

Do you look after someone?

Do you provide help and support to a partner, relative, child, friend or neighbour who could not manage without your help due to physical or mental illness, disability, frailty or addiction?

If so you are a CARER

Anyone can become a carer at any age — children and young people, parents, daughters, sons, spouses, partners and friends. Many people don't think of themselves as carers; they just look after someone close to them. Caring often just happens to you, as you find that someone close to you gradually needs more help. There are thousands of unpaid carers in Bristol.

You may be a carer whether or not you live in the same house as the person you care for. If you receive a Carers Allowance or a direct payment to enable you to buy a service or equipment to help you in your caring role you are still a carer. If the person you care for, moves to live in a residential or nursing home you may still be a carer if you spend time managing their affairs and making sure that they are well cared for.

People employed to give care i.e. care assistants, care workers, nursing staff, etc are not included in this definition of carers, nor are people who work for organisations on a voluntary basis.

1. Look after your own health – tell your GP you are a carer

As a carer, it is important that you look after your own health so that you can go on caring for as long as you want to. It is easy not to look after your own health when you are looking after someone else.

Here at the Old School Surgery we want to be able to do all we can to try to help you to stay as fit and healthy as possible. We will do our best to help you look after yourself as well as the person you care for. For example, we offer most carers a free flu vaccination each Autumn and our GP's will be aware that when arranging any treatment for you, they should also help you to make sure that the person you care for is looked after.

We keep a register of carers who are our patients so that we can support you, provide you with information about organisations that may be able to help you and let you know about any new services or support that becomes available.

Please ask at reception for help with registering yourself as a carer with the practice or discuss it with your Doctor / nurse.

2. Get the Carers Emergency Card:

The Carers Emergency Card is a card you can carry that identifies you as a carer so that if you are taken seriously ill or you have an accident, anybody who finds you can ring the number on the card and tell the Emergency Communications Team that the person you care for needs help. This team can then provide up to 72 hours of care for that person in their own home. The only information held on the card other than the emergency telephone number is your carer PIN Number; the card carries no other personal information about you or the person or people you care for.

If the person you care for pays Council Tax in Bristol call Care Direct to order your card on: 0117 922 2700 or email: adult.care@bristol.gov.uk

3. Tell social services you are a carer

You may also need practical support to care. This could be someone to sit with the person you care for while you go out, equipment to help you to lift or move the person you care for, or info about local carers support organisations. The best place to start looking for help is your local social services department. To get help, social services will usually assess the person you care for to see what help he/she might be eligible to receive. Carers who frequently provide help to the person they look after are also entitled to an assessment, called a Carers Assessment.

What sort of help can social services give?

Services for the person you care for could include:

- personal care, like help to get washed and dressed in the morning
- sitting services to enable you to leave the house for a few hours
- breaks for the person you care for (also called 'respite care')
- practical help such as help with cleaning, laundry or gardening
- aids and equipment
- adaptations to your home
- telecare alarm systems
- meals delivered on a daily basis.

Services for carers could include:

- practical help at home such as help with housework or gardening
- help with taxi fares or other travel
- counseling / alternative therapies to deal with emotional issues and stress
- information about local support groups for carers
- vouchers to enable carers to take a break from caring.

In Bristol, social services for adults is now called Adult Health and Social Care; the contact number to refer yourself and/or the person you care for is the Care Direct number 0117 922 2700. You can also email adult.care@bristol.gov.uk Children and Young People's services in Bristol, can be contacted on: 0117 922 2000.

Alternatively for independent advice about whether a carers assessment is right for you, call Carersline on 0117 965 2200.

4. Are you missing out on any money you are entitled to?

The benefit system is complicated and finding out what you are entitled to can be difficult. For example many people who are eligible for Carers Allowance are not aware of it and miss out as a result.

If you think you might be missing out or just want some advice on what you might be entitled to, please call your local Carers Line on 0117 965 2200. They will also be able to make sure the person you look after isn't missing out on any of their entitlements as many carers pay out of their own pockets to pay their relatives' bills.

5. Contact your local Carers' Support Centre

The Carers' Support Centre is a local charity that can provide you with information, advice and advocacy on any aspect of caring and local support services that might be useful.

They can put you in touch with other organisations that offer specialist support, for example support for carers of people with dementia, mental health problems, recovering from a stroke or dealing with drug and alcohol problems.

The Carers' Support Centre provides a range of services such as help with Carers assessments, volunteer sitting service, pamper days and subsidized carers holidays to give carers some time off from caring.

For information, advice or just an understanding, listening ear call the Carers' Support Centre confidentially: **CarersLine 0117 9652200**

6. Tell people at work you are a carer

Juggling work and looking after someone can be difficult. Having an understanding and knowledgeable employer or manager can make this easier. Telling work you are a carer is not always an easy step and you might feel it depends on whether your employer is likely to be supportive. However, there may be existing support you are not aware of, colleagues may be supportive or they may even be in a similar caring situation themselves.

As a carer you have the legal right to request **flexible working** to help you balance caring and work responsibilities - your employer has to seriously consider this request. You also have the right to time off in an emergency to care for someone.

You have the right to take a 'reasonable' amount of **time off work to deal with an emergency** involving a dependent. This right also includes some protection from victimization and dismissal. It is at the employer's discretion whether the leave is paid or unpaid.

7. Talk to someone about how being a carer affects you

Whether it's a friend, family member, community worker, GP, nurse or other professional many carers find it useful to be able to 'off load' the stresses and strains that caring can bring. It is important to be aware of the affect that caring has on you and your own health. Talking about this can help in itself or be the first step to getting the support that you need.

The Carers Support Centre provide free specialist counselling and telephone befriending services and carers' groups that meet regularly across the city to share practical ideas, support and friendship. To find out more about these options call **CarersLine 0117 9652200**

USEFUL ORGANISATIONS

- Bristol City Council Health and Social Care; Care Direct 0117 922 2700:
Website www.bristol.gov.uk ; provides information, advice, assessment and commissions and arranges care and support services
- Carers Support Centre; Carersline 0117 965 2200:
Website www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk provides information, advice and services focussed on supporting carers
- Black Carers Project; 0117 314 4664
Website www.bristolblackcarers.org.uk ; provides information, advice and services supporting carers from black and minority ethnic communities
- Carers' Support Centre Young Carers; 0117 939 2562:
Website www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk/young-carers ; provides information, advice, services and activities focussed on supporting young carers
- Rethink Carers Service; 0117 353 2042: Website www.rethink.org/bristolcarers ; provides support services for carers of people with mental health issues
- Well Aware; 0808 808 5252
Website www.wellaware.org.uk ; provides information on health, wellbeing and community resources
- Cedar Community Care (formerly Crossroads Care Bristol North); 0117 983 9955:
Website www.cedarcommunitycare.org.uk ; provides home based short breaks services for carers in North Bristol
- Crossroads Care Bristol South; 0117 353 3135:
Website www.crossroads.org.uk/bristolsouth ; provides home based short break services for carers in South Bristol
- Dhek Bhal; 0117 955 6971:
Website www.dhekbhal.org.uk ; provides support to carers principally from Bristol's South Asian communities
- Bristol and Avon Chinese Women's Group; 0117 935 1462;
Website www.bacwg.co.uk ; provides support to carers from Bristol's Chinese communities
- Carers Direct; 0808 8020202;
Website www.nhs.uk/CarersDirect ; provides a free national service offering information, advice and support for carers