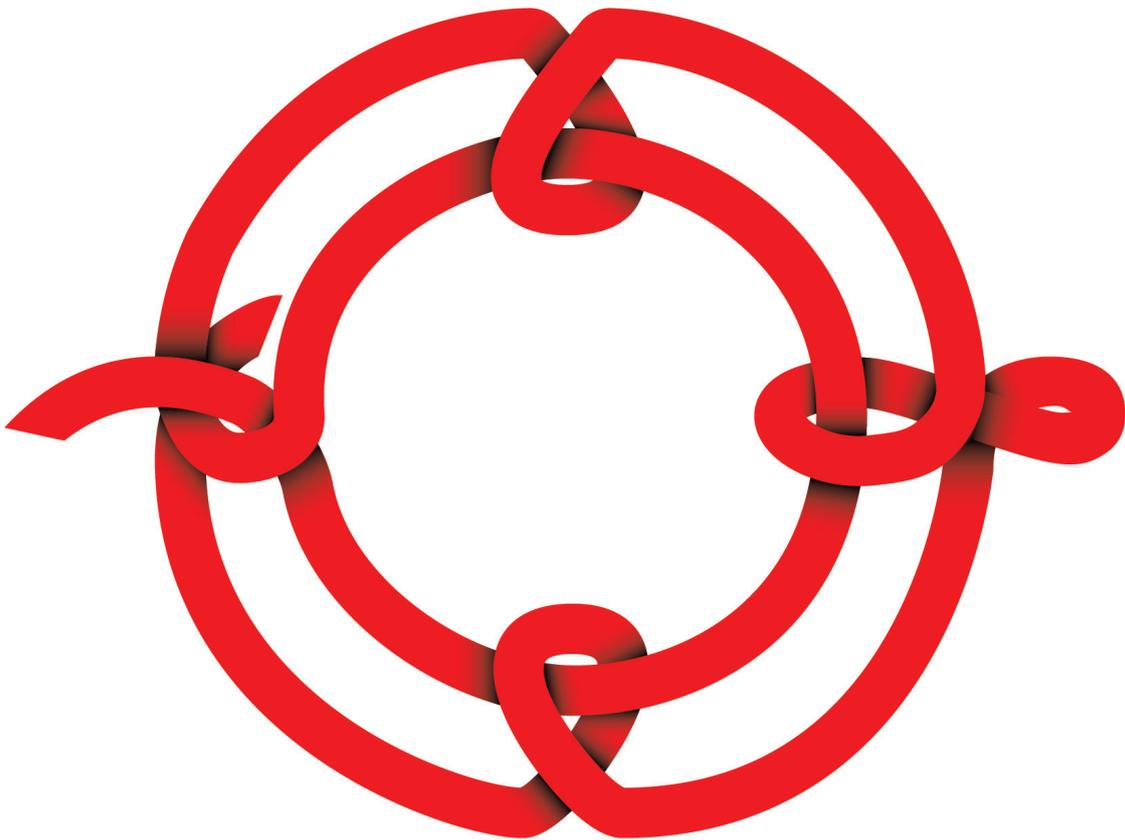


Assessments



Many carers find it easier to continue in their caring role if they can get some help.

Local councils can provide help and support for people who need care, and their carers. The way they make a decision about the help and support that they can provide is by carrying out an assessment.

This factsheet applies to people living in England & Wales.

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Many carers find it easier to continue in their caring role if they can get some help. Local councils can provide help and support for people who need care, and their carers. The way they make a decision about the help and support that they can provide is by carrying out an assessment.

This factsheet focuses on the help that is available through assessments which are carried out through local councils. It is also possible to organise help privately, without involving the local authority. For further information, have a look at the Carers UK website or contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

There are different kinds of assessments:

- **Carer’s assessments** are for carers who provide regular and substantial care.
- **Community care assessments** are for adults who may have care needs.
- **Children Act assessments** are for disabled children under 18, their parents and family, and also young carers under the age of 18.

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Note: Parents and family members who care for disabled children can also request a separate carer’s assessment if they do not feel their needs have been taken into account following a Children Act assessment. This also applies to young carers in certain circumstances. For further information contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

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This factsheet explains how these assessments can be arranged, what services may be provided, and what the possible charges for these services could be. There is a greater focus on carer’s assessments although community care assessments and Children Act assessments are also covered. It also outlines what to do if you disagree with a decision made about assessments.

Carer's assessments

What is a carer's assessment?

