care for to hospital appointments.

If you are thinking about giving up work, your employer may offer career breaks. A career break allows you to have a break from employment, which can enable you to keep your options option whilst ensuring you can go back to work.

Sometimes the support you might need may be very simple like access to a telephone or information and advice. Your employer may be able to arrange for private access to a telephone to enable you to call and check on the person you care for. Some employers have carers groups and provide information packs for carers.

Carers Scotland can provide a range of information for your employer to help them understand the business case for supporting you as a carer and an employee. (See "Further Information")

## Further information

- **Action for Carers and Employment** – information on all aspects of supporting carers in the workplace including the business case, developing flexible working policies, information leaflets and posters [www.carerscotland.org/Policyandpractice/Workingforcarersandemployment](http://www.carerscotland.org/Policyandpractice/Workingforcarersandemployment)
- **"An Employees Guide to Work and Caring"** – available free of charge from Carers Scotland on **0141 221 9141** or online at [www.carerscotland.org/information/workandcaring](http://www.carerscotland.org/information/workandcaring).
- **ACAS** – for information on all aspects of employment including flexible working, time off for emergencies and parental leave and, a wide range of information leaflets to download available online at [www.acas.co.uk](http://www.acas.co.uk)
- **Employers for Carers** – a website developed by employers as part of Action for Carers and Employment initiative. Includes a downloadable employers resource pack and an online assessment tool to help employers develop flexible working and policies to support carers. [www.carerscotland.org/Employersforcarers](http://www.carerscotland.org/Employersforcarers)





# Making time for yourself

Caring can be all consuming, with much of your time spent looking after the wellbeing of the person you care for. You may also be juggling caring with paid employment, parental and family responsibilities. This can often leave little time to do the things you enjoy, for you take up new activities to protect your own wellbeing.

Your local social work department can help you to get a regular break from caring (see “Getting Help and Support” section) which can enable you to take part in leisure activities, lifelong learning or simply to spend time with friends or family.

## Leisure

Most local authorities have community and leisure facilities, which can offer activities such as exercise classes, complementary therapies, hobbies such as art and, for example, dance, theatre and drama. To find out more, contact your local authority leisure and recreation department for information on what is available in your area.

## Education and lifelong learning

There are many opportunities to take part in lifelong learning and education. You might consider restarting a hobby that you enjoy or you might want to study for a qualification or about subject that interests you. Your local further education college or university can offer a range of courses, from vocational evening classes to part-time study and even online learning opportunities to enable you to learn from home. To find out more about courses throughout Scotland contact Learn Direct Scotland (see “Further Information” for contact details).

Your local carers centre may also be able to offer learning activities including training to support you in your caring role and leisure classes such as complementary therapies.

Carers Scotland and City & Guilds have developed a programme for carers called Learning for Living. It is a unique course for unpaid carers to help break down the barriers to learning and work. It is a flexible e-learning programme which builds on the experiences you have gained as a carer and aims to help

you develop the knowledge, skills and confidence you might need to get back to work, go on to further training or for your personal aspirations. It is a flexible course that can be delivered anywhere with access to the internet. The course is accompanied by an optional accredited City & Guilds qualification: “The Certificate in Personal Development & Learning for Unpaid Carers”.

## Getting help with the costs

You can get help with the costs of studying through Individual Learning Accounts. ILA Scotland is a Scottish Government scheme which helps you pay for learning that you can do at a time, place, pace and in a way to suit you. If you are over 18 and living in Scotland, you could get up to £200 towards the cost of learning new skills with an individual learning account from ILA Scotland. If you earn £18,000 a year or less, you could get £200 a year towards the cost of learning. If you earn more than £18,000 a year, you could get £100 a year. Contact ILA Scotland for more information. (see Further Information for contact details).

## Social activities

Local carers centres run carers support groups in most areas. As well as providing support, these groups can give you the chance to meet other carers who face similar situations to you. Carers’ centres also often organise social activities throughout the year including holidays and Christmas events.

