Together we can make life better for carers
Hello and welcome

Thank you for choosing to volunteer with Carers UK and for helping to make life better for carers.

We value our volunteers and want everyone to enjoy being part of Carers UK. By donating your time, skills and experience you’re making our services possible, enabling us to extend our support and giving carers a much-needed voice. You’re helping to break the isolation that so many carers feel.

We want to do all we can to help you settle into your role and this handbook will give you some useful information about volunteering with us. Please do get in touch with your supervisor or our Volunteering Team if you have any further questions or suggestions.

With thanks for all your support

Heléna Herklots
Chief Executive, Carers UK

Find out why your support is so important...
No one should have to care alone

Why we’re here
Caring is such an important part of life. It’s simply part of being human. Carers are holding families together, enabling loved ones to get the most out of life, making an enormous contribution to society and saving the economy billions of pounds.
Yet many are stretched to the limit – juggling care with work and family life, struggling to make ends meet or even battling with poor health themselves. Looking after someone can be a rewarding experience, but it can also be tough, lonely and bewildering.

>>> We’re here to make sure no one has to care alone.

What we do
As the UK’s only national membership charity for carers, Carers UK is both a support network and a movement for change. Carers UK is here to listen, to give expert information and tailored advice, to champion carers rights and support the nation’s unpaid carers in finding new ways to manage at home, at work, or wherever they are.
Through volunteers like you we are reaching out into local communities across the UK and online. Your volunteering is connecting carers, offering support and raising awareness. Whatever you give to Carers UK, whether it’s time, skills, expertise or the benefit of your experience we want to thank you.

>>> We couldn’t do what we do without you.

Across the UK today

6.5 million
people are carers, supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill.

That’s 1 in 8 adults who care, unpaid, for family & friends.

Every day

6,000
people take on a caring role and within our lifetime there will be 9 million carers.

Read about our mission and values...
Our mission: is to make life better for carers

We give expert advice, information and support.

We connect carers so no-one has to care alone.

We campaign together for lasting change.

We innovate to find new ways to reach and support carers.

Our values: carers are at the heart of everything we do

We are:
- open and approachable
- inclusive, respecting the diversity of each other’s caring experiences
- independent and tenacious in advocating for carers
- expert and innovative
- committed to working with others

I volunteer to help other carers not to be isolated.

Gary, Local Ambassador (pictured)
Our history

Carers UK founder Mary Webster used her own experience of the practical difficulties, isolation and financial hardship that came from caring for her parents, to bring a private issue out of the shadows. In 1954, aged 31, she reluctantly gave up her job as a Congregationalist Minister to become one of a generation of single women expected to take on a caring role.

Mary Webster realised that if she was caring alone, others must be too and generated a breath-taking amount of publicity by writing to national newspapers about the struggles women carers were experiencing. Overwhelmed by the response, Mary founded the organisation which became Carers UK.

Mary Webster died in 1969 at the tragically young age of 46. Yet her legacy continues today as volunteers like you continue to pick up her mission, coming together to offer support and tocampaign for lasting change for the millions of men and women looking after a loved one.

Next section: Your volunteering...
Your volunteering

What can you expect from us?

- We will give you a clear and defined role profile.
- We will offer flexibility within volunteering opportunities and take into account any caring and other commitments that you have.
- We will provide an induction on the work of Carers UK and give you the appropriate training and tools to carry out your role effectively.
- Our staff are trained to support volunteers. A named supervisor will monitor your volunteering and discuss development opportunities.
- We will give volunteers a voice within the organisation – we’ll ask for your views and ideas whenever we can.
- We will cover reasonable out of pocket travel expenses.
- We will have adequate insurance to cover you while undertaking voluntary activities authorised by Carers UK.
- We will follow the policies, procedures and standards of the organisation in relation to volunteers.
- We will resolve any concerns promptly and fairly.
- We will provide references for people who have actively volunteered their time for us.
- We will operate within the spirit of equality, diversity and our values.
- We will celebrate your successes and recognise your achievements.

What do we expect from you?

- You’ll engage with your volunteering to the best of your ability.
- You’ll perform tasks and undertake training in line with your role.
- You’ll support our values and show respect to your fellow volunteers, Carers UK members and staff.
- You’ll volunteer within the organisation’s health and safety policies and the boundaries of your role.
- You’ll respect the confidentiality of the organisation and its members.
- You’ll keep staff informed about your voluntary work and feedback to us about your activity.
- You’ll bring any comments or concerns you might have to the attention of your supervisor or a member of the Volunteering Team.
- You’ll maintain the good name and reputation of Carers UK throughout your time as a volunteer.

100% of our Ambassador volunteers say that they’d recommend volunteering with us

100%

Carers UK Ambassador Feedback survey, 2014

For me, my volunteering is about giving something back to a community that supported me when I needed it.

Sue, Forum Moderator
Induction and training

We want you to feel happy and prepared in your volunteering role. This handbook offers a warm welcome to the Carers UK volunteering team, an induction to the organisation and answers many general volunteering questions. Some roles may require a more specific induction and this will be offered through a tailored training programme.

