

Caring for someone

How to get the support you need



advice and support for older age

**Independent
Age**



Thank you

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The sources used to create this publication are available on request.

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About this guide

At some point in our lives most of us will look after someone when they become ill or disabled. There are currently more than five million unpaid carers in England.

You may gradually take on caring responsibilities over time and may not think of yourself as a carer. Or there may be a sudden change that means you take on a caring role. While it can be positive and rewarding, looking after someone can also be emotionally, physically and financially demanding.

This guide explains your rights and the benefits, services and support that may be available to help you look after someone else. It also looks at what happens when your caring role ends.

We spoke to carers about their experiences. Their quotes appear throughout.

In this guide, you'll find reference to our other publications. You can order them by calling **0800 319 6789**, or by visiting independentage.org/publications

What it means to be a carer

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Many people look after someone else but don't realise that they are carers. If you're looking after someone regularly to help them with their daily life because they're ill or disabled, or can't manage without your support, then you may be a carer.

In a way, my mum doesn't recognise herself as a carer. She just accepts that her husband is very ill and it is her duty (in sickness and in health, etc) to look after him.



If you're not sure whether you're a carer, do any of these statements apply to you?

I help someone get washed, dressed or use the toilet.

I make sure someone has enough to eat and drink.

I take someone to the GP and hospital appointments.

I help someone to get around their home, for example helping them to use stairs safely.

I help someone keep their home clean and safe.

I help someone to see their family or friends, or attend social activities.

I make sure someone takes their medication at the right time.

If you ticked any of these statements, you are likely to be a carer.

The person you look after could be your partner, a friend or a family member and you may just think of it as part of your relationship. You may be a couple who are caring for each other. Whatever your situation, if you're providing unpaid support to someone, you may be entitled to some help as well.

How you may be affected

Caring for someone can be rewarding but it can also be hard work and at times it might seem overwhelming. It can also be financially and emotionally draining.

It may seem as though your life is no longer your own and you may feel a mixture of emotions such as guilt, resentment, sadness and frustration. It's important to recognise how you're feeling and that it's okay to feel this way. You shouldn't feel worried or unsure about asking for help and support. The first step to getting help is to ask for a carer's assessment from your local council – see chapter 3.



Caring from a distance

If the person you're caring for lives a long way from you, it can be difficult to stay on top of things. Travelling is tiring and time-consuming and can be costly. Make sure the person you're caring for has had a care needs assessment from their local council – see chapter 3. This will work out what their care needs are and whether any care and support would help them in their daily life. They may benefit from care at home from a paid care worker and there may be other local services that could help your friend or relative.

Getting online can be helpful for ordering shopping and managing finances. It's also a good way to stay in touch with the person you're caring for if they're also online. You could ask about free or low cost courses at your local library or Online Centre ([0114 349 1666](tel:01143491666), onlinecentresnetwork.org).

There may come a time when you need to consider other options. For example, perhaps the person you care for could move closer to you or even move in with you. Our guide **Choosing where to live** has more information about your options.

I helped care for my mum during her last illness. She lived over 100 miles from me but close to my brother and his wife, who is a registered nurse. They did the bulk of the caring and I went down almost every other weekend to support them and give them some time on their own – and of course to be with Mum as her cancer developed.

Caring and work

If you're finding it difficult to juggle work and caring responsibilities, you usually have the right to request flexible working if you've been with your employer for at least six months.

This can include working from home, part-time work, flexitime, working compressed hours, job sharing and shift work.

You also have the right to take a reasonable amount of unpaid time off work to deal with an emergency such as a breakdown in care arrangements.

Contact Acas ([0300 123 1100](tel:03001231100), [acas.org.uk](https://www.acas.org.uk)) or Carers UK ([0808 808 7777](tel:08088087777), [carersuk.org](https://www.carersuk.org)) for advice about your rights at work.

Shared caring

You may be sharing caring responsibilities with other friends or family members. It's important to be organised and communicate so you know who is doing what. You could make use of technology to organise care between you, for example by using shared calendars or the Jointly app developed by Carers UK (jointlyapp.com). There's a small charge to set up the app.

Sometimes the care duties may seem to fall more heavily on one person. If you'd like more help from other family members but don't know how to ask, we have suggestions for how to broach the subject at independentage.org/information/personal-life/difficult-conversations/talking-about-how-family-can-help.