## Further information

- **“Learning for Living”** – for further information about the programme visit [www.learningforliving.co.uk](http://www.learningforliving.co.uk)
- **Learn Direct Scotland** – for more information about learning opportunities in your area, call **0808 100 9000** or visit [www.learndirectscotland.com](http://www.learndirectscotland.com)
- **ILA Scotland** – for more information about Individual Learning Accounts, call **0808 100 1090** or visit [www.ilascotland.org.uk](http://www.ilascotland.org.uk)
- **Carers Centres** – details of your local carers centre can be found online at [www.carerscotland.org/Information/FindingHelp](http://www.carerscotland.org/Information/FindingHelp)

# Getting help & support

Carers often feel very isolated and may not know what help is available. There are a range of professionals and organisations that can provide support to you as a carer and to the person you are caring for. You, and the person you care for, may also be entitled to financial support. We have provided sections to complete your key local contacts for quick reference.

## Your GP and primary care team

Your GP and primary care team can provide you with invaluable support, advice and information. Below are just some of those who are involved in primary care but there are many other services provided by primary care and by the wider NHS that can support you in your caring role and in looking after your own health. These include occupational therapists, physiotherapists, continence advisors and dieticians. Your GP, district nurse, health visitor or practice can provide more information and refer you to these services. They can also refer you to your local social work department who can provide services to support you in your caring role. (See “Your local social work department” section).

**General Practitioner:** Remember to tell your GP you are a carer. This can be recorded on your medical record. Your GP may be able to help you as a carer by:

- Providing information and advice on medical conditions of and treatments for the person you care for to help you feel more confident in your caring role.
- Carrying out home visits to you or the person you care for if your caring responsibilities make it difficult to attend appointments at the surgery.
- Arranging appointments for both you and the person you care for at the same time to avoid having to visit the surgery twice.
- Arranging for repeat prescriptions to be delivered to your local pharmacy to save you picking them up.
- Putting you in touch with other sources of support and advice. This could include the social work department and local voluntary agencies.

- Providing information on services provided by the NHS such as continence services and patient transport to hospital appointments.
- Providing supporting letters and information to enable you and the person you care for to access benefits such as Attendance Allowance or for your local housing department or blue badge scheme.

**Practice Nurse:** Most doctors’ practices now have a practice nurse. Their role does differ from practice to practice, but they are often involved in routine health checks and nursing care. It might be useful to talk to the practice nurse if you have any concerns or would like more information about a certain aspect of health.

**District Nurse:** District Nurses provide support to individuals and carers in their own homes. They are normally based in GP surgeries and your surgery or GP can provide more advice on accessing their support and assistance. Your district nurse may be able to help you in your caring role by:

- Carrying out treatments such as dressing wounds or giving injections to avoid you and the person you care for having to visit the surgery
- Assisting with rehabilitation after an illness or operation
- Supporting you in caring if the person you care for has a terminal illness.
- Giving you advice and assistance in aspects of health care of the person you care for. This could include providing guidance and training on lifting and handling more safely, first aid and administering medication or treatments.
- Advising you on your own health care and preventing ill health.
- Arranging for the provision of equipment for the person you care for. This could include items such as walking aids or bed rails.

District Nurses also have links with other community, social and voluntary services and can assist you in contacting relevant services.

**Health Visitor:** Health Visitors provide support to people of all ages and will normally be based at your GP's surgery. Your health visitor may be able help you as a carer by:

- Providing information on health and illness prevention.
- Providing access to screening services.
- Providing support to parent Carers and advice on care, support services, benefits and adaptations for disabled children.

**Pharmacy:** Chemists are trained professionals qualified to advise on all aspects of medication. Your local pharmacy may be help you in caring by:

- Arranging to collect repeat prescriptions for the person you care for from your GP surgery. You would only need to make a visit to the pharmacy, without needing to first visit the surgery.
- Giving you advice on the side effects of medicine, the best time to take them and how they should be stored.
- Giving you advice and information on your own health or medical concerns.
- Providing a delivery service to have your prescription delivered to your door.