Your training will vary depending on your role. Ongoing training will be offered as appropriate to your role and your needs. As your volunteering progresses, we also offer relevant development opportunities for those who want them. Further training and guidance are also available should you feel unsure of what is required or how to fulfil your potential within a role.

Supervision and support

Providing support and supervision to our volunteers is very important to us. We want you to feel comfortable and confident in your role and you’ll have a named supervisor for ongoing support during your time with us. Your supervisor will be approachable and available if you have any needs, concerns, questions or ideas.

This support can be offered in person, on the phone or online, depending on the nature of your role. There’ll be opportunities for catch-ups with your supervisor to review your volunteering and to update you on what’s happening at Carers UK. We’ll also be staying in touch with regular emails and e-newsletters.

100% of our Ambassador volunteers find our ongoing training sessions helpful

Carers UK Ambassador feedback survey, 2014

100% of our Adviceline volunteers said they felt appreciated by Carers UK

Carers UK Ambassador feedback survey, 2014
Spread the word

You’ve signed up... now spread the word!

We’d love you to tell your friends and family about your volunteering and the work of Carers UK. Let them know what you’ve been up to via Facebook and twitter (@carersuk) and join in with the online debate about the state of caring in the UK today. If you know someone who’d like to join us, we are always developing new volunteer roles, which can be found at carersuk.org/volunteer.

People often are surprised that someone is actually taking the time to listen. The thank-yous are amazing. The laughs are just wonderful.

Joanie, Adviceline Volunteer

Every week I’m meeting new people where I live, which has boosted my confidence – and my social life.

Steve, Local Awareness Volunteer

Next section: THE ESSENTIALS...what you need to know
The essentials

When volunteering with us you'll need to be aware of the following policies and procedures.

Please take a few minutes to give them a good read through and do get in touch if you have any questions.

What is a volunteer?
A volunteer is someone like you who registers with Carers UK to take on a defined role and offers their time, skills and expertise free of charge in order to help carers.

These roles have been specially created as volunteering opportunities and we will not ask any volunteer to carry out a role which should be assigned to a member of staff.

Who are our volunteers?
We aim to recruit from all areas of society to ensure our voluntary team is as diverse as the carers movement itself.

Carers UK is committed to equal opportunities and wants to ensure our opportunities, services and support are accessible to all.

How we recruit
All volunteers will be asked to complete a short registration form which is tailored to your chosen volunteer opportunity.

Some roles require more specific skills or experience and may involve a longer application process, including an informal interview. We may also need to request references and you'll be notified during recruitment if this is required for your role.

As some roles do require specific skills or experience, not all applicants will be successful. We will provide useful feedback and suggest alternative roles where possible to match your interests, skills and suitability. We will always aim to place volunteers into the role most appropriate for them.

Your age
Carers UK volunteers must be aged over 18. Should anyone under 18 wish to volunteer they must be accompanied for the duration of the opportunity by someone aged over 18 who will take on responsibility for the activity and all participants.

Security checks
Some roles may require you to complete an enhanced Disclosure and Barring Service (DBS) check. This will be free of charge.

Any volunteer required to complete a DBS check will be notified in advance. Only relevant offences will be considered when evaluating an applicant’s suitability and data obtained from DBS checks will only be available to appropriate members of staff. Please contact your supervisor or a member of the Volunteering Team if you'd like to discuss this further.
Your expenses

Carers UK believes you should never be out of pocket through volunteering. We will reimburse reasonable expenses when supported by receipts and agreed in advance. Expenses should be submitted to your supervisor within one month of you paying out.

We cannot make a contribution towards car insurance if used for your volunteering role. Please discuss this directly with your insurance company to see if your policy covers use as part of volunteering.

Your commitment

Our roles are designed to be as flexible as possible to accommodate your other commitments.

If your role requires you to volunteer at a specific time it would be helpful if you could let us know in advance if you’re unable to make the session. However, we understand that sometimes things come up at short notice and notifying us may be difficult. In these situations we will look forward to seeing you at your next session and if there’s anything we can do to help you manage your volunteering/life balance please do get in touch.

Confidentiality

In the course of your volunteering you may have access to confidential information relating to Carers UK, its members and other people you may encounter through your volunteering. We expect you to keep this information confidential and not to disclose this information to anyone other than your immediate staff team during your volunteering or at any time afterwards.

If you should ever be concerned about another individual during the course of your volunteering it is important that you speak to your supervisor or a member of the Volunteering Team.

Copyright and Data Protection

All copyrights and any other intellectual property rights in connection with your volunteering role belong to Carers UK, unless otherwise agreed. Personal data about our volunteers is held in line with data protection legislation. All volunteers have the right to access any personal information that is held by Carers UK.

Representing us

When carrying out voluntary work for Carers UK you are also a representative for the organisation. You’re responsible for presenting a positive image of Carers UK and must share our values of respect, fairness and support. If you are ever unsure about what to say, write or wear during the course of your volunteering, just ask your supervisor for tips and advice.

Some volunteering roles may involve access to branded email addresses or resources – these should be used within the organisation’s ‘Phone, Email and Communications Guidelines’. Please ask your supervisor if you’d like a copy.