Carer's assessments are a way of identifying your needs as a carer. They look at your role as a carer: how being a carer affects you, how much caring you can realistically do (while still allowing you to be involved in other activities outside caring), and any help you may need.

Who can have a carer's assessment?

Anyone who provides or intends to provide a substantial amount of care on a regular basis has a legal right to a carer's assessment. Once a carer has requested a carer's assessment, the local council has a duty to carry one out.

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Note: No definition of 'substantial' is given, so if you feel you devote a lot of time to caring for someone and you do this regularly, you should meet this condition. Even if you do not provide a lot of hours of care, you can still have an assessment if your caring role has a big impact on your life.

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If you share caring responsibilities with another person, or more than one person, you can each have a carer's assessment so long as you are each providing a substantial amount of care on a regular basis.

You don't necessarily have to live with the person you are looking after or be caring full time to have a carer's assessment. You may be juggling work and care and this is having a big impact on your life.

If you are a carer 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.

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Note: If you are a carer aged under 16 and the person you are looking after does not want an assessment of their own, you may be able to get help through a Children Act assessment if you are considered to be a 'child in need' (see page 12 for further information on Children Act assessments).

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How to arrange a carer's assessment

You can request a carer's assessment by contacting the local council adult social services department of the person you look after.

It may be possible to request an assessment online, or by phone, but it is still a good idea to follow up this request in writing. You should include:

- your name and contact details
- the date
- your request for a carer's assessment
- the name and contact details of the person you look after
- the care needs of the person you look after
- any help you need as a carer

The carer's assessment process

The carer's assessment will be carried out by a social worker or another professional nominated by social services. In some areas, social services ask local voluntary organisations to carry out the assessment, but arrangements should still be made through social services. Your local council should explain who will carry out the assessment.

The assessment will normally be carried out at a face to face meeting. However, many local councils ask carers to complete a self-assessment questionnaire before the meeting to help carers and professionals focus on the help the carer needs.

The assessment should be carried out in a convenient and private place. For example, this could be at a social services' office or at your home. Assessments can be done over the phone if this is the best way for you, eg it fits in with your routine or offers more privacy. The social worker carrying out the assessment should discuss this with you beforehand.

The carer's assessment can be carried out with or without the person you are looking after being present. It is up to you. You can also have a family member, a friend or a professional person such as a Carers Support Worker from a carer's centre with you if you wish. Having someone with you should be discussed when the assessment meeting is being arranged.

Your carer's assessment should cover:

- your caring role
- your health
- your feelings and choices about caring
- work, study, leisure
- housing
- planning for emergencies (such as a Carer Emergency Scheme)

If you are not asked questions about these issues, you can raise them in the assessment meeting. See page 16 for a list of questions which should give you a clearer idea of the help you may need in relation to these areas.

It is important that you give as complete a picture as you can about your caring role and are as honest as you can be about the care that you provide and how you feel about being a carer. This way, you and the person carrying out the assessment can discuss what sort of help may make it easier for you to take up caring or continue in your caring role.

The outcome of the assessment

Once a social worker has carried out the assessment they should then determine whether you meet their eligibility criteria.

The eligibility criteria are based on the level of risk posed to your caring role if no help is provided. The levels of risk are critical, substantial, moderate and low. The local council can choose which levels of risk it provides services for. Local councils can also choose not to provide services to carers.

However, if the risk posed to your caring role is assessed as being critical then the local council must take steps to make sure that this risk is addressed. They can address this risk by either providing services directly to the carer, or by providing services to the person receiving care.

A critical risk arises when:

- The carer's life may be threatened by their caring role.
- Major health problems have developed or will develop.
- The carer feels that he/she has lost a large amount of control over the decisions they make about the nature of tasks they will perform (eg whether to help the person they are looking after with personal care) and how much time they will give to

their caring role (eg the carer feels that caring is round the clock because the person they care for won't accept outside help).

- The carer is unable to look after their own domestic needs and other daily routines while sustaining their caring role.
- Involvement in employment or other responsibilities (eg looking after other family members) is, or will be, at risk.
- Many significant social support systems and relationships are, or will be, at risk (eg unable to maintain friendships, visit relatives etc).

If the council do not provide either you or the person you are looking after with appropriate services, you may need to make a complaint or take other action to challenge this decision. For more information about complaints, please contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

The help you will get

If the local council has decided that help is going to be provided, you should be given a 'carers plan' which outlines the support needs that have been identified, how these will be addressed, and whether you need to make a contribution towards the cost of services.