## Further information

- **“Getting the most from your GP”** – produced by the Princess Royal Trust for Carers, provides information on how the ways in which your GP can support you in your caring role. Available online at [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)

## Your local social work department

The social work department may be able to provide a range of support for the person you care for and to help you in your caring role. This support can include:

- Providing paid care workers to help with bathing, dressing or housework
- Providing meals on wheels

- Providing adaptations and equipment in your home
- Providing breaks from caring

**Community Care Assessments** – To access help from your social work department, ask them to carry out a community care assessment of the person you care for. This is an assessment of their needs, which can result in s/he being offered a range of services including transport, day care, equipment, counselling or residential care. If the person you care for has already had a community care assessment and their needs have changed, ask for a re-assessment. The telephone number of your local social work department can be found in the telephone directory or by calling the NHS Helpline on 0800 22 44 88.

**Carer's Assessment** – If you regularly provide or intend to provide a substantial amount of care for a friend or relative, or you have a disabled child, you have a legal right to ask the social work department for a carer's assessment. This assessment will consider you caring role and responsibilities and, willingness to continue caring. It must take account of your circumstances and views. The assessment should result in you receiving help and support to make caring easier for you.

## Further information

- **“How do I get help”** – a guide to assessments for carers and those they care for and to getting help from your social work department
- **“Carers Rights Guide”** – a guide to benefits, services and support for carers
- **“New to Caring”** – a guide for carers who are new to caring on issues including support, relationships, health and finances.
- **“What caring ends”** – a guide for carers on issues including residential care, bereavement and life after caring.

All the above produced by Carers Scotland. For free copies, call **0141 221 9141** or email: [info@carerscotland.org](mailto:info@carerscotland.org)

Carers Scotland website – [www.carerscotland.org/Information/Helpwithcaring/Carersassessmentguide](http://www.carerscotland.org/Information/Helpwithcaring/Carersassessmentguide)

# Taking a break

Everyone needs a change and time off occasionally, whether it's for an hour, a day or a week. This can be especially true for carers.

Taking a break from caring is not an admission of failure. Nor is it saying you don't care. It is a sensible and realistic thing to do if you want to carry on caring. Without an occasional break, you may become exhausted or unwell.

A break can allow you to do all the things you cannot do when you are caring, to catch up with friends or family or just to have a rest. It may mean that the person you care for has the benefit of a break from you: other people to talk to and other things to talk about.

What you arrange will depend on what you and the person you care for need, what is available locally and the cost. There are several ways of arranging a break.

You may be able to get help through your social work department. When they carry out a community care assessment of the person you care for or a carer's assessment for yourself, ask about arranging alternative care so that you can have a break. This could include:

- **Day care away from home** – Day centres, lunch clubs, social centres or day hospital can provide care for a few hours or days each week to give you a break.
- **Residential respite care** – Care homes and nursing homes can provide short-term care for the person you care for to give you a break.
- **Care attendant schemes** – These schemes provide an attendant to come to your own home for a few hours on a regular basis to give you a break to, for example, go shopping, meet friends or have a rest. In some areas, the local social work department will “buy-in” this service from a voluntary agency; in others it is provided directly by the agency itself.

