

ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

Short Guide Series

Assessing the Support Needs for Carers

Who are Carers?

A carer is anyone, including children and adults, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid (england.nhs.uk).

Evidence shows that carers have poorer health outcomes than the non-carer population, but that early identification of carers can improve their health and wellbeing. However, carers are not easy to identify and may not consider themselves to be carers. Seventy percent of carers come into contact with health professionals and yet, of those, only 10% are identified, with GPs more specifically only identifying 7% ([Macmillan Cancer Support](#)). Encouraging services to 'think carer, think family', can help to improve the identification of carers and support better health and wellbeing outcomes.

Assessment

There are four 'categories' of carers:

1. Adult carers
2. Parent carers
3. Young carers (under 18 years old)
4. Transitioning carers, such as a parent carer with the cared for child approaching 18 or a young carer approaching 18.

Whatever the level of care provided, all carers are entitled to advice and information. Any carer who appears to have need for support must be offered an assessment to establish if they do actually have support needs and if so, how they can be supported to:

- **For adults** - to continue with their caring role, should they wish too, whilst living a life outside of their caring role; and

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- **for young carers** – to ensure they do not undertake excessive or inappropriate care and ensure help and support that may be needed to support the young carers wellbeing.

The Care Act 2014

Adult and transitioning carers support is governed by the Care Act 2014. The statutory guidance states that:

- Local authorities (LAs) have a universal prevention duty and must provide or arrange services that help prevent people developing needs for care and support or delay people deteriorating such that they would need ongoing care and support.
- LAs must offer a needs assessment to an adult carer when the cared for person lives within their municipal boundary, even if the carer lives outside of it.
- In addition to advice and information, a carer may have eligible needs where they meet a threshold based on identifying how their needs affect their ability to achieve relevant desired outcomes, and whether, as a consequence, this has a significant impact on their wellbeing. An adult carer, or transitioning carer being assessed under the Care Act, will meet the threshold if they fulfil all three of the following criteria:
 1. Their needs for support must arise as a consequence of providing necessary care for an adult.
 2. Authorities must consider whether the carer's physical or mental health is either deteriorating or is at risk of doing so, or whether the carer is unable to achieve any one of the following outcomes:
 - carrying out any caring responsibilities the carer has for a child,
 - providing care to other persons for whom the carer provides care,
 - maintaining a habitable home environment,
 - managing and maintaining nutrition,
 - developing and maintaining family or other significant personal relationships,
 - engaging in work, training, education or volunteering,
 - making use of necessary facilities or services in the local community; and/or

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- engaging in recreational activities.
3. As a consequence, there is or is likely to be, a significant impact on the carer's wellbeing.
- Carers eligibility does not depend on whether the adult for whom they care has eligible needs.
 - The LA must identify any children who are involved in providing care.
 - Identification of a young carer in the family should result in an offer of a needs assessment for the adult requiring care and support which should result in the young carer being relieved of inappropriate or excessive caring roles if they exist. The adult has the right to refuse an assessment.
 - When carrying out an adult's or carer's assessment, if it appears that a child is involved in providing care the LA must consider:
 - the impact of the person's needs on the young carer's wellbeing, welfare, education and development; and
 - whether any of the caring responsibilities the young carer is undertaking are inappropriate or excessive, that is, anything which is likely to have an impact on the child's health, wellbeing or education, or which can be considered unsuitable in light of the child's circumstances. This may include:
 - Personal care such as bathing and toileting.
 - Carrying out strenuous physical tasks such as lifting and/or substantial amounts of housework.
 - Administering medication.
 - Maintaining the family budget.
 - Emotional support to the adult.
 - Excessive care for siblings.

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Transition

Transition is a time when the differences and gaps between services and support can be particularly evident and problematic to families. It is therefore critical that LAs take a joined-up approach between adult and children's services, health services (including mental health), educational institutions and other relevant organisations, to achieve the best outcomes for the young person and their family. For example, existing Education Health and Care (EHC) plans, transition plans and reviews of other family members can be combined. This requires services to establish working protocols and ensure that those working directly with young people and their families understand referral approaches and the requirement to work cooperatively together. The power to join up assessments can be important at transition and Care Act guidance provides the following example of assessments that could be combined:

If an adult is caring for a 17-year-old in transition and a 12-year-old, the LA could combine:

- the child's needs assessment of the 17-year-old under the Care Act,
- any assessment of the 17-year-old's needs under section 17 of the Children Act,
- any assessment of the 12-year-old's needs under section 17 of the Children Act,
- the child's carer's assessment of the adult under the Care Act; and
- the parent carer's assessment of the adult under the Children and Families Act.

Under the Care Act it is important that whole-family approaches identify specific individual need as well as collective needs, interdependent needs and the desired outcomes of all concerned.

If a transition assessment is carried out, as it should be, there should not be a gap in provision of care and support. Where a transition assessment should have been conducted and was not, the LA must continue providing any existing services until any new arrangements are in place or a decision is reached that none will be provided. Good transition planning can aid and support a child to reach their goals in adulthood. Parent carers' needs are covered under Section 17 of the Children Act. However, the Care Act includes a duty to undertake a transition assessment for them when the person they care

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for is approaching 18 – and a power to start providing services on the basis of the transition assessment before they and their child actually transition.

