

While you're waiting...



We've brought together suggestions, tips and guidance to help you find support while you're waiting for a carer's assessment or for the results of one. While we can't speed up assessments or influence their outcomes, we can help direct you to some vital services that can offer support.

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Seeking professional help

Seeking help – first steps

It can be difficult to know where to turn or who to contact first when you realise you need some extra support with caring.

It's important to know that it's possible to get help through assessments, benefits and other forms of support when looking after someone, but services can vary, and some people find themselves waiting for a long time before hearing anything.

One way of finding support is through having a carer's assessment. **This is a free review of your needs when caring and is in no way a test of your abilities to look after someone.** Every carer is entitled to one, but the name of this will differ depending on where you live. In Scotland, this assessment is known as an 'Adult Carer Support Plan' or a 'Young Carer Statement' and in Wales, it may be referred to as a 'Carer's Needs Assessment'.

You can also request an assessment of the needs of the person(s) you're looking after, which is another avenue for getting set up with professional support for them: [Needs assessment | Carers UK](#).

We have factsheets, tailored for each nation, that go into lots of detail about the different types of assessments there are, how to request one, how they are usually carried out, how to prepare for one and how to challenge any decisions you might disagree with.

See our website page to find out more: [Carer's assessment | Carers UK](#). However if you're looking for more immediate support, we have developed this factsheet to help you find sources of support over the short term.

When support is needed urgently

In certain circumstances, you may feel as though you just can't wait for an assessment even if you have flagged that one is needed urgently. Perhaps you need professional services to intervene more quickly if your caring situation has suddenly escalated and you're struggling to cope. Do flag if your situation has changed. It's also important to consider all options in case you don't end up qualifying for the forms of professional support you had anticipated.

Over the shorter term, you might feel it's necessary to gain help sooner, especially if your situation is complex or you're looking after several people at the same time.

If anyone is at immediate risk of harm, the first port of call is always emergency services on 999. In situations where the issues are less severe but still fairly urgent, you may decide to consider these options which are summarised on our website page '[Getting help in an emergency](#)':

Social services

It's important to know that there are professionals that work within social care services who can offer out-of-hours support if urgently needed. If your normal office is closed and you need urgent help, you can search online for 'emergency duty team' along with the name of your local authority or Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland (visit www.hscni.net/employers/).

If you or someone else may be at risk of abuse or neglect, you can contact their local child or adult safeguarding service to report your concerns. Visit www.gov.uk/ to find the local authority's contact details or www.hscni.net/employers/ for the relevant Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland.

If possible, the person(s) you look after should consent and be involved in the process. However, you can contact the council without their consent if this is not possible or could increase the risk of danger or harm.

What level of assistance do you need?

Age UK has a useful tool on their website that can help you establish what level of assistance someone you're looking after needs: [Assess your worries | Worried about someone | Age UK](#).

Care services

If you have the financial means to procure additional professional care services and support for the person you care for, this may be another option worth exploring. Some people employ an individual or use a care provider such as a care agency. Ask your local authority or trust for a list of approved care providers.

You could look at the website of the body that oversees care in your

country (see ‘Useful organisations’) for care provision ratings. See our online guidance for more information about the choices available:

[Arranging care and support for someone | Carers UK.](#)

Health matters

Who to call?

You could call the NHS 111 service by dialling 111 if you are feeling unwell and need a telephone health assessment or guidance on behalf of someone you're looking after. This is the NHS's non-emergency line for medical advice. You can also call this number if you need mental health support (select the mental health option). There's a portal online too, where you can check symptoms as a starting point. See [111.nhs.uk/](#).

Calling 999 might feel like an overreaction but may be necessary in an emergency, especially if the person you look after might be violent towards themselves or others. You should also contact their healthcare team (if they have one) and let them know what's happening. You can always share your concerns with them even if they can't share information with you.

The 111 mental health service is very helpful as this can lead to further action and a welfare check. It is good practice to write letters and make calls to log any concerns you have including the risks that could be both physical and psychological.

Minor injuries or accidents

For minor injuries or accidents, you can visit the ‘Accident and Emergency’ department of any hospital if you need medical assistance. Depending on the time and place, there is likely to be a queue, so it is important to be prepared to wait.

Managing someone's medication

We have information on our website about managing medication and this links to common medications and their side effects, as listed on the NHS website. It's always best to consult a medical professional rather than trying to diagnose any health problems yourself. [Managing medication and health](#)

[needs | Carers UK](#).

Going into hospital?

It's naturally a worry if you need to go into hospital yourself for some time. Setting up care cover and support in your absence may feel like an added stress you don't need. If there are no family members or friends to help offer support while you are absent or your situation is complex, do alert the social care safeguarding team with as much notice as possible so that something can be put in place. Also see the 'Contingency planning' section further on in this factsheet.

