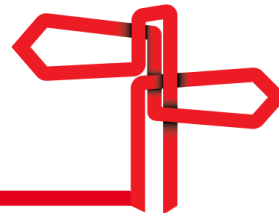


Seeking care support for the first time? We share our tips



Caring can be a struggle and you may wonder whether any support is available. Emotional, financial and other pressures can all take their toll on your wellbeing, but help is available.

It's important to know that support is available from local councils, or health and social care trusts in Northern Ireland. Getting extra support by arranging an assessment of your needs is a good place to start.

The support could range from some extra practical help with household chores to gaining help with cover so that you can take a break every so often. You are also entitled to a review of your needs regardless of how much income or savings you have or whether you are working or not.

In light of COVID-19, there have been some changes to the formal process of having an assessment. For more details on these recent changes, visit our website [here](#).



Here are some of the key tips we share with carers through our Helpline, who are seeking support for the first time.

TIP 1: Where do you start?

The first step is to contact your local council's or trust's (in Northern Ireland) social services department to ask for a Carer's Assessment. In Scotland, it's referred to as an Adult Support Plan. During the COVID-19 pandemic, you may have to wait longer to arrange an appointment, which is likely to be carried out over the phone.

Seeking help for the first time can sometimes feel like an uncomfortable step and sharing details about something so personal to you as your caring role can stir up a lot of different emotions. It is helpful to keep in mind that your needs for support are valid too, and asking for a Carer's Assessment may be the first step to having those needs met.

TIP 2: Preparing in advance

Make notes on the support you currently have, the support you provide, and the support you need, before your assessment and have these to hand during your assessment.

This exercise will help you ensure you cover all aspects without missing anything out. It may be helpful to keep a diary of the care you provide, to help the assessor understand the extent of your caring role.

Consider what your needs are right now and what your needs might be in future, including if you cannot continue, or need a break from, your caring responsibilities. You could write a list of things that you are no longer able to do as a consequence of caring, such as working, studying, cleaning your home, exercising, socialising, or maintaining a hobby.

TIP 3: Consider your own needs

You might want to explain how social care and support will improve your situation and make your goals achievable.

You might wish to have counselling, or take up exercise classes or part-time study. Perhaps attend training to improve the level of care you provide would be of interest, such as managing money workshops.

You could request financial help to cover the costs of taxi fares if you don't drive or get help with gardening or cleaning. You could ask what paid care options are available if you need to take time off from your caring role, for example to pursue a hobby or catch up with friends.

Whatever it may be, try to explain the level of care and support you can and are willing to give. Give as much detail as possible about the effects it is having on your life, both physically and mentally. If you are overcommitting yourself, don't be afraid to say so.

Never feel guilty or ashamed for putting your needs forward. If you would prefer, you could speak to the assessor in private. Also let them know whether you expect your needs to change because of other responsibilities that you may have.

TIP 4: Talk to those you care for

If possible, try to have a conversation with the person you care for. If you feel comfortable, talk about your goals and wishes and ask for their view.

It may be a good opportunity to discuss, if appropriate, specifics about the social care they need, such as a social care worker who speaks the same first language or that can sign, or their gender. This discussion will help you work out any areas of worry or concern.

TIP 4: Would a joint assessment help?

It is possible to have a Carer's Assessment and Needs Assessment (for the person cared for) carried out at the same time. One advantage is that it could save time as you wouldn't have to re-explain your situation during another appointment.

If you both agree to this arrangement, you would need to specifically ask for it. Alternatively, you may prefer for them to be carried out separately at different times or on different days. Also, it is important to know that it is not necessary to have a Needs Assessment when having a Carer's Assessment carried out, and vice versa.

TIP 5: Would having a translator help?

If English is not your first language or you need a sign translator, make sure you request one beforehand and don't worry about having to arrange

this yourself as your local council/trust is required to provide this. Having a translator present will be very useful as they could take notes for you.

TIP 6: Don't hesitate to ask for another assessment.

If you feel that your needs are still not being met or if your circumstances have changed, you can ask to be reassessed.

In reality, if social services are aware that your circumstances are likely to change, they are more likely to assess your needs over a protracted period either continuously or at intervals.

Your local council or trust should review your needs regularly, usually once a year, even if your circumstances haven't changed.

TIP 7: It can help to know about the details.

We have more detailed information about arranging a Carer's Assessment here: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-support/getting-care-and-support/carers-assessment

▶▶ **Note:** For more information and guidance relating to the COVID-19 pandemic, see our online [coronavirus pages](#) or contact our Helpline Team by emailing advice@carersuk.org if you have any questions or concerns about having a Carer's Assessment.



This information is designed to provide helpful guidance. It is not an authoritative statement of the law. We work to ensure that our information is accurate and up to date, but this guidance is subject to change over time. We would recommend contacting the Carers UK Helpline or visiting our website for the latest information.

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