Day and Nightcare

WHO CARES? WE CARE.

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FULL HANDBOOK

Help for family carers

Carer's assessments, looking after yourself, working while caring, respite and caring from a distance.



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A short guide to this handbook, with the key points of each guide: **www.dayandnightcare.co.uk/leaflets/brochure-family-carers-short.pdf**

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SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Carer's assessment: your rights and how to prepare

Last updated 30 October 2026; sources last checked 30 October 2026.

IN BRIEF

If you help an adult who could not manage without you, you have a legal right to a free carer's assessment from the council where they live, whatever your income and however much or little care you give. It looks at how caring affects your health, work and life, and can lead to support such as funded breaks, practical help or a carer's direct payment.



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Who can have a carer's assessment?

Under section 10 of the Care Act 2014, the council must offer an assessment to any adult who provides, or intends to provide, care for another adult, whenever it appears the carer may need support. That duty applies whatever the council thinks of your level of need, and whatever your finances or those of the person you care for.

You can ask for one if you:

- Help a partner, parent, relative, friend or neighbour who is ill, disabled, frail or living with dementia.
- Do not live with them, or live in a different part of the country.
- Work full time, study or have children of your own.
- Share the caring with others. Each family carer can have their own assessment.
- Are about to start caring, for example when someone is leaving hospital.

People paid to care, or volunteering through an organisation, are not usually treated as carers for this purpose. Young carers and parent carers of disabled children have separate rights. In Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the rules differ.

Your assessment is separate from the needs assessment of the person you care for, although the two can be combined if you both agree.

What does a carer's assessment cover?

The law sets out what the council must look at:

- Whether you are able, and willing, to keep caring, now and in the future.
- How caring affects your wellbeing: your physical and mental health, relationships, finances, home and sense of control over your life.
- Whether you work or want to work, and whether you want to study, train or have time for leisure.
- The outcomes you want in your day-to-day life, and whether support could help you achieve them.

The word "willing" matters. You are not expected to provide any particular amount or kind of care. If you can no longer manage nights, or would rather not give a parent intimate personal care, say so. The council has to take that into account.

Who qualifies for support after the assessment?

You have eligible needs under the national criteria when all three of these apply:

1. Your needs arise because you provide necessary care for an adult.

2. As a result, your physical or mental health is getting worse or is at risk of getting worse, or you cannot achieve one or more of these: caring for a child, caring for anyone else you look after, keeping your home habitable, eating properly, keeping up family or personal relationships, working, studying or volunteering, using local services, or having time for leisure.
3. There is, or is likely to be, a significant impact on your wellbeing.

"Cannot achieve" includes managing only with significant pain, distress or anxiety, or in a way that puts your own or someone else's health or safety at risk. If your caring varies, for example with a condition that comes and goes, the council must look at a long enough period to see the full picture.

How to ask for a carer's assessment: step by step

1. **Find the right council.** It is the council where the person you care for lives, even if you live elsewhere. Ask for "adult social care".
2. **Ask by phone, online form or email.** Say the words "I would like a carer's assessment under the Care Act 2014". You do not need a referral from a GP or social worker.
3. **Ask for a combined assessment if it helps.** If the person you care for has not had a needs assessment, you can ask for the two to be done together, as long as you both agree.
4. **Choose how it happens.** Assessments can be face to face, by phone or online. If you would find it easier to talk in person, ask for that.
5. **Ask for a timescale.** There is no fixed national deadline, but the council should tell you roughly how long it will take and act quickly if things are urgent.
6. **Keep a note** of the date you asked, who you spoke to and any reference number.
7. **After the assessment,** the council must give you a written record. Check it carefully and ask for corrections if anything is missing.

The assessment is free. Some councils work through a local carers' organisation. In Oxfordshire, for example, you can complete a self-assessment on the county council's website or have a supported assessment with Carers Oxfordshire (01235 424715), which can take around two hours. Oxfordshire County Council's social and health care team is on 01865 519800 (Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4pm), and its emergency duty team on 0800 833 408 out of hours.

Example email to the council

You can copy and adapt this. Keep it short, factual and honest.

> **Subject:** Request for a carer's assessment, [your name], carer for [their name]
>
> Dear Adult Social Care team,
>
> I am writing to ask for a carer's assessment under section 10 of the Care Act 2014.
>
> I care for my [mother], [full name], date of birth [date], who lives at [address]. Her NHS number is [number], if known.
>
> I help her with [for example: washing and dressing, medicines, meals, appointments and paperwork]. I am up [two or three] times most nights. Caring is now affecting my [sleep, health, work].
>
> I would prefer the assessment to be [face to face / by phone]. If she agrees, I would also like her to have a needs assessment, and for the two to be combined. [Please treat this as urgent because …]
>
> Please confirm you have received this request, tell me the expected timescale, and send me a copy of the written record afterwards.
>
> Yours sincerely, [Your name, address, phone number and email]

Documents to have ready

- Your NHS number and GP practice details.
- The name, address, date of birth and NHS number of the person you care for, and their GP.
- A list of their conditions and medicines.
- Your caring diary (see below).
- Any letters from hospitals, the GP or other services that show what care is needed.
- Details of any benefits either of you receives.

How to prepare: a checklist

A little preparation helps the assessor see what caring really involves.

- **Keep a diary for a week or two:** write down every task, including the ones that feel too small to mention, and how long each takes.
- **Count the nights:** note how often you are woken and what for. Broken sleep is often the hardest part of caring.
- **List the hidden work:** medicines, appointments, phone calls, paperwork, money, worry and emotional support.
- **Note your own health:** back pain, exhaustion, low mood, missed appointments of your own.
- **Think about work and life:** hours lost, opportunities turned down, friends you no longer see.
- **Decide what you want to change:** a regular break, help with mornings, a night's sleep each week, time to keep your job.
- **Think about emergencies:** what would happen if you were suddenly ill?

Be honest about the hard days rather than your best ones. Many carers understate what they do, and the support offered can only reflect what the assessor hears. It can help to have a friend or relative with you.

What support might follow?

If you have eligible needs, the council must agree a support plan with you and give you a personal budget: the amount it will cost to meet those needs. Support can take many forms:

- **Replacement care (respite):** someone else cares for the person so you can rest, work or keep your own appointments. This might be a sitting service, home care visits, a day centre, a short stay in a care home or a live-in carer for a few days or weeks. See our guide to respite options.
- **A carer's direct payment:** money paid to you to arrange support yourself. Government guidance gives examples such as relaxation classes, gym membership, adult learning, help to stay in or return to work, or a laptop to keep in touch with family.
- **Practical help and training:** for example, safe moving and handling, or equipment that makes caring easier.

- **Information and advice:** about benefits, carers' groups, emotional support and planning for emergencies.

Councils have a power to charge carers for support, but statutory guidance warns that charging carers is likely to be a false economy. Replacement care is treated as a service to the person you care for, so any charge falls on them under their own means test, and they need to agree to it. If they refuse, the council must try to find another way to support you.

If you are not eligible, the council must explain why in writing and give you information and advice about other help.

Common mistakes to avoid

- **Waiting for a crisis:** an assessment is easier to arrange, and more useful, before you reach breaking point.
- **Assuming you will not qualify:** working full time, or the person paying for their own care, does not stop you having an assessment.
- **Leaving out the nights:** night-time care is often what makes caring unsustainable.
- **Not asking for the written record:** you will need it if you want to challenge the outcome.

What to do if you disagree

Start by asking the council to explain its decision and to correct anything that is wrong in the record. If that does not resolve it, use the council's complaints procedure. If you are still unhappy, you can complain to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. If you would have substantial difficulty taking part and have no one suitable to help, the council must arrange an independent advocate. Ask for a reassessment whenever your situation changes.

Free helplines for carers

- **Carers UK:** 0808 808 7777, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, for advice on carers' rights, assessments and benefits.
- **Age UK Advice Line:** 0800 678 1602, for information on care, money and support for older people.
- **Independent Age:** 0800 319 6789, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm.

- **Carer's Allowance Unit:** 0800 731 0297, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.
- **Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman:** 0300 061 0614, if a complaint to the council has not resolved things.

What to do next

1. Contact adult social care at the council where the person you care for lives and ask for a carer's assessment.
2. Start your caring diary today, including nights.
3. If the person you care for has not had a needs assessment, ask whether the two can be done together.
4. Contact your local carers' centre for help preparing. Carers UK's helpline is 0808 808 7777.
5. Check your benefits. If you care for at least 35 hours a week, you may be able to claim Carer's Allowance of £86.45 a week if your earnings are £204 a week or less after deductions.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare is a CQC-registered home care provider, rated Good, supporting people at home since 2008. We provide home care visits from one hour, sleep-ins and waking nights across Oxfordshire, and 24-hour care with carers working in shifts anywhere in England, and fully managed live-in care anywhere in England, all of which can give family carers a planned break. We work with care funded privately, by councils (including direct payments) and by NHS Continuing Healthcare. Call us on 01865 715780 for a free initial assessment.

Common questions

Do I have to live with the person to get a carer's assessment?
No. You do not need to live with the person, be related to them or give a set number of hours of care. Many people who have assessments work full time, care at weekends or support a parent from a distance. The test is simply whether it appears you may have needs for support because of the care you give. Ask the council where the person you care for lives, because that council is responsible for your assessment.

Will a carer's assessment affect my Carer's Allowance?

No. A carer's assessment is about support from the council and is separate from benefits paid by the Department for Work and Pensions. Having one will not reduce or stop Carer's Allowance or any other benefit. The assessor may, however, point you towards benefits you are not yet claiming, such as Carer's Allowance or Carer's Credit, so it can be a useful time to check.

Can I have an assessment if the person I care for refuses help?

Yes. Your carer's assessment is your own right under the Care Act 2014, so you can ask for one even if the person you look after does not want an assessment for themselves. Some kinds of support, such as replacement care given to them while you take a break, do need their agreement. The council should then look for other ways to support you, such as help for your own wellbeing.

Is a carer's assessment means-tested?

No. The council must assess you regardless of your income or savings, or those of the person you care for. Money only comes into it later, if support is arranged. Councils can charge carers for support, but government guidance warns this is rarely sensible and many councils do not. Replacement care given to the person you care for is charged to them, under their own financial assessment, not to you.

How long does a carer's assessment take?

The conversation itself usually lasts an hour or more, and some take longer. There is no fixed national deadline for completing the whole process, but the council should carry it out within a reasonable time and act quickly if things are urgent. Ask for an indication of the timescale when you request it, and say clearly if you are close to breaking point, as that should be treated as urgent.

