



Carers' Support (Bexley)

*Supported by the London Borough of Bexley and the City of London Corporation's charitable funder, City Bridge Trust*

# Guide for Families

## **BREAKS SERVICE**

**020 8302 6579**

**Carers' Support (Bexley), Crayford Manor House  
Mayplace Road East, Crayford DA1 4HB**

**A LARGE PRINT VERSION OF THESE GUIDELINES  
IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST**

*Registered Charity No. 1075801*

## **About Carers' Support (Bexley)**

Carers' Support (Bexley) was started in September 1994 to provide flexible breaks for Carers by offering support to people in their own homes. Support is given by full time volunteers who can provide help with things like social activities, company and companionship and help to ensure the safety of the person you care for while you are away from the home.

Our aim is to build up relationships gradually, and only when everyone is happy about it, will the volunteer take over from the Carer.

Carers' Support (Bexley) is a registered charity number 1075801.

## **Details of Service**

Any carer caring for someone over the age of 18 can use the service. Each family may book either regular breaks (one day per fortnight or one half day per week), **or** up to 28 days per year (April to March) for one-off breaks, for example, several days in a row so the Carer can go away for a holiday.

In certain circumstances, volunteers can also accompany a family on holiday to assist with the caring and enable a Carer to have a more relaxing holiday (in the British Isles only).

While COVID 19 restrictions remain in place, our volunteers will wear a face mask and/or visor at all times when in your home. They will keep a 2 metre distance from the person they are looking after where possible.

Volunteers cannot help with personal care, or administer medication, and they are not expected to do any heavy domestic tasks such as cleaning windows, but they can help with other things, like accompanying the cared-for person on local trips (for example going out for a walk or to the shops), and providing companionship and to ensure that the time spent with the cared-for person is a positive experience for them both. At all times the volunteer's role is to do all they can to assist, rather than take over, and help the cared for person maintain any independence they already have, as well as promote and encourage it. It is important to remember that the volunteer is there because they want to help and they need to know that they are valued. For their part, volunteers are aware that they are guests in your house and should respect your wishes about how things are done.

The service is free but there may be an expense incurred if you ask to have a break that finishes after 9pm (see Health and Safety section).

Volunteers cannot accept any personal payment but donations are welcome which should be sent direct to the office (please do not send cash).

## **Eligibility**

The service is aimed at Carers who do not receive any other breaks provided by the London Borough of Bexley (ie Bexley Council). Before you can receive our service we will need to contact the council's social services department to ascertain what services you are already receiving from them (if any). **We will ask for your consent before we share your details with the Council.**

## **About Our Volunteers**

Our volunteers are young people, mostly from overseas, who commit themselves to working for our charity for between 6-12 months. We provide them with accommodation and living expenses. They are able to work daytimes and evenings, covering overnights for holiday breaks. However, we do not provide any cover over the Christmas and New Year period and usually do not cover Bank Holidays.

All volunteers have a clear Police check from their country of origin (if they do not normally live in the UK) and as soon as they arrive, we will apply for an enhanced police check (known as a DBS).

## **How to access our Service**

**Contact: Carers Support Bexley 020 8302 8011**

A member of staff from our Information and Support Service will talk to you about your caring role to see what services and support are available to you and what would be the best option(s) for you. They will also be able to advise you about whether you are likely to meet the criteria to access the Breaks Service. If agreed, your name will be added to our waiting list (if one exists) and once you are at the top, a member of the Respite Team will contact you and arrange to have a longer phone call with you so that we can talk about what needs you and the cared-for person have and if we feel we can help. Consideration will be given as to whether a volunteer can carry out the tasks involved without problems, risk to their own safety, or that of the person requiring assistance.

## **When the Service begins**

If we feel we have a suitable volunteer, s/he will be introduced to you and will make one or more visits (depending on what is required) to get to know the person they will be looking after before you leave them alone together.

In their first few months, volunteers receive induction training provided by us. However, they also need to be trained by *you* so that things are done in the way you and the cared-for person want (subject to these falling within Health and Safety guidelines).

The planned break can take place when everyone is confident about the volunteer's ability to support the person needing care and the volunteer and the person you care for both feel that they can get on together while you are away. The Service Manager is available to support these arrangements and provide any additional training if needed.

## **Consent**

We require the consent of the person you care for before the service can take place. If, due to illness or disability, the cared for person might not have the capacity to consent, we will carry out a mental capacity assessment and if necessary make a Best Interest Decision on their behalf to put the service in place.

## **Health & Safety**

We are obliged to protect the health and safety of our volunteers and the person they are caring for. We may therefore have to ask you to comply with certain requirements. For example, volunteers cannot be asked to care for someone if that person smokes and there is no smoke free place for the

volunteer to carry out their role. Other factors we have to take into consideration include the environment the volunteer will be working in or any electrical appliances they may be using.

