

Hands on Help

Practical Help

Introduction

This factsheet looks at practical support in the home for carers. Please note that any organisations listed are included for information only and listing does not mean recommendation.

Equipment

Disability equipment and adaptations for the home for adults can be provided after an assessment from Croydon Adult Social Care (020 8726 6500, www.croydon.gov.uk) or Croydon Health Services. The assessment will usually be carried out by an occupational therapist (OT). The person you care for may be placed on a waiting list, though urgent cases will be assessed more quickly. To request an assessment, contact Croydon Adult Social Care (see contact details above). A reablement team may carry out this assessment after a hospital discharge.

If Croydon Adult Social Care agrees that an item of equipment or a minor adaptation is essential, it should be provided free of charge. There may be a charge for non-essential equipment. If a major adaptation is agreed, the person you care for may be financially assessed to see if they need to contribute towards the cost. Loaned equipment is available free of charge, but supplies are limited and there is a waiting list for some items.

If you look after a child with a permanent and substantial disability who requires essential equipment or home adaptations, health trust staff will assess your child's needs and organise the appropriate services. For more information contact Crystal Children's Developmental Centre on 020 8274 6850.

You can also buy equipment yourself, including second-hand. Before making a purchase, make sure you know what the person's needs are and that you get the right advice. To help you make your choice, check whether any equipment you buy meets British Standards - if it does, it will have the British Standards Institute (BSI) Kitemark. You can find more information and advice at the YourCare Centre, or by talking to a physiotherapist or occupational therapist.

Equipment contacts

Staying Put



020 8760 5505



hsg-stayingput@croydon.gov.uk

Staying Put is a home improvement agency in Croydon that helps older, disabled and other vulnerable residents. They can provide advice and assistance to carry out repairs or adaptations to your home to help you live safer and more independently.



Staying Put can provide handyman and gardening services, install key safes, and offer a private work service to help take the worry out of organising house repairs, adaptations or improvements.

Croydon Wheelchair Service



020 8664 8860



cesadmin@croydon.gov.uk



www.croydon.gov.uk/community-equipment-service-ces/wheelchair-service

The wheelchair service aims to meet the needs of individuals with a permanent need for a wheelchair from the NHS that optimises mobility, with the overall aim of achieving optimal independence and function related to activities of daily living.

Disabled Living



0161 214 4590



info@disabledliving.co.uk



www.disabledliving.co.uk

Provides information about equipment, assistive technology and services for disabled adults and children, as well as older people. Bladder and Bowel UK, a branch of disabled living focus on advice and information regarding continence products. Continence products can also be obtained via your GP.

Home Safety and Security

Age UK Croydon



020 8686 0066



croydonpic@nhs.net



www.ageuk.org.uk

Whilst Croydon is not in the catchment area for an Age UK handyman service, it is in the catchment for Personal Independence Coordinator (PIC) services. PICs work in a person-centred way, helping people identify their own goals to regain independence and live the life they want to live. You must be a Croydon resident or registered with a Croydon GP to access this service.

If the person you care for has a fall and cannot get up again, even with your assistance, call 999 and make the person as comfortable as possible until help arrives. When helping someone get up, be careful not to endanger your own health or safety, and, if in doubt, call 999. Calling 999 in these circumstances is recommended by the London Ambulance service, and you should not be concerned about calling the emergency services in what may not seem to be a life-threatening situation.

The Age UK Personal Safety Project can also be contacted to make home arrangements if you think the person you care for is at risk of a fall.

Food Services

Frozen Meal Delivery Services

There are a number of frozen meal delivery services in the borough:

- Oakhouse Foods: 0333 370 6700, www.oakhousefoods.co.uk
- Wiltshire Farm Foods: 0800 077 3100, <https://wiltshirefarmfoods.com/>

Getting About

Using a Car

Blue Badges



020 8726 7100



travel.service@croydon.gov.uk



www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge

Provides parking concessions, such as parking on single or double yellow lines (up to three hours), in disabled bays, or free parking in 'pay and display' bays, to disabled people who qualify. You may be eligible if you:

- Have a permanent and substantial disability that means you cannot walk or have very considerable difficulty walking.
- Receive certain mobility benefits.
- Are registered blind.
- Have a child with a health condition that affects their mobility.

