Stonecot Surgery

Carers Information Pack

‘Because we care about you’



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# Introduction

## Do you care for someone with severe illness?

If you are a partner, relative or close friend of someone with health difficulties and you provide a major part of their care, then you would be known as a 'carer'.

It can sometimes be difficult to see yourself as a carer, particularly if you are looking after a friend or family member. If you answer yes, or even maybe, to any of the following then you would be considered a carer

* Do you feel responsible for supporting a person with ill health?
* Do you assist a person on a day-to-day basis?
* Do you feel you have to be there for them?
* Do you feel no-one understands the pressures on you?
* Do you feel you have to cope alone?

## Highs and Lows of being a carer

Caring for someone can be immensely rewarding, but there are times when caring for someone with severe illness can bring a sense of isolation and extreme stress. It is at these times that you might well benefit from the information contained on these pages and the different kinds of help and support highlighted here.

## Caring about Carers

Caring about Carers is a national strategy introduced by the Government. The strategy acknowledges the vital role of carers and introduces ways of supporting them more effectively.

We hope this pack you have been provided with will assist you in receiving the support and resources you are entitled to as a carer.

## Am I a Carer?

The Government says you are a carer if you are a friend or relative who is involved in looking after someone with a severe illness. You may be the person’s wife, husband, civil partner, son, daughter, sister, brother, parent, other relative, neighbour or friend. You do not have to live in the same household as the person you look after.

## What Are My Rights?

The Government recognises the importance of carers. In its national plan for carers, the Government says that you should feel that `the system is on your side' and that you should have opportunities for `a life of your own'.

The law (the Carers Acts) sets out what should be done for carers. The main thing that the law sets out is that you have a right to have your own needs assessed. The law says that you must be informed of your rights.

## What is an assessment for?

The purpose of an assessment of carer’s needs is:

* to find out if you need some extra support
* to look at what can help you in your caring role and help you to keep well yourself
* to see if support can be given by social services or other organisation

## What happens if I have an assessment?

When the person you look after is assessed by a doctor, nurse or social worker, your needs should also be considered. If you provide 10 or more hours of practical support/emotional support or supervision per week, or if the caring role is clearly having a negative effect on your ordinary lifestyle, then you can choose to have a separate assessment if you wish.

The member of staff who does the assessment will talk to you about how your relative or friend’s illness affects you. You can tell them about anything that worries you, and ask any questions you may have. The member of staff will answer your questions as fully as possible but there may be some information they cannot give to you because they must also respect the confidentiality of information about the person you look after.

# Carers Support Plan

The member of staff will try to identify things to help and support you. This will be written down after agreement with you the carer in a document called a “Carers Support Plan”.

The Support Plan should include some or all of the following:

* information on what to do and who to contact in a crisis
* what will be provided to meet your own health needs, and how it will be provided
* information on how to get advice on income and benefits, housing, education and
* employment
* information about appeals or complaints procedures

This Support Plan will be reviewed (looked at again) every year, or more often if necessary.

Carers UK is a campaigning organisation, providing information and advice on all aspects of caring to carers.

For further information go to www.carersuk.org. Telephone: 0207 378 4999 (helpline) or the UK helpline (Monday – Friday 9am -6pm) 08088087777 or email advice@carersuk.org

# Taking Care of Yourself

## Your Health and Needs

Illness is unpredictable and emotionally taxing. Carers often feel that they “walk on eggshells” in order not to upset the painstakingly achieved balance that has been established. This can be very limiting for both the carer and the service user, and gives little scope for moving forward. Where there is a good level of trust and open communication between them, the service user feels more understood and supported, and their everyday anxieties are less likely to grow into major problems. For the carer, it results in greater understanding of the problems, and being able to act in a constructive way rather than worrying about pushing the service user too far too soon, and doing nothing because of the risk of relapse. Mutual understanding also increases the chances of planning breaks or time out for the carer. Carers can feel guilty about taking time for themselves, but it is crucial that they do – one in three carers becomes ill with stress-related disorders.

