

Respite Care Funding

Caring for another person is challenging. That is why taking a break every so often is important for both the physical and mental health of carers. There are two sorts of funding provided by the Ministry of Health to help carers take breaks: Carer Support and Respite Services.

CARER SUPPORT

Carer Support is a subsidy towards the daily cost of your breaks. You can choose if this is used to pay an alternative carer to come to your home or for relief care in a formal setting, for example a rest home.

WHO IS ELIGIBLE?

Unpaid full-time (more than four hours per day) carers of people with a disability are eligible for Carer Support. You don't have to live with the person you support, as long as you are their main carer and responsible for their on-going care. You will not be eligible for Carer Support if the person you care for is in residential care or paying for full-time care. Carer Support is also not available for short-term convalescent needs.

HOW DO I ACCESS THE SERVICE?

To qualify for the subsidy, and determine how much you are eligible for, both you and the person you care for will need to be assessed. This will usually be done by a Needs Assessment Service Coordination organisation (NASC).

You will need a referral for a needs assessment to your local NASC. This is a documented request for needs assessment and/or service coordination. This can be provided by your doctor or Parkinson's Field Officer. You can also refer yourself, contact your local NASC for a referral form.

Once you have been assessed and determined to be eligible, the assessor will allocate you Carer Support days. Generally this is reviewed annually. However you can ask for a review earlier if you feel you need more days.

WHAT DO I GET?

You are assigned a certain number of days per year through the assessment process. These need to be used within this time frame and can't be carried forward. How much time you are allocated is determined by your need (as assessed).

The subsidy is designed to be flexible, so that you can make your own decisions about how you take your breaks and use the subsidy to pay for them. However this also means you have to make your own arrangements.

You can pay either informal carers (friends or some family) or formal carers (homecare agency) to provide respite in your own home. You can also use the subsidy for respite in a care facility, either residential or day care. If you want to use an informal support carer note that some family members are specifically excluded from receiving the subsidy. This includes the parents and partners of the person being cared for as well as other family

members living in the household. Access to formal carers may be limited by the services available in your local area. Your NASC will provide you with information on local service providers.

HOW DOES IT WORK?

You can claim either full days (eight to 24 hours), or half days (four to eight hours). Four hours is the minimum unit claimable, but you can combine shorter periods to make up a half day. You will be advised of the payment rate by the assessor.

The payment is not automatic. You will have to complete and return a claim form after services are provided. Carer Support generally provides only a partial contribution towards the cost of relief care. You will usually need to 'top-up' payments to meet the full cost.

RESPITE SERVICES

Respite Services, also known as formal out-of-home care, are community-based services, such as rest homes, contracted by the Ministry to provide this service. As with Carer Support, access to Respite Services requires assessment by a NASC. They will check your eligibility and then work with you to identify what your needs are and what services would best meet them. The amount of funded respite support available to you is based on your needs and availability of services. Respite can be planned and accessed on a regular basis, but is also available in times of emergency or unforeseen event.

Note that the funding arrangements and criteria for Carers Support and Respite Services are different for people under 65 and those over 65. Each District Health Board contracts one or more NASC organisations, so there are regional variations in the forms and processes. Your Parkinson's Field Officer can help you navigate the system.

FOR MORE INFORMATION

More information can be found on the Ministry of Health's website www.health.govt.nz/disability under the 'Your Health' menu on the right. Or call 0800 373 664. They also produce a pamphlet 'How to Claim Care Support'.

NEEDS ASSESSMENT SERVICE COORDINATION (NASC) ORGANISATIONS

Contact details can be found online at www.health.govt.nz/disability under 'contact'. Your doctor or field officer can refer you to your local NASC. The Ministry also provides a guide 'Needs Assessment and Support Services for Older People: what you need to know'.