Talking to your GP

It's always advisable to make an appointment with your GP for advice on how to deal with any symptoms or the effects of a health issue and the treatment available. If you're not happy with the advice you receive, you can arrange to see another doctor for a second opinion.

You may wish to check if there is a specialist, such as an occupational therapist, who you could be referred to. You might prefer to attend an appointment with the person you're looking after to make notes on their behalf, to advocate for them, and consider questions to ask together or on their behalf in advance. It might even be possible to make back-to-back appointments with your GP if you want to have a separate appointment to talk about your own health needs.

It's easy to put off your own health checks or health issues because of the demands of caring. Try to make time for your own health needs too, even if time is precious.

If you need to make health and care-related decisions on behalf of someone else, ask your doctor if they can give you some information about arranging a power of attorney or other ways you can make decisions on behalf of another. See our website to read [guidance about managing someone's affairs](#) and find out how your GP could support you if they know about your caring responsibilities: [Talking to your GP | Carers UK](#).

Advocacy support

Advocacy is about asserting your rights and being heard, especially among professional decisionmakers. We have some tips on how to be effectively assertive whilst understanding your rights in our 'Being Heard' guide, which is available as a printed guide as well as a pdf on our website: [Being Heard - a self-advocacy guide for carers | Carers UK](#). There is a version available for each UK nation to reflect the different legislation and systems.

Communities and support

Carers Connect – online forum and Care for a Cuppa

You can reach out to other carers 24/7 on our [Carers Connect online forum](#), a supportive community where many people post helpful suggestions based on their own similar experiences of caring in response to queries or issues being faced. It can be particularly reassuring to hear from others who understand from personal experience when you're going through a tough time or feel alone or isolated. To talk with other carers, face to face online, you might be interested in joining one of our Care for a Cuppa sessions: [Care for a Cuppa | Carers UK](#).

Carers UK Helpline

If you're seeking guidance on a specific matter or trying to navigate complicated circumstances, our email helpline service can provide detailed support. Our advisers can help steer you in the right direction on matters relating to sourcing care support, social care, finance issues and anything else related to caring: advice@carersuk.org. For further information about our Carers UK Helpline services, see our online page: [Helpline and other support | Carers UK](#).

Specialist charities

Some health and condition specific charities offer free or low-cost services for carers such as respite support. Harnessing their help and support could help you to feel better informed, supported and less alone.

Our [conditions hub](#) covers some of the health conditions we are commonly asked about and highlights resources that are available for carers. There are many other condition-related charities that offer support, and these can be searched for online or you could check with your local authority or trust to see what's available in your area.

At Carers UK, we offer a range of online meetups for carers to benefit from the advice of specialists, ask questions, connect with others, share experiences and enjoy relaxing activities.

This can be particularly helpful as a source of support for you while waiting for assessments and care plans to be put in place. 'Share and Learn' sessions, for example, are run online and vary between advice sessions to wellbeing sessions, sometimes led by carers. Keep an eye on our website to see what's coming up and register to attend any for free: [Online meetups | Carers UK](#).

Knowing that life can be extremely busy as a carer, we have also recorded many of these 'Share and Learn' sessions, which are available for you to watch in your own time here: [Share and Learn videos | Carers UK](#).

Finding support locally

Finding local support agencies in your area can also be very valuable, especially if you prefer face-to-face contact. Advice Local is a directory that can help you look up what's available where you live, covering topics such as welfare benefits, disability and social care: <https://advicelocal.uk>. For carer services, you might also find our online local directory a useful place to start. This lists contact details of services that may be able to offer you help in your area, ranging from support groups to help with filling in forms: [Support where you live | Carers UK](#).

Getting a break

If you have reached a point where you desperately need a break, you are not alone. Many carers experience mixed feelings about the idea of arranging this and it's natural if you feel a sense of guilt sometimes.

Usually, having a break is in everyone's interests as it's vital to recharge and keep going and can be a nice opportunity for a change for everyone.

At the end of our ['Taking a break' factsheet](#), you can find a list of organisations that can help. There are different options to consider, from going away with the person you care for to arranging for them to go on their own break with support (if suitable) and our factsheet also offers guidance on different ways to fund a break: [Taking a break | Carers UK](#).

Emotional support

It can be hard to look after yourself as a carer, but this is so important. We have a dedicated section on our website about the different ways you can look after yourself to protect your long-term health and help prevent burnout and exhaustion: [Your health and wellbeing | Carers UK](#).

If you need a listening ear, the following services can provide emotional support:

- **Samaritans** are available 24/7 for anybody who needs a listening ear. Call 116 123 or email jo@samaritans.org
- **Shout** is a text-based service for when you're struggling to cope and need to talk, available 24/7. Text 'SHOUT' to 85258.
- **Hub of Hope** – This national database brings together local community and charity groups and services, as well as local NHS services, which can support your mental wellbeing.

