

Social Care Toolkits

An Introduction to Respite Care

What is respite care?

Respite care is planned or emergency care for caregivers of a child or adult. Respite care is taking a break from being a carer. The person for whom they care is simultaneously cared for by someone else.

What are the benefits of respite care?

It gives the carer the opportunity to take some time out and helps stop them from becoming exhausted, run down and/or overwhelmed. During respite care, you can spend time with other family members; take a holiday; and/or recharge your batteries. Studies have proven that respite care has positive health benefits for both the carer and the person for whom they are caring.

For the person for whom they are caring, a short break can allow them to try new experiences; meet new people; and sometimes have a change of surroundings.

How can I access respite care?

You can privately purchase respite care. If you choose this option, make sure the care has the appropriate registration, including DBS checks.

You can apply through your local council. To see if you are eligible for funding, you will need a "Carer's Assessment" and the person who you are looking after should have a "Needs Assessment". This may have already been completed if you have already had a social care assessment and it is part of your plan. The council will then complete a financial assessment to assess how much they will contribute. You will then have the option to let the council arrange the respite care for you, or you can do it yourself via a personal budget or direct payment. For more information, see our "An Introduction to Accessing Social Care Services - Personal Budgets and Direct Payments" toolkit.

You can apply via a charity, such as the Carer's Trust (www.carers.org), who offer grants to those needing respite; Turn2Us (www.turn2us.org.uk), who help find grants available to those needing respite; and SENDirect (<https://www.sendirect.org.uk/categories/overnights-breaks-away>), who have a database of short breaks in your area.

Different Types of Respite Care

Care at home

This is usually referred to as homecare.

It can range from short periods, i.e. a few hours a week to live in permanent care.

Your Local Authority will have a list of homecare agencies in your area, as will the United Kingdom Homecare Association (UKHCA - www.ukhca.co.uk).

A sitting service is offered by some charities, including the RVS (www.royalvoluntaryservice.org) and Carers Trust (www.carers.org). These services are often free, or there is a small charge.

Day care centre

Care at a day centre can range from attending once a week to daily, depending on the needs of the carer and the person for whom they are caring.

It is a good opportunity to socialise and partake in new experiences.

Transport is sometimes provided but there might be a charge.

Some local councils provide day care centres and/or have a list of available centres in your area.

At some centres, a variety of healthcare professionals attend, such as chiropodists.

Some charities provide day centres.

Day care centres also include nurseries, playgroups, after school clubs, day summer camps and holiday schemes.

Short or overnight stays in a care home

This is useful for when you need 24-hour care.

These are sometimes difficult to obtain and are best arranged in advance.

The care home in which the person for whom you are caring stays depends on the needs of that person and whether they require nursing care or a care home without nursing.

The NHS website (www.nhs.uk) has a list of nursing homes in your area.

Residential breaks

For stays longer than 24 hours.

Residential breaks can be spent at residential homes and special units in hospitals and hospices.

These are useful when the carer needs support for a longer period of time.

The NHS website (www.nhs.uk) has a list of nursing homes in your area.

Respite holidays

This gives the carer and the person who needs the care the opportunity to take a holiday together.

Family Fund (www.familyfund.org.uk) offer grants towards the cost of a holiday.

Family Holiday Association (www.familyholidayassociation.org.uk) offer breaks and grants towards the cost of the holiday. You need to be referred by a professional or charity to access these grants. Metabolic Support UK can help with your referral.

Emergency respite care

Your Local Authority will be able to support you with this.

It might be a good idea to have a prepared folder containing relevant information, including medication, contact numbers, routines and the likes and dislikes of the person who needs the care, in case you are unable to provide a hand over.

What if I am refused a respite package?

You have the right to appeal.

For more information on challenging a social care decision, please see our “Introduction to Challenging a Social Care Decision or Making a Complaint” toolkit.

Useful contacts

SENDirect (<https://www.sendirect.org.uk/categories/overnights-breaks-away>) has a database of short breaks in your area.

Revitalise (<http://revitalise.org.uk/>) provides holidays for disabled persons and carers over the age of 50.

The Alan Shearer Foundation (<https://www.alanshearerfoundation.org.uk/>) funds respite care for those in Newcastle.

Sandcastle Trust (<https://sandcastletrust.org/>) provides grants to families, so they can have a holiday together.

MyTIME (<https://www.mytimecharity.co.uk/>) provides respite holidays for young carers.

Sponsor a Sibling (<http://sponsorasibling.co.uk/>) provides respite holidays for siblings.