Caring for someone with dementia

If the person you're looking after is living with dementia, you may both face particular challenges. It's important to get as much support as possible.

Ask for help

Call the Admiral Nurse Dementia Helpline for advice and support, and to find out if there is a free Admiral Nurse service in your area (**0800 888 6678, dementiauk.org**). They specialise in dementia and can offer practical advice and emotional support.

The Alzheimer's Society (**0300 222 1122, alzheimers.org.uk**) has a national helpline offering specialist advice and they have a network of local branches which offer a range of services, such as dementia advisers and support groups for carers. You can contact the central office for details of your local office or look on their online directory of services (**alzheimers.org.uk/dementiaconnect**).

The Alzheimer's Society also has an online support forum called Talking Point (alzheimers.org.uk/talkingpoint).

There may be assistive technology and telecare that could help. You can get more information and advice from atdementia.org.uk or read our factsheet **Technology to help you at home**.

Your GP or other healthcare professional can recommend self-help books on caring for someone with dementia, which you can borrow from your local library (reading-well.org.uk/books/books-on-prescription/dementia).

Coping with symptoms

Sometimes it can be difficult to communicate with someone who has dementia because they can get confused or they're unable to clearly express what's on their mind. The Alzheimer's Society has a factsheet called **Communicating** which has more detailed advice.

Some people living with dementia show aggressive behaviour, either verbal or physical. This is a symptom of the disease, which can

appear or disappear at any stage of the illness. It may be a reaction to something they feel frightened about or they could be anxious or bored. Ask their GP, psychiatrist or community psychiatric nurse (CPN) for support. For more information, see the Alzheimer's Society factsheet **Changes in behaviour**.

Getting out and about

Your area might have choirs, church services, film screenings, yoga or exercise classes, cycling groups and other activities designed especially for people affected by dementia. There are also activities such as 'singing for the brain' groups or memory cafés, where people with dementia and their carers can socialise and share experiences. Speak to your local library or council for details of local support.

See our factsheet **Living with dementia** for more information about the help available.

Getting a carer's assessment

If you provide unpaid care for a partner, friend or family member, you have a right to a free carer's assessment. It doesn't matter how much care you provide, whether it's practical or emotional support or what your financial situation is.

The assessment will look at whether you're willing and able to continue to provide care and the impact of your caring role on your wellbeing. There is a national threshold which is used to work out whether you qualify for support from your local council.



How to apply

Contact the adult social care team at your local council to arrange an assessment. This may be carried out over the phone, online, at home or somewhere other than your home if you'd prefer. You may also be able to do a self-assessment.

There's no set timeframe for this to happen but it should be within a reasonable time. Ask your council how long it could take. If you think you've been waiting too long, call the council and ask to speak to someone senior, such as the manager of the adult social care team, for an update.

If you need help urgently, make this clear to the council when you ask them for your assessment. Sometimes the council can choose to provide urgent help to the person who needs care before carrying out an assessment.

If you ask for other people to be involved, for example a friend or your GP, the council must involve them in the assessment, face to face or by phoning or writing to them. These people might be able to help you explain the impact caring has on your health or daily life. If you think it would be difficult for you to express your views, you may be entitled to an independent

advocate to help you. See our factsheet **Independent advocacy** for more information.

How to prepare

The council must give you information explaining what will happen at the assessment. Ask for this in advance, including the questions you may be asked.

It's a good idea to prepare by thinking about how being a carer affects you and what might help you. You might want to keep a diary or note things down so you remember what you want to say.

Things to consider

- Are you getting enough sleep or is it disturbed by your caring role?
- Is your health affected? If so, how?
- Are you able to go out without worrying about the safety of the person you care for?
- Are your other relationships being affected?
- Do you need information about what support and benefits are available?
- Is your caring role having an impact on your job?

- What equipment is needed by the person you care for to enable you to care for them safely?
- Do you need any training, for example in first aid or in moving and handling the person you care for?
- Do you want to spend less time in your caring role? For example, you may wish to go back to work or attend a course or just have more time to yourself.

If you'd like to talk to someone about your carer's assessment and how to prepare, call the NHS Carers Direct helpline (**0300 123 1053**, [nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support/carers-direct-helpline](https://www.nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support/carers-direct-helpline)). You could also contact our free Helpline on **0800 319 6789** and arrange to speak to an adviser.

Able or willing?

