

Carer's support guide

Helpful information to support you in your role



We know that being a carer can be a real balancing act. This guide is just one of the ways we're looking to support you in your role. Find more advice, support and guidance at www.carersclub.org

"Never believe a few caring people can't change the world. For, indeed, that's all who ever have."

Margaret Mead
American anthropologist
1901-1978

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Am I a "carer"?

"A carer is someone of any age who provides support to family or friends who could not manage without this help due to illness, disability, mental ill health or a substance misuse problem."

(Carers UK)

If this sounds like you then chances are that you may be entitled to support, as you are classed as carer.

You are not alone...

Every day around six thousand people take on new caring responsibilities in the UK, many of whom never even considered that they would end up in a caring role. The reality is that one in eight of us will, at some point, be in a caring role just like you, and it's really important that you receive the support that you need as early as you possibly can.

Carers have told us that it's the simple things that become so complicated and time consuming, emotionally draining and overwhelming. Therefore, we've pulled together some information in the key areas that carers whom we have spoken to want to know about.

Why we value you

We recognise that, as a carer, you do amazing things every day and probably don't realise it. As a health and social care organisation, our aim is to do everything we can to make life as easy as possible for you.

To us you're an equal care partner, which means you should be involved in decisions about the care received by the person that you look after. We also know that often you're the last person that you think about when it comes to staying healthy, however, it's critically important for you and the person you care for that you look after your mental and physical wellbeing, so we need to put you first.

With that in mind, we want to help share information and give you advice when you need it, so that you can get in touch with the appropriate organisations and experts which can support you further.

We've developed a website specifically for carers, as a one stop shop for information, news and guidance as well as some opportunities for fun. Head over and take a look at:

www.carersclub.org

Advice on benefits

What can I claim if I am a carer?

This guidance is a brief introduction to some of the main benefits and other forms of financial help that you may be entitled to.

The benefits system is often very complicated and millions of pounds of benefits go unclaimed every year.

Carers' benefits often include:

- Help with council tax including exemptions, discounts and benefits
- Attendance allowance and disability living allowance for the extra costs incurred because of a disability
- Housing benefit for your rent
- Income support and pension credit for daily living expenses
- Health benefits for NHS costs
- A carer's allowance and carer's premium if you are looking after a disabled person

To qualify for a carer's allowance you will need to satisfy the below rules:

- You must be 16 years old or over
- You must look after someone for at least 35 hours a week
- The person you look after must receive a qualifying disability benefit
- If you work, you must not have net earnings above £100 a week
- You must be living in the UK when you claim carer's allowance and satisfy certain residence and immigration rules
- It needs to be the only "earnings replacement benefit" that you are applying for. If you have other "earnings replacement benefits" then you won't be eligible for a carer's allowance

- You must not be a full-time student
- Some earnings replacement benefits are based on National Insurance (NI) contributions

These include:

- State pension
- Contribution-based Jobseeker's allowance
- Incapacity benefit
- Employment and support allowance
- Maternity allowance
- Widow's or bereavement pension
- Widowed mother's or widowed parent's allowance

Some earnings replacement benefits are not based on NI contributions. These include:

- Carer's allowance
- Severe disablement allowance

Carers UK provides detailed advice and help in booklet form or via telephone at 0808 808 7777* on personal finances and covers the following:

- Carer's Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Disability Living Allowance
- Attendance Allowance
- Working age benefits
- Pension age benefits
- Benefit cap advice
- Housing benefit advice
- Bedroom tax advice
- How to challenge a benefit decision
- How to challenge a bedroom tax decision

- Health benefits
- Help with debt
- Help with your pension
- Help with household finances:
 - Fuel costs
 - Council Tax rate relief
 - TV licence
 - Grants

*Telephone numbers that start with 0808 80 are **always** free to call from your mobile. These numbers are issued by The Helpline Association for non-profit helplines.

What is a community care assessment?

The community care assessment looks at the help needed by the person you are looking after. It may be frailty due to old age, disability or another health condition. A social worker usually carries out the assessment at the home of the person you are looking after.

The Care Act 2014 states that the local authority must undertake an assessment for any adult who appears to have any level of needs for care and support, regardless of their eligibility for support or of any support being provided by a carer.

The eligibility for support of the person you are caring for will be carried out before understanding what level of support you are providing as a carer. The assessment will look at:

- The personal care needs of the person you are looking after and their thoughts on how that care should be provided
- If there is a carer, their views on the care needed, including the level of care they are willing and able to provide

- If there is a risk to their independence and wellbeing if their needs are not met. For instance, risk of falling or leaving the gas cooker on
- The outcomes that matter to the person – for example, whether they are lonely and want to make new friends

Please note: a person's financial status does not affect the decisions made by your local authority about providing support, nor does it affect the eligibility of the person being assessed.

