



## **Alternative Care Options**

### **Introduction**

Perhaps the most important issue for carers thinking of going back to work is the availability of alternative care. You will want to know about services that can provide the right kind of care and support for the person you look after while you are at work. It comes as no surprise that a **lack** of alternative care provision is one of the main barriers preventing carers returning to employment.

Of course, every caring situation is different and so too are the needs and wishes of the people involved. Some carers will not even consider alternative care, preferring to look for a job that can be fitted around their caring responsibilities. Others (for example parent carers) will only need help during specific periods, such as school holidays. Many carers prefer to rely as much as possible on informal and family support while they are working.

Whatever the circumstances, having the right information about the kind of alternative care services and support that is available can be a great help. But it is not simply a case of understanding the options, carers need to know how reliable, flexible and accessible these services are and about the quality of care they provide. The issue of cost and whether or not an alternative care option is affordable is also very important.

This section covers some of the issues raised by local carers and identifies services and organisations that can help provide more detailed information and advice about alternative care.

### **Alternative care: assessing your needs**

When considering the kind of alternative care arrangements that may be necessary if you decide to return to work do not forget the specific needs of the person you care for and those of the rest of the family. It is usually worthwhile taking time to discuss these, although some may not think it appropriate to do so at this stage.

Questions that you may want to ask yourself include:

### **Amount of care cover / support**

How many hours per day and days per week will you need cover for? Will you need any extra cover (for example during school holidays)? Will you need cover at the beginning or end of the day to allow travelling to, and arriving home from, work? Do you need care cover that is flexible and adaptable to allow for work needs such as changing shifts and overtime? Do you want a job that fits around your caring responsibilities? How much help might be available from other family members?

### **Type of care cover / support**

Do you and / or the person you care for have a preference for the type of care cover required? Do you want care cover to be provided at home, away from home or a mixture of both? If care cover is provided away from home, will there be transport or other issues that need to be considered? How accessible, or close to where you live, does alternative care cover need to be? If you look after more than one person, are different types of care cover and support needed?

### **Specific care needs**

How much specialist care does the person you look after need? Does this require any specific training or the use of any special equipment? Will there be any lifting or handling involved? Will a risk assessment have to be carried out? Does the person you look after need one-to-one care? How many regular hospital appointments, therapies or other visits does the person you look after need to attend?

### **Cost**

How much can you afford to pay?

Many carers feel a strong sense of injustice about the additional costs which working often entails. Financially you may find yourself little better off by the time that you have paid for any alternative care that may be needed and other factors (such as the loss of benefit income) have been taken into account. However some carers have found ways of offsetting the possible costs and losses by relying on family or friends to provide cover or finding a job that effectively fits around their caring responsibilities.

### **Finding out about alternative care – where to get help and information**

Having looked at the various alternative care options, you will probably want to know where to go for more detailed help and advice. In general the type of

support available depends upon whether the person you are look after is a child, an adult or an older person.

If you are looking after an adult (someone aged 18 or over) it is worth asking the Department of Adult Services for a 'carer's assessment'. The purpose of the assessment is to identify your specific needs as a carer and the kind of support and services that may be of help to you in your caring role. Since 2005, it must also include consideration of your wish to remain in, or take up, paid employment.

If you would like to request a carer's assessment, either get in touch with the social worker of the person who you care for (if they have one) or contact Wigan Council's Department of Adult Services Central Duty Team: ☎ 01942 828777, minicom 01942 828791 8.45am to 8pm Monday to Friday and 8.45 to 1pm on Saturdays.

For general advice regarding the services available to carers you can also call the Department of Adult Services Carers Support Team: ☎ 01942 705983 8.45am to 5pm Monday to Friday.

If you want information about alternative care options but prefer not to involve Adult Services, there are a number of local and national organisations which may be able to help:

### **Wigan and Leigh Carers Helpline**

☎ 01942 606086 9.30am to 8pm Monday to Friday

The Carers Helpline can give you information and advice on a range of issues, including the support that is available from local carers groups, voluntary and statutory agencies.

