



## Carers: help and support

You can get help and support if you're responsible for looking after someone who has a disability, is getting old or has become ill. This can range from practical help to make day-to-day life easier to benefits like Carer's Allowance.

### Coronavirus - get extra help if you're a carer

If you're caring for someone vulnerable you can ask an NHS volunteer to go shopping for them or collect their prescription. The person you're caring for can also talk to a volunteer on the phone if they're feeling lonely because they're self-isolating.

Check how to [get help from an NHS volunteer](#) [↗](#) on the Royal Voluntary Service website.

You can also [check the guidance on the Carers UK website](#) [↗](#) to find out what other support is available to you.

### Am I a carer?

You're probably a carer if all of the following apply:

- you do things like helping someone to wash, dress and eat; taking them to regular appointments, doing their shopping or keeping them company
- you aren't paid to look after the person you're caring for
- you spend a lot of time caring for the person - there's no legal definition of this, but it could mean anything from a few hours a day, to 24 hours a day, 7 days a week

- you may or may not live with the person you're caring for

If you're a young carer (under 24) you can [get local and online support](#)  from the Carers Trust.

If you're a [parent carer of a child under 18](#)  with complex needs, NHS Choices has information about your rights and the support you can get.

## Practical help for carers

Your local council might be able to arrange practical help to allow you to care more effectively and reduce your stress. This could include things like arranging for someone to step in for a while to give you a break or providing some extra support for the person you care for, to give you more time for your other responsibilities.

To see if you can get practical help, you'll need the council to carry out a carer's assessment. All carers are entitled to this.

The carer's assessment looks at how caring affects your life and work, and how you can carry on doing the things that are important to you and your family. A carer's assessment isn't an exam - you won't be judged on whether the care you give is good enough.

## Getting a carer's assessment

Contact the social services department of the council covering the area where the person you care for lives. You may be able to do this online through the council's website. Tell them you're a carer and ask them to carry out a carer's assessment for you. You can ask at any time but it's always a good idea to ask for an assessment if your needs change or you need more support.

[Find your local council](#)  on GOV.UK

## What to expect from the carer's assessment

The carer's assessment is normally a face to face meeting with a trained person, either from the council or an organisation it works with. It could be at your home or the home of the person you care for. Alternatively, the assessment might be done over the phone.

In the assessment, you'll discuss things like:

- how much time you spend caring for the person
- what sort of tasks you need to help them with, such as getting dressed, bathing, shopping, eating or dealing with money
- whether carrying out your caring duties leaves you with enough time for your work, family and hobbies
- whether any aspects of caring for the person are particularly hard to deal with, for example, do you worry about your own safety when helping them up the stairs
- how caring is affecting your physical and mental health

It's up to you whether you want the person you care for to be present.

The council or organisation it works with might send you a questionnaire to fill in before the assessment. If they don't, it's a good idea to spend some time before the assessment thinking about how caring for someone affects your life and what might make things easier for you.

Get more help to [prepare for the assessment](#)  from Carers UK.

## What happens after the assessment

You'll be told if you're eligible for practical help from the council. If you're eligible, the council will explain how it will meet your needs, which could include referring you to other organisations for support.

You can choose to get a direct payment rather than having the services provided to you, if you prefer.

The council has to give you advice and information about other sources of support in your local area, even if you're not eligible for practical help. This could be from local charities or support organisations.

## Paying for your practical help

Most councils provide free support to carers, but some may charge for these services. If you're eligible for a service the council charges for, you'll probably be asked to have a financial assessment to see if you can afford to pay towards it. If you can't afford to pay, the council might offer you the service for free or at a reduced rate.

If the council is going to support you by providing some more social care and support services directly to the person you care for, they might also ask to look at that person's finances to see if they should contribute.

Councils follow national guidelines when deciding how much you should contribute towards your care and support needs as a carer. The financial assessment will take into account:

- your income, for example a pension
- savings
- investments
- whether you get benefits or other financial support
- your expenses, such as utility bills and rent

The council has to leave you with a protected amount of money, to make sure you have enough to live on. This is called the minimum income guarantee and is equivalent to income support or the guarantee credit element of pension credit, plus 25 per cent.

