

The carer's assessment



If you provide regular, unpaid care for a family member or friend with dementia and/or other health conditions, you are entitled to a Social Services carer's assessment. This looks at your needs as a carer, the impact of your caring responsibilities on your life, and the support you need to carry out your caring role, for example:

- respite care for the person with dementia so that you have some time to yourself (also called carer's breaks)
- help from home carers
- training in practical caring skills
- equipment to help you care for the person
- support with arranging flexible working
- mental health support

The carer's assessment is free, and anyone over 18 who has unpaid caring responsibilities can request one.

Are you a carer?

Many people who support someone with dementia do not think of themselves as carers. You may think that you are simply doing what is expected in your relationship. You may feel you are too young to be thought of as a carer. Or caring may have become routine, so you rarely reflect on its impact on your life.

However, you are considered a carer if you regularly look after someone who is ill, disabled or elderly, including a family member – for example if you help them with:

- washing and dressing
- eating and drinking



- getting out and about
- attending medical appointments
- taking medication
- household tasks like shopping, cleaning and laundry
- looking after their bills and finances
- providing company or supervision if they cannot be left alone

How to get a carer's assessment

Anyone who provides unpaid, informal care for someone has the right to a carer's assessment – the person you care for does not need to be a relative, and you do not have to live with them.

Your GP or another medical professional, such as a nurse, can refer you for a carer's assessment, or you can request it directly from your local council's Social Services (or in Northern Ireland, your Health and Social Care Trust).

If the person you care for lives in another local council area, you should contact Social Services or the Health and Social Care Trust in their area instead (except in Wales, where you should contact Social Services in your own area).

Please see Sources of support on p14-15 for details of how to find your local Social Services or Health and Social Care Trust.

Once you have requested a carer's assessment, a trained professional will contact you to arrange an appointment. In some areas, a carers' organisation will carry out the assessment on behalf of the local council, but the council is responsible for making decisions about any support you need. If you are applying on behalf of a family member or friend who is in a caring role, they must consent to the assessment.

If you had a previous carer's assessment more than a year ago or your caring circumstances have changed since your last assessment, you can request a review. You can also ask for a carer's assessment if you know you are going to become a carer, even if you are not currently caring.

While it is your right to receive a carer's assessment, some people find they have to be quite forthright in requesting one. If you need advice, please call our Helpline to speak to a dementia specialist Admiral Nurse – see Sources of support on p13 for details.



Preparing for a carer's assessment

Social Services will send you a form to complete ahead of your carer's assessment, or to fill in with the assessor's assistance at the appointment. You will need to provide:

- your contact details
- your NHS number
- the name and address of your GP
- the name, address and NHS number (if possible) of the person you care for
- the name and contact details of anyone who will be with you at the assessment

Before the assessment, it is a good idea to write notes on how you help the person you care for, and the impact it has on your life,

including your physical and mental health, work, relationships and free time. Give as much detail as you can and be open and honest about how your caring role is affecting you.

If you need any adjustments for the assessment – for example if you need an interpreter or have a disability or health condition that means you need extra support – please let the assessor know when they contact you.

What will happen at the carer's assessment?

The carer's assessment usually takes place face-to-face at home or at the home of the person you care for so the assessor can see the challenges you face, although sometimes they are carried out online or by phone. They usually last at least an hour.

It can be helpful to have someone with you during the assessment. This may be a family member or friend, or a paid or volunteer advocate who can help you make your views known. Please see Sources of support on p15 for information on advocacy organisations.

The assessor will ask you about the practicalities of caring for the person with dementia, such as helping them wash and dress, cooking for them, helping them eat and drink, getting them in and out of bed etc. They will also ask about any caring responsibilities that you have during the night.

Be as specific as possible when describing your caring role. Base your answers on a bad day, rather than an average or good day, and describe how it affects your physical and mental health and wellbeing.

Tell the assessor if your caring responsibilities are having an impact on other aspects of your life, for example work, finances and relationships with other family members or friends. They should



ask whether you have any time for leisure activities, socialising and holidays: time to yourself is key to being able to cope with your caring role.