Croydon Council has the full eligibility criteria: www.croydon.gov.uk/adult-care/blue-badges. Since 2019, the Department of Transport now considers applications from those with less visible conditions such as mental health problems or autism.

There is a £10 application fee for Blue Badges. To apply, contact Croydon Travel Services (020 8726 7100) or visit www.gov.uk/apply-blue-badge.

Blue Badge holders must display their badge correctly when using parking concessions. The Blue Badge can only be used if:

- The Blue Badge holder is the driver or passenger in the car.
- The Blue Badge holder is being dropped off or collected, and the driver needs to park where the person is being collected or dropped off.

The Companion Badge can be used by Blue Badge holders in Croydon as an alternative to the Blue Badge, which can be vulnerable to theft. It costs £30 and is only valid in Croydon.

A disabled parking bay can be created outside the home of Blue Badge holders who have no available off-street parking within 100 metres, regular shortages of on-street parking and a vehicle registered at the address. Dropped kerbs can also be created outside the homes of Blue Badge holders to make it easier to access the house.

In most cases, applications are made by the regular driver of the vehicle. In some instances, applications may be considered when the applicant is not the main driver of the vehicle, but the vehicle must be registered at the same address as indicated on the V5C logbook.

Breakdown Services

- Green Flag (0800 400 600, www.greenflag.com) aims to prioritise vulnerable members when dispatching breakdown assistance.
- The AA (0800 262 050 Disability Helpline, www.theaa.com) recommends disabled people register their needs when taking out breakdown cover so appropriate support and vehicles can be dispatched.
- The RAC (0800 029 029, www.rac.co.uk) offers specific breakdown cover for Blue Badge holders (RAC Response).

Driving Lessons

Many local driving schools can offer driving lessons to meet disabled people's individual needs. Contact local or national driving schools to find out what they can provide.

The following driving schools provide specialist support:

- BSM (0330 100 7501, www.bsm.co.uk) can offer specially trained instructors and adapted cars.
- QEF Mobility Services (020 8770 1151, www.qef.org.uk) offers driving assessments and lessons for disabled people in a range of adapted vehicles.
- The Family Fund's Driving Ambitions grant (01904 621 115, www.familyfund.org.uk) supports disabled young people to start driving lessons. Applicants must have no driving experience and have never taken driving lessons previously. Grants can contribute towards the cost of the provisional licence, theory test, learning materials and the first taster lesson.

Motability



0300 456 4566



www.motability.co.uk

Enables people receiving certain disability benefits such as higher rate mobility DLA or enhanced rate mobility PIP to exchange their mobility allowance to lease a new car, scooter or powered wheelchair. If the person you care for is eligible, they do not need to be the driver, but the car must be used for their benefit.

Customers of the Motability Scheme aged 16-25 can receive a contribution for up to 40 hours of driving lesson tuition. Applications must be in full-time education or training, and they or their parents must receive a means-tested benefit. Eligible benefits may include Income Support, income-related Jobseekers Allowance, Pension Credit, or Universal Credit amongst others.

People with a long-term illness or disability will not have to pay VAT on the lease or purchase of a Motability vehicle or on vehicles that are designed or substantially adapted to enable them to enter and drive, or enter and be carried in, the vehicle.

Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA)



0300 790 6808



www.gov.uk/driving-medical-conditions

Drivers are legally required to inform the DVLA if they have a notifiable medical condition that might affect their driving ability. Notifiable medical conditions include, but aren't limited to, epilepsy, strokes, other neurological and mental health conditions, physical disabilities and visual impairments. Contact the DVLA if you are unsure as to whether your condition requires notification.