Sources and further information

- legislation.gov.uk: Care Act 2014, section 10 (assessment of a carer's needs for support)
- legislation.gov.uk: Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations 2015, regulation 3
- GOV.UK: Care and support statutory guidance
- NHS: Carer's assessments
- Carers Oxfordshire: Carer assessments
- GOV.UK: Carer's Allowance eligibility

- Oxfordshire County Council: Contact adult social and health care

Read next

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Respite care options: how to plan a break from caring

Respite care gives family carers a break while the person they look after stays safe and well cared for. Compare live-in respite, sitting services, night care, day centres and short care home stays, how each can be funded, and how to plan a break that goes smoothly.

Read the guide →

PAYING FOR CARE AND REDUCING THE COST

Carer's Allowance: who can claim and how it affects other benefits

Carer's Allowance pays £86.45 a week in 2026/27 to people who care for someone at least 35 hours a week and earn £204 a week or less. Who qualifies, the effect on the cared-for person's benefits, Carer's Credit, underlying entitlement and how to claim step by step.

Read the guide →

PAYING FOR CARE AND REDUCING THE COST

Direct payments and personal budgets: a guide for families

How personal budgets and direct payments work in England: who can get them, setting one up, using them with a care agency or for live-in care, employing a carer, paying family, adding your own money, record-keeping, reviews and audits, with wording you can use.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

This page online: **www.dayandnightcare.co.uk/guides/carers-assessment/**

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Looking after yourself as a carer: rest, support and breaks

Last updated 30 October 2026; sources last checked 30 October 2026.

IN BRIEF

Looking after your own health, sleep and spirits is part of good care, not a luxury, because exhausted carers cannot keep going. Learn the early signs of burnout, tell your GP you are a carer, plan regular breaks, and use the free support available from carers' centres, Carers UK and a council carer's assessment.



IN THIS GUIDE

1. Signs of carer burnout to watch for
2. Protecting your sleep
3. Taking breaks, big and small
4. Emotional support and someone to talk to
5. Carers' groups and local carers' centres
6. Tell your GP you are a carer
7. Have a plan for if you are ill
8. Check your money too
9. Helplines to save in your phone
10. A weekly self-care check
11. What to do next
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Signs of carer burnout to watch for

Burnout creeps up slowly. Many carers only notice it when something gives way. Look out for:

- Feeling exhausted even after a night's sleep.
- Being short-tempered, tearful or numb.
- Feeling trapped, resentful or hopeless, then guilty for feeling it.

- Losing interest in things you used to enjoy, and seeing less of friends.
- Getting ill more often, or putting off your own health appointments.
- Back, neck or shoulder pain from lifting and helping.
- Drinking more, eating badly or relying on sleeping tablets.
- Making small mistakes, such as forgetting a dose or an appointment.

If several of these sound familiar, it is a signal to get more help now, not a sign that you have failed.

Some signs need help today. If you feel you cannot go on, have thoughts of harming yourself, or fear you might lose control with the person you care for, please talk to someone straight away. Samaritans answer 24 hours a day on 116 123. You can also call NHS 111, your GP, or the council's adult social care team. Asking for help in that moment protects you both.

Protecting your sleep

Broken nights are one of the most common reasons caring becomes unsustainable. Try to find out what is waking the person you care for, because many causes can be eased:

- **Pain or discomfort:** ask the GP to review pain relief, and whether the timing of medicines could change.
- **Needing the toilet:** ask for a continence assessment, a commode by the bed or better night-time products.
- **Confusion or restlessness:** with dementia, daytime activity, daylight and a calm evening routine can help.
- **Worry about falls:** a bed sensor or motion-sensor lights can alert you only when needed, so you are not listening all night.

If nights remain broken, consider night care for one or two nights a week. A **sleep-in** carer sleeps in the home and helps if needed; a **waking night** carer stays awake and is on hand all night. Our page on night care explains the difference. Taking turns with other family members, and resting when the person naps, also helps.

Taking breaks, big and small

Breaks work best when they are planned and regular, rather than saved for an emergency.

- **Every day:** a short walk, a phone call with a friend, twenty minutes for yourself.
- **Every week:** a few hours away, with a sitting service, a day centre or a visiting carer covering.
- **Every year:** a proper holiday or a few nights away, with replacement care at home or a short stay elsewhere.

A council carer's assessment can lead to funded breaks, and the person you care for may be able to use their own budget or benefits towards respite. Our guides to the carer's assessment and respite options explain how.

Many carers feel guilty about taking time off. It may help to see breaks as part of the care plan: they are what allows you to keep caring well for longer.

Emotional support and someone to talk to

You do not have to be in crisis to deserve support.

- **Carers UK helpline:** 0808 808 7777, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, for advice on rights, money and support. Carers UK also runs an online forum where carers support each other.
- **Samaritans:** 116 123, free, any time, for anyone who needs to talk.
- **NHS Talking Therapies:** if you are registered with a GP, you can refer yourself for help with low mood, worry, depression and anxiety without seeing your doctor first.
- **Condition-specific charities:** organisations such as Alzheimer's Society, Parkinson's UK and the Stroke Association run helplines and local groups for families.

Grief can start long before a death, as the person you knew changes. Counselling can help with this kind of loss too.

Carers' groups and local carers' centres

Most areas have a carers' centre offering free information, groups, training and wellbeing support. Carers UK's website has a directory of local organisations.

As an example, Carers Oxfordshire offers free help to adult unpaid carers of someone who lives in Oxfordshire, including support with carer's assessments, carers' groups, contingency planning, a Carer's ID card and wellbeing offers

such as leisure discounts and subsidised counselling. You can contact them on 01235 424715.

Groups are not for everyone, but many carers say meeting people who understand, without needing to explain, is the most helpful thing of all. Dementia cafés and condition-specific groups are often a gentle first step.

Tell your GP you are a carer

Ask your GP practice to record that you are a carer. Many practices keep a carers' register, and what they offer varies, but it can mean:

- An invitation for a free NHS flu vaccine. Main carers of an older or disabled person, and people receiving Carer's Allowance, are eligible.
- More flexible appointment times when it is hard to get away.
- Health checks and advice on looking after yourself.
- Signposting to local carers' support.

How to do it: phone or call in at reception and say, "Please can you record on my notes that I am an unpaid carer for [name]?" Some practices have a short carer registration form. With the agreement of the person you care for, ask their practice to record you as their carer too, so you can be kept informed.

Look after your body as well as your mind. If you help someone move, ask for moving and handling training and an occupational therapy assessment for equipment, which can protect your back. Try to eat regular meals, stay active and keep your own appointments.

Have a plan for if you are ill

Worry about "what if something happens to me?" is common. A written emergency plan eases it. Copy this template, fill it in, and keep a copy by the phone, one in your wallet or bag saying "I am a carer, please see my emergency plan", and one with each person named.

Carer's emergency plan: template

About me (the carer)

- My name, phone number and address:
- I care for:

- If I am taken ill or have an accident, please contact:

The person I care for

- Full name, date of birth and address:
- NHS number:
- GP practice and phone number:
- Conditions and diagnoses:
- Allergies:
- Medicines: where the list is kept, and who the pharmacy is:
- Any ReSPECT form, advance decision or Lasting Power of Attorney, and where it is kept:

Who can step in

- First contact (name, relationship, phone):
- Second contact:
- Paid carers or care provider, and their out-of-hours number:

Daily care

- Morning routine:
- Meals, drinks and any special diet:
- Help needed with washing, dressing, the toilet or moving:
- Evening and night routine:
- How they communicate, and what to watch for if they are unwell:
- What helps them feel calm and settled:

The home

- Who has keys, and the key safe location (share the code separately):
- Pets and who will look after them:
- Equipment, such as a hoist or alarm, and who services it:

Many carers' centres help you write a plan like this. Some, such as Carers Oxfordshire, help with contingency planning and offer a Carer's ID card.

Check your money too

Money worries add to stress. Check whether you could claim Carer's Allowance, which is £86.45 a week in 2026/27 if you care for at least 35 hours a week, or Carer's Credit, which protects your National Insurance record if you care for at least 20 hours a week. Our guide to Carer's Allowance explains the rules.

Helplines to save in your phone

- **Samaritans:** 116 123, free, 24 hours a day, every day.
- **Carers UK:** 0808 808 7777, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm.
- **Age UK Advice Line:** 0800 678 1602.
- **Independent Age:** 0800 319 6789, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm.
- **NHS 111:** for urgent health advice, day or night.
- **Carers Oxfordshire:** 01235 424715, for adult carers of someone living in Oxfordshire.

A weekly self-care check

Once a week, ask yourself:

- Have I slept properly on at least some nights?
- Have I had at least a few hours for myself?
- Have I spoken to someone about how I feel?
- Have I eaten properly and got outside?
- Is there one task I could hand to someone else next week?

If the answer to most of these is no, it is time to ask for more help.

What to do next

1. Ask for a carer's assessment from the council where the person you care for lives. Our carer's assessment guide includes an example email you can send.
2. Ask your GP practice to record you as a carer, and book any check-ups you have put off.
3. Contact your local carers' centre and ask about groups and wellbeing support.
4. Plan one break in the next month, even a short one, and put it in the diary.
5. Write an emergency plan and share it.

6. Save the Carers UK (0808 808 7777) and Samaritans (116 123) numbers in your phone.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare is a CQC-registered home care provider, rated Good, and has supported people at home since 2008. Across Oxfordshire we provide home care visits from one hour, sleep-ins and waking nights, and 24-hour care with carers working in shifts anywhere in England, and we provide fully managed live-in care anywhere in England, so you can rest, sleep or go away knowing someone is there. Care can be funded privately, by the council (including direct payments) or by NHS Continuing Healthcare. Call 01865 715780 to arrange a free initial assessment.

Common questions

Is it normal to feel resentful or guilty as a carer?
Yes. Love, frustration, sadness, guilt and resentment often sit side by side, especially when caring has changed a relationship or taken over your life. Having these feelings does not make you a bad carer. They are often a sign that you need more rest or more help. Talking to other carers, a counsellor or the Carers UK helpline can make them easier to carry.

How can I get a break if the person I care for will not accept anyone else?
Start small and build trust. Introduce a new carer while you are still at home, for an hour or two, doing something they enjoy together. Present it as help for you rather than a judgement on them. A consistent carer who comes regularly is usually accepted more easily than a different face each time. If they lack capacity to make this decision, it can be made in their best interests.

Can I get a free flu vaccine as a carer?
Yes, if you are the main carer for an older or disabled person, or you receive Carer's Allowance, you can have a free NHS flu vaccine. Tell your GP practice or a pharmacy offering NHS flu vaccines that you are a carer. Being recorded as a carer on your GP record also means your practice is more likely to invite you.

What is a carer's ID card?

It is a card from a local carers' organisation that shows you are an unpaid carer. Depending on the scheme, it can help when you speak to hospital staff, pharmacies or other services, and may give access to local offers. In Oxfordshire, Carers Oxfordshire offers a Carer ID card to unpaid carers aged 13 or over who support someone living in the county. Ask your own local carers' centre what is available.

Who can I talk to at night if I am struggling?

