

## 10. HELP IN A HURRY



None of us like to think about when things might go wrong, but if you are looking after someone it is useful to think about how you would deal with an emergency involving you and/or the person you care for. An emergency can be anything from you being stuck in traffic and unable to collect someone, to equipment that the person you care for relies on breaking down out of hours. Spending time thinking through possible emergency scenarios for your caring situation, and finding out about services that can help, can give you peace of mind now and will save time and anxiety if a crisis occurs.

## Preparing for Emergencies

You might want to think about creating a back-up plan in case you are suddenly unable to look after the person you care for. It is worth planning for everyday situations, such as delays, as well as more serious problems such as an unexpected hospital stay. Ask family members, friends and neighbours and talk to them about whether they would be willing to help out. If they agree you could make sure they know about the cared for person's disability, illness or condition, what medication they take, and where important information and contact numbers are kept. You could put this information together in a document and give copies to everyone in your 'back up team'. If you do not have a 'back up team' Croydon Social Services (020 8726 6000) may be able to help. If you telephone outside normal office hours your details will be passed by the security staff to the emergency duty team, who will call you back and see what, if any, help can be given.

We have created an emergency card for carers, that can be carried with you in your wallet or purse. The carers emergency card lets people know that someone depends on you for care and has space to enter the names

of two people who could be contacted in the event of an emergency. These are available free by contacting us on 020 8649 9339 option 1. Emergency services will often check people's mobile phones in order to contact their next of kin, if you store the names of your emergency contacts in your phone under the heading ICE (In Case of Emergency) the emergency services look there first and be able to find essential contact details easily.

Croydon Council has a new service called Croycare (020 8654 7166), a 24-hour emergency response service and card scheme. Carers who are providing a "substantial" amount of care for someone and have had a carer's assessment, may be able to register for this service, however you will need to contact Croycare for further information about eligibility criteria. To register you will need to supply information about the person you care for and the names of two people to contact in an emergency. An emergency plan will be drawn up and you will be given a Croycare emergency alert card which will include a unique reference number and an emergency contact number to call. The service will implement your personal emergency plan or provide direct support to the person you look after for up to 72 hours.

If you know that the person you care for can get help quickly and easily if there is a problem, particularly if they live alone or if they are on their own for long periods, it will be reassuring for both of you.

Croydon Careline (020 8726 6501) is a Croydon Council service that provides a home safety and personal security system, which helps people to live independently within their own homes. It operates year round, 24 hours a day. The user of the service is given a necklace or wrist strap containing an alarm button which, when pressed, alerts a control centre. The caller can talk to a trained operator from anywhere in the home without using the phone handset. The operator will take appropriate action, such as calling the nominated emergency contacts or sending out the Careline mobile response officers directly to the person's home. The operator will stay on the line until help arrives. Anyone can have a Careline but there are charges for installation and maintenance. However, if you already receive social care services or wish to be assessed for services, you may be able to receive help towards these costs. For an assessment, contact Social Services for Adults (020 8726 6500) or Children's Services (020 8726 6400).

Telecare sensors can also be programmed to the Careline Unit. These sensors

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monitor smoke, flood, gas leaks, carbon monoxide and extreme temperatures. There are systems that reduce the risk of falls by switching on lights as people get out of bed and raising an alarm if they do not return within a certain time. There are also devices that can automatically page a carer or friend up to 500 metres away to instantly alert them of a potential risk situation within the home.

The Message in a Bottle Scheme is supported by the emergency services and enables them to find someone's basic personal and medical details quickly and easily in an emergency. You can get one of the labelled bottles for free from the Lions Club of Croydon (020 8689 5411). Information about the person you look after is kept on the form inside the bottle and put in the door of their fridge. You will be given green cross stickers to put on the front of the fridge and on the back of the front door so that the emergency services know to look for the bottle.

