



Action for Family Carers

A working carer?



UK
Foundation



SUPPORTING CARERS IN ESSEX

A single source of help and advice for all unpaid carers



Are you a working carer?

In Essex, around 180,000 people provide unpaid care or support to family members, friends and even neighbours. This support could be given in their own homes or out in the community.

It can be difficult to recognise yourself as a carer when you simply think you are just being 'a good friend/good neighbour' or 'just doing what needs to be done' for a spouse or family member.

'Caring' for someone covers many aspects of everyday life. This could involve helping with personal care and dressing, helping at meal times or perhaps doing housework. It could also involve taking them to regular medical appointments or simply keeping them company when they feel anxious or lonely.

Legislation

A number of pieces of legislation currently gives carers some basic statutory rights at work, whilst many employers go beyond this provision, there is however often very limited awareness, amongst both employers and employees of the minimum legal rights which apply to carers in employment

The **Work and Families Act 2006**: gives carers the right to request flexible working. Since 2007, this legislation has applied to carers, and to parents of children under the age of 17, or 18 if the child is disabled. From the end of June 2014 this right was extended to all employees

As a working carer you might need a range of support in the workplace, and often different levels of support at different times. Here are a few ways in which your employer may be able to offer support:

Flexible working hours: it might help if you could start later and work later if you need extra time in the morning to help the person you care for get up and settled for the day, or you may need to wait for day care transport, for example

Access to a telephone: being able to use a phone, in private, at work to check that everything is ok, or being able to keep your mobile phone on at work so you can be contacted can go a long way to reduce stress levels and help you concentrate at work

Car parking space at/near work: this could shorten your journey time to and from work and might also help if you need to go home at lunch time to attend to the person you care for

Working from home: either regular or occasionally, can be a real help. You can be at home with the person you are looking after and still be able to get a day's work done

Unpaid and paid leave: you could use this, rather than your holiday leave, if you need to take a longer period of time off if the person you care for comes out of hospital or if they are unwell.

Seeking support in the workplace

Employers value skilled, experienced members of staff and are keen to keep them. Your employer may be able to help in ways you have not considered. Talk to your manager about your situation, directly or through your HR/ personnel officer or union or staff association representative.

Before you decide to speak to your employer, you should find out more about your employer's policy for supporting carers. If you decide to leave work, make sure you check all your options before you resign, for example can you take a career break, voluntary redundancy or early retirement.

Some things every carer should know

1. Caring can affect your mental health. Depression is common in Carers for obvious reasons, but there are techniques you can use to stay feeling strong and positive.
2. Caring can impact on your physical health. Looking after yourself may be hard- but it is important to eat, sleep and be physically well.
3. If you are a working Carer, you have rights at work. It helps to know what your employer's obligations are just in case they aren't supportive.
4. Caring can be isolating, but you're not alone. There are many support groups, for you and the person you care for.
5. There are advice and support services who can help with some of the practical things you might need when looking after someone.
6. There are national Carers organisations that give a wealth of advice. Visit Carers UK and Carers Trust to find out more.
7. You have a legal right to a Carer's Assessment. It sounds like a test, but it's just a chat with an advisor to find the best support for you and the person you care for.
8. Nobody wants to think about the time when their caring responsibilities end, but there are things that have to be done. Being prepared could leave you with the space to grieve when the time comes.



At **Action for family Carers** we can offer you support in your caring role:

Practical support

- Information on local support and services
- Help to access services, devices and equipment to assist you in your caring role
- Information on financial and legal matters
- Support to have your voice heard on important issues
- Planning for an emergency
- Training – learning and skills for caring
- Home visits to discuss the challenges you face
- Support to access grant funding
- Information on how to get a break

Mental health and wellbeing

- Peer support groups
- Carers counselling
- Emotional support

Support in difficult times

- When the person you care for is admitted to hospital
- Support service, in partnership with Macmillan, when the person you care for has a terminal diagnosis or is approaching the end of their life
- Respite break when you are experiencing exceptional difficulties or waiting to have a carers assessment.