You may also be looking for the opportunity to talk on a regular basis to someone who can offer you emotional support and therapy to help with your mental health.

A trained therapist or a counsellor may be able to help. You can access one through your GP or through Talking Therapies via the NHS here: nhs.uk/service-search/mental-health/find-an-NHS-talking-therapies-service/. You could also look for a qualified counsellor on the therapist directory on the British Society for Counselling and Psychotherapy: bacp.co.uk/about-therapy/using-our-therapist-directory/.

Financial support

Getting the support you're entitled to financially can help give you more choice and control when it comes to putting care measures in place.

If you're not sure if you qualify for any extra support, it could be a good idea to request a free benefits check with a qualified adviser. You can request one through our Carers UK Helpline by emailing advice@carersuk.org. Some people find that using a benefit check calculator online is helpful as a starting point: [Benefits calculator | Carers UK](#). Although these are not always completely exact, they can provide a good indication of what your options are.

Our website also has lots of information about the different financial benefits, grants, supportive initiatives and cost savings that are available for unpaid carers. You can explore what's available to help here: [Financial support | Carers UK](#).

Contingency planning

Looking ahead, developing an emergency plan can help give you much peace of mind. This can be done in conjunction with Social Care Services, or you may decide to create one independently and hand over a copy for their files. The plan should provide essential details about the person's care needs outlining:

- all the contacts you have for someone's care
- the medications they need
- any medications they react to
- special needs relating to their age or condition
- religious needs
- their preferences
- routine requirements/ any triggers.

There are ideas, templates you can use and a tool on our website to get started called 'My Backup': [Creating a contingency plan | Carers UK](#).

Many people aren't aware that there is a special register you can sign up to in case of an emergency, which is provided by many energy suppliers and network operators. The [Priority Service Register](#) is for people in vulnerable situations or with extra needs. Those signed up can be prioritised for

support in the instance of a power cut and can receive dedicated advice and help. In Northern Ireland, a similar scheme exists called the 'Medical Customer Care Register' which is for anyone who relies on electricity for healthcare needs. See the [NIE Networks website](#).

While some of these suggestions on seeking support may seem like small steps to take, they can open up further doors leading to sources of help you may not have originally expected. Becoming a free member of Carers UK is another way to feel part of a community, to keep updated on support and progress for carers and to feel less alone:

[Become a free member | Carers UK](#).

Useful organisations

Carers UK

Caring can be complicated. We offer support, information, guides, tools and understanding and we strive for lasting change.

[Helpline and other support | Carers UK](#)

Age UK

Information and advice for older people.

[Age UK | UK's leading charity helping every older person who needs us](#)

Carers Trust

A network of local centres providing advice and support to carers.

[Carers Trust | Transforming the lives of carers](#)

Citizens Advice

Local offices for advice on benefits, debt and housing.

[Citizens Advice](#)

Contact

Information and advice for families who care for children with a disability or special need.

[Contact - information & advice](#)

Mind

Information and advice for people affected by mental illness and their

carers. [Home - Mind](#)

NHS – mental health support

You can also access urgent mental health support here under your UK region:

- NHS England: [Where to get urgent help for mental health - NHS](#)
- NHS Wales: [NHS 111 Wales - Health A-Z : Mental Health and Wellbeing](#)
- NHS Inform Scotland: [Mental health services at NHS 24](#)
- Lifeline Northern Ireland: [Lifeline | nidirect](#)

Relate

Counselling and support services for couples, families and young people.

[Home | Relate](#)

England specific

Care Quality Commission

The independent regulator of health and social care in England.

[Care Quality Commission](#)

Wales specific

Care Inspectorate Wales

The independent regulator of health and social care in Wales

[Home | Care Inspectorate Wales](#)

Scotland specific

Care Inspectorate Scotland

The body that oversees care quality in Scotland

[Welcome to the Care Inspectorate](#)

Northern Ireland specific

The Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority – overseeing health and social care services in Northern Ireland

[Regulation and Quality Improvement Authority – Health & Social Care](#)

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 Helpline or visiting our website for the latest information.

Please email us your feedback on this factsheet by sending your comments to info@carersuk.org
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Carers UK Helpline

For expert information and advice about caring.



0808 808 7777

(Monday to Friday 9am-6pm)



advice@carersuk.org

Carers UK

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London SE1 4LX
info@carersuk.org

Carers Wales

029 2081 1370
info@carerswales.org

Carers Scotland

info@carerscotland.org

Carers Northern Ireland

advice@carersuk.org

However caring affects you,
we're here.

Caring will affect us all at some point in our lives.

With your help, we can be there for the 6,000 people who start looking after someone each day.

We're the UK's only national membership charity for carers: join us for free at carersuk.org/join

We're both a support network and a movement for change.

Visit us at our website to join us, help us or access more sources: carersuk.org

This information can be requested in large print or as a text file.