### **Embrace Wigan and Leigh**

☎ 01942 513053

Email: [info@embracewiganandleigh.org.uk](mailto:info@embracewiganandleigh.org.uk)

Website: [www.embracewiganandleigh.org.uk](http://www.embracewiganandleigh.org.uk)

Address: Platt Bridge Youth Zone, 81 Ribble Road, Platt Bridge, Wigan, WN2 5EG

Embrace Wigan and Leigh provides information, advice, support and advocacy to people with all kinds of disability and their families.

### **Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre**

☎ 01942 705959

Address: 3-5 Frederick Street, Hindley, Wigan, WN2 3BD

Wigan and Leigh Carers Centre was opened in June 2010. As well as a comprehensive activity programme, the Centre provides advice and information to carers of all ages.

### **Carers UK**

☎ 0808 808 7777 (CarersLine)

Email: [adviceline@carersuk.org](mailto:adviceline@carersuk.org)

Website: [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

Carers UK is a campaigning organisation which also provides high quality advice and information to carers via its website, publications and helpline – CarersLine.

### **Carers Direct**

☎ 0808 802 0202 (National Helpline)

Website: [www.nhs/carersdirect](http://www.nhs/carersdirect)

The Carers Direct national helpline can help unpaid carers by providing information, advice and support as well as practical guidance on how to access the services they need.

The organisations listed above are just a small sample of the many that provide advice and guidance on carers issues and which may be able to help if you have a query about alternative care options. As individual circumstances vary so much, you will need to be clear about your specific requirements. It is also likely that there will be different options available to you, depending on the age and disability of the person that you care for.

In the rest of this section you will find information about alternative care options and the type of provision available locally at the time this guide was compiled. It is important to point out, however, that not all of the options mentioned will be suitable or easy to access, and some may depend upon you and/or the person you care for having received an assessment of need.

## **Childcare**

Parents of pre- and school-aged children often worry about being able to access the right kind of alternative care. In particular they want to know that the people entrusted to look after their children understand their needs and are trained appropriately. Many parent carers also complain of a lack of services (for example school holiday play-schemes and pre/after school clubs) that are aimed at, or inclusive of, children with disabilities.

You may already have a very clear idea about the kind of childcare you want/need. Thinking about the following questions could help confirm these preferences or suggest other options that might be worth considering if you decide to return to work:

Would you prefer childcare in your own home or away from home?  
Would you prefer your child to be looked after by family or friends (if this is an option)?  
How much specialist care does your child need and is any equipment involved?  
Does your child need one-to-one care?  
Does your child need specially trained staff to look after him/her?  
Do you have transport to take/pick up your child?  
Do you need childcare at specific times only (e.g. school holidays, before school, after school)?  
Do you want your child to be able to play and socialise with other children while they are being cared for?  
How much can you afford to pay?

There is a brief discussion of the support available to parents of pre-school, school-aged and teenage children later in this section. However, if you would like more specific information, particularly about care provision for children with disabilities, you may find it helpful to contact Wigan Children's Information Service or one of the other services / organisations listed below:

### **Wigan Children's Information Service**

☎ 01942 486960

Email: [careforkids@wlct.org](mailto:careforkids@wlct.org)

Address: Elizabeth House, The Pier, Wigan WN3 4BD

Web: [www.wlct.org/cis](http://www.wlct.org/cis)

The Children's Information Service provides parents and carers with free and impartial information about all aspects of childcare and early education, including childminders, nurseries, playgroups and out-of-school care.

### **Children's Disabilities Register**

☎ 01942 481180

Address: Children with Complex Needs Team, Clare House, Lower Ince Health Centre, Phoenix Way, Ince, Wigan WN3 4QH

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

This is a confidential list of children and young people with disabilities in the borough. The list is maintained jointly by Children and Young People's Services, and Ashton, Leigh and Wigan Primary Care Trust. Families receive regular newsletters and information about the services available locally for children with disabilities.