Call us on: - 0300 7 70 80 90

Quote reference “carer friendly organisation”

Email us at: - info@carersinessex.org.uk

Visit our website www.carersinessex.org.uk

Based on the experience and opinions of Carers, we have included a list of 'Do's and Don'ts to help you in your caring role

Do

- Take care of your health. Stress can be known to raise blood pressure!
- Ensure that you get regular exercise and find time for relaxation
- Find time to laugh, even it means just watching a comedy on TV
- When speaking to professionals, stay calm!
- If there is something you don't understand keep asking until you do!
- Ask for information about treatments
- Ensure you are clear on medication/ side effects
- Ask what further help/back up is available if needed
- Keep making your point if you feel you need to
- Ask for 'time out to collect yourself' in professional meetings if you are feeling emotional or angry.
- Tell someone if you are stressed or feel you are not coping
- Help the 'cared for' understand their illness and the effects of their illness
- Try to stay calm and positive and be as flexible as you can with your time
- Seek advice from informed sources and the help that is available

Keep Records of: hospital/doctor's appointments (write down where, when and with whom) /Hospital admission and discharge dates /Professionals spoken to Commencement and changes to any benefits

Don't

- Be too quick to give up your job before considering all of the options available to you
- Stop doing the things you enjoy i.e.: hobbies and interests, you may still find some respite time to do these
- Forget that other family members also need you
- Try to cope alone
- Feel guilty for getting angry or stressed at times, this is perfectly normal and many Carers go through these emotions
- Be frightened to express your own needs to health professionals and family members
- Forget to speak to professionals if you feel the situation is getting worse
- Force a diagnosis onto the person you care for
- Argue with someone who has Dementia or Alzheimer's or try to bring him or her back to reality. Reassure them and allow them to say what is on their mind

Carer Assessment

Carers Assessment is a legal entitlement that Carers have under the Care Act 2014.

Carers are entitled to a Carer's Assessment of their needs, if they provide a significant amount of care on a regular basis. It is important to consider the effect your caring role has on your life outside of caring for example your work, your own personal health or simply your own time.

The assessment is not means-tested and is not at a judgment of your caring competence; instead, it is an acknowledgement of the extra work and responsibilities that you as a carer may have.

A social care worker will complete the Carer's Assessment. These can be completed over the phone, however you can request a face to face meeting if you would prefer.

Attendance Allowance, PIP & DLA

Attendance Allowance is a tax-free benefit you can get if you are aged 65 or over, are physically or mentally disabled and need help with personal care or supervision to remain safe. You do not actually have to be getting any help. It is the help you need that is relevant. You can get Attendance Allowance even if you live alone; you do not need to have a Carer.

Attendance Allowance is not means tested, there are no National Insurance contribution tests and in most cases it is paid in addition to other money.

PIP (Personal Independence Payment) is a benefit for people who have a physical or mental disability and need help participating in everyday life or find it difficult to get around. It replaced Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for people over the age of 16. PIP is tax-free, is not means tested and you do not need to have paid National Insurance contributions to be entitled to it

DLA (Disability Living Allowance) provides help towards the extra costs of bringing up a disabled child. It is paid on top of almost any other income you have and can give you access to other types of help. DLA is divided into two parts: mobility component – for children with walking difficulties, A care component – for children needing extra personal care, supervision or watching over because of a disability



Do you worry about what would happen to the person you look after if you were suddenly unable to continue your caring role?

The Carers Emergency Planning Service could help give you peace of mind in a crisis. They can support you to complete an emergency contingency plan and more. You will be provided with a Card that shows your name, a unique identification number and an emergency phone number.

I would like to be contacted regarding the Carers' Emergency Planning Service

Name

Address

.....

.....