Your assessment must look at whether you're able or willing to continue providing care for the person you're looking after. Think carefully about how it's affecting you. If you're struggling or you can't manage any more, don't be afraid to say so.

Getting a care needs assessment for the person you're caring for

If the person you're caring for hasn't had one already, you should ask social services to carry out a free care needs assessment for them as well as a carer's assessment for you. This could be done at the same time as your assessment if you wish. Their assessment will work out what their care needs are, whether any care and support would help them in their daily life and if they qualify for council help. It must only look at what they can or can't do and ignore any help they're getting from you. See our factsheet **First steps in getting help with your care needs** for more information.

After your carer's assessment

If the council decides that you qualify for support and they are going to pay for some or all of it, they must prepare a support plan with you. See chapter 4 for examples of the practical support you may be able to get. Although the council may charge you for a service provided directly to you, they mustn't charge you for any care and support provided to the person you look after. See our factsheet **Getting help from the council as a carer** to find out more.

If you don't qualify for help from the council

If you don't qualify for support, the council must write to you to explain why. They must also provide advice about ways to help you avoid needing support in the future. For example, they may tell you about local support services for carers.

Having this information and a copy of your carer's assessment will make it easier if you decide you want to challenge the council's decision or make a complaint. Our factsheet **Complaints about care and health services** has more information.



Practical support

Practical support could be anything from equipment at home to respite care so you can take a break. It could make your caring role easier and give you more time for other activities.

Help from the council

If you qualify for support, your local council might provide care and support to the person you care for, or provide you with support directly. This could include:

- practical help with things like housework or gardening
- advice about benefits
- leisure activities such as gym membership
- training to help you feel more confident in your caring role (such as moving and handling training)
- emotional support from other carers (such as attending a local carers' group)
- breaks from caring.

Aids, adaptations and technology

Different types of equipment or home adaptations can make your life easier and help the person you're looking after to stay safe and independent. If the council assesses them as needing an aid or minor adaptation (one that costs less than £1,000 to install), the council must provide this for free. There may be grants available for larger adaptations. See our factsheet **Adapting your home to stay independent** for more information.

Technology can help the person you look after to live safely at home and give you peace of mind. Telecare consists of alarms and sensors which can detect a range of problems, for example if they fall out of bed while you're sleeping. Telehealth is a way of monitoring someone's health remotely through equipment that's set up in their home. See our factsheet **Technology to help you at home** to find out more.

If you're worried about leaving someone by themselves because they may leave the house and wander, you could get sensors that alert you if they've opened their front door. Or if you're having to take someone to regular medical appointments to have their blood pressure checked, a telehealth device might minimise the number of appointments and save time and hassle.

Anna, Independent Age adviser

You may be able to get telecare as part of a package from your council or you may have to pay for it privately. Contact the Disabled Living Foundation for information about what may be available (**0300 999 0004, [livingmadeeasy.org.uk](https://www.livingmadeeasy.org.uk)**).

Your GP

Tell your GP that you are a carer and ask them to make a note of this on your records. Caring can take a toll on your own health so it's important you look after yourself as well – see chapter 6.

When caring for my mum after a stroke, I mentioned to my GP that I was having to take on a caring role. She was very helpful in pointing out to me that I had to make time for myself as I was wearing myself down to the point where I wouldn't have been any good to anyone. It was as though she gave me permission to put myself first sometimes.

Your GP can give you advice and information about the medical condition of the person you look after. They may put you in touch with

support services provided by the NHS and other local sources of support and advice.

Your GP could also:

- arrange medical appointments for you and the person you care for at the same time so you only have to make one visit
- arrange for repeat prescriptions to be delivered to your local pharmacy or home
- provide letters of support to help you claim benefits. Some GPs charge for this.

The person you're caring for can give consent for their GP to discuss their health with you so you can be involved in decisions about their care. Talk to them to find out if they're willing to do this.

Help from charities and carers' networks

Charities and carers' networks can be an invaluable source of practical and emotional support. They understand the challenges you face and can give you the chance to talk to people who are in a similar position. The services they offer vary, but they can usually give you information and advice about your rights, benefits and other

financial help, and respite care. They can also put you in touch with local support groups.