If the volunteer will be leaving your home after 9pm, we may ask you to pay for a taxi for them to ensure that they get home safely.

### **Emergencies**

Please ensure that you give your volunteer the telephone numbers of people who can be contacted in an emergency. If there are any special situations that they may have to cope with, please let them or the Service Manager know. The volunteer will have access to a member of staff in cases of emergency as well.

### **Cancellations**

If you cancel with less than 48 hours' notice and we are unable to offer the time to another Carer, we will still have to count the break as part of your allocation for the year.

When families cancel breaks at short notice it does mean that our limited resources are not being put to best use. We understand that, at times, breaks have to be cancelled due to sudden illness or an unexpected event, but please do not cancel at the last minute because you have changed your mind. Our volunteers could, if we had been given enough notice, be caring for someone else and giving a much needed break to another family Carer.

Please be aware that if you call to cancel late on a Friday for a Saturday visit, we may not be able to advise the volunteer of the cancellation. This is because we do not have the funding to enable us to have a member of staff in the office all the time. Staff members do check the office answering machine from time to time over the weekend, but we cannot guarantee that they will always pick up your message in time. Therefore, the volunteer may arrive as planned and you will have to tell them when they arrive that they are not required. If they arrive and you are not at home, they will try to call you, or will call the member of staff who is on call to advise them, and we will call you to find out what is happening.

Occasionally, Carers' Support (Bexley) will have to cancel a break because your volunteer is ill. We cannot replace them with another volunteer, as we do not have a pool of volunteers available for such circumstances. We are sorry about the inconvenience and disappointment this will cause you, but we do not have funding to cover such occurrences. However, if you are going away and have booked a holiday, we will make every effort to cover this if we can.

### **Insurance**

Although every effort will be made to meet your needs and provide a volunteer for the times/dates you request, we cannot guarantee a service for specific periods. It is therefore very important that you take out the necessary insurance to cover for cancellation if you book and pay for a holiday. It is also in your interests to provide insurance cover for any damage which may accidentally be caused by a volunteer in your home. Volunteers are covered by public liability insurance through the charity.

## **Equality and Inclusion**

Carers' Support aims to promote equality of opportunity. Therefore, families wishing to use the service will not be discriminated against on grounds of race, gender identity, disability, sexual orientation, age, religion or belief. This also applies to the acceptance of volunteers into the organisation. Any racial or sexual abuse or harassment of volunteers while they are with families may lead to the service being withdrawn.

English is the only language spoken by Carers' Support (Bexley) staff. However, we will try to find an interpreter or signer if they are available. Please let us know if you require this service.

## **On going support from Carer's Break Service**

If you decide to use our service on an on-going basis, it will be necessary to introduce other volunteers to you from time to time. Either a member of the Respite Team or another volunteer you already know will bring the new volunteer to meet you and the person you care for. Even if there is no change of volunteer, the Service Manager will need to visit you from time to time (and at least once a year) to ensure that the details you gave us originally are still up to date and review the Support Plan. Please let us know as soon as possible if there are any changes to your circumstances or to the needs of the person you care for.

## **Donations**

The funding we receive only covers the day-to-day running of the service. We rely on donations in order to provide any "extras" which are needed. For example, birthday and Christmas presents for the volunteers, items of furniture for their flat, office equipment and other unforeseen expenses. If you are satisfied with the service you receive from us and would like to make a donation, cheques should be made payable to **Carers' Support (Bexley)**, and sent to the address on the front of this Guide. You may also donate directly to our bank if you prefer. Our bank details can be found on page 8 of this Guide.

## **Compliments and Complaints**

Carers' Support is keen to provide a service that meets the needs of individual carers and those they care for and we aim to respond to your needs (within the limitations of our resources) where we can. We therefore welcome any comments or suggestions you wish to make. You will be asked to complete a questionnaire about what you think of the service and this is sent out once a year (usually in the Autumn). This will help us to consider any changes that might improve the service and also help with the service's continued funding. You may request a copy of the results.

Of course, we hope that it never happens, but if you are unhappy with our service and wish to make a complaint, we have a complaints procedure attached to this document. Please do not think that you will lose the service or be a nuisance by telling us if you are dissatisfied in any way - we want to know so we can try to remedy the problem.

## **How to contact us**

If for any reason you need to contact your volunteer or the office, please telephone the Carers Breaks' office on **020 8302 6579**. You can leave a message on the answerphone if no-one is available. You can also text us on our office hours mobile which is 07749 913 643 but please text your full name so we know who is contacting us.

## **Booking your breaks**

You can ring us to request further dates or more typically, the Service Manager will contact you, offering dates in advance that match your usual 'slot'. If your usual slot is not available (due to your volunteer being on holiday/training/covering a client holiday break), we will, when possible, offer alternate days/visits if we can.