There are two ways that help can be provided:

1. Through support to the person you are looking after which in turn could benefit you.

This help is provided under the community care assessment and therefore any contribution towards the cost of services would be the responsibility of the person you are looking after. An example of this is respite care which gives you a break, but it is the person you are looking after who is in receipt of the service. If a service is provided to the person you are looking after, then it will be recorded on the care plan of the person you are looking after.

2. Through direct support to you.

This is provided under the carer's assessment and would be included in your 'carer's' plan.

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Note: If the person you are looking after is a child then help for the child and the carer should be provided under the Children Act assessment. However if your needs have not been properly addressed

under this assessment, you can ask for a carer's assessment for your own needs.

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If the local council decides that you are eligible for help, they can:

- Provide you with services themselves.
- Provide you with services through another organisation.
- Provide you with money so that you can arrange and pay for your own services (usually called direct payments). The local council must agree that the service meets your assessed needs.

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Note: You can request direct payments instead of having services provided directly to you.

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For more information on direct payments visit www.carersuk.org/directpayments or contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

Some examples of the kind of help that could be available following a carer's assessment are:

- driving lessons
- help with taxi fares
- help with housework and gardening
- a mobile phone
- a short holiday for the carer to enable them to have time to themselves
- a computer for a carer who cannot access computer services from a local library because they felt unable to leave the person they were looking after
- repairs and insurance costs for a car, where transport was crucial to the caring role
- gym membership
- massages
- leisure classes to relieve stress

You can accept some or all of the help you are offered. If you do not feel the help you are offered is necessary or appropriate, you can refuse it. Before refusing help please do talk about your concerns with social services as it may be that more suitable arrangements can be made. You may also refuse services because of the charges you are

asked to pay for them.

Charging for help

You may be charged by social services for the help they give you. Whether you are charged for services and how much, depends on your local council. You can only be charged for help that is provided directly to you through your carer's assessment. If help is provided for the person you are looking after through a community care assessment, you, as the carer, should not be charged for this.

If local councils charge for the help they provide they must follow guidance when deciding how much to charge. The social services department should explain to you the rules they use when deciding how much they will charge for help. For more information on charging visit www.carersuk.org/carersassessment or contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

Community Care Assessments for disabled adults

What is a community care assessment?

Community care assessments are for adults (18 years of age or over) who may need help because of a disability, ill health or old age. A community care assessment looks at the range of help a person needs (this can include community care, respite and residential care services). While the focus of a community care assessment is the person you are looking after, in most cases the role and views of the carer should also be taken into account during the assessment.

Who can have a community care assessment?

The local council has a duty to assess someone once they are aware that they may have needs. The local council may become aware of the person's potential needs if they request an assessment themselves, or if someone else requests the assessment for them (eg a carer, family member, or a professional).

How to arrange a community care assessment

You can request a community care assessment by contacting the local council adult social services department of the person who may need care.

It may be possible to request an assessment online or by phone, but it is still a good idea to follow up this request in writing. You should include:

- the name and contact details of the person who may need care
- the date
- the request for a community care assessment
- the person’s circumstances and the help they may need

The assessment will normally be carried out by a social worker at a visit to the home of the person you are looking after.

The outcome of a community care assessment

The social workers use the findings of the assessment to decide whether the person being assessed fits within their eligibility criteria. They will make a decision on whether the need for services is:

- **Critical** - the person cannot look after themselves. They would not be able to stay alive and well if they did not get this help.
- **Substantial** – the person needs quite a lot of help to look after themselves. Without this help their quality of life would be poor and their health might get worse.
- **Moderate** – the person can undertake most of the activities they need to do to look after themselves but they may need help with domestic tasks or getting out and about.
- **Low** – the person can do most things for themselves but might need encouragement and support with one or two things.

All local councils have a duty to include critical needs in their eligibility criteria. However they can choose which other categories also fall within their eligibility criteria. If the person is assessed as having needs that fit within the eligibility criteria then they will be considered to have ‘eligible needs’. If the local council assesses the person as having ‘eligible needs’ that are not already being met (eg by a carer), then they have a legal duty to provide services to meet those needs.

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Note: If an ‘eligible need’ is being met by a carer informally, then the local council do not have a duty to meet this need. Local council’s must follow guidance when carrying out community care assessments, which states that assumptions should never be made about the level of care that a carer will provide. Therefore it is important for you to be clear during the assessment about the level of care you are willing and able to provide.