For more information, contact Carers UK (0808 808 7777, [carersuk.org](https://www.carersuk.org)) or the Carers Trust (0300 772 9600, [carers.org](https://www.carers.org)). You can find details of your local carers' centre on [nhs.uk/Service-Search/Carers/LocationSearch/1796](https://www.nhs.uk/Service-Search/Carers/LocationSearch/1796). Or see chapter 8 for contact details of other support organisations.



Making emergency plans

You need to know that care would be put in place quickly in an emergency, if you became ill or were admitted to hospital for example. If the person you care for receives help from the council, emergency plans should be included in their care and support plan. If not, you can create an emergency plan by writing down:

- the name, address and other contact details of the person you care for
- who you would like to be contacted in an emergency
- any medication the person you care for is taking
- any ongoing care or health treatment they need.

You may be able to arrange emergency help from friends and family.

In some areas, there are carers' emergency card schemes. Some of these are integrated with police, fire and ambulance services. You can register and get help to draw up an emergency plan. You'll receive a card with the scheme's telephone number and a unique identification number. If you're unable to provide care, you or someone with you can call the number and an operator will put your emergency plan into

action. Ask your local council or a local carer's organisation if there is a scheme in your area.

Making decisions

The person you're caring for may want to consider putting in place powers of attorney. This allows you to help them make certain decisions, or make them on their behalf in the future if they are unable to do so – financial decisions for example. For more information, see our factsheet **Managing my affairs if I become ill**.

Getting respite care

You may want to take a break from caring so you can do other household tasks, take part in leisure or social activities or catch up on sleep. Consider asking your local council to help, even if the person you care for doesn't currently get any help from them. If they're eligible, the council will have to arrange what is often called respite or replacement care while you take your break. You can't be charged for this but the person you're caring for might be. The council will look at their finances to see if they should pay anything towards it.



There are different options available, including:

- **care services at home** – home care agencies employ care workers to visit people and provide care in their own home. For more information on choosing home care, see our guide **Getting help at home**

- **day care centres** – the person you're caring for can receive support and socialise with others while you have a break. Ask your local council about services in your area
- **care homes** – some care homes offer short-term stays for respite care. Contact local care homes to see if they have places available for this.

Some carers' organisations provide help with respite care. You can also arrange replacement care yourself. If you want to go on holiday, either alone or with the person you're looking after, you may be able to get some help with costs – see chapter 5. Make arrangements well in advance if possible.

Mum is the sweetest person but it's still tiring and very tiring. We have managed a short holiday every year though. My brother comes to stay and the council provides extra evening care while we're away.

Financial support

Caring for someone can take a toll on your finances, especially if you've been doing it for a long time. You may be eligible for extra money as a carer, so make sure you check.

Carer's Allowance

If you're caring for a family member or a friend for 35 hours or more a week, you may be able to claim Carer's Allowance. You might qualify if the person you care for receives a qualifying disability benefit such as Attendance Allowance, the middle or higher rate care component of Disability Living Allowance or the daily living component of Personal Independence Payment, Constant Attendance Allowance or Armed Forces Independence Payment. For more information, see our factsheet **Carer's Allowance**.

You won't qualify for Carer's Allowance if you have earnings over £120 a week (after certain deductions). Money you get from personal and workplace pensions doesn't count as earnings.

If you're already getting more than the rate of Carer's Allowance – £64.60 a week (2018/19 rate) –

from certain other benefits including the State Pension, you won't get paid Carer's Allowance as well. Instead, you'll be told you have an 'underlying entitlement' to Carer's Allowance. This can help to increase any other means-tested benefits you're getting or you may qualify for them for the first time, so it's still worth applying.



How to claim Carer's Allowance

You can download a claim form or claim online at [gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim](https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim) or phone the Carer's Allowance Unit (**0800 731 0297**) to ask for a claim form. If you're already claiming a State Pension, there's a different, shorter form to fill in.

You'll automatically get a Class 1 National Insurance credit each week you receive Carer's Allowance if you're below State Pension age. This helps protect your claim for State Pension and other benefits.

If you need help filling in the form, your local Age UK ([0800 169 6565](tel:08001696565), ageuk.org.uk) or Citizens Advice ([03444 111 444](tel:03444111444), citizensadvice.org.uk) may be able to help.

Extra money added to your means-tested benefits

If you get Carer's Allowance or have an underlying entitlement to it, you may qualify for a Carer Addition in Pension Credit, Carer Premium in Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support, or Carer Element if you're claiming Universal Credit.

