

DOWN LISBURN TRUST



# Do you look after someone?

## Carer Information Booklet

**For copies in large print or other languages  
Tel: Carers Development Officer  
028 9756 5456**



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## FOREWARD

My name is Joan Scott and I am Down Lisburn Trusts Carers Development Officer. My role is to help professionals on the ground to provide help and support for carers as necessary. The content of this booklet is the information which has been most requested by carers, staff and carer organisations.

To date a lot has happened within the Trust in relation to raising awareness of the needs of carers within all programmes and introducing carer assessments. However, staff recognise that it is early days in terms of providing specific provision for carers.

We have made a start in recognising the needs of carers and providing support for them in their caring role. There is still a lot to be put in place and I feel it is important to involve carers in deciding what services and supports are needed. To this end, I will be contacting carers who are on my list and also creating a carers forum to get carer views.

I have already made contact with carer support groups, carer organisations and made links with a variety of people in voluntary organisations. I am currently putting together a list of carers who wish their name to be held by me so that I can keep carers informed about a range of information, services and carer events in the Trust. If you wish your name to be included in the carer list please complete the form on Page 3.

Down Lisburn Trust has a Carer Strategy which will be formally reviewed on a regular basis. This strategy document is available from Trust offices (see list on Page 4) and is available on the Trust's website on the internet [www.dltrust.nhs.uk](http://www.dltrust.nhs.uk) Further information for carers is also available on this website in the 'Our Services' section.

I look forward to working with carers and staff to develop services which support carers in their caring role.

Joan Scott  
Carers Development Officer

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## Contents

	Page
Foreward	1
Contents	2
Consent for Name to be held on Carer List	3
List of Down Lisburn Trust Offices	4
Information about Assessment of Carer Support Needs	5
Useful Contacts for Carers	7
Benefits for Carers	9
Carer Support Groups	11
Carer Workers in Down Lisburn Trust area	13
Carer Health Questionnaire and Information	14
Recognising Stress and Coping with it	17

## CONSENT FOR NAME TO BE ON CARER LIST

Medical Practices and Down Lisburn Trust want to improve services to people who look after friends or relatives on a regular basis. We are inviting these carers to let us know if they wish their name to be held on the Doctor's computer and/or on a list held by Down Lisburn Trust Carers Development Officer. This list will be used for the purpose of contacting carers about new services, information, support, carer events, etc. If you wish your name to be included on the carers list, please complete your details below:

Carers Name \_\_\_\_\_

Carers Address \_\_\_\_\_

Postcode \_\_\_\_\_

Telephone \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Birth \_\_\_\_\_

GP Name \_\_\_\_\_ Phone no \_\_\_\_\_

**1) I agree/do not agree** to my details being held on computer for my Doctor's information.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

**2) I agree/do not agree** to my details being held by the Carers Development Officer at Down Lisburn Trust.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

The person I **care for** is aged: 17yrs or under  18-64yrs  65yrs or over

Their main illness or difficulty is: Physical  Learning  Sight/Hearing   
Mental Illness

They live in/near: Hillsborough  Dunmurry  Lisburn   
Newcastle  Downpatrick  Ballynahinch   
Outside Down Lisburn Trust area

It is a requirement that any personal information we hold is accurate and up to date. We are therefore depending on you to let us know of any changes to the information provided. If at any time you do not wish us to continue to hold your details please let us know.

### Completed forms should be returned to:

Joan Scott Carers Development Officer,  
Down Lisburn Trust, Ballynahinch Community Services,  
45-47 Main Street,  
Ballynahinch, BT24 8DN  
OR  
Your Doctor's receptionist

## DOWN LISBURN TRUST OFFICES

This is a list of telephone numbers for Trust Offices which provide services to Carers and the people they care for.

