

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

in partnership with Northumberland County Council

Better Care, Higher Standards

Updated 02/04/11

## **Information sheet 7 – care in your own home**

Care managers can arrange home care services provided by a number of different organisations. Some home carers work for the County Council or the NHS, others work for voluntary or private organisations. This information sheet describes what you can expect from any service arranged through care management, whoever provides it.

For information about charges for home care, see Information Sheet 5.

# **The standards you can expect**

Your home carers should keep confidential all information about you, and should not repeat it without your agreement to anyone except those involved in arranging your care.

Your care manager should send you a written care plan saying when the home carers will come. If the plan gives an exact time, they should arrive within fifteen minutes of that time, otherwise they should arrive within the time band set out in the plan. Home carers should always stay for the length of time stated in the plan.

Home carers should carry identity cards or other proof of identity. If you are in any doubt, you should contact the organisation which employs them. Genuine home carers will not mind waiting outside while you do this.

Home carers should have suitable skills and experience, and be honest and careful. They should respect your privacy, your dignity and your independence.

Home carers should **not**:

- smoke while they are in your house
- ask you to provide them with a meal
- bring children, relatives, friends, or pets
- attempt to sell you anything or to borrow anything from you

All organisations providing home care are insured against damage or injury caused by negligence in the way care is provided.

## **Your responsibilities**

Home carers cannot work in unsafe conditions. You must make sure that your home carers are not put at risk of accidents, verbal or physical abuse, or attack from an animal.

When they are planning how to provide you with care, home care agencies will need to consider other risks to the health

and safety of their carers. Back injuries are one major risk for home care staff. If you need help from your home carer to move around, you may have to agree to let them use special equipment such as slide sheets or hoists.

Home carers are not allowed to accept gifts – please do not put them in a difficult position by offering one. They are also not allowed to loan people money.

## **How much choice do I have about how my home care is provided?**

If you need different help on a particular visit, you can ask your home carer to change what s/he does. For instance if s/he normally gets you out of bed, but you are unwell, you might want to stay in bed but be helped in other ways.

However there are some things that home carers cannot do because they are not trained to, or because they are not safe. You cannot ask a home carer to stay longer than usual, except in a serious emergency. If you regularly ask

home carers to do things which aren't in your care plan, your care manager may have to review whether you really need the level of service which is being provided.

If you have a strong view about which organisation you would prefer your care to be provided by, let your care manager know. We will try to meet this preference if we have a contract with that organisation for the kind of care you need, though there may sometimes be practical difficulties about this.

Finally, you have the option of taking complete control over arranging your own service by asking to be given the money to employ home carers yourself (see Information Sheet 14).

## **Making changes to your service**

If you are not available at the usual time for some special reason, you should contact the organisation providing your help and ask them to change the times or miss a day or a week. They may not always be able to offer an alternative

time, but they should try to.

The organisation will let the Care Trust know if some visits have been cancelled, so as to sort out what we need to pay them. From time to time, someone from the Care Trust may contact you to check that this information is accurate. It would be helpful if you are able to keep a note of any visits that you cancel, or any occasions when you get more help than usual for some special reason.

If you have not let the organisation know that you will be out, and they call in vain, you will usually have to pay for the service anyway (unless there is some special reason such as a medical emergency).

Any permanent changes to your service will need to be agreed with your care manager. The organisation providing your care should not make permanent changes without doing so. This includes changes from what your care plan says about the times of your visits.

If your circumstances have changed and you think you need extra help, or if you want to change the arrangements in any other way, you should contact your care manager and ask for a review of your care plan.

## **Queries or complaints**

If you have any queries or complaints about the quality of the service you are getting, you should usually take them up first with the organisation responsible. Organisations are required to have a procedure for investigating complaints.

If you do not get on with a particular home carer, the organisation should try to send someone else, if that is practical without inconveniencing other users of the service.

Information sheet 4 gives further advice about how to make a complaint, if you need to.