Means-tested benefits, such as Pension Credit, Housing Benefit and Council Tax Support are designed to support you by giving you enough money to live on. The Carer Premium or Carer Addition increases the amount the government says you need to live on by £36 a week (£156.45 a month if you're claiming Universal Credit). These rates apply for 2018/19. This means you could get a higher rate of these benefits, or that you could become eligible for them for the first time.

Protecting your entitlement to State Pension and other benefits

If you're under State Pension age, Carer's Credit is a National Insurance credit that helps to fill gaps in your National Insurance contribution record so you can build your entitlement to benefits like the State Pension.

To be eligible, you must care for one or more disabled people for at least 20 hours a week. They must either receive one of the qualifying disability benefits listed on page 28, or a health or social care professional must sign a 'Care Certificate' to show they have a certain level of care needs.

If you're not receiving Carer's Allowance, you'll need to fill in a claim form for Carer's Credit. Download a form from [gov.uk/carers-credit/how-to-claim](https://www.gov.uk/carers-credit/how-to-claim) or request one by calling the Carer's Allowance Unit on **0800 731 0297**.

Disability benefits for the person you care for

Make sure the person you're caring for is getting all the benefits they're entitled to. If they have a long-term health condition or disability they may qualify for Attendance Allowance or Personal

Independence Payment, depending on their age. See our factsheets on these benefits.

Council Tax discounts

You may be eligible for some Council Tax discounts, if the person you're caring for has a disability or a severe mental impairment for example. See our factsheet **Council Tax Support and Housing Benefit** for more information.

Other carers told us about so many little things that can make a difference to those who have some savings – things that aren't means-tested, such as Attendance Allowance, Blue Badges and a reduction in Council Tax.

Caring and grandchildren

If you're looking after a grandchild on a short- or long-term basis, you may be able to receive benefits such as Child Benefit and Child Tax Credit. If you're in this situation, get advice from an organisation like Family Rights Group ([0808 801 0366](tel:08088010366), frg.org.uk). They have an advice sheet called **Social security support for relatives and friends looking after someone else's child** which you can request from their advice line or download from their website.

Grants and funding

As a carer you may be eligible for grants from charities to help pay for respite care, disability equipment and aids, and other essential one-off costs. You can search for charitable grants on the Turn2us website (grants-search.turn2us.org.uk). Read our factsheet **Extra help with essential costs if you're on a low income** to find out more.

Some carers' organisations also offer grants and discount schemes – see chapter 8 for contact details. You may be eligible for other discounts such as travel concessions and cheaper cinema tickets if you accompany someone as a carer. Contact Turn2us for more information ([0808 802 2000](tel:08088022000), turn2us.org.uk).

Bill's story

"We are almost marooned indoors and tried for a long time to get help. My wife, Amy, is in her 80s and pretty frail. She doesn't feel comfortable going out. She freezes at the front doorway, even though there are handrails to stop her falling. It's as if she's standing on the edge of a cliff. I have to help her all the time.

"I'm frail too so I'm not able to help her as much as I used to. I've had ten years of cancer in the bone marrow and haven't got the strength any more. An injury in my shoulder means it's difficult for me to lift her. If she fell, I would fall as well.

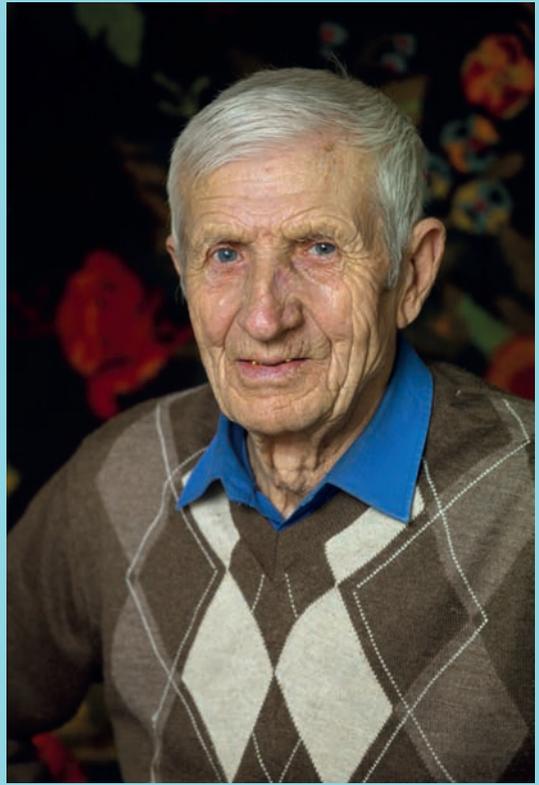
"If I have to go out to do some shopping or for a dentist appointment, I'm so worried because there's no one at home to look after her. We have a personal alarm fall detector but she won't wear the wristband. It's too worrying for me to go out unless I have to.

