



INFORMATION SHEET 11

WHEN CARING BEGINS

Looking after a partner, relative or friend can be something that either creeps up on you slowly or happens suddenly as a result of an illness or accident. Either way it can have a massive impact on your life. There is so much to sort out and so much new information to learn.

Signpost Stockport is here to help you in the coming months or years, and we hope you will use us as a source of information, advice or emotional support. We are here to help you.

The decision to become a carer is not to be taken lightly; it is something that needs careful consideration. It is very important that you do not allow yourself to be persuaded by relatives, or professionals, to take on a caring role if you don't think that this is the right thing for you to do. Remember that you do have a choice, even if it might not feel like it!

It is important that when making a decision on whether to become a carer or not, to consider the impact this decision will have on your life, and what support is available:

- What aspects of your life will you be giving up, or will be restricted? (eg. work, leisure activities, family life)
- What are the positive aspects of becoming a carer?
- What support will you have from family and friends? (it is helpful if you can get people to be specific about what assistance they will be able to provide)
- Have you informed your GP that you are now a carer, so they can monitor your health?
- What support will you be getting from social/health services? (eg. Home care, day care, district nurse etc)
- What impact will becoming a carer have on your financial situation? Do you know what benefits you will be entitled to? What equipment might you need?
- What impact will becoming a carer have on your family life, children, partner etc
- When will you have a break from your caring role? How often will this be? Who will take over the caring role whilst you are away?

These may be difficult questions to consider, but a chat with one of the team at

Signpost may help to generate some of the answers. Recognising yourself as a carer is the first step to getting the support you need. Many people do not see themselves as a carer, just a parent, partner, child or friend helping a loved one with the things they cannot do or find difficult. No one likes to be labelled, but recognising yourself as a care can be the gateway to getting help.

When should I first contact Signpost Stockport?

Many carers say that they have gained most of their knowledge accidentally and that they wish they had known it from the start. Signpost aims to be the main source of information for carers in Stockport, so contact us as early as possible to ensure you have the information you need. We have factsheets providing essential information for carers.

It is an unfortunate fact that people do not ask for help until a situation has reached crisis point. It is easy to neglect yourself when you are busy looking after somebody else. Caring without a break and support can be very tiring and stressful and it is important that you recognise this. Signpost can offer advice, information and other services which can support you and possibly make life a little easier. We are not here to tell you how to be a carer, or to interfere in what you do.

All carers are welcome to phone our helpline on 0161 456 2808.

Carers in employment

If you are a carer in employment and your employer or colleagues are not aware of your situation, they are less likely to be sympathetic if you need time off (not necessarily paid) to deal with an emergency involving some one you are caring for. Carers UK provide an information sheet which gives further information about caring and work. It can be obtained from them by telephoning 0808 808 7777 or visiting their website 'www.carersuk.org'.