

Getting A Service

In this section we explain how people get a short break or respite care service and how this is funded.

You can apply to your local authority for assistance to take a short break. If you are seeking financial help, a Community Care Assessment (sometimes known as a Single Shared Assessment or an Integrated Assessment for children) will be carried out to determine what support you need and how often, and whether you are eligible for financial assistance. To ask for an assessment you should contact your local authority Social Work office. Carers are entitled to an assessment of their own needs and this includes your need for a break.

Local authorities have different policies and procedures in place for allocating support and you may have to meet certain criteria. Getting an assessment can take time and so we would advise that you make contact as early as possible.

(Even if you choose not to ask for an assessment or seek help with paying for the break, you're local authority should still be able to offer you advice and information. You shouldn't have to fend for yourself!)

In some cases, the NHS may be able to provide short-term care, particularly if there are healthcare needs involved. You can speak to your GP about this. There is no charge for NHS services, but benefits are sometimes affected by longer stays in hospital, or any registered care home funded by health or social work.

Carers Scotland has produced a useful guide to Carers Rights which includes information on how the law interprets people's rights to short breaks and respite care. You can obtain a copy by phoning - 0141 445 3070

Funding a Short Break

There are three ways that short break services can be funded:

- self funded - you arrange and pay for a short break service
- *partially funded - the costs of the break may be shared between you and the local authority
- *fully funded - the break may be fully funded by the local authority.

*It is unlikely that a fully funded break will be provided by the local authority, except for Children Services. Local authorities carry out a financial assessment for short breaks and would only waive the charge in exceptional circumstances.

Direct Payments & Self Directed Support

The costs for receiving a short break service may be paid directly to an approved provider by the local authority or, if you are eligible, you can receive money in the form of a Direct Payment or Voucher that can then be used more flexibly to purchase a service of your choice.

At present, in Scotland, Direct Payments are paid to people using services rather than carers except where the carer has parental responsibility, power of attorney or legal guardianship.

Direct Payments are a form of 'Self Directed Support' which include other means to give people more control of the services and support they need to live the life they choose. For further information about Self Directed Support go to the website: www.selfdirectedsupportscotland.org.uk

Here's what the Guide has to say about Direct Payments and Short Breaks...

"Can I (use Direct Payments to) buy occasional short breaks?

Yes, respite is a short break which is to act as a positive experience for the person with support needs and the carer, where there is one. The term includes a wide range of different services of limited duration. "

"The common factor is not what service is provided, but its purpose. Respite can be offered in a wide variety of settings, including breaks in residential homes, respite-only units (e.g. specialist guest houses), breaks in the home of another individual or family who have been specially recruited, breaks at home through a support worker or sitting service, or holiday type breaks."

All local authorities are now expected to provide information, support and advice about Self Directed Care.

Holiday Funds

You may be eligible to apply to a charitable trust for help to pay for a break. Examples of national charities providing financial support include:

- The Family Fund - www.familyfund.org.uk
- Family Holiday Association - www.fhaonline.org.uk

Local charities that support short breaks, or organisations that focus on particular disabilities or conditions may also be able to help. Again the Citizen Advice Bureau,

Carers Centre or the local branch of a disability organisation should be able to offer further information and advice.

Not getting the service you think you are entitled to?

If you feel that you are not getting a service that you think you are entitled to or you're unhappy about the service that is being delivered, you can submit an official complaint to your local authority.

If you have a concern or suggestion about a service, write or speak to a member of staff or the service manager in the first instance. Contact information for this, and other council services is listed on your local authority's website or in the phone book.

Your local authority welcomes feedback on the standard of service it provides. In this way they can learn from mistakes and improve services.

If you are not happy with your reply

A service manager normally sends you a written reply within a certain number of working days from receiving your complaint.

If you are still not happy, you can contact your authority's complaints officer. The complaints officer will confirm that they have received your complaint and, after investigation with the department concerned, they will send you a written reply.

Your local authority will be committed to responding to a complaint within a set number of days. Again, local circumstances vary slightly and you should contact your local authority for full details.

Taking your complaint further

The Scottish Public Service Ombudsman is an organisation that deals with complaints about councils, the National Health Service, housing associations, the Scottish Government and its agencies and departments, colleges and universities and most Scottish public bodies.

You can complain directly to the ombudsman at any time, but they usually only consider your complaint after it has been looked at under your local authority's or public organisation's complaints procedure. You can contact the ombudsman's Adviceline on 0800 377 7330 for general help and assistance before submitting a complaint.

Further information about making a complaint can be found at:

- Scottish Public Service Ombudsman - www.spsso.org.uk