### CONTACT NUMBERS DURING OFFICE HOURS (Weekdays 9am - 5pm):

**If you are caring for an older person, phone and speak to a Care Manager or Assistant Care Manager:**

Ballynahinch	028 9756 5456
Downpatrick	028 4461 3811
Dunmurry	028 9060 2705
Hillsborough	028 9268 3609
Lisburn	028 9266 5181
Newcastle	028 4372 3346

**If you are caring for someone with a physical or learning disability phone and speak to the Duty Social Worker:**

#### Lisburn

Adults	028 9260 4031
Children & young adults	028 9260 7528

#### Downpatrick

Adults	028 4461 6915
Children/young adults	028 4461 3311 - Ask for Childrens Disability Team

**If you are caring for someone with sensory difficulties phone and speak to the Duty Social Worker:**

Lisburn <b>Tel:</b> 028 9260 7746	Downpatrick <b>Tel:</b> 029 4461 6915
<b>Text:</b> 028 9262 8646	<b>Text:</b> 028 4461 4744
<b>Mobile:</b> 077 3987 9554	<b>Mobile:</b> 077 3987 9556

**If you are caring for someone with mental health difficulties**

Lisburn area	028 9266 5181- Ask for Mental Health Team Secretary
Downpatrick area	028 4461 3311- Ask for Mental Health Team Secretary

**If you are caring for someone with brain injury**

Lisburn and Downpatrick 029 9263 3189 - Ask to speak to a member of the Community Brain Injury Team

### EMERGENCIES OUTSIDE OFFICE HOURS (Evenings and Weekends)

028 9056 5444 - Ask for emergency duty Social Worker

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## ASSESSMENT OF CARER SUPPORT NEEDS

### Our Aim:

Down Lisburn Trust aims to recognise and value the work of carers. We will provide a separate assessment of your needs to support you in your caring role. Any information given will be treated in confidence.

### Who Is Entitled:

A carer is someone who regularly provides a substantial amount of care to a family member, friend or neighbour who is ill, disabled or is an older person.

You could be

- A young person under 18 looking after a parent/brother/sister;
- Looking after a relative with a disability;
- The parent of a child with special needs;
- A friend or relative looking after an older person.

You do not have to

- Live with the person. you care for
- Be the only carer.
- Be related to the person you care for.

You can also get an assessment of your needs if you are planning to care for someone in the near future, for example, if a relative is due to come home from hospital.

### How to Get an Assessment:

Carers have the legal right to an assessment of their own needs, separate from the person they care for.

You can ask for this assessment when your local care manager, social worker, nurse, etc. assesses the needs of the person you look after. You can have your own needs assessed even if the person you look after does not get any services.

Perhaps the person you care for has already been assessed and is receiving services. If circumstances change, for example his/her condition has got worse or you are finding it difficult to cope, you can ask for both your situations to be reassessed by social services

Carers can contact Health and Social Services Trust offices directly on one of the telephone numbers listed on Page 4 of this booklet. Alternatively, Carers may ask their GP to do this on their behalf.

### **The Assessment:**

The carer assessment focuses on you as a carer. The purpose is:

- To support you in your role as a carer and recognise the input you have into the life of the person you care for.
- To explore the amount of help or care given and look at the impact of this on you and the life of your family.
- To find out your support needs as a carer.
- To see if the support needs identified can be met by social services or others.

Account will be taken of your circumstances, views, age, general health and well being, and other available supports.

The carer assessment provides an opportunity to find out what help might be available to support you in your caring role.

The support might include:

- Information for you as a carer
- Training to help you in your caring role
- Emotional support through support groups, alternative therapies, etc.
- Practical support in the home
- Breaks from caring

## USEFUL CONTACTS FOR CARERS

This is a list of some organisations who offer information to carers. Some offer general advice and others offer advice to carers of people with a specific illness, frailty or disability.

### General Carer Organisations

#### **Belfast Carers Centre**

Supports carers through advice and information.  
Helpline: 028 9043 4700 [www.carerscentre.org](http://www.carerscentre.org)  
Fax: 028 9024 9999 Email: [info@carerscentre.org](mailto:info@carerscentre.org)

#### **Carers NI**

They provide information and advice for carers on a range of topics relating to caring. They are part of Carers UK and campaign on behalf of carers on policy matters.  
Telephone: 028 9043 9843 [www.carersonline.org.uk](http://www.carersonline.org.uk) Carers Line: 0808 808 7777  
Fax: 028 9032 9299 Email: [info@carersni.demon.co.uk](mailto:info@carersni.demon.co.uk)