Samaritans answer calls 24 hours a day, every day, free on 116 123. If you are worried about your safety or someone else's, call NHS 111 or, in an emergency, 999. During the day, the Carers UK helpline is open Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, on 0808 808 7777, and your GP can talk with you about low mood, anxiety or exhaustion.

Sources and further information

- Carers UK: Emotional support
- NHS: Carers' breaks and respite care
- NHS: Flu vaccine
- NHS: NHS Talking Therapies for anxiety and depression
- Carers Oxfordshire
- NHS: Carer's assessments

Read next

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Carer's assessment: your rights and how to prepare

A carer's assessment is free and is your legal right under the Care Act 2014. What it covers, how to ask your council for one, how to prepare, and the support that may follow, from funded breaks and replacement care to a carer's direct payment.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Respite care options: how to plan a break from caring

Respite care gives family carers a break while the person they look after stays safe and well cared for. Compare live-in respite, sitting services, night care, day centres and short care home stays, how each can be funded, and how to plan a break that goes smoothly.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Working while caring: your rights at work and your money

Juggling a job with caring for someone? Your rights at work in plain English: a week of unpaid carer's leave from day one, the right to request flexible working, emergency time off for dependants, how to talk to your employer, and how earnings affect Carer's Allowance.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

This page online: **www.dayandnightcare.co.uk/guides/looking-after-yourself-as-a-carer/**

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Working while caring: your rights at work and your money

Last updated 30 October 2026; sources last checked 30 October 2026.

IN BRIEF

In England, employees have a day-one right to up to one week of unpaid carer's leave a year, the right to ask for flexible working, and the right to reasonable time off in an emergency involving someone who depends on them. You can also earn up to £204 a week after deductions and still get Carer's Allowance of £86.45 a week, if you care for at least 35 hours a week.



IN THIS GUIDE

1. Your rights at work as a carer
2. Carer's leave: one week a year
3. Flexible working: ask from day one
4. Time off for dependants in an emergency
5. Protection from discrimination
6. How to talk to your employer
7. Carer's Allowance and earnings
8. When work and caring no longer fit
9. Free helplines
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Your rights at work as a carer

If you are an employee in England, three legal rights help you combine work with caring. All three apply from your first day in a job:

- **Carer's leave:** up to one week of unpaid leave a year to give or arrange care.

- **Flexible working:** the right to ask for a change to your hours, times or place of work.
- **Time off for dependants:** reasonable unpaid time off to deal with an emergency.

You are also protected from being treated badly or dismissed because you use these rights. Workers who are not employees, such as some agency staff and the self-employed, may not have all of them, so check your status with Acas if you are unsure.

Carer's leave: one week a year

The Carer's Leave Act 2023 gives employees up to one week of unpaid carer's leave in every 12 months.

- **How much:** one week is your usual working week. If you work three days a week, you get three days.
- **How to take it:** as a whole week, single days or half days, spread across the year.
- **Who it is for:** a dependant with a long-term care need. That can be a partner, child, parent, someone who lives with you, or anyone who relies on you for care. A long-term care need means an illness or injury likely to need care for more than three months, a disability, or care needs because of old age.
- **Notice:** at least three days for a half day or a day, or twice the length of the leave if longer. It does not need to be in writing, and no evidence is required.
- **Can your employer say no?** They cannot refuse, but they can postpone it if your absence would cause serious disruption. They must tell you in writing within seven days and give you a new date within one month.

Typical uses include going to a hospital appointment, settling in new care, covering a gap between carers or sorting out a care home visit. Some employers pay carer's leave or offer more than the legal minimum.

Example carer's leave request

A short email or message is enough. For example:

> Dear [manager's name],

> I would like to take carer's leave under the Carer's Leave Regulations 2024 on [date or dates], [a full day / the morning only]. I need the time to [arrange care for / go to a hospital appointment with] a dependant who has a long-term care need.
>
> I am giving notice on [today's date], which meets the notice period. Please let me know if you have any questions.
>
> Thank you, [Your name]

You do not have to say who the person is or give medical details, and you do not need to provide evidence.

Flexible working: ask from day one

Every employee can make a statutory request for flexible working from their first day. Options include part-time hours, compressed hours, flexitime, working from home, staggered start times, job sharing and annualised hours.

- You can make two requests in any 12 months.
- Put the request in writing, with the date, a statement that it is a statutory request, the change you want and when, and the date of any previous request.
- Your employer must discuss it with you before refusing, and must give a decision within two months, unless you both agree to longer.
- They can refuse only for one of the business reasons set out in law, such as extra costs, effects on customer demand or quality, or being unable to reorganise work.

The Employment Rights Act 2025 will add a requirement that any refusal must be reasonable. The government plans to bring this in from October 2027, so it is not yet in force.

Tip: make it easy to say yes. Explain how the work will still get done, and offer a trial period.

Example flexible working request

> **Subject:** Statutory request for flexible working

> Dear [manager's name],
>
> Date: [date]
>
> This is a statutory request for flexible working under the Employment Rights Act 1996.
>
> I would like to change my working pattern from [current pattern, for example Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm] to [new pattern, for example Monday to Thursday, 8am to 6pm, working from home on Wednesdays], starting from [date].
>
> I am asking because I care for [my father], who needs help at [times]. I believe the change can work for the team because [for example: my tasks can be completed in the new hours, I will be available on the phone and online, and colleague cover is not needed]. I would be happy to try it for [three months] and review it together.
>
> [I have not made a previous request.] / [My previous request was made on (date).]
>
> I would welcome the chance to discuss this with you.
>
> Yours sincerely, [Your name]

Time off for dependants in an emergency

You have the right to a reasonable amount of time off to deal with an unexpected emergency involving a dependant, such as a fall, a sudden illness, or a carer not turning up. This is unpaid unless your employer chooses to pay. Tell your employer as soon as you can, and how long you expect to be away. It is for dealing with the emergency and making other arrangements, not for ongoing care. You cannot be dismissed or treated unfairly for taking it.

Protection from discrimination

The Equality Act 2010 protects you from direct discrimination and harassment at work because of your association with a disabled person, such as a parent with dementia or a partner with a disability. Your employer does not have to make

"reasonable adjustments" for you as a carer, since that duty applies to disabled employees, but many will agree to sensible changes if asked.

How to talk to your employer

Many carers keep caring hidden at work until something gives. A planned conversation usually goes better than an emergency one.

- Read your employer's policies first: carers' leave, compassionate leave, flexible working, any employee assistance programme.
- Decide how much you want to share. You do not need to give medical details.
- Explain what is changing, what you need, and what you are proposing.
- Ask whether there is a carers' network or a named contact in HR.
- Follow up any agreement in writing.

If things become difficult, Acas offers free, impartial advice on employment rights on 0300 123 1100, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

Carer's Allowance and earnings

Carer's Allowance is £86.45 a week in 2026/27. To get it, you must care for at least 35 hours a week for someone who receives a qualifying disability benefit, such as Attendance Allowance, the daily living part of Personal Independence Payment, or the middle or highest care rate of Disability Living Allowance.

You can work, but your earnings must be £204 a week or less after:

- Income Tax and National Insurance.
- Half of your pension contributions.
- Some care costs: up to half of your net earnings paid to someone (not a close relative) to look after the person you care for while you work.

The limit is strict. Earning even slightly over it means no Carer's Allowance for that week, or for that month if you are paid monthly. If your hours vary, earnings may be averaged, so speak to the Carer's Allowance Unit. Report changes straight away, because overpayments must usually be paid back.

In the Autumn Budget on 28 October 2026, the government announced it will replace this "cliff edge" with a taper, so Carer's Allowance is reduced by £1 for each £1 earned over the limit. This is not expected to start until 2030/31.

Other points to know:

- If you care for at least 20 hours a week but cannot get Carer's Allowance, Carer's Credit can protect your National Insurance record and future State Pension.
- If your State Pension is £86.45 a week or more, Carer's Allowance will not be paid, but having an "underlying entitlement" can still increase Pension Credit and other means-tested help.
- Universal Credit may include an extra amount for carers.

How to claim Carer's Allowance

1. Claim online through GOV.UK, or ask the Carer's Allowance Unit for a paper form on 0800 731 0297 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).
2. Have ready: your National Insurance number (and your partner's, if you have one), your bank details, your employer's details and latest payslip, your P45 if you have recently left work, and details of pension contributions or care costs you pay while at work.
3. You will also need the date of birth, address and National Insurance number of the person you care for.
4. Claims can be backdated by up to three months, so claim as soon as you think you qualify.
5. Report any change in earnings or caring straight away.

Our guide to Carer's Allowance explains the rules in more detail.

When work and caring no longer fit

Before giving up work, pause and explore the options, because leaving can affect your income, pension and wellbeing for years.

- Ask about reduced hours, unpaid leave or a career break.
- Ask the council for a carer's assessment. The law requires it to consider whether you work or want to work.
- Look at paid care to cover your working hours, such as morning and evening visits or a live-in carer.
- Get benefits advice before you resign. The Carers UK helpline is 0808 808 7777.

Free helplines

- **Acas:** 0300 123 1100, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, for employment rights.
- **Carers UK:** 0808 808 7777, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm, for carers' rights and benefits.
- **Carer's Allowance Unit:** 0800 731 0297, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm.

What to do next

1. Check your contract and staff handbook for carers' leave and flexible working policies.
2. Make a written flexible working request if a change would help, using the example above.
3. Ask for a carer's assessment from the council where the person you care for lives.
4. Check whether you can claim Carer's Allowance or Carer's Credit.
5. Write an emergency plan, so a crisis at home does not become a crisis at work too.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare is a CQC-registered home care provider, rated Good, supporting families since 2008. Across Oxfordshire we provide home care visits from one hour, sleep-ins and waking nights, and 24-hour care with carers working in shifts anywhere in England, and we provide fully managed live-in care anywhere in England from £1,550 a week, so that someone is with your relative while you are at work. Call 01865 715780 for a free initial assessment and a written quote.

Common questions

Is carer's leave paid?

Not by law. The legal right is to up to one week of unpaid carer's leave in any 12 months. Some employers choose to pay for it, or offer extra paid carer's leave, so check your contract, staff handbook or carers' policy. While you are on carer's leave your other employment rights, such as holiday and the right to return to your job, are protected.

Can my employer refuse my flexible working request?

Yes, but only for a genuine business reason from the list set out in law, such as extra costs or an inability to reorganise work among other staff. Your employer must discuss the request with you before refusing it and must give you a decision within two months, unless you agree to extend that. Planned changes will require any refusal to be reasonable, expected from October 2027.

Do I need to prove I am a carer to take carer's leave?

No. You do not have to provide evidence of the person's care needs, and the request does not have to be in writing. You do need to give notice: at least three days for a half day or a single day, or twice the length of the leave for longer periods. Your employer cannot refuse, but may postpone it for up to a month if your absence would seriously disrupt the business.