### **Parent Partnership Service**

☎ 01942 486131

Email: [sheila.robinson@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:sheila.robinson@wigan.gov.uk)

Address: Parent Partnership Service, Progress House, Westwood Park Drive, Wigan WN3 4HH

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

The Parent Partnership Service aims to encourage and develop partnership between parents, schools, the local authority and all other partners who are involved in working to identify, assess and meet the special educational needs of children. The service offers impartial information, guidance and support to parents of children who have special/additional educational needs so they can make informed decisions about their child's education.

At a national level, help and information is also available from Working Families' 'Waving *not* Drowning' project. The project supports parents of children with disabilities who work or wish to work. It provides a network, a newsletter and a dedicated helpline available on 020 7017 0072. Waving not Drowning has produced a guide for working parents of disabled children entitled 'Make it Work for You!' (2006) and a free booklet, 'Getting into Work', which is aimed at carers who want to get into employment or step-up their level of paid work.

### **Working Families**

☎ 0800 013 0313 (free helpline)

Email: [advice@workingfamilies.org.uk](mailto:advice@workingfamilies.org.uk)

Web: [www.workingfamilies.org.uk](http://www.workingfamilies.org.uk)

## **Childcare for pre-school children**

### **Family or friends**

Most parents would prefer to entrust the care of their child to someone who they know well and who knows their child. For some, indeed, it is the only option that they are prepared to consider. Family members and friends can also be more flexible and reliable than paid carers.

### **Childminders**

Childminders are self-employed carers based in their own homes who can provide care for up to six children aged from birth to 8 years old. All childminders must be registered with Ofsted and a full list is available from Wigan Children's Information Service.

Childminders are not allowed to discriminate against disabled children. However in practice it may be difficult finding one in your area with the necessary training and experience to look after a child with specific needs. If you *can* find one, you will probably have to pay more than the £2.50 to £7.50 per hour rate which childminders typically charge.

## **Nursery Schools**

Nursery schools provide early learning and childcare for children between three and five years old. They are often based at Sure Start Children's Centres, or linked to an infant or primary school.

In Wigan there are places for about 60 % of pre-school children in local authority nurseries. Some children, including those with learning difficulties and other special needs, are accorded special priority. A leaflet giving details of local authority nursery schools and units is available from the School Placements Team (01942 486038 / 9). Places are usually part time, for a 12 month period. In most cases children attend 5 half day sessions per week but some nurseries provide full day care and even 'wrap around' care as additional services.

As well as local authority nursery schools there are many day nurseries based in workplaces and run by businesses and voluntary groups. If you want to find out more about these, and the amount that they charge, contact Wigan Children's Information Service.

## **Au pair or Nanny**

If you would prefer your child to be looked after in your own home while you are at work, you might think about employing an au pair or nanny. Unlike childminders nannies don't have to be registered but they can become "approved" by joining Ofsted's Voluntary Childcare Register (vOCR). Nannies' fees start at around £6 per hour (although this can vary greatly). As your nanny's employer, you will also have to pay their tax and national insurance contributions.

There is guidance for anyone looking for a nanny on the Directgov website: [www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Childcare/](http://www.direct.gov.uk/en/Parents/Childcare/)

## **Financial help**

### **The Nursery Education Grant**

All 3 and 4 year old children are entitled to a free, part time Early Education place. The free entitlement is 12.5 hours per week for 38 weeks of the year. From September 2010 this will increase to 15 hours a week, delivered flexibly over a minimum of three days.

For details of the playgroups, nursery units and other settings which offer Early Education places, contact Wigan Children's Information Service on 01942 486960.

For more information about the Nursery Education Grant contact the Sure Start Finance Team:

**Sure Start Finance Team** ☎ 01942 486050 Email:  
[WEYDFunds@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:WEYDFunds@wigan.gov.uk) Address: Wigan Council, Children and Young  
Peoples Services, Progress House, Westwood Park Drive, Wigan WN3 4HH  
web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

## **Tax Credits**

If you are entitled to Working Tax Credit it may include a 'childcare element'. This means that you can get a tax credit equal to 80% of eligible childcare costs (£175 per week for one child, £300 a week for two or more children). However the precise amount that you receive depends upon individual circumstances.

