

ADOPTING A FAMILY APPROACH

Short Guide Series

Carers and Safeguarding

Across the UK an estimated 6.6 million people are carers and increasing numbers of people have carer roles to a greater or lesser extent in their personal lives. Recognising that this is an everyday experience for many people is an important reminder that 'carers' are not to be stereotyped. Carers are from a diverse range of backgrounds. Carers may be parents, daughters, sons, partners, neighbours and friends. Carers may be adults or children, and at risk themselves.

Carers make a huge contribution to the lives of the people in the UK they support, however, carers need access to practical and emotional support to enable them to provide good and safe care, as well as looking after their own wellbeing.

Carers may be involved in situations where someone is at risk of abuse or neglect, that require a safeguarding response. This guide aims to identify ways of improving practice and securing desired outcomes in those situations for:

- Family/friend/unpaid carers speaking up about abuse or neglect within the community or within different care settings.
- Family/friend/unpaid carers who may experience intentional or unintentional harm from the person they are trying to support or from professionals and organisations they are in contact with.
- Family/friend/unpaid carers who may unintentionally or intentionally harm or neglect the person they support.

Section 10 of the Care Act 2014 gives anyone over the age of 18, who is looking after another adult who is disabled, ill or elderly the right to a carer's assessment.

Young carers and parents of disabled children also have the right to an assessment by their local council under the Children and Families Act 2014. These assessments should cover topics such as carers' mental and physical health, their ability and willingness to care, and their relationships with others.

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Key points in working in together with carers

Make sure you know what support is available for unpaid carers in your area. Local authorities may do things differently; for example, in some areas carer's assessments are completed by a carer organisation. Whoever undertakes the assessment should be able to work with the carer in the following way:

- Not make assumptions about the 'carer' and their circumstances.
- Ask 'Is there a young carer involved?'
- Provide timely and careful assessments of both the carer and the person they are caring for.
- Understand the relevant legislation and being able to apply this to practice with confidence (for example, Care Act, Mental Capacity Act, Liberty Protection Safeguards/ Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards (DoLS), domestic abuse).
- Apply Making Safeguarding Personal principles.
- Apply professional curiosity.

Timely and careful assessments of both the carer and the cared for person is vital for safeguarding.

When decisions are made about a person's care arrangements without a full understanding of family circumstances or support network, assumptions can be made which may compromise their safety. For example, at the point of discharge from hospital, the fact that there are family members in the household or nearby does not necessarily mean that they will be in a position to take on caring responsibilities. Equally, it could be the case that family or friends have taken on a carer's role, but without identifying themselves as a 'carer' are not accessing the support they have a right to and need. Assessment of both the carer and the adult they care for must include consideration of the wellbeing of both people. Risk of abuse, either for the carer or the person they are caring for, increases when the carer is isolated and not getting any practical or emotional support from their family, friends, professionals or paid care staff. Abuse between the carer and cared for person may be domestic abuse. The definition of domestic abuse extends to paid and unpaid carers if they are also personally connected, such as a family member.

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Abuse of carers

Potential situations where abuse of carers is more likely are where the person supported/cared for:

- has health and care needs that exceed the carer's ability to meet them,
- does not consider the needs of the carer or family members,
- treats the carer with a lack of respect or courtesy,
- rejects help and support from outside, including breaks,
- refuses to be left alone by day or by night,
- has control over the carer's financial resources, property and living arrangements,
- engages in abusive, aggressive or frightening behaviours,
- has a history of substance misuse, unusual or offensive behaviours or does not understand their actions and their impact on the carer,
- is angry about their situation and seeks to punish others for it and/or
- has sought help or support but did not meet criteria for this.

These factors may indicate that the carer is at risk of being abused themselves by the person they support and care for. These are signs that should be considered when undertaking an assessment.

Abuse of the cared for person

When risk increases in relation to carers unintentionally or intentionally harming or neglecting the adult they support, often the carer:

- has unmet or unrecognised needs of their own, including health needs,
- are themselves vulnerable,
- has little insight or understanding of the vulnerable person's condition or needs,
- has unwillingly had to change his or her lifestyle,
- are not receiving practical or emotional support from other family members,
- are feeling emotionally and socially isolated, undervalued or stigmatised,
- has other responsibilities, such as family or work,
- has no personal or private space, or life outside the caring environment,
- has frequently requested help but problems have not been solved,

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- are being abused by the vulnerable person and/or
- feels unappreciated by the vulnerable person or exploited by relatives or services.

These factors may indicate that a person being supported and cared for is at risk of abuse from their carer and should be considered when conducting an assessment.

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 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 which clarified the law relating to young carers and addresses local authorities as a whole (applying to both adult and children's services). The 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

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families can access appropriate assistance. The provisions bestowed 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'.
- Making links between children's and adults' legislation to enable local authorities to align the assessment of a young carer with an assessment of an adult they care for (preventing inappropriate care).
- Requiring local authorities 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. This 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.

Further information

[Supporting people who provide unpaid care for adults with health or social care needs](#) -

Co-produced by the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) and Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE), this quick guide for social care practitioners is based on NICE's guideline and quality standard on supporting adult carers.

Also see the [Short Guide Series](#) on Accessing the Support Needs of Carers and Care and Support Needs.

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References

This guide includes key information from the national briefing, [Carers and Safeguarding: a briefing for people who work with carers](#), co-produced by the LGA, ADASS and Carers UK.