The community care assessment will look at all individuals affected by the care provided to the person in question, not just the individual providing most of the care. This approach ensures your whole family or network of people, are registered as carers and can benefit from the same rights if they are also providing help and support.

Following the assessment, the care provided by you and any other carers will be discussed, listing the duties you are willing and able to provide. Your local authority will record the duties you have decided to manage and therefore they do not need to provide support in those areas.

However, should you choose to change your mind or later say you can no longer provide some or all of the care, the local authority can then refer back to the record and provide the assistance required.

What is a carer's assessment?

A carer's assessment looks at your needs as a carer and the sustainability of your caring role, including the practical and emotional support you provide.

The assessment looks at whether you are able and willing to provide care now and in the future. The assessment also considers the impact

on activities outside of the care you provide such as your work, education, training and enjoying yourself, as well as your mental and physical health.

The Care Act 2014 makes sure that any carer who appears to have a need for support should be offered a carers assessment by social services. You will be entitled to an assessment no matter what your level of need, the amount of care you provide or your financial status.

It is not necessary for you to live with the person you are looking after or be caring full time to have a carer's assessment. However, you must be aged 16 or over.

You can have a carer's assessment to look at the help that you need, even if the person you look after does not want to have an assessment to look at the help that they need.

You can also choose to have a joint assessment, where you and the person you care for receive an assessment together. If the person you care for does not have an assessment or if they have been considered not to be eligible for support, you can still have a stand-alone assessment.

If you are under the age of 16 the Children's and Families Act 2014 has made sure some of these rights can apply to you too. Your local authority will undertake a young carer's assessment upon your request or if they think you need to be assessed.

They will identify the support you need and decide if you are a 'child in need' which means that the care you provide may have an effect on your health or development, or if you have a disability. For more advice on being a young carer, you can refer to our Young carer's

guide, available from early 2015 or can contact one of the relevant support organisations which are listed at the end of this booklet.

What are the services that are available to me as a carer?

Here are some examples of services that may be offered following a community care assessment:

- Changes to the disabled person's home to make it more suited to their needs
- Equipment installed such as a hoist or grab rail
- A care worker to help provide personal care at home
- A temporary stay-in residential care/respice care
- Meals delivered to the disabled person's home
- A place at a day centre
- Assistance with travel, for example travel to and from the day centre
- Laundry services

The Care Act 2014 allows social services to charge for services used, including those services available to you as a carer. However, you cannot be charged for services provided to the person you care for.

Following a financial assessment of your needs as a carer, the following outcomes are possible:

- You may be expected to meet the full costs
- The local authority may meet the full costs
- The cost may be shared between you and the local authority

Whilst the new legislation gives local authorities the right to charge back to carers for services they use, there is concrete guidance advising why they should not. For example, if you choose to withdraw

your caring role, the expense for your local authority to step in would be far more costly than providing free services to you.

How do I find out about respite care and do I qualify?

Respite care may be beneficial to you and the person you're looking after. In some areas, respite care is provided by your local authority as a result of you having a carer's assessment.

In other areas access to respite care is provided through a community care assessment for the person you're looking after. Therefore, it is best to make sure that both of you are assessed. The local authority will consider what help you need and will decide which community care services should be provided to help you.

It is important to remember that carers' assessments and community care assessments are not the only route to qualify for or access respite care. The local authority will consider what help you need and will decide which community care services should be provided to help you.

What is a carer's assessment?

You have a legal right to an assessment of your own needs. It's really important that you look into this, as it is your chance to discuss with the social services department of your local authority what help you need with caring.

You can discuss any help that would maintain your own health and help you balance caring with other aspects of your life, such as work and family commitments. You need to get in touch with your local authority to arrange an assessment.

You can find the contact details for your local authority in the directory of local carer services on the Carers Direct website (please see next page for contact details).

How do I qualify for one of these separate assessments?

You should be able to have a separate assessment in the following situations:

- Where you're providing regular and substantial care to someone. Social services will also check that you're over 16, if you're looking after a disabled child, or someone over 18 for whom they may provide community care services
- The person you're looking after is being discharged from hospital
- Planning and reviewing someone's mental health care needs (when you're looking after someone with mental health problems who is on the Care Programme Approach, which is a particular way of assessing)
- As a parent carer of a disabled child under 18. In this instance, you have a right to a separate assessment of your own if the assessment does not fully take account of your needs

Please be aware there are also changes planned for the benefits system over the next few years.

Advice on caring and employment

Juggling work and looking after someone can be difficult. Having an understanding and knowledgeable employer or manager can help make this easier. It is helpful to have access to information and advice in your workplace, but often it doesn't exist. Please see below our run down on the support that you are entitled to as a carer.