Using Public Transport

Transport for All



020 7737 2339



www.transportforall.org.uk

Transport helpline for disabled and older users of public transport in London. Provides help and advice on travel including planning journeys, applying for discount cards and support with complaints about transport services.



24-hour online travel information and journey planning, including options to plan accessible journeys. Customers do not need to pre-book assistance but can book assistance on the London Overground. Provides a range of accessibility guides including: Audio Tube Map, Step-Free Tube Guide and Assisted Transport Services in Greater London. Also offers a Travel Support Card for people with a hidden disability who might need help during a journey. The card alerts transport staff to the person's support needs, details of regular journeys and emergency contact information.

Buses, trams and DLR

In Greater London, all buses, trams and Docklands Light Railway (DLR) trains have step-free access. Wheelchair users travel free on all London buses and trams. Buses have one dedicated wheelchair secure space, and trams have two spaces. On buses, wheelchair users have priority over buggies.

Mobility Aid Recognition Scheme



020 3054 4361



travelmentor@tfl.gov.uk



<https://tfl.gov.uk/transport-accessibility/learn-to-use-public-transport>

Scheme to help people who use mobility aids, such as mobility scooters, wheelchairs and mobility walkers, to show that their mobility aid can be used safely on public transport. To use the scheme, contact the Travel Mentoring Service on the above number. If the person's device can be used on London buses, the person will be offered an accompanied journey to check the suitability and size of their mobility aid. If the mobility aid is suited for bus travel, they will be given a Mobility Aid Card to keep and show to bus drivers to prove their device is suited to bus travel.

Coaches

Megabus



0141 352 4444



uk.megabus.com/conditions/accessibility-statement

Wheelchair and scooter users who can transfer and climb the few steps onto the bus will be offered assistance from the driver, and the wheelchair or scooter will be stored in the luggage bay. Wheelchair and scooter users who need to remain in their wheelchair during the journey need to book their place by phone at least 36 hours before their journey.

National Express



0371 781 8181
(Disabled Persons Travel Helpline)



addl@nationalexpress.com



www.nationalexpress.com

Many coaches are now accessible and have passenger lifts at the front entrance and space for one wheelchair. National Express do not normally reserve specific seats; however with 36 hours' notice the chances of a wheelchair space are greatly increased.

Lightweight (20kg or less) manual wheelchairs can be stowed in the luggage hold for customers who can transfer. Mobility scooters that can be dismantled (the heaviest part not exceeding 20kg) can be stowed in the luggage hold but staff cannot assist with dismantling or reassembling.

Assistance from staff needs to be booked 24 hours in advance and can include: providing accessible information, help on and off coaches, a priority front seat, help loading and unloading luggage (not exceeding 23kg) and connection assistance at staffed stations where available.

Victoria Coach Station



020 7027 2520



<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/coaches/help-with-your-coach-journey>

Free mobility assistance available but needs to be booked at least 24 hours in advance.



Travelling by rail

Disabled people's right to travel by train is protected by the train company's Disabled People's Protection Policy (DPPP). Each train company must produce a DPPP, and copies can be requested from the train company.

Assistance can be provided with boarding the train, during the journey and exiting the train. You can also be guided off the platform to the arrival or interchange station, as well as being assisted with onward travel arrangements. Assistance is free and available to people who need assistance due to disability, temporary impairment or old age. You do not need a Disabled Persons Railcard.

To request travel assistance, contact the rail company you are starting your journey with at least 24 hours before travelling. To check which company you are travelling with, contact National Rail Enquiries (see contact details below). London Overground offers a 'turn up and go' service, which means you do not need to pre-book assistance.

National Rail Enquiries



03457 484 950



www.nationalrail.co.uk

Carers
Information
Service



Stations Made Easy gives full accessibility information, as well as maps and details of staffing hours, of all stations. To use Stations Made Easy, enter the name of the station that you are interested in then click on the Stations Made Easy logo next to the station address.