## **Statement of Confidentiality**

Any verbal or written information you give to Carers' Support (Bexley) will be treated as confidential unless you tell us otherwise. Staff and volunteers may need to share information with their supervisor within Carers' Support (Bexley), but we will not pass on anything to anyone outside the organisation without your consent. The only exception to this will be where we have concerns about the well-being of a child or vulnerable adult, or where a third party may be harmed if the information is not disclosed, where it relates to the risk of self-harming, or where a crime has been or is likely to be committed.

In order to give a good service and to avoid us having to ask you for the same information more than once, it will be necessary for us to keep certain records. This will include written/electronic records about your health and care needs, the health and care needs of family members or any problems you may choose to share with us. All files and other information will be stored securely and used only for the purpose for which it was supplied. Any information we hold about you will be deleted/destroyed when no longer required.

If you have provided your name and address and agreed to go on our mailing list, we will send you our Carers Voice magazine twice a year, together with any other information we think could be of interest to you, including information about how you can help our charity if you wish to do so. If you change your mind and would like to be removed from our mailing list at any time, or if you would like us to destroy/delete any records we hold about you, you just need to let us know. You may do this verbally (either face to face or by telephone: 020 8302 8011), by email: [info@carerssupport.org](mailto:info@carerssupport.org) or by post: Carers' Support (Bexley), Crayford Manor House, Mayplace Road East, Crayford, DA1 4HB

If you wish to see the records we hold about you, you may do so, provided you give us reasonable notice. You may be asked for some form of identification so that we can verify that you are the person to whom the information relates.

## Compliments

Have we provided a good service? If so, please let us know!

[margaret@carerssupport.org](mailto:margaret@carerssupport.org) or [maria@carerssupport.org](mailto:maria@carerssupport.org)

020 8302 6579

## Would you like to make a donation?

Our Carers Breaks Service is free of charge to carers, but in order to continue to provide this service, we do rely on voluntary donations. If you would like to help us in this way you can send a cheque payable to **Carers' Support (Bexley)** or **make a donation directly into our bank account**. Our bank details are:

Account: Carers' Support (Bexley)

Sort Code: 40-52-40

Account number: 00009013

Regular monthly donations are also appreciated and you can do this directly into our account. We will always ask anyone donating if they are a tax payer, and if so, claim Gift Aid from your very kind donation (with your permission). If you would like to talk to someone about making a donation or setting up a standing order, please contact our Admin Office on 020 8302 8011. Thank you.

## Do you want to Complain?

If you are dissatisfied with the quality of service received from us we take this very seriously and you have the right to make a complaint if you wish to do so. Examples of complaints could include: dissatisfaction with the speed at which we have responded to your enquiry, a staff member being late for or missing an appointment, lack of courtesy from a member of staff or volunteer. However, this list is by no means exhaustive. If you are unhappy about any aspect of our service, we need to know about it so that we can put things right. Please do not think that by complaining you will lose our service.

### How do I make a complaint?

1. Talk to the member of staff responsible for the service you are using:

A member of the Respite Team can be contacted on 020 8302 6579. You may speak to them on the telephone, face to face at the office, or by making an appointment for them to visit you at home.

They must listen to you. You can ask to be supported throughout this complaint by an independent individual or organisation. We will endeavour to provide an interpreter or signer for you if you wish.

If your complaint is about that staff member, you can write or talk to the Chief Executive or you can write to the Chair of the Management Committee. Please mark any correspondence 'Private and Confidential'. Within 7 days of telling us about your complaint, you will receive an acknowledgement in writing that we have received a complaint from you.

2. Tell the person you speak to the reason for the complaint, where, when and how things happened and say how you felt about the episode.
3. You can tape or write the complaint down. This must be done together with a staff member so that you are in agreement with what has been stated and you should be given a copy for your records.

### **What will we do about your complaint?**

1. The staff member dealing with the complaint will try and resolve the matter and will ask you what action you wish to be taken. He/she will then tell the Chief Executive and/or the Chair of the Management Committee about the course of events.
2. Within 28 days of receiving your initial complaint, we will inform you in writing of the outcome of the investigation we have carried out into your complaint. If you wish, you can also meet again with the staff member to talk about what has happened.
3. If you think your complaint has been resolved, then the procedure is complete and will be reported to the Management Committee at the next meeting.

### **What if I am still not satisfied?**

1. If the complaint has not been dealt with to your satisfaction, you can meet with the Chief Executive or the Chair or another member of the Management Committee who will investigate your complaint and try to resolve the matter.
2. If you are not satisfied with the decision of the Chair or member of the Management Committee, then you have the right to go to your MP or Councillor and ask for help.

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