Can I work full time and still get Carer's Allowance?

Only if your earnings are low enough and you still care for at least 35 hours a week. The earnings limit is £204 a week after tax, National Insurance and half of your pension contributions, and some care costs can also be deducted. Going over by even a small amount means no Carer's Allowance for that week, or that month if you are paid monthly.

What counts as an emergency for time off for dependants?

It covers unexpected situations, such as the person you care for falling ill or having an accident, care arrangements breaking down at short notice, or dealing with an incident. It is meant for the time needed to deal with the emergency and make other arrangements. Planned events, such as a hospital appointment you knew about in advance, are not covered; carer's leave or annual leave may suit those better.

Sources and further information

- GOV.UK: Carer's leave
- GOV.UK: Flexible working, applying
- GOV.UK: Time off for family and dependants
- Acas: Carer's leave
- GOV.UK: Carer's Allowance eligibility

- Carers UK: Carer's Allowance and the earnings limit
- GOV.UK: How to claim Carer's Allowance
- Which?: End to Carer's Allowance cliff edge announced in Autumn Budget 2026

Read next

PAYING FOR CARE AND REDUCING THE COST

Carer's Allowance: who can claim and how it affects other benefits

Carer's Allowance pays £86.45 a week in 2026/27 to people who care for someone at least 35 hours a week and earn £204 a week or less. Who qualifies, the effect on the cared-for person's benefits, Carer's Credit, underlying entitlement and how to claim step by step.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Carer's assessment: your rights and how to prepare

A carer's assessment is free and is your legal right under the Care Act 2014. What it covers, how to ask your council for one, how to prepare, and the support that may follow, from funded breaks and replacement care to a carer's direct payment.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Caring from a distance: staying close when you live far away

Supporting a parent or relative who lives miles away? How to stay informed, set up Lasting Power of Attorney and GP access, use technology sensibly, work with a care provider, build a local network, plan for emergencies and make every visit count.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

This page online: **www.dayandnightcare.co.uk/guides/working-while-caring/**

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Respite care options: how to plan a break from caring

Last updated 30 October 2026; sources last checked 30 October 2026.

IN BRIEF

Respite care means someone else takes over the caring for a few hours, a night or a few weeks so that you can rest. The main options are a sitting service, home care visits, a day centre, night care, a live-in carer at home or a short stay in a care home. The council may help pay after a carer's assessment and a needs assessment, and the person's own budget or benefits can also be used.



IN THIS GUIDE

1. The main types of respite care
2. How respite care can be paid for
3. How to plan a break: a checklist
4. Emergency respite
5. Free helplines
6. Common worries
7. What to do next
8. How we can help
9. Common questions
10. Sources and further information

The main types of respite care

There is no single right kind of break. The best choice depends on the person’s needs, what they enjoy and how long you need.

Type of respite	Best for	Things to know
Sitting service	A few hours of company while you go out	Often volunteers; may not include personal care
Home care visits	Help with routines at set times	Personal care, meals and medicines support
Day centre	Regular daytime breaks, social contact	Activities and meals; transport may cost extra
Night care	Unbroken sleep for you	A sleep-in or a waking night carer
Live-in respite	Longer breaks, staying at home	Carer needs a bedroom and proper breaks
Care home stay	Higher needs or a change of scene	Book early; a new place can unsettle some people

Sitting services

A trained volunteer or paid sitter keeps the person company for a few hours, so you can shop, see friends or rest. Charity sitting services are often free or low-cost. Check what the sitter can and cannot do, as many do not help with personal care.

Home care visits

Paid carers visit at agreed times to help with washing, dressing, meals and medicines. Regular visits can cover the parts of the day that are hardest for you, or give you a fixed afternoon off each week.

Day centres

Day centres offer company, activities and a meal, sometimes with specialist support for people living with dementia. Transport is often available, though there may be a charge.

Night care

If broken nights are wearing you down, night care can make the biggest difference. A **sleep-in** carer sleeps in the home and gets up if needed. A **waking night** carer stays awake all night, which suits people who need help several times a night. See

our page on night care.

Live-in respite

A live-in carer moves into the home for a few days or weeks and takes over the day-to-day care. The person keeps their own bed, routines, food, pets and neighbours, which can be especially reassuring for someone living with dementia. It also suits couples who want to stay together. The carer needs their own bedroom and agreed breaks. Our page on live-in respite care explains how it works.

Respite in a care home

Many care homes offer short stays, and some take bookings in advance. A nursing home may be the right choice if the person needs nursing care. Some people enjoy the change and the company. Others, particularly people with dementia, can find a new place confusing, so a short trial stay first can help.

Other options

Family or friends may move in for a while or host the person. Shared Lives schemes, which councils can tell you about, offer short breaks with approved carers in their own homes. Some charities offer holidays with care built in.

How respite care can be paid for

Through the council

The council will only fund respite where it has assessed a need for it. You will usually need a carer's assessment for yourself and a needs assessment for the person you care for. If support is agreed:

- Replacement care is treated as a service to the person you care for. Any charge is based on their finances, not yours, and they need to agree to it.
- For a short care home stay of up to eight weeks, the council can choose to charge using its care-at-home rules rather than care home rules.
- The person's direct payments can pay for respite at home, or for short care home stays of up to four consecutive weeks in a year.
- You can ask for a carer's direct payment to arrange replacement care yourself, as long as the person you care for is happy with it.

Our guide to direct payments and personal budgets explains more.

Getting council-funded respite: step by step

1. **Ask for two assessments.** Contact adult social care at the council where the person you care for lives. Ask for a carer's assessment for you and a needs assessment for them. Our carer's assessment guide has an example email.
2. **Explain the break you need.** Be specific, for example "one night's sleep a week" or "two weeks in the summer so I can have surgery".
3. **Expect a financial assessment** for the person you care for, if the council will arrange or pay for their replacement care.
4. **Choose how it is arranged.** The council can arrange it, or the person can take a direct payment and choose a provider themselves.
5. **Get it in writing.** The support plan should say what respite is agreed, how often, and what it costs.
6. **Book early,** especially for school holidays and Christmas, and ask for a review if it is not working.

Through the NHS

If the person you care for is eligible for NHS Continuing Healthcare, the NHS is responsible for meeting their assessed needs, so talk to the Continuing Healthcare team about respite as part of their package. See our guide to NHS Continuing Healthcare.

Their own money and benefits

Attendance Allowance and Personal Independence Payment are not means-tested and can be used towards respite. Charities such as Carers Trust offer some grants, and the Turn2us website can search for others.

How to plan a break: a checklist

- **Book early:** popular dates, such as school holidays and Christmas, fill quickly.
- **Start with a trial:** a short break first builds confidence on both sides.
- **Write a one-page profile:** routines, likes and dislikes, how the person communicates, what calms them, and what upsets them.
- **Medicines:** a current list, enough supply for the whole break, and clear instructions agreed with the provider.
- **Health details:** GP, conditions, allergies, and any ReSPECT form or other emergency care plan.

- **Equipment:** check hoists, commodes and continence products are ready.
- **Access and contacts:** keys or key safe code, neighbours, and who to call first.
- **A handover:** arrange for the carer to meet you both beforehand if possible.
- **Staying in touch:** agree how often you will hear how things are going, and whether you want to be contacted at all.
- **Afterwards:** talk about what went well, and book the next one.

One-page profile: template

Fill this in together and leave it where the carer will see it. It helps anyone new give care the way the person likes it.

- **What people like and admire about me:**
- **What is important to me:** for example, family photos by my bed, my morning paper, my cat.
- **How to support me well:**
- **My day:** usual time I get up, meals and snacks, favourite drinks, when I like to rest, bedtime.
- **Personal care:** how I like to wash and dress, and what I can do myself.
- **Moving around:** walking aids, hoist or equipment, and how many people are needed.
- **Eating and drinking:** diet, allergies, texture of food, help needed.
- **Medicines:** where they are kept, when they are taken, who supplies them.
- **Communication:** hearing, sight, glasses or hearing aids, how I show I am in pain or upset.
- **What calms me:** music, a walk, a familiar programme.
- **What upsets me:** things to avoid.
- **Health contacts:** GP, district nurse, pharmacy, and any ReSPECT form.
- **Family contacts:** who to call, and when.

Emergency respite

If you are suddenly unable to care, for example because you are taken ill, call the council's adult social care team, or its emergency duty team out of hours. In Oxfordshire, the social and health care team is on 01865 519800 in office hours and the emergency duty team on 0800 833 408. If someone is in immediate danger, call 999.

A written emergency plan, shared with family and neighbours, makes it much easier for someone to step in. Our guide to an emergency plan for carers includes a template to copy. Some local carers' centres run emergency schemes, so ask yours.

Free helplines

- **Carers UK:** 0808 808 7777, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm.
- **Age UK Advice Line:** 0800 678 1602.
- **Independent Age:** 0800 319 6789, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm.
- **Carer's Allowance Unit:** 0800 731 0297, Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm, to report a long break in caring.

Common worries

"They will be upset with me." It is natural for the person to feel uncertain at first. Talking about it positively, and starting small, usually helps.

"Nobody else can do it like I do." Probably not exactly. But a good carer, given a clear handover, can keep things safe and familiar, and you will come back better able to carry on.

What to do next

1. Ask for a carer's assessment, and a needs assessment for the person you care for.
2. Talk together about which type of break might suit them.
3. Write a one-page profile and an emergency plan.
4. Book a short trial break.
5. Put regular breaks in the diary, not just one a year.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare has supported people at home since 2008 and is a CQC-registered provider rated Good. We provide fully managed live-in care anywhere in England, which can be arranged as respite, and home care visits from one hour, sleep-ins and waking nights across Oxfordshire, and 24-hour care with carers

working in shifts anywhere in England. Care can be funded privately, by the council (including direct payments) or by NHS Continuing Healthcare. Call 01865 715780 for a free initial assessment.

Common questions

How long can respite care last?

As long or as short as you need. Respite can be a regular afternoon each week, one night a fortnight, a long weekend or several weeks while you have an operation or a holiday. Short, regular breaks often do more for a carer's wellbeing than one long break a year. Live-in respite and care home stays usually suit longer breaks, while sitting services and visits suit shorter ones.

Does the council pay for respite care?

It may. The council will only fund respite where it has assessed a need for it, usually through your carer's assessment and a needs assessment of the person you care for. Replacement care given to them is charged to them under their own financial assessment, not to you. If the council arranges a short care home stay of up to eight weeks, it can choose to charge using its care-at-home rules.

Can direct payments be used for respite in a care home?

Yes, within limits. Direct payments can pay for short stays in a care home of up to four consecutive weeks in any 12-month period. Stays that are more than four weeks apart are not added together, so regular short breaks spread through the year are usually possible. Direct payments can also pay for respite at home, such as visiting carers or a live-in carer, from a provider you choose.

Will Carer's Allowance stop while the person is in respite care?