Older Carers

Older people may be more reluctant than other carers to ask for or accept help and less likely to reveal their caring status or to identify themselves as a carer. This could be for a range of reasons including a sense that asking for or accepting help is a failure on their part. They may also be fearful of someone else taking over or even removing the person they care for from them, or the person with care needs may be adamant that they will not accept care from anyone else. Additionally, there is often a sense of dignity in remaining independent and sometimes a feeling of duty. It may therefore be that services need a particularly skilled and sensitive approach to older carers to address their concerns and this may be a process rather than a one-off intervention.

A caring situation may not be obvious particularly when an adult continues to remain living within his/her family. It is therefore important to understand the family narrative, to provide context to any assessment and consider the following points:

- Promoting and actively seeking the voice of the adult with care and support needs leads to better understanding of their needs and impacts positively on care delivery.
- Early preparation and open dialogue with older carers of adults with significant needs may help alleviate concerns and build trust, preparing for future changes to care arrangements.
- Conversations with families regarding the contingency arrangements for adults requiring care may provide indicators of future difficulties.
- Combined assessments of the adult and their unpaid carer should acknowledge any inter-dependency and take a whole family approach.

Young Carers

A young carer is a child under the age of 18. The identification of a young carer in the family should result in an offer of a needs assessment for an adult requiring care and support

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which should result in the young carer being relieved of inappropriate or excessive caring roles if they exist.

When carrying out an adult's or carer's assessment, if it appears that a child is involved in providing care the local authority must consider:

- the impact of the person's needs on the young carer's wellbeing, welfare, education and development, and
- whether any of the caring responsibilities the young carer is undertaking are inappropriate or excessive, that is, anything which is likely to have an impact on the child's health, wellbeing or education, or which can be considered unsuitable in light of the child's circumstances and may include:
 - personal care such as bathing and toileting,
 - carrying out strenuous physical tasks such as lifting and/or substantial amounts of housework,
 - administering medication,
 - maintaining the family budget,
 - emotional support to the adult,
 - excessive care for siblings.

The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act 1989 and has clarified the law relating to young carers and addresses LAs as a whole (applying to both adult and children's services). The new provision works alongside measures in the Care Act 2014 to enable a 'whole-family approach' to assessment and support, so that young carers and their families can access appropriate assistance. The new provisions bestow new rights for young carers including:

- The right to an assessment is extended to all young carers under the age of 18 regardless of who they care for, what type of care they provide or how often they provide it.
- Placing a clearer duty to undertake an assessment on request or on the appearance of need.
- Ensuring that young carers are identified, and that consideration is given as to whether they are a 'child in need'.

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- Making links between children's and adults' legislation to enable LAs to align the assessment of a young carer with an assessment of an adult they care for (preventing inappropriate care).
- Requiring councils to be proactive about identifying young carers in their area and acting to help reduce their need for support through the provision of information and preventative measures (for example in schools).

Where a young carer may be a 'child in need', adult workers will need to discuss the case with children's services to see what further action is needed. Further action might include:

- A referral to an independent young carers service.
- Accessing preventative support through the 'Early Help' network.
- Further assessment by children's services to identify any potential safeguarding concerns.
- Combine a young carer's assessment with that of the adult.

Where young people are in transition this will be an area of joint activity including where any sibling young carers are identified as needing support through transition. The Children and Families Act also bestows a duty of care on LAs to parent carers, defined as "a person aged 18 or over who provides or intends to provide care for a disabled child for whom the person has parental responsibilities". The Act strengthens parent carers rights so there will be a consistent approach to all groups of carers and makes it clear that councils must take into account the full and complex needs of parent carers.

Further Information

[The Care Act and Whole Family Approaches](#) - Provides practical guidance for practitioners working in adult social care in relation to carrying out assessment and developing plans which consider the needs of the whole family. It considers how the Care Act works in tandem with the provisions of the Children and Families Act to create a cohesive legislative framework that allows assessment and support for families to be combined where appropriate.

[Young Carers: legislation, guidance and research](#) - Resource produced by The Children's Society to support professionals working with young carers.

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[Carer's assessments](#) - Produced by Carers UK, this resource provides further information on carer's assessments including Q&As and downloadable factsheets.

[Care Act Statutory Guidance](#) - Online version of the guidance provided by the Department of Health & Social Care. Includes a search facility and an option to print a copy of the guidance or select a page range.

[Care Act 2014](#) - Original and latest online versions of the Care Act legislation, which sets out the duties of LAs when assessing people's care and support needs.

[The Care and Support \(Eligibility Criteria\) Regulations 2014](#) - Outlines the needs which meet the eligibility criteria for 1. adults who need care and support and 2. carers.

[NHS England's Commitment to carers](#) - This sets out a series of commitments that NHS England will do to support carers, reflecting what NHS England has heard from carers during a number of engagement events.

[NHS England's Carers toolkit](#) - NHS England and its partners have developed a toolkit to help health and social care organisations work together in identifying, assessing and supporting the wellbeing of carers and their families. The toolkit covers the duties on NHS organisations brought about by the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 and includes numerous examples of positive practice that are already making a difference to carers and their families.

[Strategy Guide: Young Carers](#) - Produced by Hampshire and Isle of Wight Safeguarding Children Partnerships, this guide provides an overview of young carers and the impact it can have on young people. Signposting to additional resources and information is included.

Also see the Adopting a Family Approach [Short Guide Series](#) on Care and Support Needs and Carers and Safeguarding.