The right to request flexible working

If you are working in the UK, you are able to benefit from the right to request flexible working and employers have a duty to consider these requests.

Employees with 26 weeks service are able to request flexible working.

The law places a duty on employers to:

- Give all requests serious consideration
- Agree to requests unless there are genuine business reasons for not doing so

There will be an employment policy that refers to these rights, so it is worth asking your human resources department for their advice and guidance to help you.

For more information contact:

Carers UK

w: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/looking-after-you/your-work-and-career

t: 0808 808 7777 **e:** advice@carersuk.org

Carers Direct

w: www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/workandlearning/work/Pages/Overview.aspx

t: 0300 123 1053

Carers Trust

w: www.carers.org/help-directory/carers-and-employment

t: 0844 800 4361

Employers for Carers

w: www.employersforcarers.org

t: 020 7378 4956

Tips for looking after your physical and general wellbeing

Staying healthy and looking after yourself is important for everyone, but it's especially important for you if you are a carer; the better your physical and emotional wellbeing is, the better you will be able to manage the daily demands of being a carer. You may be responsible for the care and support of disabled, elderly or sick partners, relatives or friends who are unable to care for themselves.

You are not alone and we are here to support you. We have a great health and happiness section on www.carersclub.org to inspire you to take better care of your mind and body. Here are a few things to help support you in your everyday life.

Talk to your GP

Talk to your GP and other health professionals involved in the care of the person you look after. It is really important that you stay well, physically, and mentally too. Your GP can ensure that you receive additional support, for example free flu jabs, screening for depression and anxiety or help you to look after your back. They can also inform you about services that may be of benefit to you. In some areas GPs are able to provide a referral to a carer's direct payment.

Counselling

Sometimes it's hard to talk to people close to you. Your local carers centre, GP, social services, specific illness charities and support groups should be able to give you further advice on counselling or help you to find a counsellor.

Take care of your back

Back pain is common among carers. Nurses and care assistants never move anyone on their own but most of the time, as a carer, you will have no choice. Even helping someone to dress or move from bed to chair can take its toll on your back.

Ask your GP to refer you to the district nurse or physiotherapist. They can visit to assess your needs and also show you the correct way to move someone safely and minimise the risks.

You may also be able to have your home, or the home of the person you care for adapted to suit needs, or be supplied with equipment that will help you in your role as a carer.

Get enough sleep

There are a few ways that can help you get a good night's sleep:

- Regular exercise will allow your body to rest better and help you sleep
- Try to go to bed at the same time each night or at least try to get a consistent number of hours each night if possible
- Create a restful sleeping environment
- Make sure that your bed is comfortable
- Try to relax before going to bed
- Keep your caffeine intake to a minimum, especially before bed
- Write away your worries by making lists of things to be tackled the next day
- Don't worry in bed, get up and do something you find relaxing until you feel sleepy again, then return to bed
- Don't smoke or over-indulge in too much food or alcohol, especially late at night

Eat well

A good, well balanced diet will help you in a number of ways such as giving you energy combating stress and building immunity so there's a reduced risk of you falling ill.

Your role as a carer can mean that you are busy helping someone else with food at mealtimes, so you may find that you have little time yourself to eat. However, having regular patterns for your meals will help keep your energy and concentration levels high and help avoid the temptation of unhealthy snacks. A good routine can also be of benefit to the person you care for and enable you to schedule time for you to eat.

The sorts of things that are recommended are:

- Lots of fruit and vegetables and starchy foods to give you long lasting energy
- Eat some non-dairy protein such as fish, lean meat, eggs, beans, chickpeas and lentils
- Milk, dairy foods and cheese and yoghurt are good sources of protein and calcium
- Cut down on saturated fat which increases the risk of heart disease. Saturated fats are contained in foods such as hard cheese, cakes, biscuits, sausages, cream, butter and pies. Choose food with unsaturated fats, such as vegetable oils, oily fish and avocados
- Cut down on sugar and foods that contain added sugar, such as fizzy drinks, alcohol, cakes, biscuits, chocolate and pastries
- Cut down on salt, as too much salt in your diet can increase your blood pressure and increase the risk of heart disease or stroke
- Keep hydrated and aim to drink about 1.2 litres of fluid (around seven big glasses) each day – water, milk, fruit juice or other non-alcoholic drink (although try to avoid sugary soft and fizzy drinks)

Exercise

Choose an exercise that you enjoy, it could be swimming, an hour at the gym, yoga, or even a short walk with the person you care for. You could even turn regular household chores into a workout like vigorous vacuuming, cleaning or gardening.

There are other ways you can incorporate exercise into your daily routine, for example you could use the stairs rather than the lift if practical. If you are unable to get out you can exercise at home with a video or book.

