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**Supporting adult carers**

This document provides a step-by-step guide for staff on how to identify, listen to and support adult carers who are caring for another adult.

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1. **Identify a carer**

* **Look out for carers in your day-to-day work**. A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support.

*“I want to speak to professionals that understand carers and can recognise the signs”*

* **Be proactive**. It is unlikely that someone will tell you they are a carer, so it is important that you are able to identify them in other ways. If you are interacting with someone who needs support, you could try asking who helps support or look after them.
* **Look for carers in complex situations**. There may be many people caring for one person, with each taking a slightly different role. Carers may live with the person they care for, or they may live far away. Carers can be patients or social care users as well as being carers. It may take time to understand the different roles being played by different people.
* **Help people understand they are a carer.** Many people do not know about the term “[carer](https://carers.org/what-carer)”, or do not see themselves in that way. In addition, some people have told us that the term carer feel inaccurate, or condescending to the person being cared-for. Despite this, it may be useful for carers to know about the term “carer” so that they can understand what support is available and what to expect from health and social care.
* **Understand that carers have different perceptions of caring**. One person might see caring as a stressful activity they never signed up for. Another person might see it as a positive experience they are proud of. Another person still may be ambivalent, and see it as an expected part of their relationship. Carers in all these situations may need support, but their reaction to the offer of support may be different.

1. **Listen to and involve carers in your work**

* **Listen.** Take the time to [listen](http://www.skillsforcare.org.uk/Documents/Learning-and-development/Core-skills/Communication-skills-in-social-care.pdf) to carers views about the person they care for and about their own experiences. This applies to carers who are friends or neighbours as much as it does to immediate relatives.

“*Recognise me as an expert and equal partner of care and my views and opinions should be valued and respected*”

* **Share information** where you can. Carers often say it can be incredibly frustrating when professionals refuse to share information about the person they care for. Be aware of what is and isn’t possible under [confidentiality and data protection](#DP).
* **Involve** carers in decision-making about the person they care for. The “[triangle of care](https://professionals.carers.org/sites/default/files/thetriangleofcare_guidetobestpracticeinmentalhealthcare_england_0.pdf)” model in mental health provides good guidance on how to do this in any health or social care setting.

1. **Support and signpost**

* **Give carers the information they need about health or social care.** A suite of information is currently being developed, depending on the carer’s circumstances. You should also ask the carer if they would like more information on the health condition of the person they are caring for.
* **Explain the support options available to carers.** Click [here](#SuportOptions) to see what these are. There are also [other services](https://www.ideastoreonlinedirectory.org/kb5/towerhamlets/cd/home.page) in the borough that are open to all residents.
* **Explain the support options available to the person they care for.** It may be that the person being cared for isn’t getting the right help, which is having an impact on the carer.

1. **Refer or offer a Carer Needs Assessment**

* If it appears that a carer may be struggling or in need of support, you can refer them for a Carer Needs Assessment. The Assessment is a social care tool which looks at what the carer needs help with, what impact this is having on their lives, and what outcomes they would like to achieve.

*“I have the right to request a carers’ needs assessment to discuss the help I need to continue caring”*

* Understand that carers may have differing reactions to the offer of support or a Carer Needs Assessment.
* You can advise a carer to [fill in an assessment form themselves](https://live-lbtower.cloud.contensis.com/lgnl/health__social_care/carers/support_for_carers.aspx) online. Completed forms are sent to a Social Worker to review and agree.
* You can refer the carer to the [Carer Centre](http://www.ccth.org.uk/) so they can complete an assessment with staff
* If you are a Social Worker or other social care practitioner, you may come across carers when visiting a social care user. You should offer to complete a Carer Assessment with the carer directly, or carry out a Joint Assessment with the carer and cared-for person. These are also sometimes called “combined assessments”. Guidance on how to complete this assessment is in the adult social care Practice Framework.
* One of the functions of the Carer Assessment is to see whether the local authority has a legal duty to provide support to the carer. This is determined using [eligibility criteria](https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-statutory-guidance/care-and-support-statutory-guidance#Chapter6) set out in the 2014 Care Act.
* Carers who are “eligible” should receive the support they need from the local authority. Support that the Council is paying for will be set out in a Support Plan, drawn up between a member of staff from social care and a carer. It should be reviewed annually. The support could take many forms, but importantly can include:
  + Respite or another form of replacement care provided to the cared-for person to enable the carer to [have a break](#Break).
  + A one-off or regular direct payment from the local authority, which can be spent on something that meets the needs of the carer

1. **The** **support options available to carers**

Financial, legal, social care, health and other advice

* + - * For all carers ([Carers Centre](http://www.ccth.org.uk))
      * For carers of those with dementia ([Alzheimer’s Society](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk))
      * For carers of those with mental health problems ([Rethink](https://www.rethink.org/services-groups/services/tower-hamlets-carers-service))
      * For Somali carers ([BWHAFS](http://www.bwhafs.com/services/19/somali-carers-access-project.html))

Advocacy and help to speak out

* + - * For all carers ([Carers Centre](http://www.ccth.org.uk))
      * For carers of those with mental health problems ([Rethink](https://www.rethink.org/services-groups/services/tower-hamlets-carers-service))
      * For Somali carers ([BWHAFS](http://www.bwhafs.com/services/19/somali-carers-access-project.html))

Relaxation activities

* + - * Relaxation days ([Carers Centre](http://www.ccth.org.uk))
      * Breathing Space drop-in sessions ([London Buddhist Centre](http://www.breathingspacelondon.org.uk/help-for-carers/mbsr-at-breathing-space/drop-in-classes/))
      * Retreats ([London Buddhist Centre](http://www.breathingspacelondon.org.uk/help-for-carers/mbsr-at-breathing-space/retreats-for-carers/))
      * For carers of those with mental health problems ([Rethink](https://www.rethink.org/services-groups/services/tower-hamlets-carers-service))