## **Housing and Council Tax Benefit**

People who are entitled to Housing Benefit and / or Council Tax Benefit may also have part of their earnings disregarded if they work and incur eligible childcare costs.

Contact Wigan Council's Benefits Section for further details:

### **Wigan Council Benefits Section**

☎ 01942 828644

Email: [benefits@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:benefits@wigan.gov.uk)

Address: Council Tax Offices, Moore Street East, Wigan, WN1 3XN

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

### **Other sources of financial assistance**

For information on other sources of financial assistance go to:

[www.payingforchildcare.org.uk](http://www.payingforchildcare.org.uk)

## **Childcare for school-aged children**

Alternative care options for parents of school age children include: family and friends (see above), childminders (see above), after-school clubs, breakfast clubs, holiday play schemes and respite care cover.

For some people term-time working offers another, very attractive, option. However, the range of term-time jobs is quite limited, rates of pay tend to be low and you will still have to have contingency plans in place for any time that your child is ill or otherwise unable to attend school.

## **After-school clubs**

After-school clubs are usually based in or near schools and many have been set up for the benefit of working parents. Sometimes they are run by the schools themselves, sometimes by private or voluntary organisations.

Clubs provide a secure environment in which children can play, relax and socialise. They are usually open from 3.30 pm to 6 pm during term time and cost around £7.00 per session.

## **Breakfast and homework clubs**

Breakfast clubs open in the morning before school starts (usually around 7.30 am), providing children with a safe place to go as well as a healthy, nutritious meal. The cost of a single session is about £2.00, although this can vary.

Homework clubs provide somewhere for children to go after school. They take place in local libraries where there is often computer and internet access and trained staff on hand to help with queries. You can find out more by contacting your child's school or local authority.

## **Holiday play schemes**

For the large number of working carers that struggle to find care cover during the school holidays, holiday play schemes can be an attractive option. It is important to bear in mind, however, that many schemes only operate over the summer and may be of quite limited duration (perhaps only one or two weeks). They can also be relatively expensive, costing around £20 per day on average.

For children with severe learning difficulties (complex needs) aged between 3 and 18, Wigan Council runs a number of special activity schemes. These take place mainly during the summer holidays, under the guidance of trained and experienced staff and volunteers. If your child already has a social worker you can get more information from the Children with Complex Needs Team. If not, you should contact the Children in Need Duty Team and request an assessment.

### **Children in Need Duty Team**

☎ 01942 828300

Address: Wigan Council, Children and Young Peoples Services, Town Hall, Ince Green Lane, Ince, Wigan, WN3 4QX

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

### **Children with Complex Needs Team**

☎ 01942 481180

Address: Lower Ince Health Centre, Phoenix Way, Ince, Wigan, WN3 4NW

Email: [ssdcnt@wiganmbc.gov.uk](mailto:ssdcnt@wiganmbc.gov.uk)

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

As well as play schemes you will sometimes come across 'holiday clubs'. For example, the 'Crazy Caterpillars Holiday Club', based at Hope Childrens Centre which provides places for children aged between 3 and 11, including those with additional needs.

### **Hope Children's Centre**

☎ 01942 824150

Address: Hope School, Kelvin Grove, Wigan WN3 6SP

Email: [childrenscentre@hope.wigan.sch.uk](mailto:childrenscentre@hope.wigan.sch.uk)

### **Respite Care**

Respite care usually takes the form of occasional short breaks (often at weekends) when your child goes away to be looked after. However, it should be possible to have this time allocated to regular periods of a few hours during the week, if you need cover while you are at work. In negotiating such an arrangement you might argue that working would allow you a break from caring and that you would rather spend the time that you are not at work with your child and the rest of your family.