If the person you care for has a specific medical or disabling condition you could contact the relevant national organisation to find out if they produce an identification or awareness card stating that the bearer has a medical condition. If the person you care for has any hidden medical conditions or allergies it might be a good idea for them to join a scheme such as MedicAlert (0800 581 420, [www.medicalert.org.uk](http://www.medicalert.org.uk)). Each MedicAlert member receives an emblem that is engraved with the wearer's main medical conditions or vital details, a personal identification number and a 24-hour telephone number to call for more information about the wearer. Charges apply, but free membership can be given to individuals on a limited income. Other schemes are available.

If you combine caring with paid work you may need to take time off if there is an emergency situation involving the person you care for. See chapter nine to find out about your rights to time off in an emergency.

If the person you care for relies on vital equipment it is a good idea to be prepared in case it breaks down. You need to know who is responsible for fixing or replacing it, how to contact them and whether they have any out of hours services. If the equipment has been bought with a direct payment from social services it is essential to find out who will be responsible for it if there is a problem, see chapter two.

## Dealing with Emergencies

### Medical Assistance

A medical emergency is regarded as a critical or life-threatening situation and in this situation you need to call 999. If the person you care for needs urgent medical attention outside of normal GP practice hours, the surgery will usually have a recorded message giving details of the out of hours service. You may be referred to Croydon Doctors on Call (Croydoc), a co-operative run by Croydon GPs. Alternatively, NHS Direct (0845 46 47, [www.nhs.uk](http://www.nhs.uk)) can advise and even call an ambulance for you if necessary.

Croydon NHS Walk-In Centre (020 8714 2888) at 45 High Street Croydon offers healthcare advice and treatment for minor injuries and illnesses. You do not need an appointment. It is open year round, except Christmas Day, 7 am - 10 pm on weekdays and 9 am - 10 pm at weekends and on public holidays. The Emergency Minor Treatment Centre at Parkway Health Centre (020 8251 7225) has specialist nurses who can treat a wide range of minor injuries and problems. The centre is open year round, except Christmas Day, 2 - 9 pm on weekdays and public holidays, and 12 noon - 9 pm at the weekend.

If the person you care for has severe dental pain and their dental surgery is closed, or they are not registered with a dentist, you can contact Croydon's emergency dental service, Croydent, on 0845 000 4567. If you need an out of hours pharmacist urgently you can get details by contacting NHS Direct.

If the person you care for has a fall and cannot get up unassisted, it is best not to attempt to move them yourself, but to contact the ambulance service (999) to help get them up and check for any injuries. If you care for an older person and you are worried about falls, contact the Age Concern Croydon Personal Safety Project (020 8680 5450, [www.ageconcerncroydon.org.uk](http://www.ageconcerncroydon.org.uk)). This project helps older people, their families and carers, with some of the practical difficulties that may be affecting their safety in the home. It offers a number of services, including assessing and identifying risks, carrying out handyperson tasks to improve safety, and providing advice on equipment and aids to promote safety and independence.

If the person you care for has a mental health crisis, who you contact for help

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will depend on whether they are currently known to mental health services. If the person you are caring for is not known to the mental health system, you can ring the SLAM Information Line (open 24 hours) on 0800 731 2864 to find out where and how to get help. If you are caring for someone who is a mental health service user, you should contact their Community Mental Health Team. Out of hours, you can go to the Accident and Emergency department at Mayday Hospital where there are always specialist mental health staff on duty. If you are concerned about an immediate risk of harm, either to yourself or someone else, call the emergency services. The Samaritans is available 24-hours (08457 90 90 90, [www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)) and can talk to anyone in distress in complete confidence.

### Key Contacts

Age Concern Croydon	020 8680 5450
Croydon Careline	020 8726 6501
Children's Services	020 8726 6400
Croycare	020 8654 7166
Croydent	0845 000 4567
Croydon Council	020 8726 6000
Croydon NHS Walk-in Centre	020 8714 2888
Lions Club of Croydon	020 8689 5411
MedicAlert	0800 581 420
NHS Direct	0845 46 47
Parkway Health Centre	020 8251 7225
Samaritans	08457 90 90 90
SLaM 24 hour information line	0800 731 2864
Social Services for Adults	020 8726 6500

**If you cannot find what you are looking for please contact the Carers' Information Service on 020 8649 9339, option 1.**

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