Exercise will help with stress relief, clear your head, give you more energy and even help you sleep. However, if you haven't exercised for some time and you have health concerns, you may want to talk to a health professional, preferably your GP, before starting a new exercise routine.

Get fresh air and absorb Vitamin D

Vitamin D is important to maintain healthy teeth and bones, and we get most of our vitamin D from sunlight on our skin. However, if you are unable to get outdoors as often as you would like, you may want to consider taking vitamin D supplements. Please discuss this with your GP.

Dealing with your role change

Becoming a carer is often a life changing experience. You may be unprepared for the change in roles and relationships. It may affect things such as employment, education, socialising and interests. Give yourself time to adapt to these changes.

Guilt

Another common feeling amongst people who are carers is guilt. You may feel guilty about being angry, making decisions or having fun away from the person you care for. Letting go of guilt can help

improve your wellbeing and your ability to cope and help you focus on the positive things in your life.

It is best to talk about your feelings with the person you care for or if it gets too difficult you can talk to your local caring organisation or GP. It might just take you a little bit of time to adjust to your role as a carer.

Anger

Although generally we all feel anger from time to time, anger is a common emotion amongst people who are carers. You could be feeling out of control, frustrated, upset or low.

Anger can be expressed physically through your body language or vocally. It may help you to look out for triggers or physical signals such as feeling hot or tense etc. Try counting to ten, take some time out, take a deep breath, or try to empathise about the situation or the person creating the anger.

Talk to friends and other carers

Even if it's just by telephone or email, try to keep in touch. Socialising is good for your mental health so, even if you feel isolated and don't want to talk, try using social media, as there are other people out there who are going through what you're going through, and may be able to help you get the support that you need, or even just give you the time to listen to you.

Emergencies

Knowing that the person you look after will be cared for in an emergency is a major concern. If others share the care with you, make sure you discuss it with them. You may be able to register with an Emergency scheme. A lot of organisations provide carers

with emergency cards, holding your emergency contacts, to carry with you at all times.

Get time for yourself when you can

- Have a cup of tea
- Read the paper
- Listen to music
- Look at photos together with the person you care for
- Go out for a coffee or drink
- Meet a friend or go shopping to get out of the house
- Pursue interests, hobbies and activities that you find enjoyable
- Have a short holiday if possible, whether it is a few days or a week
- Your local carers centre can be found at

www.carers.org/find-your-local-carers-centre

For more information, you can contact

Carers Direct

w: www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect/guide/emergencies/Pages/Helpwithemergencyplanning.aspx

t: 0300 123 1053

Who do I go to for help and support?

Citizen's Advice Bureau provides independent advice on people's rights and responsibilities including benefits and assessments

w: www.citizensadvice.org.uk

t: see your local telephone directory for contact details

Carers Direct provides social care support and information online and advice on choosing social care, how to fund care, carers' breaks and much more

w: www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

t: 0300 123 1053 Lines are open 9am to 8pm Monday to Friday (except bank holidays), 11am to 4pm at weekends.

Carers UK is passionate about making life better for carers. They have just released a new "app" called Jointly which is a mobile and online application designed to support carers at a one off cost of £2.99.

w: www.carersuk.org

t: 0808 808 7777 - open Monday to Friday, from 10am until 4pm

e: advice@carersuk.org

Carers Trust works through a network of independent Crossroads Care schemes and carers centres to provide support to carers

w: www.carers.org

t: 0844 800 4361

Age UK is the country's largest charity dedicated to helping everyone make the most of later life

w: www.ageuk.org.uk

t: 0800 169 6565

Disability Rights UK aims to promote "meaningful" independent living for disabled people as well as providing support for carers

w: www.disabilityrightsuk.org

t: 020 7250 3222

The Government's pension service advises on all pension, benefit and retirement issues for people age 60 or over

w: www.dwp.gov.uk/thepensionservice

t: 0845 606 0265

The Children's Society reaches out to young carers from all communities through their National and local programmes. This group includes children and young people who care for parents or siblings who suffer from chronic illness or disability.

w: www.youngcarer.com

t: 01962 711511

Carers Trust – young carers

w: www.youngcarers.net

t: 0844 800 4361

SSAFA which provides lifelong support to our forces and their families

w: www.ssafa.org.uk

t: 0845 241 7141

Young carers (that's a carer aged 18 or younger)

can find helpful advice from both The Children's Society and the Carers Trust or can refer to our Young Carers Guide which will be available from early 2015.

The Children's Society reaches out to young carers from all communities through their national and local programmes. This group includes children and young people who care for parents or siblings who suffer from chronic illness or disability.

w: www.youngcarer.com

t: 01962 711511

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This booklet has been created in conjunction with NHS Guildford and Waverley, East Surrey and Surrey Downs Clinical Commissioning Groups.

Your notes

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