### Other useful organisations with specific information

#### **Age Concern**

They provide information and support for people over 60 and their carers. In some areas, they operate day care centres, lunch clubs, home visits and social activities.  
[www.ageconcern.org](http://www.ageconcern.org) Email: [info@ageconcernni.org.uk](mailto:info@ageconcernni.org.uk)  
Advice Line: 028 9032 5055 (9.30am-1pm) Email: [advice@ageconcernni.org.uk](mailto:advice@ageconcernni.org.uk)

#### **Alzheimer's Society**

Provides information, advice and support for people with Alzheimer's and their carers. There are carer support groups running in some areas.  
Helpline: 028 9066 4100 [www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

#### **Aware Defeat Depression**

Provides information and advice for people who have depression, their families and carers. They have support groups in some areas and also arrange public talks on depression and related topics.  
Telephone: 028 7126 0602 [www.aware-ni.org](http://www.aware-ni.org) Email: [info@aware-ni.org](mailto:info@aware-ni.org)

#### **C.A.U.S.E. for Mental Health**

Provides advice and support for families and friends of people with mental health difficulties. There are a number of local Carer Advocates who run support groups, education & training programmes, a 'listening ear' and carer representation.  
Telephone: 028 9023 8284 [www.cause.org.uk](http://www.cause.org.uk) Email: [info@cause.org.uk](mailto:info@cause.org.uk)  
Fax: 028 9024 3838 Helpline: 0845 6030 291 9am-9pm 365 days per year

#### **Chest, Heart and Stroke Association N.I.**

Provides advice for people who have had chest or heart problems or who have had a stroke; as well as their carers.  
Helpline: 0845 7697299 [www.nichsa.com](http://www.nichsa.com) Email: [mail@nichsa.com](mailto:mail@nichsa.com)

### **Contact A Family**

Provides information and advice to families who care for children with a disability or special needs.

Helpline: 028 9262 7552 [www.cafamily.org.uk](http://www.cafamily.org.uk)

### **Disability Action**

Provide a wide range of information and advice to people with any disability, their families and carers.

Telephone: 028 9029 7880 [www.disabilityaction.org](http://www.disabilityaction.org)

Email: [information@disabilityaction.org](mailto:information@disabilityaction.org)

### **Down's Syndrome Association**

Provides information on Down's Syndrome. Information pack on Down's Syndrome and dementia provided.

Telephone: 028 9070 4606 [www.downs-syndrome.org.uk](http://www.downs-syndrome.org.uk) Email: [dsa-ni@yahoo.co.uk](mailto:dsa-ni@yahoo.co.uk)

### **Headway**

Provides information and support to people who have had a brain injury, as well as carers and families.

Telephone: 9020 5777 Email: [headway@ukonline.org](mailto:headway@ukonline.org)

### **Help The Aged (Seniorline Advice Service)**

Advice and advocacy service for people over 50, their relatives, carers and friends.

Telephone 028 9023 0666 Free advice line: 0808 808 7575

Email: [helptheagedni@hta.org.uk](mailto:helptheagedni@hta.org.uk) [www.helptheaged.org.uk](http://www.helptheaged.org.uk)

### **Mencap**

Provides information, residential, education and employment services, leisure opportunities, individual support and advice for people with a learning disability, their families and carers.

Helpline: 028 9069 1351 [www.mencap.org.uk](http://www.mencap.org.uk)

### **PAPA - The N.I. Autism Charity**

Provide information to people with autism, their families and carers.

Telephone: 028 9040 1729 [www.autismni.org](http://www.autismni.org) Email: [info@autismni.org](mailto:info@autismni.org)

### **Rethink**

Provides information and advice for those with severe mental illness, their family and carers. They also provide community services including employment projects, supported housing, day services and residential care.

Helpline: 028 9040 2323 [www.rethink.org](http://www.rethink.org)

### **Speechmatters**

Provides information and advice to adults who have speech difficulties, their families and carers.