Travelling by tube

If you need assistance to travel, you do not need to book in advance. Staff can assist you at each stage of your journey, including getting onto the platform, boarding the train, finding your seat and calling ahead to your destination or interchange station for a member of staff to meet and assist you there.

Accessible tube maps include details of stations with step-free access, information on gaps between the platform and the train, and stations accessible by escalator. Audio and large print versions are also available.

If you arrive at a station and the lift is unavailable, staff will help you to plan an alternative journey to your destination. If there isn't a suitable alternative route, a member of staff will book a taxi (at Transport for London's cost) to take you to your destination or an accessible station from where you can continue your journey.

Door-to-door Transport

Dial a Ride



0343 222 7777
(Bookings)



dar@tfl.gov.uk



<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/dial-a-ride/>

Provides free door-to-door minibus service for disabled people who cannot use public transport. You are automatically eligible if you are:

- A Taxicard member.
- Receiving higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance.
- Receiving standard or enhanced mobility rate of the Personal Independence Payment (PIP).
- Registered blind or partially sighted.
- Aged 85 or over.
- Receiving higher rate Attendance Allowance.
- Receiving War Pension Mobility Supplement.
- If not automatically eligible, you can still apply using the application form.

The service can be used for things such as shopping, visiting family and friends or travelling to leisure activities. It cannot be used for travel to hospital appointments, work, council day centres or school. The service can be busy so you may wish to book a day in advance. If travelling with the person you care for, you can ride for free, provided you are both travelling to and from the same address.

Air Travel

When travelling by air, a person with a disability which affects their mobility (or an older person, or someone with a temporary injury such as a broken leg) has the right to:

- Help at arrival, including terminal entrances and car parks.
- Help with check-in.
- Help with moving through the airport, including to the toilets.

You must let the airline know assistance is needed at least 48 hours in advance.

Hospital Transport

The following listings refer to Croydon University Hospital. Please check with the relevant hospital.

Hospital Car Parking



<https://www.croydonhealthservices.nhs.uk/visitor-guide>

Blue Badge holders can park for free for 3 hours as long as they park in a disabled parking bay for 3 hours. However, if these bays are not available, or if you are not a Blue Badge holder, usual car parking rates apply. If the person you care for is likely to be in hospital long-term, speak to the nurse in charge of the ward for a weekly permit. Find the latest information on charges online.

Useful Travel Discounts

60+ London Oyster Photocard



0343 222 1234



<https://tfl.gov.uk/fares/free-and-discounted-travel/60-plus-oyster-photocard>

Free travel on bus, tube, tram, Docklands Light Railway (DLR), London Overground and most National Rail services in London for people aged 60 and over who live in a London borough. Passengers are not eligible for this card if they are eligible for an older or disabled person's Freedom Pass.

Senior Railcard



0345 3000 250



railcardhelp@railcards-online.co.uk



www.senior-railcard.co.uk

A third off most rail fares throughout the UK for people aged 60 and over. Costs £30 for one year or £70 for three years.

Congestion Charge



0343 222 2222



<https://tfl.gov.uk/modes/driving/congestion-charge/discounts-and-exemptions>

Blue Badge holders don't have to pay the congestion charge on up to two vehicles once they have completed a registration form and paid a one-off £10 fee. You can apply for an exemption on a Blue Badge holder's behalf. If you must drive the person you care for into central London for hospital treatment, you can ask for a Congestion Charge refund - speak to the hospital to apply.

Disabled Persons Railcard



0345 605 0525



advice@transportfocus.org.uk



www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk

The Disabled Persons Railcard is available to disabled adults and children. It gives the cardholder and a friend/carer a third off standard and first class rail fares throughout Great Britain. Cards cost £20 for a year or £54 for three years. Applications can be made online or by post.