## For Yourself

* Remember that you are merely human and have needs of your own. Continually putting them off, or not allowing time for yourself, will only make you resentful, irritable and could eventually make you unwell.
* Allow time each week to do something you enjoy, something to make you feel relaxed, refreshed and that life is good.
* Eat regularly and well. Poor sleep and diet will only add to your overall stress levels.
* Exercise as much as possible – even a short brisk walk will help.
* Plan to take regular time out and/or holidays – and take them.
* Put in clear boundaries with the person you care for. Be clear about what you can and cannot do – and stick to it.
* Ensure that there is at least one supportive person with whom you can talk confidentially. It is really easy to lose your perspective and sense of humour if you feel isolated.
* Remember that your Practice can be a source of help. Take a friend or advocate with you if you think you don’t know how or may not be able to tell your doctor what you are feeling.
* Knowing about the illness or disorder that you are dealing with will help you to understand it and act appropriately, even if the person you care for doesn’t want to know.
* Joining a Carers Group helps relieve isolation, stress, loss of humour and loneliness, as well as helping you to understand different types of illness and disorder.
* Seek advice from the team involved with providing care if you can – if not an advocate can help to get answers for you.
* If you should be receiving services that you are not getting, don’t be too proud or too afraid to complain – don’t just cope all by yourself, seek help from an advocate

## Counselling

Counselling can help you to express feelings and emotions, safely and confidentially. It can help you to understand why you feel stressed, angry, resentful, help to maintain a sense of perspective or new coping strategies.

Carers UK: www.carersuk.org

Telephone: Advice line 0808 808 7777

## Education, Training and Leisure Activities

Sources of information about educational and leisure activities:

• Local library

• Local leisure centre or swimming pool

• Local community college

• Local community centre

For more information please refer to:

<https://www.stonecotsurgery.co.uk/digitalpractice/wellbeing-centre/carers/> or alternatively please contact the Practice for an appointment with our Social Prescriber.

## What is Social Prescribing

Our Social Prescribers will spend time with you exploring what matters to you and identifying what your goals are.

They will then work with you to assist you in achieving those goals. Your goals may be to live a healthy and active life, explore the arts, identify support services, assist with housing, benefits and financial support, gain employment or explore training and volunteering opportunities.

If needed, social prescribers can support you to contact services and can accompany you to activities until you feel confident in going alone.

We can support you to create something new if the kind of service or support you are looking for isn’t out there already.

# Alternative Therapies

You may wish to consider some alternative therapies. It may be useful to inform your GP if you are considering Homeopathy, and if you do decide to go ahead with any alternative therapies, tell your therapist if you are taking any medication (whether this is prescribed by your GP or something you have bought for yourself).

**Acupuncture:** Uses small needles inserted into the skin at specific points to balance or restore energy.

**Aromatherapy:** Uses the essential oils from plants to enhance physical and emotional wellbeing. The oils can be inhaled or massaged into the skin.

**Homeopathy:** Uses natural substances (known as remedies) which mimic symptoms. Substances used are very diluted and have very few harmful side effects.

**Massage:** Unblocks muscular tension, stimulates circulation and helps the body to eliminate waste (e.g. blocked sinus). Massage also gives a sense of physical comfort that can ease sadness and isolation.

**Meditation:** Through learning how to clear your mind of worries and control your breathing, meditation can provide periods of time that are peaceful and inwardly calm.

**Reflexology:** Works on a similar basis to acupuncture except that the energy pathways are released through reflex points on the feet or hands, each of which corresponds to an area of the body.

**Shiatsu:** Uses massage and/or finger pressure in a similar way to acupuncture. Also known as acupressure, it helps to release blocked energy and so stimulate healing.

**Yoga:** Aims to improve mind, body and spiritual functioning, using slow gentle stretching exercises and deep breathing techniques.

**MSK**: Several of our services offer a self-referral option to access physiotherapy, without needing to visit your GP.

<https://www.connecthealth.co.uk/resources/physionow/>

**Uplift**: Uplift is an integrated community based mental health and wellbeing hub which is accessible to anyone over the age of 18. We offer services to those with common mental health problems or with severe mental illnesses such as psychosis, bipolar disorder and to those with personality disorders.

**Merton**: <https://gateway.mayden.co.uk/referral-v2/09651f35-050a-4b0e-9565-9e9dea78bc01>

**Sutton**: <https://gateway.mayden.co.uk/referral-v2/a1d9436f-46ea-4e3b-a2f0-b4e2f1646c9f>

**Age UK:**

Age UK are an independent, local charity supporting older people in the London Borough of Sutton/Merton for over 30 years. Their services aim to support older people, their families and carers. ​ They do this by providing services that make a difference, improving understanding of what older people need, standing up for their interests, enabling their voices to be heard and fostering a sense of community and belonging for all older people.​ Anyone looking for help, advice or support to do with ageing and older people in Sutton/Merton.

**Merton:** <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/merton/>

**Sutton:** <https://www.ageuk.org.uk/sutton/>