Emotional support and support groups

* + - * For all carers ([Carers Centre](http://www.ccth.org.uk))
      * For carers of those with dementia ([Alzheimer’s Society](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk/))
      * For carers of those with mental health problems ([Rethink](https://www.rethink.org/services-groups/services/tower-hamlets-carers-service))
      * For Somali carers ([BWHAFS](http://www.bwhafs.com/services/19/somali-carers-access-project.html))

Training

* + - * For carers of people with mental health problems ([Rethink](https://www.rethink.org/services-groups/services/tower-hamlets-carers-service) and [Recovery College](https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service/377/Tower-Hamlets-Recovery-College))
      * Online training for all carers

National helpline and other resources

* Carers Direct helpline: 0300 123 1053
* Carers UK information and online forum: www.carersuk.org

Carers Centre: Alzheimer’s Society Carer Service:

21 Brayford Square, 020 7790 1765 Mile End Hospital, 020 8121 5626

Rethink Mental Illness Carer Service: BWHAFS Carer Service:

62 Roman Road, 020 8981 2645 82 Russia Lane, 020 8980 3503

London Buddhist Centre Carer Service:

51 Roman Road, 020 8981 1225

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There are also a range of other local services and national services that may be of benefit to carers. These include:

* + - Advice and support for carers from the [Zaccheus Project](http://www.zacchaeusproject.org.uk/welcome.htm) in Tower Hamlets
    - The [Tower Hamlets Community Learning Disability Service](https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service/378/Tower-Hamlets-Community-Learning-Disabilities-Service) provide health and social care support to adults with a learning disability and can provide advice and information to carers
    - The [Adult Autism Service](https://www.elft.nhs.uk/service/11/Adult-Autism-Service-Tower-Hamlets) provides diagnosis and post-diagnostic support for adults with autism and can provide advice and information to carers
    - There are online support and information-sharing forums on social media for LBGT carers

1. **H****ow adult carers can take a break**

“Support me so I don’t feel guilty or fearful when I want a break from caring”

There are many different ways that carers can take a break. Every person is different: one carer may need an hour per week, another may need a day here or there, and another may need a regular short break from caring.

***Going to activities run for carers each week***

There are regular activities that carers can attend. These include relaxation activities and support groups, among other things. They give carers the chance to have time to themselves, or time with people going through similar experiences. These activities are free and are available to carers with or without an assessment. Activities are run by the Carer Centre, Alzheimer’s Society, Rethink and the London Buddhist Centre. The [Carer Centre](http://www.ccth.org.uk) is a good place to start to find out more.

***Going away on a weekend retreat***

The London Buddhist Centre run a two-night retreats for carer at their retreat in Suffolk. Retreats give people a complete break from their caring role and can give carers new strategies to help manage stress in daily life. Click [here](http://www.breathingspacelondon.org.uk/help-for-carers/mbsr-at-breathing-space/retreats-for-carers/) to find out more.

***The person being cared for going to a respite centre***

The Council may be able to arrange or pay for the person being cared for to stay at a “respite centre” for a short time. “Respite centres” are typically either specifically designed for a group of people with particular needs (e.g. a learning disability) to stay for a short time, or they are care homes where a person can stay for a short period. To get respite:

* + - A carer will need to complete a Carer Needs Assessment
    - As a result of the assessment, it will need to be agreed by the carer and social care staff at the Council that respite will meet the needs of the carer. The details of the respite (e.g. how long the person would go for and how often) will be written down in a Support Plan.
    - The person being cared for would need to agree to go to respite.
    - The Council will carry out a “financial assessment”. This will determine what – if anything – the person being cared for has to pay towards the cost of respite care. The law says that it is only the person who receives the respite care who can pay towards the cost, not the person caring for them.

Respite may be in within Tower Hamlets or nearby. The location may depend on the availability of space. Carers and the people they care for can visit the respite centre first if preferred to make sure it is right for them.

Carers also have the option of arranging and paying for respite care privately, with no involvement from the Council. The Council can still provide information and advice on how to go about doing this if helpful.

***The person being cared for getting care at home***

This is sometimes called “replacement care” or “carer relief”. It typically involves a Care Worker providing care for someone in their own home to enable to have the carer to have a break. The Council may be able to arrange or pay for this to happen. To get “replacement care” at home in order to give the carer a break:

* + - A carer will need to complete a Carer Needs Assessment
    - As a result of the assessment, it will need to be agreed by the carer and social care staff at the Council that replacement care will meet the needs of the carer. The details of the replacement care (e.g. when a Care Worker will visit and how often) will be written down in a Support Plan.
    - The person being cared for will need to agree to a Care Worker coming in and caring for them.
    - The Council will carry out a “financial assessment”. This will determine what – if anything – the person being cared for has to pay towards the cost of replacement care. The law says that it is only the person who receives the care who can pay towards the cost.

Replacement care provided by a Care Worker is typically organised through one of the Home Care agencies that the local authority has a contract with. One of the benefits of this type of care is that it can be booked well in advance, which can sometimes be difficult to for respite care. Carers and the people they care for may also be able to arrange for a Care Worker they already know and trust to come in by getting a direct payment for the Council. These options can be discussed as part of the Carer Needs Assessment.

Carers also have the option of arranging and paying for replacement care privately, with no involvement from the Council. The Council can still provide information and advice on how to go about doing this if helpful.

1. **Taking action in a crisis**

* Dial 999 if you need emergency services
* Dial 020 7364 5005 if the issue relates to safeguarding, or if someone urgently needs input from social care