Your health and safety

Carers UK has appropriate types of insurance in place to cover our volunteers. We are committed to ensuring your wellbeing and safety while volunteering for us. In turn we expect our volunteers to help maintain a safe volunteering environment for all. We expect you to take reasonable care for the health and safety of yourself and other people who may be affected by your actions. For some activities it is recommended that volunteers conduct a risk assessment or take out specific insurance to cover the event, these guidelines will be issued for the relevant roles. Please ask your supervisor if you’d like a copy of our ‘Health & Safety Policy’.

Your privacy

We sometimes take photographs of volunteers for use in recruitment materials or to promote the work of Carers UK. If you’d prefer we didn’t use your image, please make sure you let your supervisor know and we will respect your wishes.

In the media

While we want you to share your personal experiences and tell others about Carers UK, we would never expect you to be our spokesperson. No comments should be made to media organisations as defined ‘Carers UK volunteer’, unless you’ve been asked to do this by a staff member. If you do receive any media or public speaking enquiries, please contact your supervisor who will then direct the enquiry to the relevant staff department.
Your achievements
During your time with Carers UK you will keep us up to date with your volunteering by regularly filling out a simple feedback form. This information will help us share the impact volunteering can have in making life better for carers. It will also enable us to feedback to you about the success of the volunteering programme as a whole, as well as your own individual achievements.

Leaving
We understand that your availability can change over time, please speak to us if you would like to change your role or time commitment. If you do decide to leave or want to put your volunteering on hold for a while, all we ask is that you let us know as soon as possible. You are under no obligation to serve a notice period and we thank you for the support you have been able to provide.

References
All volunteers can request a reference from their supervisor for use in applications for work, education or other volunteering opportunities.

Resolving concerns
If you have a problem or concern about any aspect of your volunteering role it is important you speak to your supervisor as soon as possible for advice and support. If it feels more comfortable you can also speak to the Volunteering Team at any time. We take the concerns of our volunteers very seriously and will make every reasonable effort to resolve them at the earliest opportunity in line with our Complaints Policy.

You can read more about what to do if you encounter a problem in our ‘Issues, Comments & Complaints Guidelines’ which are available from your supervisor or the Volunteering Team.

If you’d like to read our more detailed ‘Volunteering Policies & Procedures’ please request a copy from your supervisor.

Discover other ways to get involved…
Other ways to get involved

Fundraising for Carers UK is another great way to help us keep doing what we do.

Collections
Not only an effective way to raise vital funds, but collection boxes also raise awareness of the work we do and the services we offer. You can collect in your local area or at home – even your small change can make a big difference.

Care for a Cuppa
Hold a coffee and cake morning with friends or at work with colleagues. Why not post about it on social media to spread the word?

Online Fundraising
You could be raising money for Carers UK every time you shop online at no extra cost to you. Give As You Live works with over 3000 online retailers to turn a percentage of every penny you spend into a donation for Carers UK. You can also raise funds just by changing your search engine or recycling old clothes.

Become a member
Need some support?
When you’re caring for someone it can sometimes feel like no-one else understands what it’s like.
By joining Carers UK you’ll become part of a supportive community and a movement for change. Join us. We’re here for you.
Find out more: carersuk.org/join

Challenge yourself
Whether it’s trekking, cycling or running a marathon, taking part in a challenge is a fun way to fundraise. It is also the perfect excuse to test yourself and finally take on that event you’ve always said you’d like to do.

Accepting donations
If someone offers you a donation in return for a talk or would like to make a donation directly to us, please contact the Fundraising Team to find out the best way to pay it in.

Feeling inspired?
Get in touch to find out more about fundraising for Carers UK...
Email: fundraising@carersuk.org
Visit: carersuk.org/fundraise
Call: 020 7378 4952
Contact information

We are here to support you

Here’s how you can contact the Carers UK Volunteering Team:

- By email: volunteering@carersuk.org
- Volunteer Line (weekdays, 9am – 5pm): 0207 378 4989
- Visit: carersuk.org/volunteer

Notes:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Tell us your stories

If you have a special experience whilst volunteering or if you’ve been moved by a carer’s story please get in touch by emailing volunteering@carersuk.org.

We often find the most uplifting stories about the impact of Carers UK come directly from our volunteers.

We’d love to see photos of you volunteering too!

Being a carer can be a very isolating experience, so having the opportunity to meet others to support and promote a good cause is very rewarding for me.

Brenda, Carer Ambassador

Volunteering alongside likeminded people willing to give up their free time to help others has been so rewarding. As is the feeling that I’m making a difference to a carer when they ring up and want to let off steam.

Pauline, Adviceline Volunteer

Notes:

- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 
- 

Making life better for carers: carersuk.org
thank you

Carers UK is a charity registered in England and Wales (246329) and in Scotland (SC039307) and a company limited by guarantee registered in England and Wales (864097). Registered office: 20 Great Dover Street, London, SE1 4LX.

© Carers UK April 2015

Volunteer photography by Rahima Subhan, Local Ambassador volunteer
Contact Rahima via twitter with any photo enquiries: @artinournature