

Emergency planning for carers: guidance

Your emergency plan

When you are caring for someone, it is a good idea to put together an emergency plan in case something happens and you are temporarily unable to provide care. The Carers Information Service has a template emergency plan you can use.

To create your emergency plan, you will need to know:

- Name, address and any other contact details of the person you care for.
- Emergency contact details of people who can provide replacement care.
- Any medication the person is taking.
- Any ongoing treatment they need.
- Their support, mobility and communication needs.

How to put your plan together

- Take time to talk through your plan with everyone who will be involved. Make sure that all your emergency contacts are happy to provide replacement care in an emergency and for names and contact details to be shared.
- Decide where to keep your plan. Keep it somewhere safe and easy to hand.
- If the person you care for needs specific medication, write on the plan where this is kept and attach a prescription list if possible.
- Double-check the phone numbers, especially out of hours' numbers, for any emergency contacts.
- If a child or young person is one of your emergency contacts, make sure that you have parental permission to include their details and that their school is aware. If they have a caring role, the Off the Record Young Carers Service may be able to support them (020 8649 9339, option 2, www.talkofftherecord.org/croydon/young-carers-service).
- If someone in the household has a pet, let your emergency contacts know about this and think about alternative arrangements that will be required to look after them.
- Give copies of your plan to:
 - All of your emergency contacts.
 - Any care providers supporting the person you care for.
 - The person you care for's GP.
 - The person you care for's social worker (if they have one).
 - The person providing your Carer's Assessment (if applicable).
- When you have completed your plan, date it and add your review due date.
- Review your plan annually, or sooner if something changes.

If you would like support filling in your emergency plan, contact the Carers Information Service on 020 8649 9339, option 1 or email enquiries@carersinfo.org.uk.

Other ways to prepare for emergencies

Keep a list of emergency contacts

Make sure you have any emergency contact numbers in a place you can easily access e.g. stuck on your fridge. If you and the person you care for have mobile phones, you can enter an 'ICE' (in case of emergency) number in the contacts section, listing the details of the best person to call in an emergency. This can also help if the person you care for is likely to wander and get lost, or finds it difficult to ask for help.

Emergency Card

The Carers Information Service can supply you with an emergency card to show someone relies on you for care, with space to write on details of who to contact in an emergency. Keep this in your wallet or travel pass holder to ensure that emergency services can find it in a hurry. Collect your card from the Carers Support Centre, or call us on 020 8649 9339, option 1.

Tell your employer you are a carer

If you are juggling work and care, it is a good idea to let your manager and human resources department know, as every employee has the right to take 'reasonable' time off work for an emergency that affects a dependant. A dependant includes a spouse, partner, parent, child or relative living with you. It may also include someone who relies on you for help in an emergency. Please be aware that the right to time off only applies in unexpected events that affect the dependant, does not have to be paid and must be reasonable in the circumstances. Contact ACAS (0300 123 1100, www.acas.org.uk) for more information.

Register for a replacement care service

Croydon Council's Croycare service provides up to two hours' replacement care for the person you care for in an emergency. If you register, you will receive a card with your name, unique ID number and an emergency phone number. If you have an accident, emergency or are taken seriously ill, you (or someone on your behalf) can call the 24 hour CarelinePlus team. A team member will visit the person you care for and stay with them for up to two hours. This will allow for more permanent care arrangements to be put into place if required. Call 020 8654 7166 (CarelinePlus) or email careline@croydon.gov.uk to register.

Ask for a Carer's Assessment

If you are caring for someone and need support, you are entitled to a Carer's Assessment. Your Carer's Assessment will look at the impact your caring role has on your life and wellbeing, and any support you need to maintain your caring role.

During your Carer's Assessment, you can raise any concerns about what would happen to the person you care for in an emergency, and ask for support to put the plan in place. The Carers Information Service is commissioned by Croydon Council to provide Carer's Assessments for adults caring for an adult residing in Croydon. To request a Carer's Assessment, call 020 8663 5664 (direct line), email assessments@carersinfo.org.uk or drop in to the Carers Support Centre.

Think about home safety

The Age UK Croydon Personal Safety Project (www.ageuk.org.uk/croydon) aims to help older people who have fallen, or who are at risk of falling, by identifying potential hazards and helping to reduce risk of slips and trips in their own home. The service can arrange for additional stair rails, grab handles and other aids to be supplied and fitted free of charge. As part of NHS Croydon's Integrated Falls Team, they can also refer on to other services, such as assessment by occupational therapist, or physiotherapy, for those with more complex needs. Following referral and initial risk assessment visit, the project can provide ongoing telephone support for up to six weeks to monitor the risk of further falls. Call 020 8680 5450 or email personalsafetyproject@ageukcroydon.org.uk for more information.