Telephone: 028 9040 1389 [www.speechmatters.org](http://www.speechmatters.org) Email: [info@speechmatters.org](mailto:info@speechmatters.org)

## BENEFITS FOR CARERS

The benefit system is complex and finding out what help is available is not always easy. This section gives a brief overview of benefits for carers. You can get further help and advice from a Citizen's Advice Bureau, an Independent Advice Centre, a Disability Organisation or CarersNI (Tel 028 9043 9843)

### CARER'S ALLOWANCE

Carer's Allowance is the main benefit for carers. It is paid at a basic rate of £45.70 a week.

You can get Carer's Allowance if:

- For at least 35 hours a week, you look after someone who gets Attendance Allowance or the middle or higher rate of the care component of Disability Living Allowance; **and**
- You are over 16; **and**
- You are not studying for more than 21 hours a week; **and**
- You earn £82 a week or less (after specified deductions); **and**
- You do not receive one of a list of other benefits paid at a higher rate than Carer's Allowance (including State Retirement Pension, Incapacity Benefit and Bereavement Benefits); **and**
- You satisfy UK residence and immigration rules.

Sometimes, if you are paid Carer's Allowance, the person you care for may lose some of their benefit. If you are unsure, seek further advice.

To claim, call 0800 220674

### CARER PREMIUM

The Carer Premium is not a benefit, but an extra allowance used in the calculation of some means-tested benefits (Pension Credit, Income Support, Income-based Jobseeker's Allowance, Housing Benefit and Rate Rebate). A Carer Premium of £25.80 a week is included in the benefit calculation if you get Carer's Allowance or cannot get Carer's Allowance because you receive another benefit paid at a higher rate.

### NATIONAL INSURANCE CREDITS

You receive a National Insurance Contribution Credit for each week that you qualify for Carer's Allowance. The credit protects your State Retirement Pension and State Second Pension and may help you to qualify for Incapacity Benefit or contribution-based Jobseeker's Allowance in the future.

If you cannot get a Contribution Credit, you may still be able to protect your pension by claiming Home Responsibilities Protection. For more information contact your local Inland revenue office.

## **BENEFITS - PEOPLE WHO ARE ILL OR HAVE A DISABILITY**

### **Disability Living Allowance (DLA) and Attendance Allowance (AA)**

DLA and AA are state benefits that help with the extra costs of long-term illness or disability. They are paid whatever your income or savings. They are not taxable. They are paid to the person who has the illness or disability or to the adult responsible for a child under 16. DLA is for people who first claim before the age of 65. AA is for people who claim on or after their 65th birthday.

To claim, call 0800 220674.

## **FINANCIAL SUPPORT AND BENEFIT FOR PEOPLE ON LOW INCOME**

### **Income Support (IS)**

This is for people whose income is below minimum levels set by the Government. It is for people under 60 who do not have to sign-on to claim Jobseeker's Allowance. The minimum level varies with your circumstances. Carers do not have to sign-on if the person they care for gets DLA at the highest or middle rate for personal care or AA. If you are 60 or over see Pension Credit. You cannot claim Income Support if you have more than £8,000 in savings.

Claim Income Support from your local social security office.

### **Pension Credit**

Pension Credit is a benefit for people aged 60 or over. The Credit has two parts, one is equivalent to Income Support and the other provides extra income for people 65 or over with modest savings or small occupational or personal pensions.

Claim on 0808 1006165.

### **Tax Credits**

There are two tax credits - Working Tax Credit and Child Tax Credit.

Working Tax Credit is for people who are in work. The amount you get depends on your income and personal circumstances.

Child Tax Credit is for people with a child under 16 or under 19 if they are in education. You may be able to get extra credit if you have a child with a disability.

### **Rate Reductions**

If you leave your home unoccupied (without furniture) and live elsewhere to provide care, the property that you leave may be exempt from rates.

Similarly if someone leaves a house empty and comes and lives with you so that you can provide care, their home may be exempt from rates.

**Disabled Person's Allowance** is a reduction in rates for a property that has facilities to meet the needs of a disabled person who resides in the property. E.G. a room used mainly for providing therapy, an additional bathroom, wheelchair access, garage, central heating, etc.