Postcode

Telephone No

Please Return to:

Carers Emergency Planning Service

Essex House

200 The Crescent

Colchester

This is available as a tear off page at the back of this booklet



Register as a Carer

When you register as a Carer at your local GP surgery, there may be some benefits you can receive (this is at the discretion of your Surgery) to register as a carer complete this form and hand in to your local practice

Dear GP

Name of Carer: _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Please register this patient as a Family carer on your records and inform them of services available to Carers such as:

- Annual Medication Check
- Annual Health Check
- Home visit Flu Vaccinations
- Priority Appointments
- Home visits

This is available as a tear off page at the back of this booklet

Respite

When you provide care for a relative, friend or neighbour, there are times when you need to take a break: it might be that you need a break from caring to rest and recharge your batteries, or to attend family commitments or to deal with your own health issues. When considering respite there are some points you need to remember as respite care can occur suddenly, so there won't always be lots of time to research and make decisions. It may be worth checking which home care providers can offer care at short notice or local care homes that offer respite care. We hold details for local care home and home care providers that work in your area so please contact us for details.

Community Transport

This is a term given to passenger transport schemes that are outside the usual travel options. These schemes help people who are rurally isolated or not easily able to access conventional public transport or with restricted mobility.

Community transport schemes in Essex (and Thurrock) offer a wide range of transport services, such as social car, dial a ride, group travel and more. The schemes are independent of Essex County Council. They often run as charities and receive some funding. They are usually operated by people working together to solve their own transport needs and mostly rely on volunteers to help.

Other Community Transport schemes may exist in your local borough/district, for further information contact us on 03457 430 430 or email passenger.transport@essex.gov.uk

Live in Care

A live in carer lives with you in your family home and allows your loved one to stay at home in familiar and relaxed surroundings with one to one support. When considering live in care you must remember that the carer requires his / her own bedroom and even though they are available most of the day, it is usual for a live in carer to have a 2 hours break in 24 hours and will typically work 5 and 7 days per week.

Social Media

Carers sometimes live in a bubble, the roundabout of caring, sorting out finances, juggling family responsibilities and struggling with the challenge of keeping their relative safe, comfortable and happy.

Social media can be a great way to find other carers, and there's a wonderful community on Twitter who support each other, share tips and good practice and lighten the day with comments, photos and light-hearted banter. It's easy to dip in and out of conversations when you have the time, or to use that five minute breather between other responsibilities to catch your breath and talk to someone in the same or a similar situation.

Twitter and how do I use it?

It's an online network where you write messages (called tweets), which can only be up to 140 characters in length. You can send them to individuals, by responding to their tweets, or you can use them to make general comments to all the twitter community. *If you also work, you may need to check if your organisation has a social media policy.* You can also send private messages (these are called DM - direct messages) which you only send to an individual.

Basically: you need to have a username, which you choose, and it always begins with @. Once you've organised your twitter name, you need to set up your profile (this is where you describe yourself - give other people an idea of your interests), etc. You can either use your real name or choose something which doesn't identify you - this may be useful if you want to talk to other carers whilst respecting the privacy of the person you care for (so they can't be identified), and it also means you won't be upsetting family members if you share some of your experiences with the twitter community.

@CarersTrust @CarersUK @CarersSupport

Facebook – Action for Family Carers

Facebook is very easy to use and you can post photos, articles and comments and you can always set your privacy settings so that those you've designated as friends are the only ones who can see your postings. Facebook has a less formal feel and you'll find plenty of groups to join, depending on your interests.

Rally Round is a free and secure online tool that allows family members, friends and carers to organise support for someone they care about.

www.rallyroundme.com/affc

Last Power of Attorney (LPA)

A **lasting power of attorney** (LPA) is a way of giving someone you trust the legal authority to make decisions on your behalf if you lack mental capacity at some time in the future or no longer wish to make decisions for yourself.

You must be 18 or over and have mental capacity (the ability to make your own decisions) when you make your LPA.

There are 2 types of LPA:

health and welfare

property and financial affairs

You can choose to make one type or both.

It costs approx. £110 to register, however further costs will may be incurred if legal support is required.