## Further information

- **“Taking a Break”** – produced by Carers Scotland, provides information on taking a break from caring and the ways in which you can arrange alternative care. For a free copy, call **0141 221 9141** or email **info@carerscotland.org**
- **Carers Scotland Website** – for further information on assessments visit **www.carerscotland.org/Information/Helpwithcaring/Takingabreak**
- **Crossroads Caring Scotland** – for more information on Care Attendant Schemes and to find more about your local scheme, contact Crossroads Scotland on **0141 226 3793** or visit **www.crossroads-scotland.co.uk**
- **Shared Care Scotland** – for more information on taking a break, contact Shared Care Scotland on **01383 622462** or visit **www.sharedcarescotland.com**

# Carers' centres

Your area may have a carers centre. Your local authority, the Princess Royal Trust for Carers or another voluntary organisation could operate this centre. Many carers find their local carers centre an invaluable source of help and support. These centres provide a range of support to carers including:

- Support groups for carers, where you can meet other carers, share your experiences and enjoy social and leisure activities. As well as general carer support groups, many centres have specific groups based around who you are caring for, your age or gender – for example, male carers, young carers and those caring for people with mental health problems, dementia or drug and alcohol dependency.
- Assistance in applying for benefits.
- Information and advice on all aspects of caring and on the disability or illness that affects the person you care for.
- Complementary therapies through regular sessions or by arranging “pampering” days for carers where you can try out a range of therapies.
- Training opportunities covering topics to assist you in caring such as first aid, lifting more safely, stress reduction and general interest topics such as computing.

## Further information

### For details of your local Carers Centre:

- Contact Carers Scotland on **0141 221 9141**, email [info@carerscotland.org](mailto:info@carerscotland.org) or visit [www.carerscotland.org/Information/Findinghelp](http://www.carerscotland.org/Information/Findinghelp)
- Contact the Princess Royal Trust for Carers on **0141 221 5066**, email: [infoscotland@carers.org](mailto:infoscotland@carers.org) online: [www.carers.org](http://www.carers.org)
- **Crossroads Caring Scotland** – contact Crossroads Scotland on **0141 221 3793** or visit [www.crossroads-scotland.co.uk](http://www.crossroads-scotland.co.uk).
- See your Yellow Pages under “charitable and voluntary organisations”

## Voluntary organisations

There are many voluntary organisations throughout Scotland and the rest of the UK that can provide information and support on particular illnesses, conditions and disabilities. They will be able to provide leaflets and advice and may also offer support groups and services to you and the person you care for.

If you would like information on groups who may be able to assist, please contact Carers Scotland on **0141 221 9141**. Alternatively, local organisations will be listed under your Yellow Pages under “charitable and voluntary organisations”

# Financial Support

Both you and the person you are caring for may be entitled to financial assistance. Below are details of some of the benefits that are available. For more information on these, contact Carers Scotland on **0141 221 9141** or CarersLine on **0808 808 7777**.

## Benefits for carers

- **Carers Allowance and the Carer Premium** – If you are a carer, you may be able to get Carer's Allowance (CA). This is the main state benefit for Carers so it's important to find out if you can receive it. You may also be able to get the Carer Premium – an extra amount of money included in the calculation of income support, income-based job seekers' allowance, housing benefit and council tax benefit. An amount equivalent to the Carer Premium is used to calculate pension credit. To claim, call **0800 882200** or visit [www.dwp.gov.uk/carersallowance](http://www.dwp.gov.uk/carersallowance)
- **National Insurance Credits** – You receive a national insurance contribution for each week you qualify for Carers Allowance. The credit protects your retirement and state second pension. If you cannot get a contribution credit, you may be able to get home responsibilities protection. To claim contact your local Inland Revenue Office or, visit [www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals](http://www.hmrc.gov.uk/individuals) or call **0845 302 1479** for more information.

## Benefits for people who are ill or have a disability

- **Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA)** – DLA and AA are state benefits that help with the extra costs of long term illness or disability. They are paid whatever your income or savings. They are not taxable. They are paid to the person who has the illness or disability (or to the adult responsible for a child under 16). DLA is for people who first claim before the age of 65. AA is for people who first claim on or after their 65th birthday. To claim call **0800 882 200** or visit [www.direct.gov.uk/disability](http://www.direct.gov.uk/disability)

