

Need a Helping Hand Following a Stroke?

If you have recently had a stroke you may find that you need help with a number of issues from help around the house or with shopping, personal help such as washing or dressing or even with your financial and legal planning. Here are a few things to think about...

Driving: - Following a stroke you must not drive for 6 weeks. After this period you can drive again unless you have visual symptoms or weakness or sensation problems that remain. If this is the case then you should let the DVLA know. Call 0300 790 6801.

Financial Help: - Sometimes you or your family may need a little financial help to be able to support you. Finding out what benefits you or the person caring for you may be entitled to can be very daunting and especially filling in all the forms but help is at hand.

1. Call the benefits agency helpline 0800 88 22 00
2. Call the Citizen's Advice Bureau 08444 77 10 10

All of these agencies have websites and the following links are especially useful.

<http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/MoneyTaxAndBenefits/BenefitsTaxCreditsAndOtherSupport/Disabledpeople/index.htm>

Preparing for the future: - Make sure that you have an up to date will. You will need to see a solicitor about this. Make sure that you have completed a Power of Attorney if you own your house or have savings. This means that you can nominate a trusted family member or friend to manage your money if you are no longer able to.

A Power of Attorney costs £145 but could save your loved ones a lot of trouble. You do not need to see a solicitor for this and can get the forms by ringing 0300 4560300 or on the internet at <http://www.publicguardian.gov.uk>

Benefits - the Minefield!

You may be entitled to a variety of benefits and here is a brief summary of them all...

- **Attendance Allowance**
 - You should be over 65 to claim this and dementia would be a reason to claim it. (If you are under 65 you get disability living allowance instead)
- **Pension Credit**
 - You may be able to claim pension credit if you have low weekly pension income or even if you have some pension savings. It is worth asking.
- **Council Tax Benefit and Housing Benefit**
 - You may be entitled to both these if you have a low income or low savings.
- **Disabled Facilities Grants**
 - You may be entitled to this grant if you require adaptations to your house to allow you to continue to live there independently.
- **Direct Payments**
 - If you have been found to be able to claim attendance allowance or disability living allowance but would like to use the money in a different way to what the council can offer you can ask to get direct payments.

- **Carer's Allowance**

- If you spend more than 35 hours looking after someone, you should be able to claim carer's allowance. The person you are caring for must be getting attendance allowance or disability living allowance.

Societies: -

There are several organisations in Birmingham and Nationally that can offer you and your family support following a stroke.

- Stroke Association 0303 3033100
- Different Strokes 0845 1307172
- Stroke Support Group (online) <http://www.strokesupportgroup.org/>
- Headway 0808 8002244
- Northfield Stroke Club 682 8630

Other Useful People to ask your doctor about: -

- **Occupational therapist** – can assess patients in their home for adaptations that may help them remain independent for longer such as stair lifts, bath aids and also assess patient safety at home such as in the kitchen
- **Social workers** – these people can help to arrange funding for care in the home, day centres and also care home placement. They can also arrange key safes (a safe on the outside of the house to hide keys in for carers to use)
- **Assistive Technology specialists** – this agency can provide services such as door alarms that warn relative when a front door has been opened alongside many other pieces of monitoring.
- **District Nurses** – if you are struggling to remember to take your tablets we can provide medipacks that separate all of your tablets for each week into day and time slots to help you remember but district nurses can also come around to prompt if needed.

Carer's Groups: -

The Carers Network. A new website that has been created to enable Carers to easily access up-to-date information on services across the city, www.thecarersnetwork.org.uk

Carers Information Packs. This pack contains a variety of useful information for carers in Birmingham. If you would like a pack please call the Carers Helpline on 0121 675 8000.

Although I hope that most of the information you will need is in this booklet, carer's groups can be a useful resource for support and more advice. These are some local groups available. This might be to meet up for a coffee to a quick call to check some information.

- Carers Advocacy Service – CASI Tel no: 0121 464 5957. The Advocacy Service provides short-term crisis advocacy by acting on behalf of the Carer to enable their views and opinions to be heard. Advocates will confidently discuss your issues, provide information to enable and empower carers to make informed decisions and offer practical assistance with letters, telephone calls, appointments with professionals etc.

Register with CERS if you are caring for someone with memory problems. In an emergency, if you cannot find someone to care for your loved one with dementia then you can call them and they will provide someone. 0845 468 1338