

Factsheet G11A – Backing You Up – Health and Community Services (HCS)

Why Contingency Plan?

If you look after a relative or friend who is ill, frail or disabled you may worry about what would happen if you were unable to care for them. How would they cope if you were suddenly taken ill, caught in traffic or even in an accident yourself? Who could be called on to help out – even on a temporary basis? Health and Community Services (HCS) in Hertfordshire have recognised that this is a very real issue for many carers and so, usually as part of a carers assessment, can help you draw up a contingency plan to give reassurance that back up would be there for you in an emergency.

To receive this service you must be:

- Caring for an adult of any age with physical or learning disabilities who is eligible for Health and Community Services (although they do not need to be currently receiving them e.g. because you are providing all the care they need.)
- A 'regular and substantial carer' i.e. caring has a significant impact on your life.

What can the plan do?

The Health and Community Services (HCS) contingency plan will outline cover arrangements needed, if, at short notice, you are unable to provide care. It will be held on their electronic care records so that it can be accessed by HCS staff 24 hours per day, 365 days per year.

The plan could include:

- The support available from relatives, friends and neighbours
- Formal services that HCS would need to organise.
- A mixture of the two – some formal services to supplement support from family and friends.

Any friends or relatives who agree to be part of the plan will need to give written consent to their details being held on HCS records. Once this has been arranged and the full plan registered with HCS you will be provided with a 'Carers Card' to carry in your purse or wallet. It looks something like this:

<p>I AM A CARER Someone's safety depends on me. In an emergency contact Hertfordshire Health and Community Services 0300 123 4042 (24 hours)</p>

www.carersinherts.org.uk

An ID number on the reverse of the card will link with your contingency plan logged on the HCS system and enable it to be put into action in providing short term emergency care cover as agreed with you. This also gives time for a fuller assessment of the situation to be made if it seems that continuing help will be needed.

The system is not active until you have received your Carers Card and HCS do ask that you take responsibility to let them know of any changes to the contact details you have provided. *Carers in Hertfordshire* can help with this if you want us to.

How can I arrange to make a plan?

Call Health and Community Services on 0300 123 4042 and ask for someone to talk to you about drawing up a carers contingency plan. If you prefer, ring *Carers in Hertfordshire* and we will contact HCS for you.

If you wish you can arrange a contingency plan as part of a carers assessment (see factsheet G3). A carers assessment is an opportunity for you to discuss your caring situation in some detail with a social worker and explore what support and services are available to help. However you do not need to take up other services to have your contingency plan registered with HCS.

Not eligible for HCS help or don't want to involve them?

Carers in Hertfordshire can help you draw up your own plan with the help of friends and relatives who would be willing to help out. See factsheet 11B for more details.

Other useful emergency contacts and information:

'Out of hours' health and community service help and advice in Hertfordshire can be contacted on the following numbers:

Health and Community Services	0300 123 4042
Mental Health Services	01438 843322
Children Schools and Families	0300 123 4043
GP out of hours service	111 or contact own GP where you will be re-directed to the out of hours service

The **'Message in a Bottle'** scheme (www.lions.org.uk) can also be useful in an emergency. A bottle is available from your GP surgery, pharmacy, health centre or local Lions club. You put vital personal and medical information inside it and keep it in the fridge. Emergency services will know there is a bottle by two labels. One fixed to the inside of the front door and the other to the door of the fridge.

www.carersinherts.org.uk

'Lifeline' and Community alarms systems can be installed in the homes of vulnerable people by your local district council. An emergency button is supplied to be worn on a pendant around the neck or on a wristband so that the person you care for can alert an operator at the other end to a problem situation at home. There is usually a small weekly charge for this service. Contact your local district council for details of the scheme in your area.

Health and Community Services can arrange for a 'keysafe' to be installed at the home of the person you care for. This is a secure way of storing a key, accessed by a pincode, so that trusted people who have been given the code can enter without the person having to come to the door to let them in.