## Benefits for people on low incomes

- **Income Support** – This is for people whose income is below minimum levels set by the Government. It is for people under 60 who do not have to sign-on. Carers do not have to sign-on if the person they look after gets DLA at the high or middle rate of care or AA. If you are 60 or over see Pension Credit. Claim Income Support from your local Jobcentre Plus office. For details of your local office visit [www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk](http://www.jobcentreplus.gov.uk) or call **08456 060 234**.
- **Pension Credit** – This is for people aged 60 or over. The Credit has two parts: the Guarantee Credit which is equivalent to income support and the Savings Credit which provides extra income for people 65 or over with modest savings or small occupational or private pensions. Claim on **0800 99 1234** or visit [www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/pensioncredit/home.asp](http://www.thepensionservice.gov.uk/pensioncredit/home.asp) for more information.
- **Tax Credits** – There are two tax credits: the working tax credit and the child tax credit. Child Tax Credit is for people who look after a child under 16 (or under 19 in education). You may be able to get extra credit if you have a disabled child. Working Tax Credit is for people who are in work. The amount you get depends on your personal circumstances.

To claim the tax credits call **0845 300 3900** or visit [www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk](http://www.taxcredits.inlandrevenue.gov.uk)

- **Council Tax** – If you leave your home unoccupied and live elsewhere to provide care, the property that you leave may be exempt from council tax or eligible for a discount. Similarly if someone leaves a house empty and comes to live with you so that you can provide care, their home may be exempt from council tax or eligible for a discount.

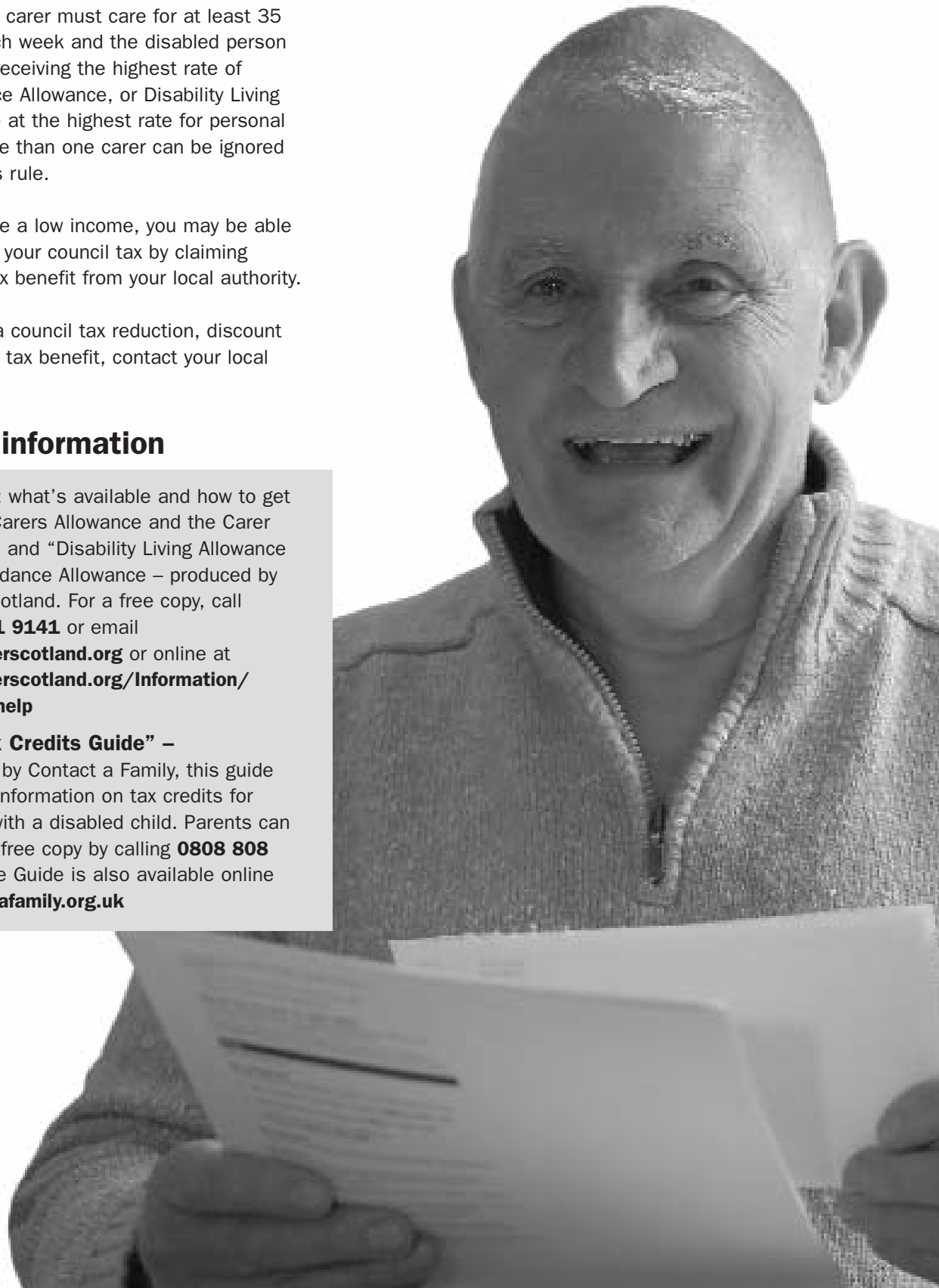
Council Tax bills assume two or more people live in each property. If one person lives in the property, the bill is reduced by 25%. If no-one lives in the property, the bill is reduced by 50%. Some carers are not counted. These are carers who look after a disabled person who is not their partner or, if the disabled person is under 18, their child. The carer must care for at least 35 hours each week and the disabled person must be receiving the highest rate of Attendance Allowance, or Disability Living Allowance at the highest rate for personal care. More than one carer can be ignored under this rule.