Make sure the assessor knows if you have any other caring responsibilities, for example for children or grandchildren. They should also consider what would happen in an emergency, for example if you became unwell and had to take a break from caring.

If you live with the person with dementia, a carer's assessment may be done at the same time as a needs assessment, which identifies what support the person needs themselves, as there is some crossover. However, it is better to do them separately so you can focus on your individual needs. Speak to the assessor to find out whether the assessments can be done separately.

See Sources of support on p15 for details of the needs assessment.

The support plan

Following the carer's assessment, the assessor should agree the next steps with you and share any relevant information they have gathered with other health and social care professionals who are involved with you or the person you care for, eg a nurse or GP.

If the assessment has identified that you have eligible support needs, the assessor will work with you to prepare a support plan that covers:

- the type of support you need
- how this support will be provided
- what funding (if any) is available

Your support plan might:

- recommend home adaptations or living aids to help you in your caring role
- suggest ways to help you make time for yourself – for example, arranging for someone to visit the person you care for, or finding the person a place at a day centre
- make provisions for carer's breaks of a few hours, overnight or longer – these could be one-off or regular
- connect you with support groups and one-to-one befrienders for emotional and practical support and to share experiences
- recommend financial support with the cost of transport, cleaning, gardening, assistive living equipment and gym membership

You will be asked for your opinion on the support plan, so make sure it reflects your views.



Your support plan should be reviewed after six to eight weeks to make sure it is meeting your needs, and then every 12 months. If your role or needs as a carer change, you can request a review to update your support plan.

Be aware that any changes in routine may have to be introduced slowly and carefully to avoid confusing or overwhelming the person with dementia, especially if you are introducing a new carer.

Funding for your support plan

Once you have received your support plan, the local council will carry out a financial assessment (or means test) to determine how your support will be funded. You are entitled to this assessment whatever your financial situation.

Local council funding to meet the recommendations of your support plan is based upon your finances and whether you can afford to pay partly or fully for the support you need. If you are eligible for funding, it will be provided in one of three ways:

- A ‘personal budget’, where the local council chooses which services will provide care and support and pays for them directly – these could be council or private providers
- A ‘direct payment’, where the money is paid directly to you so you can choose how the care is provided and by whom, and pay them yourself – the local council will usually ask for evidence of how you have spent the money every three months
- A combination of the above

If you are not eligible for funding, the local council should be able to give you advice about other ways you can get support in your community. You can also speak to our Admiral Nurses about other support in your area – please see Sources of support on p13.

Disagreeing with the decision

If you disagree with the decision made about your care and support needs following your carer’s assessment, or with how the assessment was carried out, you can challenge this. Initially, you can complain directly to your local council. It should have a formal complaints procedure on its website, or you can phone and ask to be directed to the correct team.

If you are unhappy about how the local council handles your complaint or the outcome, you can escalate it to the Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman: an independent organisation that investigates complaints. Please see Sources of support on p15 for details.

Assessments for young carers

Young carers under 18 are also entitled to a carer’s assessment from Social Services. As with adult carer’s assessments, it will look at the care the young person is providing, how it affects their life, and what



support they need – for example, access to a support worker, local support groups and, in some cases, financial support.

The young person can be referred for a carer's assessment by contacting Social Services themselves, or asking someone else (eg a parent, GP or teacher) to contact them on their behalf. Please see Sources of support on p14 for more information on young carer's rights.

Carer's Allowance

Many unpaid carers can claim Carer's Allowance (or in Scotland, Carer Support Payment) to help them in their caring role. To qualify, the person you care for must be receiving a disability benefit such as Personal Independence Payment (PIP) or Attendance Allowance. Only one person can get Carer's Allowance for the person who requires care, so if other people also provide unpaid support for the person with dementia, you will not all be able to claim it.

