



In Safe Hands

A Carer's Guide to Planning for an Emergency

This guide is for you if ...

... you are providing care and supervision, unpaid, for an adult.

We know that if you look after someone because they are ill, frail, elderly or have a disability, there will be times when you wonder what might happen if there's an emergency which means you can't continue looking after the person - even if it's just for a short time. It will help if you have had a chance to think about what might happen and be prepared.

Being prepared can't prevent an emergency or crisis but it can make it a bit easier to manage and a bit less stressful for everyone. You may be very clear what you would do in an emergency but if not, this guide will help you develop your ideas further and write a plan. The plan describes what the person you care for needs, giving the information to whoever takes over the care about what they might need to do, be aware of and with whom they might need to be in touch.

How to plan for a situation where you might (unexpectedly) be unable to look after the person you care for:

For example, you may be delayed in being able to get to the person you care for; or you may be taken ill suddenly, possibly for a prolonged period.

You will need to think about who you could ask to help, who might be available and who would be most appropriate.

You also need to consider how long the person you care for can be left and what are the main things they need help with.

The headings and questions below may help you think more clearly about the person you care for and what help they might need. It may help you to make notes of your answers to these questions ready for completing the plan later.

Communication

- ❖ Can the person you care for reach and use the telephone easily? Do they have useful telephone numbers to hand?

- ❖ Are they able to communicate easily?
- ❖ People who are being cared for often say everything is fine when asked if they can care for themselves. Can this response be relied on?

Looking after themselves

- ❖ Would the person you care for be able to get up, washed and dressed on their own? What would they need help with?
- ❖ Would they be able to get to the toilet on their own?
- ❖ Would they be able to go up and down the stairs alone?
- ❖ Would they be able to go to bed without help? What would they need help with?
- ❖ Could they get a drink and something to eat? If so, what sort of thing? Would everything be accessible to them? Would they be able to manage any reaching up/bending down?
- ❖ Can they manage the heating in their home? If need be, can they 'top up' a gas or electricity meter?
- ❖ If they fell would they be able to get up?
- ❖ Do they know where their GP number is? Do they know how and when to contact 999 or an out of hours GP service?
- ❖ Do they know who else they can contact (for example a neighbour or family member)? Are they likely to make that contact?
- ❖ Can they work the television/radio?

Access and security

- ❖ Can the person you care for answer the door? If not, how would someone else be able to get into the home?
- ❖ Is there a key safe or does someone else have a key – if so, who?
- ❖ Can the person you care for lock/unlock the door or windows to keep their home secure?
- ❖ Is there a house alarm? If so, are they able to use it? What is the code to set/disable it, and where is the keypad?
- ❖ Does the person you care for have a personal alarm and if so is it easily accessible? Do they remember and know how to use it?
- ❖ Are there any safety risks in the home, such as difficult steps/unreliable appliances/animals?

Medication

- ❖ Does the person you care for take medication regularly? Do they fully understand when and what medication to take? Can they manage to take tablets easily?
- ❖ Will they be able to say where medication is kept?
- ❖ Would they be able to manage an insulin injection, or using an inhaler, if they needed to? If they can't, is there someone who you could ask to do this with them?

Pets

- ❖ Are there any pets which will need looking after? What care is needed? Is there anyone who would help?

Help which is already in place

Support Plan

- ❖ Does the person you care for have a Support Plan which has been agreed by the Local Authority (this could be Social Services/Adult Social Care, or Joint Learning Disability Services or Mental Health Services)?
- ❖ If so, what is written in the support plan about an emergency situation?
- ❖ Who knows this information?

Other care and support

- ❖ Does the person you care for already receive care provided by another person or organisation, which might be able to help? This might be paid for privately or funded by the Local Authority.
- ❖ Where is the information about this and any contact details?
- ❖ Does the person you care for have a service from City Wide Care Alarms or another alarm service?