If you have a low income, you may be able to reduce your council tax by claiming council tax benefit from your local authority.

To claim a council tax reduction, discount or council tax benefit, contact your local council.

## Further information

- “Benefits: what’s available and how to get them”, “Carers Allowance and the Carer Premium” and “Disability Living Allowance and Attendance Allowance – produced by Carers Scotland. For a free copy, call **0141 221 9141** or email **info@carerscotland.org** or online at **www.carerscotland.org/Information/Financialhelp**
- “The Tax Credits Guide” – produced by Contact a Family, this guide provides information on tax credits for families with a disabled child. Parents can receive a free copy by calling **0808 808 3555**. The Guide is also available online at **www.cafamily.org.uk**



# Further reading & useful websites

- **“Looking After Yourself: for Carers of People with Dementia”** – This booklet provides practical advice for carers of people with dementia on coping with their caring role and reducing stress”. Single copies available free to carers (£1.50 others) from Alzheimer Scotland – Dementia Helpline on **0808 808 3000**.
  - **Alzheimer Scotland: Action on Dementia** – produce a range of factsheets (which are free to carers and individuals) on all aspects of dementia, money matters and caring for someone with dementia. These are available online at **www.alzscot.org** or by calling the Dementia Helpline on **0808 808 3000**.
  - **“Age Concern – Caring for Someone...”** – A series of 15 books examining different aspects of caring and providing step-by-step guidance and information. Titles include the “Carers Handbook: What to do and where to turn to” and Caring for someone....
    - \* ...at a distance
    - \* ...in their own home
    - \* ...who has had a stroke
    - \* ...who is dying
    - \* ...with a hearing loss
    - \* ...with a heart problem
    - \* ...with a sight problem
    - \* ...with an alcohol problem
    - \* ...with arthritis
    - \* ...with cancer
    - \* ...with dementia
    - \* ...with depression
    - \* ...with diabetes
- Each of these books cost £6.99 and are available from Age Concern’s Information Line: **0800 009966** or online at **www.ace.org.uk**
- **Age Concern Scotland** – produce a range of factsheets (which are free to carers and older people) on issues including money matters, caring at home, leisure and transport and housing. Available online at **www.ageconcernscotland.org.uk** or by calling the Information Line on **0800 009966**.
  - **“The Selfish Pig’s Guide to Caring” by Hugh Marriet.** – This book aims to bring into the open everything the author wished he had been told when he first became a Carer and airs topics such as sex, coping with incontinence and dealing with the responses of friends and officials who fail to understand. This book costs £7.95 plus P&P and can be ordered from Polperro Heritage Press, Tel: **01886 812304** or online at: **www.polperropress.co.uk**
  - **“Past Caring” by Audrey Jenkinson** – This book describes how she tried to cope with her parent’s deaths (after putting her career as an actress on hold to care for her mother who had a stroke and her father who had cancer.) and recalls the “void” she felt at the time. She wondered how others coped in similar situations and, when she found there were no books on the subject, decided to write one. She travelled throughout the UK interviewing former carers asking how they rebuilt their lives. Past Caring also includes a twelve-step recovery guide for ‘past carers’. This book costs £8.95 plus P&P and can be ordered from Polperro Heritage Press, Tel: **01886 812304** or online at: **www.polperropress.co.uk**