To be eligible for Carer's Allowance/Carer Support Payment in England, Scotland and Wales, you must:

- be 16 or over
- spend at least 35 hours a week caring for the person
- normally live in England, Scotland or Wales (unless you live abroad as a member of the armed forces)
- usually have lived in England, Scotland or Wales for at least two of the past three years
- not be in full-time education or studying for more than 21 hours a week
- earn below a certain weekly threshold – please check the latest rates at [▶ gov.uk/carers-allowance/eligibility](https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/eligibility)

To make a claim for Carer's Allowance, please visit

[▶ allowance/how-to-claim gov.uk/carers](https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance/how-to-claim)

The eligibility criteria for Carer's Allowance in Northern Ireland are the same as in England, Scotland and Wales, but require you to live in Northern Ireland. To apply, please visit [▶ nidirect.gov.uk/services/apply-carers-allowance-online](https://nidirect.gov.uk/services/apply-carers-allowance-online)

Sources of support

If you are living with dementia or caring for someone with the condition, register for our free online sessions, 'Dementia: what next?' at [▶ dementiauk.org/dementia-what-next](https://dementiauk.org/dementia-what-next)

To speak to a dementia specialist Admiral Nurse, call our free Helpline on **0800 888 6678** (Monday-Friday 9am-9pm, Saturday and Sunday 9am-5pm, every day except 25th December) or email [▶ helpline@dementiauk.org](mailto:helpline@dementiauk.org)

If you prefer, you can book a phone or video call with an Admiral Nurse at a time to suit you: please visit [▶ dementiauk.org/book](https://dementiauk.org/book)

Dementia UK resources

Attendance Allowance

[▶ dementiauk.org/attendance-allowance](https://dementiauk.org/attendance-allowance)

Carer's Allowance

[▶ dementiauk.org/carers-allowance](https://dementiauk.org/carers-allowance)

Caring from a distance

[▶ dementiauk.org/caring-from-a-distance](https://dementiauk.org/caring-from-a-distance)

Financial and legal sources of support

[▶ dementiauk.org/financial-and-legal-sources-of-support](https://dementiauk.org/financial-and-legal-sources-of-support)

Looking after yourself as a carer

[▶ dementiauk.org/looking-after-yourself-when-you-care](https://dementiauk.org/looking-after-yourself-when-you-care)

Registering as a carer with your GP

[▶ dementiauk.org/the-importance-of-registering-as-a-carer](https://dementiauk.org/the-importance-of-registering-as-a-carer)

Supporting children and adolescents when a parent has young onset dementia

➤ dementiauk.org/supporting-children

Other resources

Assessments for carers (Northern Ireland)

➤ nidirect.gov.uk/articles/assessments-carers

Being a young carer – your rights

➤ nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/support-and-benefits-for-carers/being-a-young-carer-your-rights

Benefits and financial support if you're caring for someone

➤ gov.uk/browse/benefits/help-for-carers

Care Information Scotland

➤ careinfoscotland.scot

Carer Support Payment (Scotland)

➤ mygov.scot/carers-support-payment

Carers Trust

➤ carers.org

Carers UK

➤ carersuk.org

Financial assessments (means test) for social care

➤ nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/help-from-social-services-and-charities/financial-assessment-means-test/

Find your local council (to contact Social Services in England, Scotland and Wales)

➤ gov.uk/find-local-council



Find your local Health and Social Care Trust (to contact Social Services in Northern Ireland)

➤ nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/health-and-social-care-trusts

Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman

➤ lgo.org.uk

Needs assessments

➤ gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services

Personal budgets and direct payments

➤ nhs.uk/conditions/social-care-and-support-guide/money-work-and-benefits/personal-budgets

Voiceability: carers advocacy

➤ voiceability.org/about-advocacy/types-of-advocacy/carers-advocacy

**To speak to a dementia specialist Admiral Nurse
about any aspect of dementia:**

Contact our Helpline:

0800 888 6678 or ➔ **helpline@dementiauk.org**

Book a virtual appointment:

➔ **dementiauk.org/book**

**Our charity relies entirely on donations to fund our
life-changing work. If you would like to donate to help us
support more families:**

- Call **0300 365 5500**
- Visit ➔ **dementiauk.org/donate**
- Scan the QR code



Thank you.



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