"I rang the Independent Age Helpline and they advised us to ask for a face-to-face care needs assessment from our local council and a carer's assessment for me. They also sent me

useful information about other sources of help.

"We discussed our difficulties with the assessors and we now have care workers coming to help five times a week for up to two hours. We also have cleaning ladies once a week to clean the floors, loos and do the vacuuming.

"Now we're working out respite care with social services. Respite care would give me time for myself to do things I need to do, such as getting work done in the house. I'd also be able to sit in the garden. We're still waiting but I think there's something cooking now! I know I can ring Independent Age again if we need any more help."



Picture posed by model

6 Taking care of yourself

Being a carer can be emotionally and physically demanding. You may be so busy looking after someone else that you neglect your own health. It's important that you take good care of yourself, not only for your own sake but also to give you the strength to go on caring.

Your horizons will shrink and sometimes it will be all you can do to get through the day. At those times it can help just to look at the couple of hours ahead of you. Take small steps and appreciate small victories (a cup of tea made and drunk before it got cold). Be kind to yourself – you are doing all you can – and pat yourself on the back for your achievements.

Get support

It's a good idea to talk to someone about your situation and how you're feeling. Tell your friends, family and GP that you are a carer so they're aware of the pressure you're under.

Don't be afraid or too proud to ask for help. Workmates are often willing to listen when you need to vent your frustrations and can make suggestions you may not come up with for yourself. Neighbours can be another unexpected source of support.

It can be helpful to talk to people in the same situation, to share experiences and get advice. You could join an online carers' forum or a carers' group. Carers UK has an online forum (carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-support/carersuk-forum) and can also put you in touch with local support groups ([0808 808 7777](tel:08088087777), carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-support/local-support).

You could also contact your local Age UK (0800 169 6565, [ageuk.org.uk/local](https://www.ageuk.org.uk/local)) or ask your council about support groups in your area.

Organisations for people with a specific health condition or illness, such as Alzheimer's, arthritis, Parkinson's disease or stroke, also offer support for carers – see chapter 8.

Your health

Looking after someone can affect both your physical and mental health but there are steps you can take to reduce the impact. Try to follow a balanced diet, get some regular exercise and get enough rest. If you're having trouble sleeping, speak to your GP.

You could also ask your GP about health checks and screening programmes for older people. You're eligible for a free flu jab if you receive Carer's Allowance or if you're the main carer for an older or disabled person who may be at risk if you fall ill.

Look after yourself is the golden rule. You can't care for anyone if you're ill yourself. I found that during my father's care, my mum lost herself a bit. We'd make an effort to give her a few hours each week to herself – even something as simple as a relaxing bath, undisturbed, helped Mum to hold onto her sanity.

The challenges of caring could make you more vulnerable to stress and mental health problems. See our guide **Dealing with depression** for advice on how to cope if you're feeling low. If you'd like to talk to someone about what's troubling you, call Samaritans (**116 123, [samaritans.org](https://www.samaritans.org)**). You could also contact the Mind information line to find out about support in your area (**0300 123 3393, [mind.org.uk](https://www.mind.org.uk)**). If your low mood continues, speak to your GP.

If your caring responsibilities are affecting your health, make sure you mention this during your carer's assessment – see chapter 3.



Your relationships

Looking after someone can change the nature of your relationship and put a strain on other relationships with friends and family. If you're caring for a partner it may take time to adjust to your changed situation.

My mum appreciated all of the practical things we did for her, but what she appreciated most was us spending time with her, doing everyday things like swapping words from the word puzzle in the newspaper, watching TV or going out for a short drive. It was important not to lose that invaluable personal relationship.

The Carers Trust has a useful online guide to relationships (relationships.carers.org). You may also find it helpful to speak to a specialist relationship counsellor. Contact Relate to find out about services in your area ([0300 100 1234](tel:03001001234), relate.org.uk).