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Once it has been decided what services will be provided, a care plan will be drawn up detailing the care and support needs that have been taken into account, how these needs will be met and who has been identified to provide care and support.

The help you will get

If the local council decides that the person you are looking after is eligible for help, they can:

- Provide them with services themselves.
- Provide them with services through another organisation.
- Provide them (or someone on their behalf) with money so that they can arrange and pay for their own services (usually called direct payments). The local council must agree that the service meets the ‘eligible needs’.

.....

Note: The person you are looking after (or someone on their behalf) can request direct payments instead of having services provided directly to them. For more information on direct payments visit www.carersuk.org/directpayments or contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

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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 suitable
- equipment 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 to get to a day centre
- laundry services

Charging for help

Most local authorities will conduct financial assessments as part of community care assessments – this is to work out if a person is required to contribute towards the services they need. Each local authority must decide if and how it will charge people for care and they must follow guidance when doing this. The social services

department must produce information about their charging policy, and this should be easily accessible through your social worker or via the council's website. For more information on charging visit www.carersuk.org/communitycareassessment or contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

Children Act Assessments

What is a Children Act assessment?

Children Act assessments are carried out under the Children Act 1989. They look at the needs of disabled children (under 18 years of age) and their families and can also provide services for young carers. The assessment should consider all the help that your disabled child needs, the needs of any other children in the family and the help that you may need to care for the disabled child.

Who can have a Children Act assessment?

Local councils have a duty to assess a 'child in need' under the age of 18 for any services that they or their family may need. A 'child in need' is defined as:

- A child who is unlikely to achieve or maintain, or to have the opportunity of achieving or maintaining, a reasonable standard of health or development without the provision of services by a local council *or*
- A child whose health or development is likely to be significantly impaired, or further impaired, without the provision of services.

.....

Note: If you are a carer under the age of 18 you will generally be considered to be a 'child in need' if you have significant caring responsibilities.

.....

- A child who is disabled.

A child is considered disabled if they are one of the following:

- blind
- deaf
- non-verbal
- suffering from a mental disorder of any kind

- substantially and permanently handicapped by illness, injury or congenital deformity or such other disability as may be prescribed

.....

Note: If you feel that a Children Act assessment has not addressed the help that you need as a carer you can still ask for a separate carer’s assessment (see page 4). The only exception to this is if you are a young carer under the age of 16 and the person you are looking after does not want a community care assessment.

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How to arrange a Children Act assessment?

You can request a Children Act assessment by contacting the local ‘children with disabilities’ team in your local council. Alternatively, you could ask your GP, health visitor or voluntary organisation to contact them on your behalf. If your child’s special educational needs are also being assessed then both should be done at the same time.

The assessment will normally be carried out by a social worker at a visit to the home of your child.

The outcome of a Children Act assessment

Local councils have different eligibility criteria for deciding who to provide services to. If the local council does assess your child as being within their eligibility criteria, then they have a duty to provide services to meet the needs identified. However they can take their resources into account when deciding how to meet these needs.

Once it has been decided what services will be provided, a care plan will be drawn up detailing the care and support needs that have been taken into account, how these needs will be met and who has been identified to provide care and support.

The help you will get

If the local council decides that your disabled child, their family, or a young carer, is eligible for help, they can:

- Provide them with services themselves.
- Provide them with services through another organisation.
- Provide them (or someone on their behalf) with money so that they can arrange and pay for their own services (usually called direct payments). The local council must agree that the service

meets the 'eligible needs'. If your child is under 16 then direct payments will usually be made to the parent.

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Note: You can now request direct payments instead of having services provided directly to you. For more information on direct payments visit www.carersuk.org/directpayments or contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

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Here are some examples of services that may be offered following a Children Act assessment:

- > practical assistance in the home
- > provision of, or support in acquiring, a radio, television, accessing a library, or similar recreational facilities
- > recreational facilities outside the home and help to use educational facilities
- > travel and other assistance
- > home adaptations and facilities
- > holidays
- > meals
- > telephone and other related equipment

The local council can also provide services that can help the family, and which can help you as a carer for the disabled child.

Charging for help

There can be a financial charge for services. If local councils charge for the help they provide they must follow guidance when deciding how much to charge. The social services department should explain to you the rules they use when deciding how much they will charge for help.

Usually it is the parent's income and savings that are taken into account when the local council are deciding whether there will be a charge, and if so how much. When the child turns 16 years old then it should be their own income and savings which are taken into account.

