



Respite care breaks can be a real tonic

Caregivers often look after their loved ones at the expense of their own health and wellbeing. Respite care breaks can bring enormous benefits.

Whether it is a temporary rest period for a few hours, a day or a block of time extending over weeks, caregivers can hand over the responsibility of looking after someone with Dementia to us and invest in their own health and wellbeing.

Caring for someone with Dementia is not only challenging because it is a 24/7 responsibility. It is emotionally difficult when Dementia affects the behaviour and welfare of someone you have known for a long time and changes the relationship between you. Not being able to tell from one day to the next how Dementia will affect the person you live with, responding to changes in behaviour and constantly being on tenterhooks about safety takes its toll on the caregiver.

Well intended pledges long before Dementia was diagnosed 'to never put me in a home' and the out of date perception of life in a care home can make it difficult for a caregiver to consider or arrange a respite break. Carers sometimes say they feel guilty or that they have failed their loved one by turning to a third party for support.

When we get a call from a caregiver enquiring about our respite break service, our local Home Manager will visit them in their own home and discuss their needs. We encourage them to visit our home with the cared for person, usually during the lunchtime, so that they can have a meal without any charge or obligation, to meet other residents, their families and our staff.

It's essential the caregiver has the peace of mind and reassurance knowing that if their relative or partner did spend time with us, they would be well looked after. We also want the person with Dementia to look forward to their time with us – it's as much a break for them as it is for their carer. For those who regularly book their respite breaks with us, Waypoints is considered as their 'holiday home.'

It's not unheard of for residents to say at the end of their respite break that they want to stay with us for longer and if there is a future need for full time residential care the transition into a place already known from respite stays can be much smoother.

We always have accommodation set aside for respite break residents so that we can respond to the unforeseen circumstances, for example the emergency hospital admission or illness of a caregiver.

It's heartening when you see a caregiver walk in to our home after a respite break looking and feeling more energised and positive. It may be that having undisturbed sleep or the rare opportunity to socialise without worrying about the person they look after has been just the tonic they needed.

It is well evidenced that if a carer is supported in this way and has 'time out' then their own health resilience improves which enables them to look after the person with Dementia at home for longer.

Contact Waypoints Care Group on 01425 486 760 or visit www.waypoints-care.co.uk