If you have a low income, you may be able to reduce your rates by claiming Rate Rebate. For more information about Rate reductions phone 0800 5877 477

*This information about benefits was compiled in April 2005. Benefits usually are subject to increase in April each year to take account of the rise in cost of living.*



**MUMS (Mothers Understanding Mothers Support)**

For mothers who have children with learning difficulties/special needs

**Aleida Millar**

**028 4483 1778**

Meet 1st Thursday monthly 7.30-9.30 pm in Sure Start Building, St Patricks Avenue, Downpatrick

**LISBURN DOWNTOWN CENTRE CONTACT GROUP**

Carers of children and adults with learning difficulties.

**Margaret Bailey**

**028 9267 2052**

Meet 2nd and 4th Tuesday monthly in Downtown Centre, 49 Market Square South, Lisburn.

**PAPA (Parents And Professionals and Autism)**

Carers of people with autism.

PAPA Lisburn

**Clare Hughes**

**028 9266 3005**

Every 2nd Monday 7.30pm in Warren Children's Center, Lisburn.

PAPA Down

Moira Denvir

028 4461 5307

Meet 2nd last Wednesday monthly 8.30 pm in Murlough Tavern, Dundrum.

**LISBURN DOWNS SYNDROME SUPPORT GROUP**

Carers of people with Downs Syndrome

Lisburn Area

**Rosemary Gorman**

**028 9266 9742**

Meet once a month location varies

**NORTH & WEST BELFAST DOWNS SYNDROME ASSOCIATION**

Carers of people with Downs Syndrome

**Grainne Murray**

**028 9096 1435**

Meet in Glen Community Centre monthly.

**DISABILITY NETWORK CARERS GROUP**

Carers of people with disabilities

Lisburn

**Louise Duffy**

**028 9266 7227**

Frequency of meetings varies depending on the level of need from carers.

**'BRAIN TIME' SUPPORT GROUP**

Support group for people aged 16 to 65 years with acquired brain injury, family members and carers.

Brain Injury Team 028 9263 3189 or

**Mary Braithwaite**

**028 9263 3187**

Downpatrick area Monthly meeting in Downpatrick Library on Tuesday morning

Lisburn area Monthly meeting in Thompson House Hospital on Thursday evening

## LIST OF PEOPLE WORKING WITH CARERS IN DOWN LISBURN TRUST AREA

### **Alzheimers society** (Down Sector)

Cathy Connolly  
Alzheimers Society Outreach Worker  
C/o St Patrick's Centre  
Market Street, Downpatrick, BT30 6LZ

Tel: 028 4461 3489  
Mobile: 077 080 93282  
Email: cathydowndistrict@gmail.com

### **Cause for Mental Health** (Lisburn Sector)

Brenda McFall, Carer Advocate  
Derriaghy Day Centre  
Unit 7 The Cutts  
Dunmurry Industrial Estate, Derriaghy BT17 9HU

Tel: 028 9062 2008  
Mobile: 079 668 09427  
Email: brenda.mcfall@ntlworld.com

### **Chest Heart & Stroke Association** (Down & Lisburn Sectors)

Isobel Milhench  
Stroke Family Support Co-ordinator  
C/o Social Work Dept., Lagan Valley Hospital, Lisburn

Tel: 028 9266 5141 ext: 2344  
Mobile: 0776 421 1535

### **Disability Network** (Lisburn Sector)

Stephen Woods, Disability Co-ordinator  
Unit 1 TSL House  
Bachelors Walk, Lisburn BT28 1XN

Tel: 028 9266 7227  
Email: disability.net.stephen@btconnect.com

### **Down Lisburn Carers Forum on Learning Disability** (Down & Lisburn Sectors)

Collette McGinnity, Liaison Officer  
Stewartstown Road Health Centre  
Stewartstown Road, Dunmurry BT17 0FB

Tel: 028 9060 2705 ext 6075

### **Huntingtons Disease** (Down & Lisburn Sectors)

Rosie Dargan  
HD Palliative & Social Care Project Manager  
Dept of Genetics  
Belfast City Hospital, Lisburn Road, Belfast BT9 7AB