## If you're unhappy with the assessment

If you disagree with the outcome of the carer's assessment or you're unhappy with how you've been treated, you can [complain to the council](https://www.nhs.uk/health/nhs-and-social-care-complaints/complaining-about-social-care-services/) ([/health/nhs-and-social-care-complaints/complaining-about-social-care-services/](https://www.nhs.uk/health/nhs-and-social-care-complaints/complaining-about-social-care-services/)). All councils should have a complaints procedure you can follow - ask them for a copy.

## Help with money

You may be able to get help to increase your income if your caring duties are affecting your finances.

Depending on your income, assets and living arrangements, you might be able to:

- apply for [Carer's Allowance](/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/carers-allowance/) and [other benefits](/benefits/).
- get [help with paying for prescriptions and other healthcare costs](/health/help-with-health-costs/help-with-health-costs/#helpwithhealthcostsifyouareonalowincome) from the NHS low income scheme
- cut down your household costs, including [gas and electricity bills](/consumer/energy/energy-supply/get-help-paying-your-bills/grants-and-benefits-to-help-you-pay-your-energy-bills/), a [free or discounted TV licence](#) from TV Licensing or [council tax discounts](/benefits/help-if-on-a-low-income/help-with-your-council-tax-council-tax-reduction/council-tax-reduction-what-you-need-to-know/)
- have your contributions towards your state pension covered by the government if you've given up or cut down paid work to care for someone - Carers UK has advice to help you [protect your pension](#)
- get a grant or other financial help from a local charity or trust - Turn2Us has details of [charities that might be able to help](#) you

You can get free and impartial help to [sort out your finances](/debt-and-money/help-with-debt/) if you're worried about having enough money to live on and meet your existing commitments. This could include better budgeting, learning how to make your money go further and dealing with debt problems.

## Other help for carers

### Help from your employer

You don't have to tell your boss about your caring responsibilities, but if you're an employee, your employer must offer you certain legal rights. These include:

- the right to ask for [flexible working](/work/rights-at-work/flexible-working/flexible-working-what-is-it/), such as reducing your hours or working from home - anyone has the right to ask for flexible working
- [time off in emergencies](/work/rights-at-work/basic-rights-and-contracts/time-off-work-overview/) - meaning if the person you care for falls ill, has an accident or is without care unexpectedly, you have the right to take time off work to deal with it

Your employer isn't obliged to offer you more than your legal rights, but some workplaces have policies that might give you more support or time off, for example through applying for a career break. Check with your employer or HR department to find out more.

## Support from other carers

You may find it helpful to speak to other people who understand the issues carers can face. Carers UK has details of [local support groups and online forums](#)  where you can meet other carers like you.

## Protection from discrimination

You're protected from discrimination because of your caring responsibilities. This means you can [take action if you think you've been treated unfairly](#) ([/law-and-courts/discrimination/](#)) because you're a carer. For example, you can't be refused a promotion at work because of your caring responsibilities.

## Help for the person you're caring for

Making sure the person you're caring for gets all the social care and support they're entitled to could mean your role as a carer is made easier. They're entitled to get a care needs assessment from the council. Depending on the person's situation they may also be able to:

- [claim benefits](#) ([/benefits/sick-or-disabled-people-and-carers/benefits-for-people-who-are-sick-or-disabled/](#))
- make arrangements for you to [look after their affairs](#) ([/family/looking-after-people/managing-affairs-for-someone-else/](#)), for example through power of attorney
- [complain about the social care and support services](#) ([/health/nhs-and-social-care-complaints/complaining-about-social-care-services/](#)) they've received

## More information

If you need further help or advice, there are a number of organisations you can contact.

These include:

- [Carers UK](#) 
  - the [Carers Trust](#) 
  - [Carers Direct](#)  - which also has a helpline for carers on 0300 123 1053 (Mon-Fri 9am-8pm; Sat and Sun 11am-4pm)
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### Did this advice help?

 Yes No

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