Discounts for people who do not hold a Disabled Persons Railcard



0345 748 4950



www.nationalrail.co.uk/railcards/concessionary-travel/

Blind or visually impaired people travelling with a companion are entitled to at least a third off most rail fares throughout the UK. This discount only applies to adult fares and does not apply to people travelling alone. Blind or visually impaired people can also buy an additional adult season ticket for a companion to travel with them on National Rail services at no extra cost. People who need to stay in their wheelchair during a journey are entitled to at least a third off most rail fares throughout the UK. A companion will also be entitled to the discount. This applies to adult and child fares.

All the above discounted tickets can be purchased from staffed National Rail station ticket offices. For passengers with a visual impairment, evidence of visual impairment will be required when booking and whilst travelling. Evidence from a recognised institution will be accepted, such as the local council, the adult social care team, The Royal National Institute for the Blind (RNIB) or Blind Veteran's UK (formerly St Dunstan's).

Disabled Persons Freedom Pass



020 8726 7100



travel.service@croydon.gov.uk



www.croydon.gov.uk/healthsocial/adult-care/getting-around/disabled-person-freedom-pass

Free travel on trains (after 9.30am on weekdays, all day on weekends/bank holidays), trams, tube and DLR in Greater London, and on buses throughout England. Cardholders must have an eligible disability. Criteria includes:

- Blindness or partial sightedness
- Being profoundly or severely deaf
- Being unable to speak
- Having mobility and walking issues
- A loss of function in both arms
- Severe learning disabilities
- Having been refused a driving licence because of a disability

Older Persons Freedom Pass



0300 330 1433



info@freedompass.org



www.londoncouncils.gov.uk/services/freedom-pass

Free travel on trains (after 9.30am), trams, tube and DLR in Greater London, and off-peak local buses (after 9.30am) throughout England. You must live in London and meet specific age criteria to be eligible.

Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme



0300 330 1343
(Low Income Scheme
helpline)



www.nhs.uk

If you or the person you care for are referred to hospital or other NHS premises by a health professional for NHS treatment or a diagnostic test, you may be able to claim back travel costs. To claim you must be on a low income and claiming a low-income related benefit. If you are taking someone to a medical appointment, you may be able to claim travel costs if a healthcare professional deems it medically necessary for them to travel with a carer.

London Taxicard Scheme



020 8726 7100



travel.service@croydon.gov.uk



www.croydon.gov.uk/adult-care/taxi-card

Reduced fares in black cabs for Croydon residents who are registered blind or have severe mobility problems and are unable to use public transport. The Taxicard holder pays a minimum contribution, and Croydon Council will pay the rest up to a maximum amount. The council will contribute more for trips made at night or at weekends. The concession is limited to a certain number of trips per year and bookings must be made in advance.

Vehicle Tax



0300 123 4321
(Driver and Vehicle
Licensing Agency)



www.gov.uk/vehicle-tax

You are exempt from paying vehicle tax if you receive:

- Higher rate mobility component of Disability Living Allowance (DLA)
- Enhanced mobility component of Personal Independence Payment (PIP)
- War Pensioner's Mobility Supplement
- Armed Forces Independence Payment

The vehicle must be registered to the disabled person or their nominated driver. If you are the nominated driver, you can only drive the car to meet the needs of the disabled person; you cannot drive it for your own personal use. The exemption can be claimed when applying for vehicle tax.

If you receive standard rate Personal Independence Payment (PIP), you can claim a 50% reduction on your vehicle tax. For more information on how to apply, contact the Driver and Vehicle Licensing Agency (DVLA).

Leisure and Holidays

Disabled people and their carers have just as much right to relax and take a break as anyone else, and leisure and holiday providers should be as inclusive as possible. However, there are also specialist activities, holidays and clubs available to meet individual needs.

Disability is a protected characteristic under the Equality Act 2010. This means that disabled people should not be discriminated against when provided services, including leisure services. Discrimination is when you are treated unfairly because of something related to your disability. This could be reduced mobility, need for extra toilet breaks, behavioural issues, difficulties using public transport, etc. Services are also required to make reasonable adjustments for disabled people. For more information, visit www.citizensadvice.org.uk.

