



Short breaks

Introduction

There are more than 650,000 unpaid carers in Scotland, providing care and support to a family member, partner, relative, friend or neighbour. The people they care for may be affected by disability, physical or mental health issues, frailty, substance misuse or some other condition. Some carers care intensively while others care for shorter periods.

Being able to access regular breaks is vital for unpaid carers to look after their own health and wellbeing. Breaks can help relieve the demands of caring, and when provided in a way which meets the needs of the carer and the cared for person, can help sustain the caring relationship too, avoiding the need for crisis support.

This leaflet aims to set out the basics of short breaks and where to get more information.

What is a short break?

Put simply, a short break is any form of service or assistance which enables a carer to have sufficient and regular periods away from their caring routines or responsibilities.

In the past the term 'respite care' has been used to describe a break from caring but this is often associated with traditional or institutional forms of service such as hospital based stays and can have a

more negative connotation. For this reason, the term short break or 'a break from caring', is often preferred.

Who is a short break for?

Respite has been used to describe a service which benefits the carer, but when provided in the right way, a short break should benefit both the carer and the person with care needs. Breaks should be viewed as part of ordinary family life and relationships: everyone needs a break from routine now and again.

What is a break?

It's hard to 'nail down' what we mean by a break! Breaks from caring may:

- be for short or extended periods
- take place during the day or overnight
- involve the person with support needs having a break away from home allowing the carer time for themselves
- be a break away with replacement care in place
- be a break together for the carer and the person they care for providing a break from the demands of their daily caring routines
- be something that helps the carer get a break at home e.g. a garden shed or a treadmill.

What should I look for from a break?

Whichever form a break takes the key factors are simple:

Choice – you should be able to choose the type of break that is best for you. Support is available if you need help to think through your options too.

Flexibility – a good break should work for you and the person you care for to best meet your needs.

Personalisation – what works for someone else might not be the right break for you. A good break will be personalised to your needs and wants.

What types of break are there?

There are a huge range of short breaks options including:

- residential accommodation with nursing or personal care support
- building-based day centres
- breaks in the home of another family
- breaks at home provided through a care at home service

- a range of accessible and inclusive community-based activities and groups
- holiday breaks – sometimes through specialist holiday providers
- specialist play schemes and after school clubs
- befriending schemes
- peer support groups
- breaks at home through the purchase of items such as equipment or subscriptions

Is there anything that's 'not' a short break?

Services that are in place to enable you to work are not a short break because the right to work is a universal human right. Services that are put in place when you are unwell or need something such as hospital treatment should also not be considered as a short break.

Where can I find more information?

More detailed information on all aspects of short breaks, including a directory of 400+ services can be found on our website at www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk

Our other 'Short Guides'

Shared Care Scotland and our work
Support for carers
Carer rights in Scotland
Funding for short breaks
Short breaks fund



What do we mean by...?

Carers

Carers provide unpaid care to family members, partners, friends or neighbours affected by physical or mental illness, disability, frailty or substance misuse. Some carers care intensively or are lifelong carers. Others care for shorter periods.

Short breaks

A break from caring helps carers, and the people they care for, recharge their batteries. A short break can be anything from a few hours of downtime to relax and rest, to a holiday together away from the daily routine.

About Shared Care Scotland

At Shared Care Scotland we aim to be the leading organisation on short breaks and respite care in Scotland.

Our vision is:

“that everyone who receives support or provides unpaid care can live a full and satisfying life, with the assistance they need to take regular, quality breaks from the everyday demands of their caring routines.”

www.sharedcarescotland.org.uk

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