  - **Patient UK** – Online resource **www.patient.co.uk** of 600 leaflets on health and disease, details of nearly 2000 patient support/self-help groups and organisations and a directory of UK websites on disease, health, carers issues, medicines and tests. It also provides details of recommended books, mainly written by UK authors.
  - **Carers Scotland** – Information on all aspects of caring including: New to Caring, Work and Caring, Financial Help, Help with Caring, Caring and Bereavement. Also contains details of local and national support services. **www.carerscotland.org/Information**
  - **Chest Heart & Stroke Scotland** – produce a range of advice and information booklets on chest, heart and stroke illnesses together with information for carers. Available online at **www.chss.org.uk** or by calling the advice line on **0845 077 6000**.



# Join us: Make your voice heard

Carers Scotland is part of Carers UK. Carers Scotland and Carers UK want carers to be recognised for the contribution they make to society. We are an organisation of carers fighting to end the financial hardship, ill health and discrimination faced by carers as a direct consequence of caring. We need you to add your voice by joining Carers UK to help us win better support for carers.

We welcome any individual who supports our aims. You will benefit by receiving the latest information written by our team of experts. We are offering FREE membership because we know that carers and former carers have many calls on their finances.

Join today and you'll receive:

- Our quarterly newsletter, *Caring*, with the latest information on caring, carers stories and how Carers Scotland and Carers UK are making a difference.
- CARERS, our magazine for members in Scotland
- Helpful free telephone advice on all aspects of caring from our CarersLine experts
- Free information booklets written by experts covering a wide range of topics.

Join online at

[www.carerscotland.org/Aboutus/Joinus](http://www.carerscotland.org/Aboutus/Joinus)

or contact Carers Scotland for a membership form.



# Acknowledgements

- Our thanks go to **BT Scotland** and **H&P Graphics** for their assistance in the design of this Guide.
- This Guide has been produced with the support of the **Action for Carers and Employment** (ACE) initiative and is funded by the European Social Fund Equal Programme.

ACE is a partnership initiative led by Carers UK, which works to support the inclusion of carers in training and working.

In Scotland, the initiative is led by Carers Scotland and was supported by the Equal Opportunities Commission and the Association of Directors of Social Work.

ACE is funded by the European Social Fund Equal Programme.

A range of stakeholders have contributed to the initiative:

- Work with employers to promote and develop flexible working policies
- Work with health and social care providers to promote and develop flexible alternative care services and to promote change in the ways that carers are involved in the design development and delivery of services.

ACE has produced a range of information for employers and carers which is available at [www.carerscotland.org](http://www.carerscotland.org) and [www.acecarers.org](http://www.acecarers.org)



**CARERS** Scotland  
the voice of carers

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