For further information contact the Carers UK Adviceline. Alternatively to find out more information on Children Act assessments, you can get in touch with *Contact a Family* who are a charity that supports families with disabled children. See page 18 for contact details.

Complaints

Assessments

If you are not happy with the way you have been treated, or with the outcome of any of the assessments, you can complain to social services. All social services departments should have a complaints procedure that you can follow – ask the social services department for a copy.

If you are not happy with the outcome of your complaint, you may be able to take a complaint to the Local Government Ombudsman. Your social services department should be able to give you more information about this.

If social services have acted unlawfully (eg have refused to carry out a carer's assessment without good reason), you may be able to take them to court. This is called a judicial review. You will need to seek legal advice if you are thinking about taking the local council to court. An application for judicial review must be made within a maximum period of three months so it is important to get legal advice as quickly as possible.

Services

If you are not happy with the services provided after an assessment, you can complain to social services. If services are provided by an agency or care home, you may also be able to complain directly to them through their own complaints procedure.

For more information about complaints, contact the Carers UK Adviceline – see final page for contact details.

Appendix

Questions to help prepare you for your carer's assessment

By answering the following questions, you should get a much clearer idea of your needs and you can then discuss with your social worker the services that might be most helpful to you to meet these needs.

Time

- How many hours a week do you provide care? Include all the time you spend with the person you care for, the things you do for them and how long they take you.
- Do you help the person you are looking after with:
 - Housework?
 - Shopping?
 - Bathing?
 - Going to the toilet?
 - Cooking?
 - Other personal care?
 - Keeping an eye on them?
 - Dealing with money, eg cashing pension?
 - Laundry?
- Do you have to help during the day or night, or both?
- Does anyone else help? If so, for how long?
- Would you like some help (or extra help) with these jobs? List the tasks you would like help with (putting the most important first).
- Are you able to spend enough time on other family responsibilities, eg being with your children?

Health

- Does the person you care for have any health problems you find hard to deal with? Describe them as fully as you can.
- Do you have any health problems? If so, are they made worse by your caring role? Describe them as fully as you can.
- Are you getting enough sleep?
- Do you feel you are suffering from stress or depression?
- Is caring having a negative impact on your health?

Feelings and choices about your caring role

- Do you feel that you do not have a choice about providing care?
- If you feel that you cannot carry on at all, or can only carry on if you reduce the amount of caring you do, tell the social worker. It is not unusual to feel this way and it is important they know how you really feel.
- What would you most like to change about your situation?

Work/study/leisure

- Do you work? If so, for how many hours a week?
- Does your employer know that you are a carer – do they know about your rights, eg to time off in an emergency?
- Do you feel you can manage to work and provide care? If you cannot manage or are at risk of not managing - do explain this.
- What would make working/caring easier for you?
- Would you like to start work/study?
- Are there things that you find enjoyable and relaxing that you cannot do anymore because of your caring responsibilities? (eg a hobby, visiting friends, going to the cinema).
- When was the last time you had a whole day to yourself to do as you pleased?

Housing

- Do you live with the person you care for? Is the arrangement satisfactory? If not, why not?
- Does the person you care for have any difficulties moving around their home? (eg can they climb the stairs, or have a bath on their own?)
- Do you have to help them? If so, are you able to do this safely and without causing yourself any pain or injury? Special equipment could make life easier for the person you look after and caring easier for you.

Further help

For information and advice contact the Carers UK Adviceline on **0808 808 7777** (open Monday to Friday, 10am to 4pm) or email **advice@carersuk.org**

Information is also available on our website – visit **www.carersuk.org**

Other organisations

Contact a Family

A national charity that supports the families of disabled children.

www.cafamily.org.uk

0808 808 3555 | helpline@cafamily.org.uk

Citizen's Advice

Provides free, independent, confidential and impartial advice.

www.citizensadvice.org.uk

HM Courts and Tribunals Service

To search for a court or tribunal in England and Wales, or a tribunal in Scotland:

courttribunalfinder.service.gov.uk

The Local Government Ombudsman

The Local Government Ombudsman looks at complaints about councils and some other authorities and organisations.

www.lgo.org.uk

0300 061 0614

This factsheet is designed to provide helpful information and advice. It is not an authoritative statement of the law. We work to ensure that our factsheets are accurate and up to date, but information about benefits and community care is subject to change over time. We would recommend contacting the Carers UK Adviceline or visiting our website for the latest information.

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Carers UK Adviceline

For expert information and advice about caring.



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(open Monday to Friday,
10am-4pm)



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