

Creating a Backup Plan: Covid-19 and Family Carers



We understand that many family carers in Ireland are anxious about the current outbreak of the new virus named Covid-19. This outbreak has been upgraded, worldwide, to a pandemic by the World Health Organization.

We in Care Alliance are not in a position to give medical advice, and would recommend that all family carers follow the recommendations of the Government

(<https://www.gov.ie/en/publication/ea1c30-updated-measures-in-response-to-covid-19-coronavirus/> and the HSE

(<https://www2.hse.ie/conditions/coronavirus/coronavirus.html> on such matters. As this is such a rapidly evolving situation, this advice is likely to change on a regular basis.

You may also wish to visit a page specifically set up by Family Carers Ireland, detailing the measures that family carers should be aware of in relation to Covid-19: <https://familycarers.ie/coronavirus-covid-19-information-advice/>.

Many of Ireland's family carers are already providing significant medical care and supports to those who are most at risk from Covid-19. A situation may arise whereby a family carer may need to isolate themselves from the person they provide care for, or indeed may need to continue caring for that individual even if they contract the virus.

It is vital that family carers develop an emergency/backup plan which can be used if a family carer cannot provide care in the home. We have collated some information here which may be useful for family carers in planning for such an event.

Nominate a Backup Carer

Do you have another family member who is willing and able to provide care if something happens and you cannot for a period of time? Make sure that everyone is comfortable with this scenario – you as the carer, the person receiving care, and the backup carer – or at least accepting of it. You should make sure that the backup carer has access to important details about the medical and social care needs of the caree. Check to see if there are any tasks that they need to be shown how to do correctly (for example, peg feeding or using particular equipment like hoists or mobility aids). It might be a good idea to pass on this knowledge now rather than having to do it when an emergency occurs.

You should make sure that any health and social care professionals involved in the care of your loved one are aware of this person and know that this person is your backup carer.

Make an Emergency Plan

If you are suddenly unable to provide care, it is important that whoever will take over the provision of care knows all the important information about the particular care situation. We recommend that family carers create a document or folder containing the following information:

- Name and contact details for you and the person you care for.
- Name and contact details for your and their next of kin (closest living relative).
- Name and contact details for your backup carer.
- Name and contact details for the healthcare professionals involved with the person you care for: GP, local public health nurse, home care provider or agency, pharmacist, etc.

It should also include the following details on the person you care for:

- the medical condition(s), including allergies and dietary requirements
- any communication and mobility issues they have
- a list of medication they're taking and details of their ongoing needs
- information about who has keys and how to access the property, including alarm codes
- any important information about the person's home, for example, how to turn the central heating on, the location of the fusebox, etc.
- any Power of Attorney that's in place
- any advance care plan that has been made.

Enable UK, an organisation based in the UK, has developed a workbook to help guide you through creating an emergency plan. You can download a copy of it from our website - <https://www.carealliance.ie/userfiles/files/Enable%20Scotland%20Print.pdf>.

If you want to print this plan out and don't have a printer at home, ask a neighbour. Failing that, email us info@carealliance.ie and we will send you a hard copy in the post. Please be aware, however, that not all aspects of services discussed in the workbook will be relevant or available to family carers here in Ireland.

In Case of Emergency (ICE)

ICE (In Case of Emergency) is a campaign started by a paramedic to help emergency staff quickly find out who to contact. You can store the word 'ICE' in your mobile phone address book with the number of the person you'd like contacted, for example, your backup carer. If something happens to you, ambulance, police or hospital staff will look for the word ICE in your phone's address book and call that person. If you have more than one person to contact in an emergency, you can list them as ICE1, ICE2, ICE3.

Your phone may have a lock with a password, in which case other people won't be able to access your address book. But you can put ICE information on your phone's lock screen. Your phone instruction manual will have information about how to do this.

It may also be useful to create a card with these contact details to keep in your wallet or purse, including the information that you provide care for someone.

Technology

If someone you're caring for lives at a distance, it's important to consider how technology can help alert you to any problems and give you both peace of mind.

You may find it valuable to explore some apps and devices specifically designed with carers' needs in mind, such as CareFolk, which has been designed by an Irish developer and former carer, that enables easier communication and coordination of care among friends and family. It is available at <https://carefolk.com/family>.

Another option is the app Jointly (<https://jointlyapp.com/>). Jointly is a mobile and online app developed by CarersUK, and functions similarly to CareFolk.

Social Media

In recent days, following the Covid-19 outbreak and the subsequent reduction in social mixing, a community initiative has sprung up on Twitter called [#Selfisolationhelp](#).

This aims to provide an immediate response to a particular need of someone who is self-isolating or unable to leave their home due to caring responsibilities. It could include collecting groceries, prescriptions, etc. While we can't attest to its reliability, it may be a useful way to get specific support from people in your local community.

You will need to set up your own Twitter account to use the service properly. Be careful in how you share information. It's probably wise to talk to any online volunteer in person or ask a trusted relative/neighbour to support you in this.

WhatsApp

WhatsApp is a messaging service that allows easy one-to-one and group messages. Some local WhatsApp groups are also responding to local need within their community. Consider getting yourself added to these groups. Again, ask a friend or relative to help you set up and use WhatsApp.

(Note; This guidance document will be updated as necessary. Should you notice any inaccuracies in it or have suggestions for improvement please email info@carealliance.ie)