Look for online for help at www.lastingpowerofattorney.service.gov.uk

Health and welfare lasting power of attorney

Use this LPA to give an attorney the power to make decisions about things like your daily routine, for example;

Washing, dressing, eating, medical care, moving into a care home, life-sustaining treatment

It can only be used when you're unable to make your own decisions.

Property and financial affairs lasting power of attorney

Use this LPA to give an attorney the power to make decisions about money and property for you, for example:

managing a bank or building society account, paying bills, collecting benefits or a pension, selling your home

It can be used as soon as it's registered, with your permission.

Office of the Public Guardian

Contact the Office of the Public Guardian if you need help.

customerservices@publicguardian.gsi.gov.uk

Telephone: 0300 456 0300

Text phone: 0115 934 277

Case Study

I used to see mum every couple of months and phoned her several times a week. Over a period of 3 weeks myself, my sister, mum's neighbours and her work colleagues became increasingly worried about mum's wellbeing. After some considerable "persuasion" mum agreed to go and see a doctor with me and my sister (it had been 18 years since she'd last made an appointment). The GP put her on medication for depression and made a referral to the wellbeing service for assessment. Within a week she'd deteriorated further. She'd lost around 3 stone and gone from a healthy size 12 to a size 8. She was hallucinating, had no conversation at all – just seemed to stare at nothing. We took her back to her doctor who arranged for a CT scan that day. She spent the day having tests and seeing doctors. They were very quick to come back with their findings, she didn't have a brain tumour and she didn't have dementia, she had severe depression and acute paranoia. They said she was extremely poorly but they were confident she could make a full recovery over time. The following day there was a plan in place and a team of people providing intensive support to her. It was fantastic, they kept me informed, I phoned mum daily and regularly travelled up at weekends. It took almost a year before my sister and I could start to recognise our mum and then the support started to reduce. That's when I found myself starting to reverse roles with my mum – looking out for her, having to keep her safe from harm, guiding her the way she did for me when I was little, giving constant reminders on what she should and shouldn't do.

Describe a 'typical' day for you in terms of the work you do and your caring responsibilities – what are the main challenges? I don't think mum has ever fully recovered but some days you think she has and then other days it's worrying as she seems to be regressing. I phone her every night but the conversation is generally one way except on the odd occasion. On average it's a 4 hour journey to mum's. My sister sometimes meets me halfway for mum to come down to stay with me or for her to take mum home. Mum generally comes to stay for a couple of weeks about every 6 weeks, which gives my sister a break. She sees mum 3 times a week and makes sure she eats a proper meal on those days. Mum has a close friend who takes her out once or twice a week and also has her round for dinner once a week. I arranged for Mum to go a wellbeing centre 2 afternoons a week, which she enjoys.

I also go up and stay with mum to take her to some of her medical appointments or to sort things out which can't be sorted over the phone/ email. My sister helps where she can and if I specifically ask her. We try to work as a team with me leading. It's only when I see mum 24/7 that we get a picture on how she's managing. For example, in the midst of winter last year I arrived at her house at 11 pm only to find the house so cold you could see your breath. Mum was like a block of ice sitting in front of her gas fire. She said her boiler hadn't worked the last couple of days. When the engineer came he said it was more like weeks it hadn't been working. On other occasions I found the microwave had burnt out – she cooked something for over an hour in it. Her oven didn't work. The freezer was broken. Light bulbs on the landing had blown. Her mattress was saturated. The list goes on and the difficulty is she doesn't tell anyone and when people only see her for a couple of hours there's lots of things that are masked. She never complains. Always says she's alright. Always says she doesn't need anything – which means you have to keep checking by being with her 24/7.

How does your employer support you in your caring role?

