

OA FACT SHEET

This fact sheet is about looking after someone. It aims to provide information and guidance and to highlight other sources of support available.

LOOKING AFTER SOMEONE

A carer often provides unpaid care and support to someone: a family member or friend who has a disability, illness, or a mental health condition, or it might involve supporting an elderly parent, neighbour or friend who needs extra help as they grow older.

Caring can often be part of family life but is not limited to our family circles as it can involve looking after and supporting close friends.

For many, caring is something that happens gradually over time either when someone ages or has a progressive illness. For others, it arises suddenly, for example because of an accident, a stroke or possibly Covid-19.

Caring will often be hugely rewarding, but it can impact all aspects of your life and can be tough looking after someone without the correct information and support.

LOOKING AFTER YOURSELF

Taking care of your own health and wellbeing is essential when caring for someone, but it can be challenging. You may struggle to eat and sleep well, find the time to exercise and manage your stress levels.

It is common to feel lonely or isolated as a carer, especially as friends and family might not understand how difficult it can be. Taking good care of yourself matters not only for your own sake but to give you the strength to carry on caring.

If you find yourself struggling, why not discuss your situation and how you're feeling with someone.

Tell your friends and GP that you are a carer so they are aware of the pressures you face. It can be helpful to talk to other people in the same situation, to share experiences, and get advice. You could also think about joining a carers group/forum.

Carers UK has an [online forum](#). Carers Trust and Carers UK can also put you in touch with local support groups: [Carers Trust Services Near You](#); [Carers UK Local Support](#)



HOW YOU MIGHT BE FEELING

You can find out about local support groups and services by contacting your local council or Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland. They can also inform you about what you could be entitled to in your role as a carer. For example, a carer's assessment can explore your needs and the support available to you, from emotional assistance to practical help. This differs to the actual assessment for the person you look after.

- [Find your local council](#)
- [Independent Age](#)
- [Carers UK](#) produce a version of the guide 'Looking after Someone' for each nation: England Wales, Scotland, and Northern Ireland and can be downloaded from their website. Printed copies can be ordered from the Carers UK online shop.



WORK AND FINANCES

If you are balancing paid work with caring, it is worth checking out your company's policies and procedures regarding caring responsibilities. As a working carer, for example, you might be able to request flexible working and time off to look after dependants in emergencies. Flexible working could cover options such as home working, part-time working, term-time hours, flexitime, working compressed hours, job sharing and shift work.

Emergencies cover anything and everything, from disruption or breakdown in care arrangements to the death of a dependant, and covers:

- A dependant falling ill, being assaulted or in an accident
- Needing to make longer-term arrangements for a dependant
- Dealing with an incident involving a child during school hours.

If you are thinking of leaving work, it is vital to consider the full implications on your income, quality of life and future pension entitlements. Explore any options that could help make your working and caring roles more manageable.

Depending on your circumstances, you may be eligible for Carer's Allowance or other benefits or tax credits if you decide to leave work or reduce your hours. Therefore, before making any decisions, it is a good idea to undertake a benefits review so you can best understand the implications of any proposed changes.

For information on benefits and tax credits: [Help with benefits - Carers UK](#).

Note: You can get a benefits review online at benefits-calculator-2.turn2us.org.uk or contact the Carers UK helpline on advice@carersuk.org.

TECHNOLOGY AND EQUIPMENT

While technology can never replace being with others, simple devices and apps can help people connect and manage care on a day-to-day basis. They may also help someone live independently for longer and give you peace of mind.

[Carers UK](#) has lots of information about how technology can help with caring.

If you or the person you care for are uncertain about using the internet, some local Age UKs can help older people get online: [Age UK Services in Your Area](#)

PLANNING FOR THE UNEXPECTED

It is essential to think about what you could do if something goes wrong or your situation changes suddenly. For example, could family and friends help you? Do you have contact details handy to get in touch with people in case of an emergency? Keep up to date records covering critical information about the person you care for and keep these details safe and in a visible place to help you find them.

Some areas also have emergency card schemes for carers that are set up by the local council (or trust) or your local carers' organisation.

Further details can be found at carersuk.org/about-us/throughout-the-uk

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

- **Age UK** Information and advice for the over 60s. 0800 678 1602 [ageuk.org.uk](https://www.ageuk.org.uk)
- **Alzheimer's Society** Information and advice for people with dementia and their carers. 0333 150 3456 [alzheimers.org.uk](https://www.alzheimers.org.uk)
- **Care Quality Commission** The independent regulator of health and social care in England. 03000 61 61 61 [cqc.org.uk](https://www.cqc.org.uk)
- **Carers Trust** A network of local centres providing advice, information and support to carers. 0300 772 9600 [carers.org](https://www.carers.org)
- **Citizens Advice** Local offices for advice/representation on benefits, debt and housing. 03444 111 444 [citizensadvice.org.uk](https://www.citizensadvice.org.uk)
- **Contact** Information and advice for families who care for children with a disability or special need. 0808 808 3555 [contact.org.uk](https://www.contact.org.uk)
- **Disabled Living Foundation** Information and advice on equipment for independent living. 0300 999 0004 [dlf.org.uk](https://www.dlf.org.uk)
- **Independent Age** Information and advice for older people, their families and carers. 0800 319 6789 [independentage.org](https://www.independentage.org)
- **Macmillan Cancer Support** Information and advice for people with cancer, their families and carers. 0808 808 00 00 [macmillan.org.uk](https://www.macmillan.org.uk)
- **Marie Curie** Support for people living with any terminal illness, and their families. 0800 090 2309 [mariecurie.org.uk](https://www.mariecurie.org.uk)
- **Mencap** Information and advice for people with a learning disability, their families and carers. 0808 808 1111 [mencap.org.uk](https://www.mencap.org.uk)
- **Mind** Information and advice for people affected by mental illness and their carers. 0300 123 3393 [mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)
- **Relate** Counselling and support services for couples, families and young people. 0300 003 0396 [relate.org.uk](https://www.relate.org.uk)
- **Rethink** Mental Illness Information, advice and community services for people affected by severe mental illness and their carers. 0808 801 0525 [rethink.org](https://www.rethink.org)
- **Samaritans** Samaritans are open 24 hours a day, 365 days a year. 116 123 [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)
- **Shelter** Information and advice on housing issues. 0808 800 4444 [shelter.org.uk](https://www.shelter.org.uk)
- **Stroke Association** Information, support and advice to help those affected by stroke. 0303 3033 100 [stroke.org.uk](https://www.stroke.org.uk)
- **Turn2us** Information and advice on benefits and grants. 0808 802 2000 [turn2us.org.uk](https://www.turn2us.org.uk)

Officers' Association, Grants and Welfare
T: 020 7808 4175 | E: help@officersassociation.org.uk
[officersassociation.org.uk](https://www.officersassociation.org.uk)

**EVERY OFFICER
EVERY FAMILY**



**OFFICERS'
ASSOCIATION**

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