What to do next

(If you care for more than one person, please complete a separate Plan for each of them)

Step 1: decide who could help

- ❖ Depending on how long you are unable to care and on what the person needs, it might be that a neighbour would be able to help by keeping an eye on the person or give them a drink or a meal. They would probably only be able to cover for a short time, so you would also need to identify another relative or friend to take over the care if needed.
 - ❖ It's important that you ask the neighbour in advance whether they are able and willing to do this – you will need to explain what is needed and where they can find things. They will need any important telephone numbers – your number and perhaps another relative, as well as emergency numbers and the GP's number – and all the information you have put in your plan.
 - ❖ You will need to think which relative(s) or friend (s) may be able to 'take over' from the neighbour and then discuss all of this with them, again covering all the details in your plan.
 - ❖ If you are unable to care for a few days and you have nobody who lives nearby who could step in and no relative or friend to do the caring, Adult Social Care (Social Services) can help. There is a 24 hour, 7 day a week contact telephone number – **0114 273 4908**
- A. If the person you care for is already known to Adult Social Care (or 'Social Services')** and already has a Support Plan you will need to get their Care First number which will be on the top of their copy of the assessment questionnaire form and support plan. If the person you care for is known to the mental health services you will need to get the Insight Number. These

numbers can be used to trace the person you care for if the contacts you have given cannot be contacted.

Whoever rings 0114 273 4908 will need to describe what the emergency is and Adult Social Care will decide what sort of emergency support can be given. For example, they might arrange for some (extra) care to be given in the home or arrange for a temporary stay in a care home. Any emergency support is only temporary and will be reviewed. (If, whilst receiving this emergency service, Adult Social Care assess that the needs of the person you care for have changed, they will ask the Review and Reassessment team - part of Adult Social care - to review the person's support within 8 weeks.)

- B. If the person you care for has no existing support or a Support Plan from Adult Social Care** and there is no relative or other care agency who can step in, Adult Social Care has a duty to make sure the person you care for is safe. They will try to gather information to identify the person you care for and their address. Again they will consider what the best options for support are and make arrangements for the emergency care to be put in place. Later on, there will be a financial assessment for the person you care for to see if there is any charge for whatever care has been provided.

Step 2: write down the information in a plan, so that other people know how to help

Whether you do a substantial amount of caring, or relatively little, you have lots of knowledge which could be very useful for another family member, relative, friend, or staff from an agency who takes over while you are unable to care. Recording this information clearly will help them – it may also be helpful for you.

- ❖ Complete the Emergency Plan attached to this guide using your notes. The plan includes a list of essential/useful phone numbers. If you are downloading this from the website you will need to print it out and complete it by hand.
- ❖ Date the Emergency Plan on the front page. Make sure you update any information and the list of telephone numbers regularly and **as soon as anything changes**. Ask the Carers Centre if you need more blank copies.
- ❖ Keep a copy of your Emergency Plan with your cared-for person's Single Record, if they have one. (This is the folder which will have been given to the person if they are receiving support from Adult Social Care.) Keep another copy somewhere prominent, e.g. by the phone, or on the fridge, or with the medication of the person you care for.

If you would like any help or support completing this Plan, please ask when you call the Carers Centre.

Step 3: call Sheffield Carers Centre

(0114 278 8942)

or email insafehands@sheffieldcarers.org.uk

- ❖ Ask the Carers Centre to send you the Carers Emergency Contact Card. The card will fit in your wallet and will state that you are a carer. You will need to write on the card the name of the person you care for, their date of birth and the Care First or Insight numbers if you have those and also the names and telephone numbers of the people you have nominated to be contacted in an emergency. The emergency number for Adult Social Care is also on the card.
- ❖ We will send you 4 cards – one to carry at all times but also others to use should any changes in details or updates be needed.
Make sure the card you carry with you can be seen easily!