Not straight away. You can usually keep getting Carer's Allowance during a short break. You must tell the Department for Work and Pensions if you or the person you care for will be in hospital, a nursing home or respite care for more than 12 weeks, or if you stop caring for more than 28 days for any other reason. The person you care for must still receive their qualifying disability benefit.

Is live-in respite better than a care home stay?

It depends on the person. Live-in respite lets them stay in their own home, with their routines, pets and belongings, which many people, especially those living with dementia, find less unsettling. A care home stay can suit someone who needs two people for every transfer around the clock, wants company, or whose home cannot accommodate a carer's bedroom. Think about what has helped them feel settled before.

Sources and further information

- NHS: Carers' breaks and respite care
- GOV.UK: Care and support statutory guidance
- NHS: Carer's assessments
- GOV.UK: Carer's Allowance, report a change in circumstances
- legislation.gov.uk: Care Act 2014, section 10
- Oxfordshire County Council: Contact adult social and health care

Read next

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Carer's assessment: your rights and how to prepare

A carer's assessment is free and is your legal right under the Care Act 2014. What it covers, how to ask your council for one, how to prepare, and the support that may follow, from funded breaks and replacement care to a carer's direct payment.

Read the guide →

CHOOSING LIVE-IN CARE

Types of care at home: live-in, visiting, night and respite care

The types of care at home in England explained simply: live-in care, visiting home care, sitting and companionship, waking nights and sleep-ins, 24-hour care, respite, reablement, Discharge to Assess and palliative care, who each suits and how to combine them.

Read the guide →

PAYING FOR CARE AND REDUCING THE COST

Direct payments and personal budgets: a guide for families

How personal budgets and direct payments work in England: who can get them, setting one up, using them with a care agency or for live-in care, employing a carer, paying family, adding your own money, record-keeping, reviews and audits, with wording you can use.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

This page online: **www.dayandnightcare.co.uk/guides/respite-options/**

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Caring from a distance: staying close when you live far away

Last updated 30 October 2026; sources last checked 30 October 2026.

IN BRIEF

You can play a big part in someone's care without living nearby. What matters most is good information, the right legal permissions, a local network of people who can help, and a clear emergency plan. Set up a Lasting Power of Attorney early, ask the GP practice about family and carer access, and agree with any care provider exactly how they will keep you informed.



IN THIS GUIDE

1. Start with what they want
2. Get the permissions in place
3. Ask for assessments
4. Build a local network
5. Use technology wisely
6. Working with a care provider from afar
7. Make an emergency plan
8. Make every visit count
9. Look after yourself too
10. Useful helplines
11. What to do next
12. How we can help
13. Common questions
14. Sources and further information

Start with what they want

Before arranging anything, talk with your relative about how they feel things are going. What is working? What worries them? What would they like help with, and what would they rather keep doing themselves? Who already helps? Their wishes

should shape everything that follows, and agreeing together what information can be shared with you avoids awkward moments later.

Get the permissions in place

When you live far away, much of your caring happens by phone and email. Organisations will only talk to you if they are allowed to.

- **Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA):** there are two types, one for property and financial affairs and one for health and welfare. An LPA can only be made while the person has mental capacity, so do not leave it too late. The steps are below, and our Lasting Power of Attorney guide explains more.
- **GP practice:** ask the person to tell the practice that you may be contacted and can be given information. You can also apply for family and carer access, which can let you order repeat prescriptions or book appointments online. To use it through the NHS App you need to be registered at the same practice. If you are not, the practice can give you separate login details.
- **Energy and water suppliers:** joining the Priority Services Register is free. It lets your relative nominate you to receive bills and letters, and gives them a password scheme for genuine callers and priority help in a power cut.
- **Banks and benefits:** ask the bank about a third-party mandate while your relative can still agree to it. If someone can no longer manage their benefits, the Department for Work and Pensions can appoint a person to act for them.

Making a Lasting Power of Attorney: step by step

1. **Agree who the attorneys will be.** Choose people your relative trusts, aged 18 or over. Talk about their wishes.
2. **Fill in the forms.** The easiest way is the GOV.UK online service, which creates the forms for you. Your relative can also use paper forms.
3. **Find a certificate provider.** This is someone aged 18 or over who confirms your relative understands the LPA and is making it by choice, such as a long-standing friend or a professional like a GP or solicitor.
4. **Print and sign.** Everyone signs the same original document: your relative, the certificate provider and the attorneys, with witnesses aged 18 or over where required. An attorney cannot witness your relative's signature. Copies and digital signatures are not accepted.

5. **Register it** with the Office of the Public Guardian. It costs £92 for each LPA, with reductions for people earning under £12,000 and possible exemptions for those on certain benefits. It takes about 8 to 10 weeks if there are no mistakes.
6. **Use it.** Once registered, give copies to the bank, GP and others as needed.

The Office of the Public Guardian helpline is 0300 456 0300 (Monday, Tuesday, Thursday and Friday 9am to 5pm, Wednesday 10am to 5pm).

Getting family and carer access at the GP practice: step by step

1. Ask your relative whether they are happy for you to help with their GP services online.
2. Contact their GP practice and ask for "family and carer access" (also called proxy access).
3. Fill in the practice's form. You may both need to show photo ID.
4. The practice decides what you can do, such as ordering repeat prescriptions, booking appointments or seeing parts of the record.
5. If you are registered at the same practice, you can use it in the NHS App. If not, the practice will give you separate login details.

Ask for assessments

The council where your relative lives is responsible for both their needs assessment and your carer's assessment, wherever you live. A carer's assessment should recognise the time and worry involved in caring from afar: the calls, the travel, the organising and the sleepless nights.

Build a local network

The single most useful thing a distant carer can have is a few people nearby.

- A neighbour or friend who can pop in, hold a spare key and call you if something seems wrong.
- A key safe by the door, so carers or paramedics can get in. Keep the code to a small, trusted group.
- Local contacts: the GP surgery, pharmacy, the council's adult social care team, the local Age UK and the local carers' centre.
- Faith groups, clubs or day centres the person already knows.

Write everyone's details on one sheet and keep copies at your home and theirs.

Use technology wisely

Technology can fill some of the gaps between visits, as long as your relative agrees and it solves a real problem.

- **A personal alarm or fall detector** linked to a 24-hour response centre, with you and a local contact as responders.
- **Telecare sensors** that alert someone if, for example, the front door opens at night or the home gets too cold.
- **Video calls** on a simple tablet, set up so they can answer easily.
- **A shared online calendar** for appointments, visits and deliveries.

Landlines are moving from analogue to digital, with most homes expected to switch by January 2027. If your relative has an alarm that uses the phone line, tell their phone provider and check the alarm will still work. Our guide to technology and telecare covers this in detail.

Working with a care provider from afar

If your relative has paid care, the relationship with the provider becomes your eyes and ears. When you choose one, ask:

- Who is my named contact, and how quickly will they reply?
- How and how often will you update me?
- Can I see the daily care notes, and how?
- What happens if a carer is ill or delayed?
- What is the out-of-hours number?
- How will you tell me about falls, illness or changes in mood?
- When will the care plan be reviewed, and can I take part?

Always check the provider is registered with the CQC and read its latest inspection report. Our guide to choosing a care provider has a fuller checklist.

For families who live far away, live-in care can bring particular peace of mind, because a regular carer lives in the home, is close by day and night, and can keep you informed. With a fully managed service, the provider also arranges cover for the

carer's breaks. If your relative needs nursing care around the clock, a nursing home may suit better, and it is worth comparing both. Our page on live-in care versus a care home sets out the differences.

Make an emergency plan

Agree a plan before you need it, so the first call in a crisis is not a scramble. Fill in this "grab sheet" with your relative, keep one copy in their home where paramedics can find it, for example near the phone or on the fridge, and keep one yourself.

Emergency grab sheet: template

- **Name, date of birth and address:**
- **NHS number:**
- **GP practice and phone:**
- **Pharmacy and phone:**
- **Conditions:**
- **Current medicines:** (attach the latest repeat prescription list)
- **Allergies:**
- **Mobility:** for example, walks with a frame, needs help to stand.
- **Communication:** hearing aids, glasses, memory problems, first language.
- **ReSPECT form, advance decision or LPA:** yes or no, and where kept.
- **First person to call:** name, relationship, phone.
- **Local key holder:** name and phone.
- **Care provider and out-of-hours number:**
- **Pets and who will care for them:**
- **Things that help me feel calm:**

Also agree what happens if you are ill or away yourself. If your relative has dementia, ask their local police force whether it uses the Herbert Protocol, a form that holds key information in case someone goes missing.

Make every visit count

Visits are precious, so it helps to look out for early signs of change, gently and without turning the visit into an inspection.

- Food in the fridge: is it fresh, and is it being eaten?

- Post: unopened letters, unpaid bills or a pile of junk mail that could signal scams.
- Medicines: are there unused tablets or a jumble of old boxes?
- The home: is it warm enough, tidy, and free of new hazards? Are smoke alarms working?
- The person: weight, clothes, hygiene, mobility, mood and memory.

Try to go with them to an important appointment, meet any carers, and leave time simply to enjoy being together.

Look after yourself too

Long journeys, guilt and constant worry take a toll. Use your rights at work, such as carer's leave, and share the load with siblings by giving each person a clear role, for example one handling money and another health appointments. Our guide to working while caring explains your rights.

Useful helplines

- **Carers UK:** 0808 808 7777, Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm.
- **Age UK Advice Line:** 0800 678 1602.
- **Independent Age:** 0800 319 6789, Monday to Friday, 8.30am to 5.30pm.
- **Office of the Public Guardian:** 0300 456 0300, for Lasting Powers of Attorney.
- **Samaritans:** 116 123, any time, if you need to talk.

What to do next

1. Talk with your relative about what they want and what can be shared with you.
2. Start a Lasting Power of Attorney if one is not in place.
3. Ask the GP practice about family and carer access.
4. Build a local network and fit a key safe.
5. Ask the council for a needs assessment for them and a carer's assessment for you.
6. Write and share an emergency plan.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare provides fully managed live-in care anywhere in England, from £1,550 a week, so families who live far away know someone is with their relative. Across Oxfordshire we also provide home care visits from one hour, sleep-ins and waking nights, and 24-hour care with carers working in shifts anywhere in England. We are CQC-registered, rated Good, and have supported people at home since 2008. Call 01865 715780 to arrange a free initial assessment and a written quote.

Common questions

Can I get a carer's assessment if I live in a different area?

Yes. You do not need to live with or near the person to have a carer's assessment. The responsible council is the one where the person you care for lives, not where you live, so contact their council's adult social care team. Your assessment should look at the travel, worry, phone calls and organising involved in caring from a distance, as well as any hands-on care you give during visits.

How can I order my parent's prescriptions or see their GP record?