Being a carer may sometimes leave you feeling lonely and isolated. It's important for your health to keep in touch with family and friends even if it's just a quick phone call. Our guide **If you're feeling lonely** has some helpful suggestions for ways to stay connected.

Time for yourself

Make sure you get a regular break from caring, even if it's only 10 minutes. It's important for your quality of life to find time to do the things you enjoy. If this is difficult for you, mention it at your assessment.

You could ask friends or family to help. You could also use telecare to help keep the person you look after safe and give you peace of mind when you're not with them. See our factsheet **Technology to help you at home** for more information.

You may be able to arrange respite care to give you a regular break, or for a longer period to give you the chance to go on holiday – see chapter 4.

I can feel my life passing and hope there will still be time to do some of the things we had planned. In the meantime, I have found a lot of support online and I've taken up some online courses – art, photography, creative writing. I meet a friend once a week for swimming and lunch, get out for daily walks, and I've adopted a cat, which Mum loves.

When your caring role ends

There may come a time when your caring role ends. This may be because the person you're looking after needs more care than you can provide or they may die. Whatever the reason, it's a good idea to prepare for the future.

There could be many reasons why you may not be able to continue looking after someone. It's understandable if you feel you can no longer provide care.

If you're no longer willing or able to look after someone, tell the council as soon as possible. Ask the council to carry out, or review, a care needs assessment (see chapter 3) and tell them if the situation is urgent. Our factsheet **First steps in getting help with your care needs** has more information.

If you're claiming Carer's Allowance, or have an underlying entitlement, you must tell the Carer's Allowance Unit ([0800 731 0297](tel:08007310297), [gov.uk/carers-allowance-report-change](https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance-report-change)) if your circumstances have changed in any way that's likely to affect your benefits.

If the person you're caring for moves into a care home

Residential care might be the best option for the person you care for but you could still have mixed feelings – relief that they will be getting the level of care they need but also guilt or sadness. Our guide **How to find the right care home** can help you choose one. If you still want to be involved in caring for them, speak to the care home staff about how you can work together.

If you're still providing care, you may be entitled to some benefits and carers' rights at work.

Find out if there's a group for relatives and carers you can join. This will give you the opportunity to talk about your feelings and the changes you're going through. Contact the Residents and Relatives Association (**020 7359 8136, relres.org**) for further information and support.

If the person you cared for has died

Grief is a complex and very personal experience. If the person you were caring for had been ill for some time, you may feel some relief, but you may also be feeling alone and isolated, especially if your caring role meant you lost touch with friends. It may help to talk to other people who knew the person you cared for so you can support each other and talk about them.

As well as coping with your loss, you may have to deal with a number of practicalities such as organising a funeral and dealing with the estate of the person who has died. Our factsheet **What to do after a death** has more information.

You can continue getting Carer's Allowance for up to eight weeks after a death.

Our guide **Coping with bereavement** can help you to look after yourself. Specialist bereavement organisations such as Cruse (**0808 808 1677**, **cruse.org.uk**) can offer advice, counselling and the details of local bereavement groups. You could also talk to your GP.



Life after caring

Caring may have been a big part of your life and it can take time to adjust. You may find yourself with lots of time on your hands but feel unsure what to do with it. Some people feel unwell for a while as exhaustion catches up with them and you may need a rest. You can still get support from carers' organisations even if your caring role has come to an end.

When you're ready, you might want to start connecting with other people again and rebuilding your life. Our guide **If you're feeling lonely** has suggestions for ways to meet people and things you could try such as taking up a new hobby.

Your financial position may have changed and you'll need to make sure you're claiming the right benefits. Call our Helpline on **0800 319 6789** to arrange a benefits check or try our online calculator (independentage.org/benefit-calculator).

Our free guide **Moneywise** also has suggestions for ways to boost your income and save money.

You may have built up expert knowledge during your time as a carer and want to continue using your skills and experience. Contact charities such as Independent Age (**020 7605 4200**, independentage.org) about volunteering as a befriender to support lonely or isolated people.