London Fire Brigade (0800 028 44 28, www.fireservice.co.uk) provides free home safety checks and smoke alarm fittings. London Fire Brigade staff will visit at home and provide advice, based on the household and lifestyle, to minimise the risk of a blaze. First time visits may take up to 90 minutes and can take place any day of the week, at a convenient time. Priority groups include: older people living alone; people with mobility, vision or hearing impairments; mental health service users and those with substance addictions. Buying a Keysafe which can be attached to the outside of the property is a practical way of allowing other people to enter a property in an emergency. Police can also provide a welfare check if the person you care for is in a house that you cannot access- for example, if they lock themselves in.

Croydon Council's Healthy Homes Service (0800 292 2529, www.croydon.gov.uk/healthyhomes) offers Croydon residents who meet the criteria (receiving benefits, or living with a household member who has a chronic medical condition, or carers, or aged 70 and over). If you are eligible, you can receive a home visit from an energy assessor who can review your home, give advice and fit energy reduction measures, as well as provide safety equipment such as a carbon monoxide detector.

Look into specialist equipment

Croydon Council's Careline provides a range of telecare services, including:

- Careline button to alert a Careline operator if the person has a fall.
- Fall and movement detectors to reduce risk of falls.
- Smoke, flood, gas and carbon monoxide detectors.
- Automatically alerting a carer of a potential risk situation within the home.

There is a one-off installation fee and a weekly or quarterly charge for this service. People who need support can also receive this service after a Needs Assessment by Croydon Adult Social Care and a financial assessment. To request telecare, contact Croydon Council Contact Centre (020 8726 6000) or call Careline directly (020 8654 7166, careline@croydon.gov.uk) for a demonstration.

Don't forget to keep instruction manuals handy for any equipment that the person you care for relies on, as these may have contact details in case of breakdown. You could also list emergency plumbers, locksmiths and electricians in your plan.

Register for Priority Utility Services

The Priority Services Register is run by energy suppliers and offers free services to customers who have a disability or long-term illness, as well as those receiving a pension or who have a child under five. This will ensure that you receive extra support, such as braille or large print bills, meter readings, annual safety checks, priority reconnection, or support in an emergency such as a power cut. Contact the relevant energy supplier to register.

Be aware of rogue traders

Scammers commonly target older and vulnerable people. If the person you care for lives alone or is alone during the day, advise them to refuse to talk to cold-callers and encourage them to follow the “lock, stop, chain and check procedure”:

- Secure all other outer doors when opening a front door.
- Think about whether you’re expecting anyone to visit.
- Put the door chain on before opening
- Check identity by asking for an ID card or other credentials.
- Ask caller to come back at a time when other people are in the house.

You can avoid inviting in bogus officials by asking utility providers to set up a password system if they are visiting to check meters. Find out if there is a local neighbourhood watch scheme and ask if they have a nominated neighbour who can help make sure if callers are safe. If in any doubt, call the police. Victims of scams can report the incident to Action Fraud (0300 123 2040, www.actionfraud.police.uk), the national fraud and cybercrime reporting centre. They can also help whilst a live cyberattack is being committed.

Gather medical information

If the person you care for relies on medication, attach a print out of their prescription list and pharmacy to the emergency plan. You can also use the Message in a Bottle scheme to save time if emergency services need to enter a property. Stickers on the back of the front door and on the fridge door guide emergency services to a plastic bottle in the fridge, containing medical information about members of the household and emergency contacts. You could put a short note in there advising where your emergency plan is kept. Bottles are available for free from Croydon Lions Club (020 8681 2306, lenhoney77@yahoo.co.uk) or from the Carers Support Centre.

Using a Medicalert can also save time in an emergency. Medicalert is ID jewellery worn on your pulse point. Carrying the international medical symbol, the ID enables emergency professionals to access free information from members’ secure emergency personal records and respond accordingly. There is an annual fee for this service. To find out more, call 01908 951 045 or visit www.medicalert.org.uk.

The NHS 111 telephone service is open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year and can provide details for out-of-hours medical advice, dentists and pharmacies. If the person you care for is in touch with mental health services, they can contact the community mental health team and speak to their care co-ordinator. For urgent or out-of-hours help or advice, contact the SLAM 24-hour mental health support line on 0800 731 2864. If the person needs help immediately, go to your nearest hospital with an Accident and Emergency (A&E) Department, where the psychiatric liaison team can help you.

Think about finances

You may need to manage someone’s affairs in an emergency. One practical and straightforward measure is a third party banking mandate – this is an instruction in writing to a bank from the account holder giving a nominated person access to their account. Some banks accept a letter, whilst others require their own third party mandate form.

If the person you care for cannot manage their benefits, you can apply to become their appointee. Contact the relevant benefits office to apply. For people who may lose their ability to make decisions, Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) may be helpful. LPA allows someone to grant you the power to make decisions on their behalf when they no longer have capacity in two areas- property and affairs and/or personal welfare. To set up an LPA, contact the Office of the Public Guardian (0300 456 0300) or visit www.lastingpowerofattorney.service.gov.uk/home.