Ask their GP practice for family and carer access, sometimes called proxy access. The practice decides what you can do, such as ordering repeat prescriptions, booking appointments or viewing parts of the record. Usually the person needs to agree. If they lack capacity, the practice can still decide to give access in their best interests. You may both need to fill in a form and show photo ID.

As next of kin, do I need a Lasting Power of Attorney?

Yes, if you may need to make decisions for them. Being next of kin gives no legal authority to manage someone's money or make decisions about their health and care. A Lasting Power of Attorney does, but it must be made while the person still has the mental capacity to do so, and registered with the Office of the Public Guardian before it can be used. Registration costs £92 for each one.

How do I know the care is good when I cannot see it?

Use several sources. Check the provider's CQC rating and latest report, agree regular updates and a named contact, and ask how you can see care records. Talk to your relative on their own, and listen to neighbours and friends. Visit at different times of day when you can. Changes such as weight loss, an untidy home or low mood are worth raising promptly with the provider.

What happens if my parent goes into hospital and I live far away?

Phone the ward, explain that you are a close relative and the main contact, and ask to be involved in discharge planning. Ask when assessments will happen and what support will be in place before discharge. If you hold a Lasting Power of Attorney for health and welfare, tell the ward. Our guide to questions to ask before hospital discharge can help you prepare.

Sources and further information

- GOV.UK: Make a lasting power of attorney
- GOV.UK: Register a lasting power of attorney
- NHS: How to get family and carer access for adults
- Ofgem: Join your supplier's Priority Services Register
- GOV.UK: Care and support statutory guidance (carers and ordinary residence)
- NHS: Carer's assessments
- GOV.UK: UK transition from analogue to digital landlines

Read next

LEGAL MATTERS AND PLANNING AHEAD

Lasting Power of Attorney: a guide for families

How Lasting Power of Attorney works in England and Wales: the two types, why to make one early, how to make and register it online or on paper, the £92 registration fee, the certificate provider, and what happens without one (deputyship and the Court of Protection).

Read the guide →

LIVING SAFELY AND WELL AT HOME

Technology and telecare: alarms, sensors and smart help at home

A plain guide to personal alarms, fall detectors, telecare sensors, video calls, medication dispensers and smart home help for older people, with typical costs, council telecare schemes, VAT relief, and what the digital phone switchover means for alarms.

Read the guide →

CHOOSING LIVE-IN CARE

How to choose a care provider: checklist and questions to ask

A practical checklist for choosing a home care or live-in care provider in England: the questions to ask about training, continuity, out-of-hours support, care plans, reviews, complaints, prices and notice, the red flags to watch for, and how to use CQC reports and reviews.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

This page online: **www.dayandnightcare.co.uk/guides/caring-from-a-distance/**

Talking to a parent about care: how to start and what to say

Last updated 30 October 2026; sources last checked 30 October 2026.

IN BRIEF

Start early, before a crisis, and start by listening: ask what matters most to your parent and what they find hard, rather than arriving with a plan. An adult who can make the decision has the right to say no, even if you think it is unwise, so the aim is a choice they own, often reached over several conversations. If they cannot make the decision, or are at risk of harm, the law gives other routes.



IN THIS GUIDE

1. Before you start: prepare
2. How to start the conversation
3. Gentle scripts you can use
4. Respecting their choices and capacity
5. When they say no
6. If you are worried about their safety
7. Things to avoid
8. What to do next
9. How we can help
10. Common questions
11. Sources and further information

Most families put this conversation off because they fear upsetting someone they love. Yet parents often feel relieved once it starts, and an early, unhurried talk gives them far more say than a rushed decision made in a hospital corridor.

Before you start: prepare

- **Be specific about what you have noticed.** "You're not coping" invites an argument; "I noticed the fridge was nearly empty twice this month" invites a conversation. Our guide to signs an older person needs more help can help you put words to your worries.
- **Know the options.** Your parent may assume "care" means a care home. Read about the types of care at home, from a few visits a week to a live-in carer, so you can describe real choices.
- **Have a rough idea of cost and help.** "How much will it cost?" is often the first question. Attendance Allowance is not means-tested, and the council's needs assessment is free. See how to reduce the cost of care.
- **Talk to brothers and sisters first.** Agree what you want to achieve, not the answer.
- **Choose the moment.** Pick a calm time, in private, with no rush: not at a family celebration, late in the evening or straight after a fall. Make sure hearing aids are in and glasses are on. For someone living with dementia, choose their best time of day.
- **Keep it small.** One or two people, not a family panel. Sometimes a trusted friend, the GP or a faith leader will be heard more easily than a son or daughter.

How to start the conversation

Begin with questions, and listen more than you speak.

- Ask what matters most: their home, the garden, the dog, church, their independence, not being "a burden".
- Ask what they find hard, and what they would change if they could.
- Link any help to what they value: "help with the heavy jobs so you can keep doing the things you enjoy".
- Offer choices, not instructions, and let them set the pace.
- Expect more than one conversation. Agree a small next step and a time to talk again.

Gentle scripts you can use

Adapt these to your own words.

Opening the subject

> "Mum, I've been thinking about how things are going at home, and I'd love to hear how it feels from your side. Is there anything that's become more of a struggle lately?"

When they say "I'm fine"

> "I'm glad, and I don't want to take over. I just noticed you've stopped going upstairs to bed. Can we think together about what would make that easier?"

Making it about you (often true)

> "I worry about you when I'm at work, and it would help me sleep at night to know someone pops in. Would you try it for a month, for me?"

About strangers in the house

> "You'd meet them first, and if you don't get on, we'd ask for someone else. You'd be in charge of how things are done."

About money

> "Let's find out what help you're entitled to before we worry about cost. There are benefits you've paid in for that aren't based on savings."

About fears of a care home

> "Nobody is talking about you leaving home. This is about what would help you stay here safely, for as long as possible."

About live-in care

> "Some people have one carer who lives here with you, so there's someone close by, day and night, and you'd keep your own routine and your own things."

Ending kindly

> "Thank you for talking about this. You don't need to decide anything today. Shall we talk again next weekend?"

Respecting their choices and capacity

Capacity is about a particular decision at a particular time. Your father may be perfectly able to decide whether to have a cleaner, yet unable to understand the risks of living alone if his dementia is advanced. You can help him decide by giving information simply, a little at a time, with pictures or written notes, at his best time of day.

If a professional assesses that your parent cannot make a specific decision, it must be made in their **best interests**, taking account of their wishes, feelings, beliefs and values, and choosing the least restrictive option. The views of family and carers should be sought where practical. A Lasting Power of Attorney for health and welfare lets someone they chose make these decisions, but only once they lack capacity. Read our guides to mental capacity and best interests and Lasting Power of Attorney. While your parent can still make one, an LPA is one of the kindest things to suggest.

When they say no

- **Fear of losing independence.** Explain that good care supports what they can do, rather than doing everything for them.
- **Fear of strangers.** Suggest meeting the carer first, asking for the same small team, or one regular live-in carer they can get to know.
- **Worry about cost.** Offer a benefits check and the free council assessment.
- **Embarrassment about personal care.** Start with shopping, cleaning or meals, and ask whether they would prefer a male or female carer.

- **Not noticing the problem.** Memory problems can make it hard for someone to see what has changed. A GP check is a gentle next step.

Practical ways forward:

1. **Start small.** A weekly cleaner or meal delivery can open the door to more.
2. **Try a trial.** "Let's try it for four weeks and then decide together."
3. **Use a break.** A short respite stay or respite live-in care can be framed as a break for the family carer.
4. **Bring in a professional.** The GP, an occupational therapist or a social worker can explain options without family history in the way.
5. **Agree a review point.** "If you have another fall, can we look at this again?"

Meanwhile, reduce risks in ways they accept: a personal alarm, a key safe, a hot meal service, regular phone calls. Keep visiting, and keep a dated note of what you see.

If you are worried about their safety

An adult with capacity can refuse a council needs assessment. Under section 11 of the Care Act 2014, the council must still assess if the person lacks capacity to refuse and an assessment would be in their best interests, or if they are experiencing, or at risk of, abuse or neglect. Neglect includes self-neglect, such as not eating, living in unsafe conditions or refusing essential care.

If you are worried, call the council's adult social care team and explain what you have seen. In Oxfordshire, call 01865 519800 (Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4pm); out of hours, the Emergency Duty Team is on 0800 833 408. If someone is in immediate danger, call 999. Our guide to safeguarding and scams explains what happens next.

Things to avoid

- Ultimatums, or talking about your parent as if they are not in the room.
- Several relatives arguing the same point at once.
- Promises you may not be able to keep, such as "you'll never have to leave this house".
- Arranging care behind their back. It can damage trust for years.
- Expecting one conversation to settle it.

If your parent has dementia, the Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline (0800 888 6678; Monday to Friday 9am to 9pm, weekends 9am to 5pm) offers specialist advice on difficult conversations. The Age UK Advice Line is on 0800 678 1602, 8am to 7pm every day.

What to do next

1. Write down what you have noticed, with dates.
2. Talk to brothers and sisters about the aim of the conversation.
3. Read up on the options and costs so you can answer questions.
4. Choose a calm moment, start with questions, and agree one small step.
5. Suggest a free council needs assessment, and a GP check if anything has changed suddenly.
6. Raise a Lasting Power of Attorney while your parent can still make one.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare has supported older people and their families at home since 2008. If it would help, we can visit for a free initial assessment, where your parent can ask their own questions and stay in charge of the decision. We offer home care visits across Oxfordshire and fully managed live-in care anywhere in England, from £1,550 a week. Call us on 01865 715780, with or without your parent beside you.

Common questions

Can I make my mum or dad accept care?

No, not if they have the mental capacity to make that decision. Adults are allowed to make choices others think are unwise, including refusing help. What you can do is keep talking, offer small steps, and make sure they know what help exists. If they lack capacity to decide, a decision can be made in their best interests. If they are at risk of abuse or neglect, including self-neglect, the council can get involved even if they refuse.

Can I ask for a care needs assessment without telling my parent?

You can contact the council to share your worries, and anyone can ask for a needs assessment. But an adult with capacity can refuse the assessment itself, and it works far better with their agreement. Tell your parent you would like to ask and explain why. The council must still assess if they lack capacity to refuse and an assessment is in their best interests, or if they are at risk of abuse or neglect.

What if my brothers and sisters disagree?

Talk with each other before you talk to your parent, so the conversation is not a family argument in front of them. Agree what you have each noticed and what you want to achieve, not the exact answer. Decide who is best placed to start the conversation. If you still disagree, a GP, social worker or independent advocate can help focus everyone on what your parent wants. Remember the decision is theirs if they have capacity.

Should the GP be involved?

Often, yes. Many older people listen to their GP more readily than to their children, and the GP can check for treatable causes of new problems, such as an infection, a medicine side effect or low mood. With your parent's agreement, you can go with them to an appointment or write to the GP beforehand. The GP will not share details with you without your parent's consent, but they can always listen to your concerns.