Tel: 028 9032 9241 ext 2794

Email: rosie.dargan@bch.n-i.nhs.uk

### **Rethink Mental Health** (Down Sector)

Paul Ennis  
Rethink Resource Services  
12a English Street, Downpatrick BT30 6AB

Tel: 028 4461 7964

### **Speechmatters** (Down & Lisburn Sectors)

Marian McKeown  
Social Worker (Aphasia) Advocate  
Knockbracken Healthcare Park, Saintfield Road, Belfast BT8 8BH

Tel: 028 9040 1389

## CARER HEALTH

A carer's lifestyle is frequently restricted and many carers can, and do, get mentally and physically exhausted by their caring role. This can cause their health to deteriorate, which is why it is important for you to take stock of your own health. Carers need to keep healthy to care.

This questionnaire will help you start thinking about your own health and see how healthy you are. If you have any concerns about any aspect of your health, speak to your GP or Practice Nurse. You should have regular medical checks with your GP.

### How often do you have your health checked?

- NEVER 1
- OCCASIONALLY 2
- REGULARLY (every 1 to 3 years) 3

### Health tips

A health check involves checking: Blood pressure; weight; urine as well as a general discussion about your health.

### How are you feeling?

- TIRED MOST OF THE TIME 1
- TIRED OCCASIONALLY 2
- RARELY TIRED 3

Need advice? Talk to your GP or Practice Nurse.

### Are you physically active for 15 minutes or more each day?

(Walking briskly, cycling, swimming, keep fit etc.)

- RARELY OR NEVER 1
- ONCE A WEEK 2
- 2 OR 3 TIMES A WEEK 3

Being **physically active** for half an hour five days a week will keep you active for life. This can be an enjoyable way to take a break, relieve stress and socialise.

### Do you eat regularly?

(breakfast, lunch and evening meal)

- NO 1
- SOMETIMES 2
- YES 3

**Meal times** are an opportunity to relax. This aids digestion, helps to reduce tension and increase energy.

It is important to take meals regularly and remember that breakfast is a good start to the day.

### Do you have a balanced diet?

(See Health tips for advice)

- NO 1
- SOMETIMES 2
- YES 3

Your daily diet should include: fruit/vegetables; starchy foods such as breakfast cereals, potatoes, bread; Lean meat, fish, eggs and nuts; milk, cheese and yoghurt; butter, margarine and oils (used sparingly).

### Do you eat high fibre foods?

- NO 1   
 OCCASIONALLY 2   
 YES 3

### How often do you eat convenience foods?

(Takeaways, burgers, chips, crisps, chocolate, cakes and biscuits)

- DAILY 1   
 ONCE OR TWICE A WEEK 2   
 OCCASIONALLY 3

### How many cups of fluid do you drink each day?

(Non-alcoholic, e.g. water, tea, coffee, milk, fruit juice, soft drinks)

- LESS THAN 8 1   
 8 TO 12 2   
 12 OR MORE 3

### How much alcohol do you drink?

- OVER 14 UNITS A WEEK 1   
 UNDER 14 UNITS A WEEK 2   
 OCCASIONALLY/NEVER 3

### Do you smoke?

- YES 1   
 OCCASIONALLY 2   
 NO 3

**High fibre foods** (wholemeal bread, brown rice, pasta, peas, beans and lentils, fruit and vegetables and jacket potatoes) can help you relieve constipation, lower cholesterol and control diabetes.

**Fluid intake** is recommended to be 8 to 12 cups per day, which helps to: flush out the kidneys; prevent urine infections and constipation.

You should drink even more in hot weather. Tea and coffee are stimulants and may keep you awake if taken before bedtime.

**Alcohol** in excess can: affect concentration, memory and reactions; lead to stomach disorders and high blood pressure.

**Smoking** increases the risk of: heart disease; lung disease (e.g. bronchitis, cancer) and osteoporosis (brittle bone disease). Smoking affects other people too (passive smokers). Want to give up? Ask your GP for advice.