Further information about respite care is available from your social worker.

### **Adult and elder care**

If you are looking after an adult relative or partner, decisions about alternative care will obviously need to take into account their needs and wishes. Depending on the age and capabilities of the person you care for simple replacement care may not be the only option. They may prefer some type of work or learning based activity.

Carers of both adults and children often look for a job that they can fit around their caring responsibilities, or which allows them to draw upon the help of family and friends. However, not all carers have a supportive family network that they can fall back on and some may feel quite lonely and isolated. For carers such as these finding the right kind of alternative care can be a problem.

If the person you care for has a social worker, you could try asking them about the options available. As suggested earlier it may also be worthwhile requesting a carer's assessment. The Carers (Equal Opportunities) Act 2004 placed a duty on local authorities to take into account a carer's outside interests – including their wish to work – when carrying out an assessment.

Listed below are some of the alternative care options that may be available to carers of adults and older people.

### **Home care services**

Many carers, and the people they look after, receive home care services. Extending this provision can sometimes provide the necessary extra support and flexibility to enable carers to go back to work, particularly if it can be tailored to their needs. However, it is important that any such support is of high quality and delivered by appropriately trained staff. Most carers would like someone who can provide the same standard of care that they provide themselves, someone who can slip into their shoes and take over their role for them when they are not there.

### **Care Quality Commission**

If you are looking to make your own arrangements for care the website of the Care Quality Commission is a good place to start. The website contains details of all domiciliary care services, nurses agencies and other health and social care providers registered with the Commission, including inspection reports.

### **Care Quality Commission**

☎ 03000 616161

Email: [enquiries@cqc.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@cqc.org.uk)

Address: National Correspondence, Citygate, Gallowgate, Newcastle Upon Tyne, NE1 4WH

Web: [www.cqc.org.uk](http://www.cqc.org.uk)

### **Day care services**

Depending on the care needs of the person you are looking after, there are a range of different day care services that you may be able to access. For **people with learning disabilities**, support and training is provided through a day service network, based partly in day centres and other smaller satellite bases across the borough. For **people with mental health needs** a day service, offering support and rehabilitation, is available at Tunstall House Clubhouse, Pemberton. Day services for **people with physical disabilities** are provided at Fourways Assessment Unit in Tyldesley and Hunter Lodge Clubhouse, Marsh Green.

There are also several day centres in the borough for **older people**. Some of these, including Sunshine House Day Centre in Wigan, Heathside Day Centre in Leigh and Heath Road Day Centre in Ashton, cater specifically for **older people with mental health needs**.

### **Residential care and supported living**

Housing options for vulnerable people in Wigan include:

Residential / nursing homes  
Sheltered housing  
Supported accommodation  
Adult placement schemes  
Ordinary housing

There is also a range of housing related support aimed at enabling **older people, people with physical or learning disabilities and people with mental health problems** to live as independently as possible. The type of support available includes help with setting up and maintaining a home, developing domestic / life skills, managing finances and benefits, finding a job and gaining access to education and training. Furthermore under the Government's national 'Supporting People' programme most short-term services are provided free of charge to those who need them.

Local Supporting People services are delivered by a number of agencies including housing associations, voluntary organisations and private companies. For a complete list of providers and services or to obtain more information about the programme contact the Supporting People Team.

### **Supporting People Team**

☎ 01942 827181

Email: [supportingpeople@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:supportingpeople@wigan.gov.uk)

Address: Wigan Council, Civic Centre, Millgate, Wigan WN1 1AZ

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

**People with learning disabilities** who wish to live independently can also get help from Wigan Link. This is a non-profit making organisation and registered charity whose aim is to assist people to find appropriate ordinary housing in their local community and to ensure they are supported according to their own needs and preferences.

