

Do You Support
an Adult with
a Learning
Disability?



WELCOME

If you are mum, dad, sister or brother to an adult with a learning disability, you may not think of yourself as a Carer - few people do. However the term 'Carer' applies to anyone who looks after someone, adult or child, who cannot manage without additional support - whether physical or emotional, or both - due to disability, illness, addiction or general frailty.



Whether you are caring alone or are one of several members of your family providing support, your perspective as a long-term Carer is unique - no-one knows your family the way you do.

Caring can be very rewarding. However, it can also be intensive and challenging, and there may be times when you feel stressed by day-to-day caring or with worries about the future. This is where Carers Link can help - we are the local organisation dedicated to Carers in East Dunbartonshire, providing you with support you may need and are entitled to.

COMMON FEELINGS

You will already have been providing support for many years, and you will have experienced much along the way.

Caring can give you a lot of happiness, but long-term caring also brings its own strains. You may feel resentful that so much of your life has been about caring, possibly at the expense of career, hobbies and relationships, but feel guilty for feeling this way. You are not alone - many Carers feel like this.

With caring comes huge responsibility. As you get older you might have worries about how to ensure that the best possible support for the person you care for continues for years to come.

Carers Link can help. You can talk with our support workers, who are dedicated to dealing with issues that may affect you. We also run a support group specifically for families of Adults with a Learning Disability, where you can meet over lunch with other Carers in a position similar to yours.

"Through the group it is great that we are meeting other Carers"



IT'S GOOD TO TALK

Have you had good support throughout the time that you've been caring, or do you feel you've very much been 'left to get on with it'?



Either way, you have a wealth of knowledge and experience about learning disability and the ways that it has affected your life and your family. You may sometimes feel that you'd like to talk with someone outwith your circle of family and friends about how you feel about caring, and the impact that it has on your day-to-day life - or just to chat about things that have nothing to do with caring. If so, Carers Link has a telephone support service, Carers Call, which provides a friendly, listening ear, calling you on a regular basis to chat and catch up with how you're doing.

Another good place to talk is at our groups. As well as our support group for families of Adults with a Learning Disability, we also run monthly 'Blether' groups where all Carers are welcome to come along and chat over coffee and cake.

For details contact Carers Link - 0800 975 2131

CARING WITH CONFIDENCE?

Knowing how to help and support an adult with learning difficulties can be rewarding yet complicated, or even frustrating at times, and many Carers struggle alone.



If you sometimes feel caring leaves you with little time and energy to spare, it is important for you to know that there is help available for both you and your family.

Even if you are coping well with your caring role, it is important to find out about what services and support options are available, so that you have help to hand if you need it.

This leaflet is a simple introduction to provide ideas of what might help and how to get it.

**Call us on 0800 975 2131 or visit our website
for useful information at: www.carerslink.org.uk**

GETTING SUPPORT

You may or may not have been in touch with Social Work over the years that you've been caring. As you get older and your needs change, remember that you are entitled to a Carers Assessment - even if you've had one or more done previously.

The Carers Assessment will look at what help you need with caring at the moment, and to help maintain your own health and wellbeing. It should provide an opportunity to think about yourself and your needs, and the best way to meet these. Remember that, although you may be managing well just now, there could be help available that you haven't thought of which would make caring easier and help you to continue as you are as a family. Some of these ideas are listed under 'What Might Help'.

While the idea of filling in a Carers Assessment can be daunting, a Carers Link support worker can arrange it with Social Work, and we can also help you to fill in the form and prepare for it.



WHAT MIGHT HELP

Through your Carers Assessment, Carers Link can help you identify - and advocate on your behalf to access - a range of services from Social Work or other organisations. Such services may include:

- Short Breaks - available so that you can get a rest from caring, or even residential respite care so that you can get a longer break
- Domiciliary care
- Clubs, activities and social opportunities for the person you care for
- Learning or employment opportunities for the person you care for
- Equipment or adaptations for your home
- Benefits advice

Self Directed Support or Direct Payments may however be more suitable for you and your family. If so, you may be able to receive a payment instead, to buy the services and support that have been assessed as being needed giving greater choice, flexibility, independence and control.



LOOKING TO THE FUTURE

After a lifetime of caring, you are the expert in respect of the person you care for. As with anyone who supports someone with a lifelong disability, it can be very difficult to think about a future where you are no longer able to care in the way that you always have before.

Remember that just because a plan for the future has been written down this does not mean that anything needs to happen right now. But it is always a good idea to start thinking ahead as just knowing that there is a plan in place might help to ease your mind. As well as life choices you may need to consider powers of attorney, guardianship orders, writing a will or perhaps setting up a trust.

Beginning to think about the future is daunting, but a Carers Link support worker can help you to explore different options, look at what's important to your family's particular circumstances and advocate for you if that's what you wish. It's difficult to predict what you may need in the future as needs change over time, so a flexible plan is a good idea. Your plan could also consider what would happen now in case of emergencies to help to give you peace of mind.



LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Now more than at any other time in your life it's vital to remember that you are important, too. Long-term caring can have an impact on your emotional as well as your physical health, so if you feel unwell or stressed try to get some support so that you can feel better. Make sure your GP knows you have a caring role and don't be shy to ask for a home visit if this would help.

Try to make a wee bit of time for yourself in the day doing something that gives you pleasure, whether that be walking, gardening, playing bowls or taking up a new hobby. Just a little time away from your caring role can help you to come back feeling refreshed and better able to keep going.



Carers Link runs Stress Management and Relaxation Courses. Or if you'd like a more general course about taking care of your physical and emotional wellbeing why not come along to our 'Looking After Yourself' sessions? Attending any course is a chance to meet and chat with others too!

WHAT CARERS HAVE SAID

"Looking forward to future group meetings, 'you are not alone' comes over in waves"

"I was growing older myself and caring was beginning to take its toll. A friend suggested I phone Carers Link - thankfully I did"

"I just breathed this huge sigh of relief that someone was at last understanding what I was going through and helping to do the practical side of things..."

"Before coming into contact with Carers Link we had no-one to turn to, we really felt we were alone"

"I've learned more in these two hours at the support group than I have done in 20 years"



GOOD TO KNOW

REMEMBER YOU ARE NOT ON YOUR OWN. CARERS LINK CAN:

- Provide individual support and advocacy, helping you to explore different options, resolve issues or ensure your views or concerns are heard
- Give information about services and resources to help you
- Help you with letters, meetings or preparing for a Carers Assessment
- Invite you along to a wide range of courses for Carers where you can learn something new in a friendly atmosphere
- Keep in touch with you through our regular telephone support service 'Carers Call', providing a listening ear
- Welcome you at a range of groups
- Provide regular mailings of our newsletter and What's On bulletin

SOME USEFUL PHONE NUMBERS TO KEEP AT HAND:

- Carers Link East Dunbartonshire
0800 975 2131
- East Dunbartonshire Council Social Work
0141 355 2200
- EDC Local Area Co-ordinators for Learning Disability **0141 578 2142**



CONTACT US



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- Telephone:** 0141 955 2131
- Email:** enquiry@carerslink.org.uk
- Office:** Carers Link East Dunbartonshire,
Enterprise Centre, Ellangowan Road
Milngavie G62 8PH
- Normal hours:** Monday - Friday 8.30am to 5pm
(Appointments outwith these hours can be arranged)
- Website:** www.carerslink.org.uk



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