Useful contacts

Carers' support organisations

Carers UK – 0808 808 7777, carersuk.org

Provides an advice service for carers and may be able to put you in touch with local support groups

Carers Trust – 0300 772 9600, carers.org

Information, home care and local support services for carers

Carers Direct – 0300 123 1053,
[nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support/
carers-direct-helpline](http://nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support/carers-direct-helpline)

National information service for carers

Other useful organisations

Age UK – 0800 169 6565, ageuk.org.uk

Information and advice for older people

Alzheimer's Society – 0300 222 1122,
alzheimers.org.uk

Support and advice for anyone affected by dementia

Arthritis Care – 0808 800 4050,
arthritiscare.org.uk

Support for people living with arthritis

Carer's Allowance Unit – 0800 731 0297,
gov.uk/carers-allowance-unit

Information on Carer's Allowance and how to make a claim

Citizens Advice – 03444 111 444,
citizensadvice.org.uk

Information and advice on money, legal and consumer problems

Cruse – 0808 808 1677, cruse.org.uk

Bereavement counselling and support

Dementia UK – 0800 888 6678, dementiauk.org

Support for people affected by dementia

Disabled Living Foundation – 0300 999 0004,
livingmadeeasy.org.uk

Information and advice on equipment for independent living

Macmillan Cancer Support – 0808 808 0000,
macmillan.org.uk

Information and advice for people affected by cancer

Marie Curie – 0800 090 2309, mariecurie.org.uk

Care and support through terminal illness

Mind – 0300 123 3393, mind.org.uk

Information and advice for people affected by mental illness

Parkinson's UK – 0808 800 0303,
parkinsons.org.uk

Support for people affected by Parkinson's disease

Relate – 0300 100 1234, relate.org.uk

Relationship counselling and advice

Samaritans – 116 123, samaritans.org

Confidential support if you need someone to talk to

Stroke Association – 0303 3033 100, stroke.org.uk

Support and advice for people affected by stroke

Turn2us – 0808 802 2000, turn2us.org.uk

Information and advice on benefits and grants

Things to do if you're new to caring

- Ask for a carer's assessment – see chapter 3.
- Ask for a care needs assessment for the person you're looking after if they haven't already had one.
- Apply for Carer's Allowance – see chapter 5.
- Make sure the person you're looking after is claiming all the benefits they're entitled to.
- Ask your local council about aids and adaptations – see chapter 4.
- Consider getting lasting power of attorney or deputyship for the person you look after – see chapter 4.
- Tell your friends, family and GP that you are a carer and ask your GP to make a note on your records.
- Find out what support is available to you, such as a carers' support group.
- Make a plan to deal with emergencies, for example, if illness affects your ability to provide care.

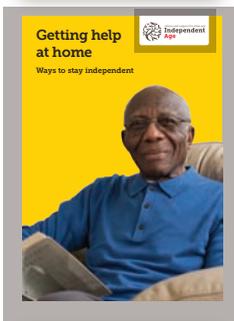
Our free advice guides

You may be interested in...



If you're feeling lonely

Ways to overcome loneliness.



Getting help at home

How to find help to stay independent in your own home.



Planning for the end of life

How to plan for the end of your life and where to get support.

Our practical, jargon-free advice guides give you the information you need to get the most out of older age.

To find out about our full range of guides and order copies, call 0800 319 6789 or visit independentage.org

The information in this guide applies to England only.

If you're in Wales, contact Age Cymru (**0800 022 3444, agecymru.org.uk**) for information and advice.

In Scotland, contact Age Scotland (**0800 12 44 222, agescotland.org.uk**).

In Northern Ireland, contact Age NI (**0808 808 7575, ageni.org**).

We want the UK to be the best place to grow older and we have ambitious targets to increase the number of older people we help and the difference we make. We receive no state funding and rely on income from individuals, trusts and other sources to continue providing our services to hundreds of thousands of older people in need.

Visit **independentage.org** to make a secure online donation and find out about other ways to support us. Alternatively, you can call us on **020 7605 4223** or email **supporters@independentage.org**



About Independent Age

Whatever happens as we get older, we all want to remain independent and live life on our own terms. That's why, as well as offering regular friendly contact and a strong campaigning voice, Independent Age can provide you and your family with clear, free and impartial advice on the issues that matter: care and support, money and benefits, health and mobility.

A charity founded over 150 years ago, we're independent so you can be.

For more information, visit our website
independentage.org

Call us for information or to arrange free, impartial advice from an adviser. Lines are open 8am–8pm Monday to Friday and 9am–1pm Saturday. Freephone **0800 319 6789** or email **advice@independentage.org**



advice and support for older age

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