Travel Insurance

Travel insurance companies cannot deny you travel insurance on the basis of disability. However, if you have a pre-existing medical condition or disability, they can charge you more if they can show you are more likely to make a claim. It is important to disclose any pre-existing conditions when you apply, as failing to do so may render your policy invalid if you do need to make a claim.

Some travel insurance agencies specialise in policies for people with pre-existing medical conditions. These agencies may also be able to insure disability or mobility equipment and provide cover for situations such as an airline being unable to carry an individual due to a change of plane to one that is not accessible.

You can find several travel insurance comparison websites online. Alternatively, you can ask a travel insurance broker to find the best deal for you. The British Insurance Brokers' Association has a list of regulated insurance brokers: www.biba.org.uk/find-insurance or call 0370 950 1790.

Flying

When flying within the European Union (EU), airlines and tour operators may not refuse to carry passengers, or to take bookings, on the basis of reduced mobility. A reservation or boarding can only be refused for justified safety reasons, or if the boarding or transport of the disabled person is physically impossible due to the size of the aircraft or the width of its doors. If you are refused a reservation, a suitable alternative must be offered, and if boarding is refused, reimbursement or re-routing must be offered at no extra cost.

In addition to these rights, a person with a sensory, physical or learning disability which affects their mobility (or an older person, or someone with a temporary injury such as a broken leg) has the right to:

- Help at arrival, including terminal entrances and car parks
- Help with check-in
- Help with moving through the airport, including to the toilets

You must let the airline know assistance is needed at least 48 hours in advance. If you do not give this much notice, the airline only has to do what they reasonably can to assist you onto your flight. If you are travelling with a battery-powered wheelchair or mobility aid, let the airline, travel agent or tour operator know as soon as possible.

If you request assistance due to disability or a medical condition, the airline may ask if you are 'fit to fly'. This will usually involve filling in a form about your condition. It may help to have medical documents ready to support this process. Disabled people who will need help during the flight with tasks such as feeding, taking medication or using the toilet must travel with a carer. The airline will try to sit the disabled person and carer together, but will need 48 hours' notice.

Disabled people can travel with up to two items of mobility equipment free of charge. This is in addition to your baggage allowance. Airlines also have to carry assistance dogs free of charge. Assistance dogs are allowed to travel in the aircraft cabin with their owner on approved routes and carriers registered to carry assistance dogs. For more information visit www.equalityhumanrights.com.

Civil Aviation Authority



www.caa.co.uk

If you have a disability and you are unhappy with the assistance provided by the airline, you should complain directly to the airline. If you are unhappy with their response, you can complain to the Civil Aviation Authority.

Travelling with an assistance dog

If travelling abroad with a pet, including an assistance dog, you can enter or return to the UK without quarantine as long as you follow government guidelines on travel abroad. You will need a pet passport for your pet to travel, which you can apply for from certain vets. Visit www.gov.uk/take-pet-abroad for more information.

Medical Care

The UK Global Health Insurance Card (GHIC) lets you get necessary state healthcare in the European Economic Area (EEA), and some other countries, on the same basis as a resident of that country. This may be free or it may require a payment equivalent to that which a local resident would pay.

The UK GHIC has replaced the existing European Health Insurance Card (EHIC). If you have an existing EHIC you can continue to use it until the expiry date on the card. Once it expires, you'll need to apply for a UK GHIC to replace it.

You can apply for a new card up to 9 months before your current card expires. A UK GHIC is free and lasts for up to 5 years. Apply for your new card through the NHS website. Avoid unofficial websites – they may charge you a fee to apply.

The UK GHIC is not a replacement for travel insurance. We advise you to have private travel and medical insurance for the duration of your trip.

If you are travelling outside the European Economic Area and Switzerland, the NHS provides a country-by-country guide to paying for medical care as a UK citizen: www.nhs.uk.

Medication

If taking medication abroad, try to pack more than you need to allow for delays and emergencies. If travelling by air, try to carry your medication in your hand luggage, as there is less chance of it being lost during the journey, and liquid medication may freeze if carried in the hold. Essential liquid medicines of over 100ml can be carried in hand luggage with pre-approval from the airline or airport, alongside supporting documentation such as a letter from a doctor or a copy of the prescription.