When mum's comes to stay she doesn't come down stairs until around 10.30 in the morning, catnaps during the day and falls asleep after evening dinner then goes to bed at 22.00. It's difficult to spend quality time with her and I can't keep taking annual leave as she's down quite often. My line manager and colleagues are very supportive and I work flexibly from home where ever I can when she's staying. It means I can start work at 07.30 and stop for a while when she gets up, sometimes take her out for lunch for a break, then after dinner when she's asleep I can carry on working. Appointments for mum up north need to be made during the week so I try to make them on a Friday so that I can go up Thursday evening and come back over the weekend otherwise the driving takes its toll on me. Sometimes that's not possible so I either take time off (annual leave or flexi) or in some cases it is possible for me to continue to work from mums (if I don't require access to the internet). I've recently been advised that I could be entitled to some carer time so this is something I will discuss with my line manager next time as this would really help out.

What frustrations do you have with the organisation regarding your caring role?

When I went up to mum's over 12 months ago I did ask if there was a laptop that had the internet (either built in or had a 'dongle' – I'm not an IT expert!) which I could use for a few days that would allow me to carry on working around the appointments and in the evenings. But unfortunately it wasn't possible.

I believe that if the organisation had a number of laptops with the internet that could be loaned/ booked out to staff then there will be different occasions when staff could benefit from this resource and would ensure access to continue working.

What do you wish your colleagues could understand about your position?

The one thing I have recognised recently is that carers all provide support and care in different ways, some give more intensive support than others. I'm telling my story so that others might recognise that someone they work with may take on a caring role themselves and not recognise it. If you recognise that one of your colleagues cares for someone then talk to them and ask them if they see themselves as a carer. They may not be aware of the wealth of information and support available to them.

Carer Support - / Wellbeing Groups

Please visit www.carersnessex.org.uk for more information on what is happening in your area

Call and Ask about...

UK POWER NETWORK

Uk Power network is in partnership with Carers Trust to provide extra support during a power cut to those who care and are cared for.

Registration is free and by joining as a customer, you will receive a welcome pack with helpful tips and advice about how to prepare for a power cut. You will also get a priority number to call and if require assistance from the Red Cross. They may also consider subsidizing meals or hotel accommodation during prolonged power cuts

DISABLED TOILET ACCESS NATIONAL KEY SCHEME (NKS RADAR KEY

Cinema Exhibitors Card

Adjustments at cinemas for disabled guests.

BLUE BADGE SCHEME

The Blue Badge scheme is for people with severe mobility problems. It allows Blue Badge holders to park close to where they need to go. The Scheme operates throughout the UK and is managed by local authorities, who deal with applications and issue Blue Badges.

BT FREE PRIORITY REPAIR SCHEME

At BT they understand just how important your phone service is. And it's even more important when you rely on it for health or mobility reasons. This is where people who meet the scheme criteria can benefit from our Free Priority Fault Repair Scheme. Under the scheme, they'll give you priority over standard faults by dealing with them as soon as they can, every day of the year, including Christmas Day.



Universal contacts

Adult Social Care – 0345 603 7630

Families and Children Social Care – 0345 603 7634

Carers UK Advice Line – 0808 808 7777

Community Agents – 0800 977 5858

Citizens Advice UK – 03444 111 444

Alzheimer's UK Helpline – 0300 222 1122

Parkinson's UK Helpline – 0808 800 0303

Unison – 0800 0857 857

ACAS Helpline – 0300123 1100

Action for Family Carers leads Supporting Carers in Essex, a group of registered charities working together to support unpaid Carers of all ages across Essex.

Quote Reference – Carer Friendly Organisation

Call us on 01279 308314 / 0300 770 80 90

Website - www.affc.org.uk

Email us at info@carersinessex.org.uk

Visit our website at www.carersinessex.org.uk

Dear GP

Name of Carer: _____

Date of Birth: ____/____/____

Please register this patient as a Family carer on your records and inform them of services available to Carers such as:

- Annual Medication Check
- Annual Health Check
- Home visit Flu Vaccinations
- Priority Appointments
- Home visits



I would like to be contacted regarding the Carers' Emergency Planning Service

Name

Address

.....

.....

Postcode

Telephone No

Please Return to:

Carers Emergency Planning Service

Essex House

200 The Crescent

Colchester

CO4 9YQ