Please be aware that as this card contains confidential and personal information, it is important that it is carried safely and the information is protected at all times

Other useful things you can do

- ❖ If you have a mobile phone, input the key numbers from the list at the end of your emergency plan so that you have them with you at all times.
- ❖ It's also useful to input an ICE ('in case of emergency') telephone number with the telephone number of the person who needs to be contacted if anything happens to you. For example ICE-Home (0114 2XX XXXX). Adding ICE to your phone is a clever means by which emergency personnel can locate your next of kin when something goes wrong.
- ❖ It's helpful to use 'obvious' names for contacts in your mobile phone such as Daughter-Lucy or Husband-Rob, so that a stranger can easily identify who the important people are who should be contacted.
- ❖ If you have not already done so, consider a home-based emergency care alarm service and/or some of the sensory equipment which is available which can help keep the person you care for safe when you're not there. See the information on City Wide Care Alarms in the next section of this guide.

Other emergencies involving the person you care for

Although this guide is primarily to help you to be prepared for an emergency when you are unable to care for someone, it may be useful to think about other possible emergencies involving the person you care for – to help you plan for how you would deal with these situations.

❖ *What if the person I care for has fallen and can't get up?*

If the person has fallen whilst you are there and you can see that they have hurt themselves, call the Ambulance Service on 999. Ensure they are warm and as comfortable as possible **without moving them**. If you think they are not hurt, probably just shaken, it is important that you leave them to get up in their own time or you make sure they are warm and comfortable whilst you organise professional help to get them up – to make sure there can be no further damage.

If the person is elderly or has had falls previously, it is important to let your GP know as this could be an indication of some other condition and the GP may be able to help with this.

Please also see section below about City Wide Care Alarms.

❖ *What if the person I care for has a catheter which has become blocked?*

You should seek immediate help by contacting the GP surgery (of the person you care for). During office hours you can speak directly to the receptionist explaining the difficulty. At other times you will be redirected to the out of hours service. You might also have a number for the District Nursing Service - keep this handy.

❖ *What if the person I care for is confused and/or has wandered out of the house?*

If you are able, look round the immediate neighbourhood and check with neighbours but also alert the police (on 101/999) explaining the situation and about the person you care for. If this has happened a number of times, let the GP know, as further help might be required.

❖ *What if I run out of medication?*

If you can't find the medication needed or have run out of medication or if you don't know whether medication has been taken or not, you will need to contact either the GP surgery or the pharmacist (if you have a regular one who delivers the medication) and seek their advice.

❖ *What if I run out of continence products?*

You will have been given a number by the continence nurses - make sure it is easily available.

❖ *What if I'm not able to get in the house to help the person I care for?*

You may not be able to get into the house because you are locked out (for example, if you have lost your key) and this could be a real concern if the person you care for needs your support and is inside. You could ask a neighbour or someone nearby to keep a spare key to your house. If there is nobody to leave a key with, you could consider a key safe. This is a secure metal box on the wall outside the house with a combination lock – you can give the code to others you trust.

There are a number of ways to obtain a key safe: 'Stay Put' (which is a not-for-profit home improvement agency operated by Yorkshire Housing Foundation, in partnership with Sheffield City Council) can fit them at a small cost (0114 256 4270), or they are available in store or online at major DIY stores.

❖ ***What if the person I care for has an accident or emergency when I'm not there?***

The person you care for may have a fall, or an accident, whilst on their own in the house. You may want to consider a care alarm for them.

There are a number of private agencies which provide these (information is available on the internet), but the one provided by Sheffield City Council is called City Wide Care Alarms (CWCA). If the person you care for falls, they can press the button on a personal care alarm, which alerts specially trained staff at an emergency call monitoring centre. They'll help them to resolve any problems they may have. They will also contact you so that you're aware of the accident. The professional support workers who respond are available at any time of the day or night, 365 days a year. This is a unique service in Sheffield and is available to anyone over 18 years of age living in the Sheffield Council area.

The service also offers a number of additional alarms (such as a bed occupancy sensor, property exit sensor, or medication reminders) to help with specific issues such as for those at risk of falling, or with memory problems.

There is a charge for this service. For more information contact City Wide Care Alarms on 0800 0130980 or 0114 242 0351.

Please remember that Carers in Sheffield is here to help you with any aspect of your caring role. We can provide information and support to all carers of adults – please do contact us on 0114 272 8362 Monday – Friday 9 am – 6 pm or email support@sheffieldcarers.org.uk

Website: www.sheffieldcarers.org.uk