### **Wigan Link**

☎ 01942 202054

Email: [Norman@wiganlink.co.uk](mailto:Norman@wiganlink.co.uk)

Address: 5 and 10, Hindley Business Centre, Platt Lane Hindley, Wigan WN2 3PA

Web: [www.wiganlink.co.uk](http://www.wiganlink.co.uk)

## Further education and employment

Depending upon their needs and abilities another option for the person you are caring for may be full-time education or employment. **Young people with learning disabilities** often go on to attend a full-time further education course when they have left school and some colleges also provide a residential option.

For people with disabilities who need help getting into (or back into) the workplace Wigan Supported Employment Service may be able to provide the necessary assistance. The team can help with things like filling in application forms, job searching and giving one-to-one support and job training. Referrals to the service must be made by a social worker, community psychiatric nurse, occupational therapist or disability employment advisor (DEA).

Supported Employment Service

☎ 01942 828439

Email: [supempt@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:supempt@wigan.gov.uk)

Address: Wigan Council, Department of Adult Services, Town Hall, Ince Green Lane, Ince, Wigan WN3 4QX

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

Some specialist employment opportunities also exist. Metrolite Industries, which is part of Wigan Council's Adult Services Department, is a sheltered workshop for people with disabilities. It manufactures a wide range of products for local authorities, private industry and individuals.

Metrolite Industries

☎ 01942 497861

Email: [enquiries@metrolite.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@metrolite.org.uk)

Address: 60 Warrington Road, Ince, Wigan WN3 4JW

Web: [www.metrolite.org.uk](http://www.metrolite.org.uk)

## How much will I have to pay?

Whichever option you choose, you will probably want to know how much it is going to cost you on top of what you, or the person you care for, already pays.

There is a charge for care services provided by the Adult Services Department which depends upon an individual's financial means. As everyone's circumstances are different and the cost of services vary, it is not possible to give even a rough estimate of what you may have to pay. Many carers find that the cost of replacement care is such that they are little or no better off financially by going back to work, but choose to do so anyway for reasons such as those suggested in the previous section.

You may want to think about ways in which the costs of care can be offset and the help which the council provides made more adaptable to your needs as a carer. One option, which an increasing number of vulnerable people and their carers are taking up, is to request 'direct payments' rather than services.

### **The direct payment scheme**

People who qualify for care services from the local authority but who prefer to make their own arrangements can choose to receive 'direct payments' instead. These are cash payments which you can use to buy your own care services. The service provider may be an agency or an individual, a friend or even a relative. The only restriction is that the person providing the care must not live in the same house as you.

The direct payments scheme is about giving people who need services real choice about how, when and by whom they are delivered. It's available to all those – including carers - who have been assessed as being in need of community care services.

If you have parental responsibility for a disabled child you can use direct payments to employ someone to provide your child with support. They can also help you to stay in work (or return to work) if this is what you want, by paying for things like after-school and holiday provision.

Just like services that the council arranges on your behalf you may have to pay a contribution towards direct payments. To find out more ask your social worker or contact the Direct Payments Team:

#### **Direct Payments Team**

☎ 01942 404507

Email: [directpayments@wigan.gov.uk](mailto:directpayments@wigan.gov.uk)

Address: Department of Adult Services, Town Hall, Market Street, Leigh, WN7 1DY

Web: [www.wigan.gov.uk](http://www.wigan.gov.uk)

If you are considering direct payments as an option, you will need to contact your social worker for an assessment. This will involve talking about the type of help and support you need and planning with you the appropriate services. If you do not have a social worker call the Central Duty Team on 01942 828777.

### **Personal Budgets**

Personal budgets are designed to give people greater choice and control over the way that they receive social care services.

At one time, if you were assessed as needing services, your social worker would have made all the arrangements on your behalf. More recently people have had the option of receiving 'direct payments' instead (see above). Personal budgets (which Wigan Council plans to introduce for adults in 2010) allow for even greater independence by providing people with an amount of money (based on their assessed care needs) and the choice of how they want to spend it. You can choose to have cash (direct payments), services or a combination of both.

If you decide to take some or all of your personal budget in cash form you can get help with managing it from the Direct Payments Team.