Sources and further information

- NHS: Mental Capacity Act
- GOV.UK: Mental Capacity Act Code of Practice
- legislation.gov.uk: Care Act 2014, section 11 (refusal of assessment)
- NHS: Getting a needs assessment
- Independent Age: Talking about getting extra help at home
- Dementia UK: Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline

Read next

CHOOSING LIVE-IN CARE

Signs an older person needs more help, and what to do about each

Practical warning signs that an older parent or relative needs more help at home, from weight loss and missed medicines to unopened post, falls and sudden confusion, with what to do about each, who to call, and a one-week checklist to print. England.

Read the guide →

LEGAL MATTERS AND PLANNING AHEAD

Mental capacity and best interests: a guide for families

How the Mental Capacity Act 2005 works in England and Wales: the five principles, how capacity is assessed, best interests decisions, deprivation of liberty after the 2026 Supreme Court ruling, the position on LPS, and how to support someone to decide.

Read the guide →

CHOOSING LIVE-IN CARE

Types of care at home: live-in, visiting, night and respite care

The types of care at home in England explained simply: live-in care, visiting home care, sitting and companionship, waking nights and sleep-ins, 24-hour care, respite, reablement, Discharge to Assess and palliative care, who each suits and how to combine them.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

This page online: **www.dayandnightcare.co.uk/guides/talking-to-a-parent-about-care/**

Emergency plan for carers: what happens if you are suddenly ill

Last updated 30 October 2026; sources last checked 30 October 2026.

IN BRIEF

If a family carer is suddenly taken ill, the people named in their emergency plan are called first; if nobody can step in, the council's adult social care team, or its emergency duty team out of hours, can arrange urgent care, which may be charged for later. A written backup plan, shared with family, the GP and any care provider, makes that handover safe and quick. Many areas, including Oxfordshire, also offer a carer's card that tells emergency services you look after someone.



IN THIS GUIDE

1. What happens if you are suddenly taken ill
2. Three layers of backup
3. Your backup plan: a template
4. Where to keep it and who needs a copy
5. Carers' emergency card schemes
6. Other things that help in an emergency
7. Who to call
8. What to do next
9. How we can help
10. Common questions
11. Sources and further information

"What happens to Mum if something happens to me?" is one of the most common worries carers have. A little planning now turns that worry into a set of instructions anyone can follow, and helps the person you care for stay safe, calm and, wherever possible, at home.

What happens if you are suddenly taken ill

In a real emergency, things usually unfold like this:

1. **You tell the ambulance crew or hospital** that you look after someone who cannot be left alone. A carer's card or a note in your wallet does this for you if you cannot speak.
2. **Your emergency contacts are called.** They use your written plan to step in, check on the person and keep their routine going.
3. **If nobody can step in,** someone calls the council's adult social care team, or its emergency duty team out of hours. The Care Act 2014 allows a council to meet urgent needs straight away, before any assessment. Help might be care at home, or a short stay in a care home.
4. **Afterwards,** the council will usually assess needs properly, and may carry out a financial assessment. Emergency care is not automatically free.

The Care and Support Statutory Guidance says that where a carer meets someone's needs, the council should consider plans to respond if that caring arrangement breaks down. Ask for this to be written into the person's care and support plan and your carer's support plan.

Three layers of backup

A strong plan has more than one layer:

- **People:** two or three relatives, friends or neighbours who know the routine, live close enough to come, and have agreed to be called.
- **Paid care:** a care provider who already knows the person, or who you have contacted in advance. Regular planned respite, such as respite live-in care, means a carer who already knows the house and the routine.
- **The council:** the person's needs assessment, your carer's assessment, and the out-of-hours number.

Your backup plan: a template

Copy this, fill it in with the person you care for, and date it. If you already have a one-page information sheet, our guide to looking after yourself as a carer has one, and this plan adds who does what, and when.

1. About us

- Carer's name, phone, address:
- The person I care for: full name, date of birth, NHS number:
- They cannot be left alone for more than: [hours]
- Main language, hearing, sight and communication needs:

2. Who to call, in order

- Contact 1 (name, relationship, phone, how far away):
- Contact 2:
- Contact 3:
- Care provider and out-of-hours number:
- Council adult social care and emergency duty team numbers:
- GP surgery and pharmacy:

3. The first 24 hours

- Who will go to the house, and how they get in (key holder or key safe; share the code separately):
- Medicines due today, and where the list and the medicines are kept:
- Meals, drinks and any special diet:
- Help needed with the toilet, washing, moving or getting to bed:
- Pets, and who feeds them:
- Things that cause distress, and what helps them feel calm:

4. If I am away for days or weeks

- Who can stay, or visit daily:
- Paid care that could start, and who has agreed to arrange it:
- Appointments to cancel or keep:
- Who can collect prescriptions and do shopping:
- How bills and money will be handled (any Lasting Power of Attorney, and where it is kept):

5. Health and legal papers

- Conditions and allergies:
- ReSPECT form, advance decision, advance statement or DNACPR decision, and where kept:

- Lasting Power of Attorney: who the attorneys are, and where it is kept:
- Hospital bag: where it is, and what is in it:

6. Plan details

- Date written, and date to review:
- Copies given to:

Where to keep it and who needs a copy

- One copy at home where emergency services can find it, such as by the phone or on the fridge.
- One with each named contact, and one with the care provider.
- One with the GP: ask the surgery to note that you are a carer.
- A photo or PDF on your phone.
- In your phone contacts, save emergency contacts as ICE1, ICE2 ("in case of emergency").

Carers' emergency card schemes

Many areas run schemes that let emergency services know you are a carer. Carers UK explains that in the fullest schemes, you register a plan with the scheme and carry a card with its phone number and a unique ID instead of personal details; in an emergency, the scheme's 24-hour service puts your plan into action. Schemes vary a great deal, so check what yours does.

In Oxfordshire, Carers Oxfordshire runs a **Carer ID card** for unpaid carers aged 13 or over who support someone living in Oxfordshire. It is a photo card, valid for two years, with a unique QR code that gives your emergency contacts and your GP surgery's number. You apply online with a recent photo and your emergency contacts' names and numbers; Carers Oxfordshire says applications are currently taking a few weeks. It also provides contingency plan templates for carers and for the person cared for, will help you write a plan if you ask, and points carers to the Lions' Message in a Wallet scheme. Contact the CarersLine on 01235 424715 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).

Elsewhere, some councils run a registered emergency plan with a round-the-clock response line. Essex County Council, for example, says its carers emergency plan is free and available 24 hours a day. Derbyshire County Council makes clear that its

emergency plan does not include free care. Ask your local carers' centre or council what exists where you live.

Other things that help in an emergency

- **Message in a Bottle:** many local Lions clubs offer a free bottle for the fridge holding key medical details, with stickers telling paramedics to look there.
- **A key safe** fixed outside, with the code shared only with named contacts.
- **A personal alarm or telecare** for the person you care for. See technology and telecare.
- **Your energy supplier's Priority Services Register,** which can help during power cuts.
- **The Herbert Protocol,** used by many police forces, if the person has dementia and might go missing.
- **Lasting Powers of Attorney,** so someone can manage money or decisions if needed. See Lasting Power of Attorney.
- **Carers UK's MyBackUp,** an online tool that walks you through building a backup plan.

If you work, you have a legal right to reasonable unpaid time off to deal with an emergency involving a dependant. See working while caring.

Who to call

- **Emergency:** 999. **Urgent medical advice:** NHS 111.
- **Oxfordshire County Council Social and Health Care Team:** 01865 519800 (Monday to Thursday 8.30am to 5pm, Friday 8.30am to 4pm).
- **Oxfordshire Emergency Duty Team (out of hours):** 0800 833 408.
- **Elsewhere:** search for your council's name and "emergency duty team".
- **Carers Oxfordshire CarersLine:** 01235 424715 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm).
- **Carers UK Helpline:** 0808 808 7777 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 6pm).
- **Samaritans:** 116 123, 24 hours a day, if you are struggling.

What to do next

1. Fill in the backup plan with the person you care for, this week.
2. Ask two or three people to be your named contacts, and give them copies.

3. Apply for a carer's card, such as Oxfordshire's Carer ID.
4. Ask for a carer's assessment, and for backup arrangements to be written into both care plans.
5. Consider contacting a care provider in advance, and booking regular respite.
6. Set a reminder to review the plan every six months.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare provides home care visits, waking nights and sleep-ins across Oxfordshire, and fully managed live-in care anywhere in England, from £1,550 a week, including respite live-in care. It can be reassuring to have a provider who already knows your relative before a crisis. Call us on 01865 715780 for a free initial assessment, and we can talk through how we would fit into your backup plan.

Common questions

What will happen to my husband if I am rushed into hospital?

Tell the paramedics or hospital staff straight away that you care for someone who cannot be left alone, and give them your emergency contact. Your contacts will be asked to step in using your plan. If nobody can, the council's adult social care team, or its out-of-hours emergency duty team, can arrange urgent care at home or a short emergency stay elsewhere. The council can act on urgent needs before any assessment, though charges may follow its financial assessment.

Is emergency replacement care free?

Not necessarily. Councils can meet urgent needs straight away, but the usual charging rules may apply afterwards, so the person being cared for may be asked to contribute after a financial assessment. Some council emergency card schemes say clearly that registering a plan does not include free care. A carer's assessment and the person's own needs assessment can set up planned support in advance, which is usually smoother than arranging help in a crisis.

How often should I update my emergency plan?

Look at it every six months, and straight away after any change: a new medicine, a hospital stay, a change of GP, new equipment, a new key safe code or a contact who has moved. Put a date on every version, give the new copy to everyone who has the old one, and ask them to destroy the old one. An out-of-date medicines list can be more dangerous than none.

Can a care company be ready to step in if something happens to me?

Yes. Many families contact a care provider in advance, so it already knows the person and can start more quickly in an emergency. Some families book regular respite, such as a week of live-in care every few months, so a carer already knows the routine. Ask any provider how quickly it can usually start, what it needs from you, and how it handles urgent requests out of hours.

Sources and further information

- Carers UK: Getting help in an emergency
- Carers Oxfordshire: Contingency planning
- Carers Oxfordshire: Carer ID
- legislation.gov.uk: Care Act 2014, section 19 (urgent needs)
- GOV.UK: Care and support statutory guidance
- Essex County Council: Carers emergency plan
- Derbyshire County Council: Carers emergency card

Read next

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Looking after yourself as a carer: rest, support and breaks

Caring for someone you love can wear you down without you noticing. How to spot carer burnout, protect your sleep, take regular breaks, find emotional support and carers' groups, and get help from your GP and local carers' centre.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Respite care options: how to plan a break from caring

Respite care gives family carers a break while the person they look after stays safe and well cared for. Compare live-in respite, sitting services, night care, day centres and short care home stays, how each can be funded, and how to plan a break that goes smoothly.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Carer's assessment: your rights and how to prepare

A carer's assessment is free and is your legal right under the Care Act 2014. What it covers, how to ask your council for one, how to prepare, and the support that may follow, from funded breaks and replacement care to a carer's direct payment.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

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SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Can family be paid to care? Direct payments, benefits and the rules

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IN BRIEF

Yes, in some cases. A relative who lives elsewhere can be paid from a council direct payment, but a husband, wife or partner, or a close relative living in the same household, can only be paid if the council decides it is necessary. Family carers can also claim Carer's Allowance (£86.45 a week in 2026/27) or the Universal Credit carer element, and a person can choose to pay a relative from their own money, with care over tax, benefits and any power of attorney.