Always keep medication in the original packaging, preferably still with the pharmacy label visible. It may help to ask the prescribing doctor to write a letter stating the health condition/s and the medication that has been prescribed, so that you can prove there is a legitimate reason for carrying your medication.

Make sure that you check that the medication you are travelling with is legal in the country you are visiting. The Foreign and Commonwealth Office can give details of foreign embassies in the UK (020 7008 1500, www.gov.uk).

Equipment

It is important to ensure any disability equipment taken on holiday is appropriately insured (see previous page). It may be possible to hire equipment at the holiday destination.

Equipment hire companies that operate across a range of countries are:

- Mobility at Sea- www.mobilityatsea.co.uk.
- Mobility Equipment Hire Direct- www.mobilityequipmenthiredirect.com.

Purchasing or hiring equipment specifically to take on holiday is also an option.

Alternative Care

If you are planning a holiday without the person you care for, it might be necessary to arrange alternative care. This could be in the form of care workers coming into the home, a respite stay in a residential home or an accessible holiday.

If you need to arrange respite, contact Croydon Adult Social Care (020 8726 6500) to request an assessment and possible funding or practical help with arranging alternative care. If you prefer to arrange alternative care yourself, there are a range of home care providers and care homes offering respite care in Croydon. For more information, see our Getting Support from Social Care factsheet.

Holiday Tips

1. Bring the instructions, spare parts and batteries for any mobility or disability equipment you are taking with you.
2. Check your accommodation will meet your mobility needs. For example, will you need access to a lift? If so, will it accommodate a wheelchair or scooter?
3. Translate key phrases related to your disability into the appropriate language, in case you have to seek medical help abroad.
4. If you need to keep your medication cold, find out if your accommodation has access to a fridge.
5. If you have specific dietary needs, make sure your accommodation knows about them.
6. Check how near your accommodation is to health services such as pharmacies and hospitals. If you are not familiar with the language of your holiday destination, check if there is an English-speaking doctor available.

And most important of all...

7. Get written confirmation of what your accommodation has promised in terms of disabled facilities.

Respite

Respite care is the term used for services that enable you to take a break from caring. A respite care service is provided to the person you care for; to temporarily replace the care you would otherwise give them.

Respite care can come in many forms. What works best will depend on your circumstances and those of the person you care for. It might be a home care service for the person you care for, for example to allow you to go out in the evening, or a temporary stay in a care home to enable you to take a longer break, such as a holiday.

Arrangements could be made for the person you care for to attend an activity group or day centre once a week, to give you a regular break from caring.

In Croydon, under some circumstances respite care can be provided as a result of your carer's assessment, while in other circumstances it's provided through a needs assessment for the person you look after. If your assessment or the assessment for the person you care for shows you need respite care, Croydon council should provide it.

You might be able to get financial support from the council to help you take a break, but respite services are means-tested so you or the person you care for may have to contribute towards the cost.

Useful contacts for respite

Victoria Convalescent Trust



07768 742940



vic.c.trust@gmail.com

Grants for convalescent and respite care for people on a low-income. Preference is given to people living in Surrey and the London Borough of Croydon. Professional referrals only.

Croydon Mencap



020 8684 5890



www.croydonmencap.org.uk

Information, advice and support for people with a learning disability and their carers. Runs a social club and discos for people with a learning disability and their carers.

Croydon Adult Learning and Training (CALAT)



www.calat.ac.uk

Wide range of adult education classes including courses for adults with a learning disability. Fees apply but financial support is available for learners on a low income.

Cinema Exhibitor's Association Card



www.ceacard.co.uk

Enables people aged eight and over who are receiving Disability Living Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Personal Independence Payment, Armed Forces Independence Payment or who are registered blind, to get one free ticket for someone accompanying them to the cinema.