SUPPORT FOR FAMILY CARERS

Carer's assessment: your rights and how to prepare

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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**

Talk to our care team: 01865 715780
enquiries@dayandnightcare.co.uk · Out of hours: 07775 686272
Day and Nightcare Live In Limited, 9 Hollow Way, Cowley, Oxford OX4 2NA
CQC overall rating: Good (report published 20 April 2018)

The latest version of this page: **www.dayandnightcare.co.uk/guides/carers-assessment/**
This PDF was made on 1 November 2026.
Information, not advice: please check anything important with the organisation named.