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Many families wonder whether the son, daughter or partner who does most of the caring could be paid for it. In England there are four main routes, each with its own rules. This guide explains them in turn; in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland the rules differ.

The four ways money can reach a family carer

1. **A council direct payment** used to pay a relative for care.
2. **An NHS personal health budget**, if the person gets NHS Continuing Healthcare.
3. **Benefits for the carer**: Carer's Allowance, or the carer element of Universal Credit.
4. **The person's own money**, including Attendance Allowance, paid to a relative by agreement.

Being paid from a council direct payment

A direct payment is the council's share of a personal budget, paid so the person can arrange their own care. See direct payments and personal budgets for how they work.

Relatives who live elsewhere can be paid from a direct payment to provide care. A daughter who lives down the road, for example, can be employed as her father's personal assistant.

Close family in the same household cannot be paid for care from a direct payment unless the council decides it is necessary. Regulation 3 of the Care and Support (Direct Payments) Regulations 2014 covers:

- the person's husband, wife or civil partner, or someone living with them as a couple, wherever they live;
- a parent, parent-in-law, son, daughter, son- or daughter-in-law, stepchild, brother, sister, aunt, uncle or grandparent who lives in the same household;
- the husband, wife, civil partner or partner of any of those relatives, if they live in the same household.

Paragraph 12.36 of the Care and Support Statutory Guidance explains that this rule continues from the 2009 regulations, with one change: a close relative in the same household can now also be paid for **managing and administering** a direct payment, if the council decides that is necessary. Its example of paying for care is James, whose communication only his parents understand after years of caring for him. Its example of paying for administration is Gill, who organises her husband's personal assistants. The guidance says payments for administration are not meant to replace income, and that families should be told about the tax, employment and benefit effects before deciding.

Making the case. The council decides each case. Explain, in writing, why care from you is necessary to meet the person's needs, not simply preferred. Reasons families put forward include communication that only the family understands, severe distress with unfamiliar carers, cultural or religious needs that cannot otherwise be met, or no suitable care available locally. Include evidence: letters from the GP or specialist nurse, records of failed attempts with agencies, or the person's own written wishes.

Wording you can use:

> "We are asking the council to agree that [name]'s direct payment may be used to pay me, [his daughter, who lives with him], to provide part of his care. We believe this is necessary because [reasons]. Enclosed are [evidence]. Please consider this under regulation 3 of the Care and Support (Direct Payments) Regulations 2014 and paragraph 12.36 of the statutory guidance, and send us your decision and reasons in writing."

If the council refuses and you think the decision is wrong, use the council's complaints procedure, then the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman. See how to complain about care.

Becoming an employee. A relative paid from a direct payment is usually employed by the person, or by whoever manages the payment. That brings payroll, tax and National Insurance, holiday pay, pension and insurance duties. The council's direct payment support service can help, and the statutory guidance says the direct payment should include the cost of insurance needed to meet the plan.

Being paid through an NHS personal health budget

People who get NHS Continuing Healthcare at home have a right to a personal health budget, which can be taken as a direct payment. The NHS rules are similar: a family member or friend who lives in the same household can only be paid if the NHS body is satisfied it is necessary to meet the person's need for that service satisfactorily. Relatives living elsewhere can be paid where the care plan allows.

Carer's Allowance

Carer's Allowance is **£86.45 a week** in 2026/27 for people who care for someone at least 35 hours a week, where that person gets a qualifying benefit such as Attendance Allowance or PIP daily living. You do not have to live with them or be related. Earnings must be **£204 a week or less** after tax, National Insurance and allowable expenses. Any pay for caring counts as earnings.

Before claiming, check the effect on the person you care for: if they get an extra amount for severe disability in Pension Credit, it stops when someone is paid Carer's Allowance for them. See our full Carer's Allowance guide. To claim, apply on GOV.UK or call the Carer's Allowance Unit on 0800 731 0297 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm).

The Universal Credit carer element

If you claim Universal Credit and care for someone at least 35 hours a week who gets a qualifying disability benefit, your award includes **£209.34 a month** in 2026/27. You must report it to DWP, as it is not added automatically. Two points catch families out:

- **Paid caring does not count.** Under regulation 30 of the Universal Credit Regulations 2013, you are not treated as having caring responsibilities for someone if you earn income from caring for them. A relative paid by direct payment to care for their father would not get the carer element for that care.
- **Carer's Allowance is deducted** from Universal Credit, so you do not get both in full.

When the person pays a relative from their own money

An adult with capacity can choose to pay a relative for help from their own income or savings. Attendance Allowance, at £76.70 or £114.60 a week in 2026/27, is not means-tested and, as Age UK explains, does not have to be spent on care, so some people use it this way.

To keep it fair and clear:

- **Write an agreement:** what care is provided, the hours, the rate, how it is paid, and when it will be reviewed.
- **Keep the rate reasonable** and records of the care given.

- **Check tax and benefits:** regular pay may be taxable income for the relative and affect their benefits. Informal payments and employment are treated differently, so ask HMRC or an accountant.
- **Think about later council funding:** payments well above a fair rate could later be questioned as deliberately reducing savings ("deprivation of assets").
- **Talk to the rest of the family,** to avoid disputes now or after a death.

If an attorney or deputy makes the payments. The Office of the Public Guardian's guidance on family care payments (updated September 2026) says payments can be in the person's best interests, but must be affordable, reflect the care actually given, and be recorded. Where a lay attorney or deputy is both the carer and the person taking payment, they must ask the Court of Protection for approval. Where a benchmark is needed, the OPG generally uses the average hourly pay of care workers, less 20%. Ask the OPG on 0300 456 0300 (Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm; Wednesday from 10am).

Weighing it up honestly

Being paid can make caring sustainable, but it can also blur the line between family and work. Think about breaks, holidays and sick cover, the effect on your own pension and career, and what happens if the person's needs grow. Many families combine their own care with paid help, such as respite live-in care or visiting care, so the family carer can rest. Ask for a carer's assessment whatever you decide.

A checklist before any payment starts

- [ ] Which route: direct payment, NHS budget, benefits or the person's own money?
- [ ] Do you live in the same household? If so, has the council or NHS agreed in writing?
- [ ] Has a benefits check covered your benefits and theirs?
- [ ] Is there a written agreement with hours, rate and review date?
- [ ] Are tax, National Insurance and employer duties sorted?
- [ ] If an attorney or deputy is involved, is Court of Protection approval needed?
- [ ] Is there a backup plan for breaks and illness?

What to do next

1. Ask the council for a needs assessment for the person, and a carer's assessment for you.
2. Get a benefits check before claiming Carer's Allowance.
3. If you live together, put your request to be paid in writing, with evidence.
4. Write down any private arrangement, and check tax.
5. Plan regular breaks from the start.

How we can help

Day and Nightcare provides care funded privately, by councils, including through direct payments, and by NHS Continuing Healthcare. Our home care visits across Oxfordshire, or our fully managed live-in care anywhere in England from £1,550 a week, can work alongside the care you give yourself and give you proper breaks. Call 01865 715780 for a free initial assessment and a written quote you can share with the council.

Common questions

Can I be paid to look after my mum if I live with her?

Only from a council direct payment if the council decides it is necessary. The law stops direct payments being used to pay a close relative who lives in the same household, unless the council makes that decision. The statutory guidance's example is someone whose way of communicating only their family understands. Ask the social worker, explain in writing why paying you is necessary for your mum's needs, and ask for the decision and reasons in writing.

Can I get Carer's Allowance and be paid for caring?

Possibly, but the pay counts as earnings. Carer's Allowance is £86.45 a week in 2026/27 for at least 35 hours of care a week, and is only paid in weeks when your earnings, after tax, National Insurance and allowable expenses, are £204 or less. If your pay for caring, plus any other earnings, goes over that, no Carer's Allowance is due for that week. Tell the Carer's Allowance Unit about any pay.

Can my brother pay himself for caring for Dad using his power of attorney?
Not on his own say-so. The Office of the Public Guardian says that where an attorney or lay deputy is both providing care and taking payment for it, they must ask the Court of Protection to approve it, because it is a conflict of interest. It may also expect court approval for paying a close relative, such as the attorney's spouse or child. Payments must be in Dad's best interests, affordable and properly recorded.

Does paying a relative reduce what the council charges?
Sometimes, and only up to a point. When the council counts disability benefits in its financial assessment, it should allow for disability-related expenditure, which can include privately arranged care the person needs and the council is not providing. Whether payments to a relative qualify is decided case by case, so keep records and ask. Payments well above a fair rate could be questioned as deliberately reducing savings, known as deprivation of assets.

Sources and further information

- GOV.UK: Care and support statutory guidance (chapter 12, paragraphs 12.35 to 12.40)
- legislation.gov.uk: Care and Support (Direct Payments) Regulations 2014, regulation 3
- legislation.gov.uk: NHS (Direct Payments) Regulations 2013, regulation 8
- GOV.UK: Carer's Allowance, eligibility
- GOV.UK: Universal Credit, what you'll get
- legislation.gov.uk: Universal Credit Regulations 2013, regulation 30
- GOV.UK: OPG's approach to family care payments (SD14)
- Age UK: Attendance Allowance

Read next

PAYING FOR CARE AND REDUCING THE COST

Direct payments and personal budgets: a guide for families

How personal budgets and direct payments work in England: who can get them, setting one up, using them with a care agency or for live-in care, employing a carer, paying family, adding your own money, record-keeping, reviews and audits, with wording you can use.

Read the guide →

PAYING FOR CARE AND REDUCING THE COST

Carer's Allowance: who can claim and how it affects other benefits

Carer's Allowance pays £86.45 a week in 2026/27 to people who care for someone at least 35 hours a week and earn £204 a week or less. Who qualifies, the effect on the cared-for person's benefits, Carer's Credit, underlying entitlement and how to claim step by step.

Read the guide →

SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Carer's assessment: your rights and how to prepare

A carer's assessment is free and is your legal right under the Care Act 2014. What it covers, how to ask your council for one, how to prepare, and the support that may follow, from funded breaks and replacement care to a carer's direct payment.

Read the guide →

All guides in the information centre Check what help you could get

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