### How often do you have your sight tested?

- NEVER 1
- OCCASIONALLY 2
- REGULARLY (EVERY 2 YEARS) 3

### How often do you have a dental check up?

- NEVER 1
- OCCASIONALLY 2
- REGULARLY (EVERY 2 YEARS) 3

### How much do you sleep?

- UNDER 4 HOURS 1
- 4 TO 6 HOURS 2
- 6 TO 8 HOURS 3

### Do you have time for fun, study, friends and hobbies?

- NO 1
- SOMETIMES 2
- YES (DAILY) 3

### Now find out your score

Add up the numbers in the boxes you have ticked

If your score is....

**30 - 42** Excellent, your lifestyle is healthy. Keep up the good work

**20 - 30** You would benefit from making some small changes to your lifestyle. Have you read the Health Tips?

**14 - 20** Room for some lifestyle changes. Why not have a chat with your GP or Practice Nurse?

**Eye tests** are recommended every two years to help show your general state of health; diagnose certain medical conditions; and show whether you need glasses.

Eye tests are free to some people (ask the optician) and some make home visits to the housebound.

**Dental check ups** are recommended...every 6 months for natural teeth; annually for dentures (well fitting dentures aid digestion).

Dentists can give advice and spot....tooth decay, gum disease and early mouth cancers

### Difficulty sleeping?

Have you tried ... relaxing in a warm bath; bedtime snack of milk and fruit; soothing music and light reading.

**Do you have time** for studies, friends and hobbies? How about a relaxing swim, listening to music or painting?

## RECOGNISING STRESS AND COPING WITH IT

Stress simply means strain or pressure and is brought on by changes in your life. Not all stress is bad. We all need some stress in our lives to function effectively - some people thrive on stress; it makes them feel stimulated and excited. However, constant stress can be destructive and can be likened to an overloaded shopping basket the handles of which weaken and begin to break with the strain. Likewise, a stressed or overloaded carer can become physically or mentally ill.

If you are suffering from stress you are not alone. Most people suffer stress symptoms at some time in their lives. Recognising your stress symptoms is half the battle.

**Recognising stress** Carers under stress can experience:

- Anxiety and poor sleep;
- Constantly feeling tired;
- Difficulty concentrating;
- Frustration, feelings of helplessness;
- Loss of self-esteem and confidence;
- Under- or over-eating, drinking or smoking;
- Restlessness - feeling guilt when relaxing;
- Irritability and aggressiveness
- Tension, eg in neck and back
- Feelings of loneliness and isolation
- Palpitations

### How to cope with stress?

- Work out what is making you stressed.
- Try not to worry about things that you cannot change - deal with those that you can change
- Organise your time - make lists.
- Take regular exercise - try a brisk walk.
- Avoid harmful ways of coping - compulsive eating, drinking or smoking.
- Learn to relax. make time for yourself, borrow a relaxation audiotape from your local library;
- Listen to some soothing music; treat yourself to a herbal/scented bath; socialise; Attend a carer support group and/or a relaxation class.

**We all feel stress in our lives.**

	NO	SOMETIMES	YES
Do you feel stressed?	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**If you are stressed, what do you think causes it?**

Unrelated to caring activities	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Often feeling helpless	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Not enough hours in the day	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Feeling lonely - no one to talk to	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
No time to socialize	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**How do you feel about yourself?**

	NO	SOMETIMES	YES
In poor spirits most of the time	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Lacking in energy	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
That your situation is difficult	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
That you have more problems than most	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
That you have dropped many activities/interests	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
You prefer to stay at home rather than go out and do new things	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

**Mostly NO:** Good You are keeping your stress under control but remember to make regular time for relaxing activities

**Mostly SOMETIMES:** You would benefit from making some small changes to your lifestyle. Try the 'How to cope with stress' tips. Make regular times for yourself to enjoy relaxing activities.

**Mostly YES:** You need to relax more. Try the 'How to cope with stress' tips. Have a chat with your community/practice nurse or GP. Ask about relaxation sessions in your area.

**Down Lisburn Trust hopes that the information contained in this booklet will be useful for carers. We want to know how carers feel about the services we provide. Leaflets about Comments, Compliments and Complaints are available from any of the Trust offices listed on Page 4. Complaints should be sent to the Director of Corporate Affairs Lisburn Health Centre Lisburn or Telephone 028 9266 5181.**

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