



Carers, Families and Friends Guide

Book 4

Introduction

Cygnets' purpose is to make a positive difference in the lives of the individuals we care for, their loved ones and all those who work with us. Caring for people can be an opportunity to experience the joy that being compassionate can bring, but it can also be a challenging and stressful experience.



Who is a carer?

The Care Act 2014 defines a carer as:

“Someone who helps another person, usually a relative or a friend, in their day-to-day life so can be a spouse or partner, parent or child or other family members. This is not the same as someone who provides care professionally or through a voluntary organisation.”

We recognise mental health recovery can sometimes be complex and unpredictable being a family member, friend, or carer can be challenging and stressful. Family, friends and carers play a critical role in supporting recovery, but we occasionally recognise that you might need support too. A carer can be someone who gives substantial support regardless of whether they live together or have their role acknowledged by the person they care for.

Carer Assessment

Under The Care Act 2014, local authorities are responsible for assessing the needs of carers living in their area. Each local authority will have support services available for carers, and they have a duty to provide a directory of services that will be available on their local authority website. You can request an assessment of your needs, otherwise known as a Carer's Assessment, through the local authority in the area where you reside in. A carer's assessment allow carers to discuss their needs – the things that would make your caring role a little easier.

Am I eligible for a carer's assessment

Any person over the age of 18 (or 16-17 under special circumstances) who provides "substantial care on a regular basis" is entitled to a carer's assessment. This applies to all carers, whether caring full-time or combining care with paid work, and those who live with or in a separate home to the person they care for.

You are entitled to an assessment even if the person you care for does not want to receive any help or support.

What is the assessment like?

Your carer's assessment will be carried out by a health or social care professional on behalf of your local authority. It will examine your caring needs as well as helping you to think about how to maintain your own health and balance caring with your life, work and family commitments.

The assessment can also be useful in:

- > Exploring how you feel about caring
- > Giving you information on benefits and other support
- > Deciding if you want to stay in or return to work and how to make this happen.
- > A carer's assessment is about you: the person you care for does not need to be present unless you would prefer this.
- > You can also ask a friend, relative or advocate to be with you for the assessment

What happens after the assessment?

The assessment outcome will determine the services you receive, which may include respite breaks, help with household tasks, or support to access employment or education.

While you continue to provide care, your assessment should be reviewed regularly to pick up any changes in your needs. This usually occurs annually and more frequently if your situation is complex or your circumstances change significantly.

Contingency plans for carers (also called backup plans)

Many carers worry about what would happen if – for any reason – they are unable to provide support to the person they care for. A contingency plan can be written with you so that you can make arrangements for any support that needs to be provided in your absence. For example, a carer might experience an emergency when they are unable to support the person they care for.

It is your right to have this completed even if you do not want a carer assessment.



Your contingency plan would usually contain details such as:

- > A contact name and number of someone who is willing to help in an emergency, such as a
- > A relative or friend
- > Details of the support provided for the cared for person
- > Whether there are any access issues to the cared for person's accommodation
- > You can request a contingency plan from any service that offers you a carer assessment



Benefits

It is a known fact that many carers do not recognise they have become carers and therefore do not realise their entitlement to claim a range of benefits. In order for you to ascertain your rights to financial support and benefits, it is therefore important for you to **consider having a Carers Assessment to identify the level of financial support and benefits you are entitled to**. This is about meeting your needs and understanding how caring affects you.

Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) online guide offers information on a range of benefits, including the carer's allowance, attendance allowance and disability living allowance. The guidance is available at www.direct.gov.uk or call the DWP on: 0800 882200

Disability Living Allowance & Attendance Allowance

0845 123456 - 7.30am - 6.30pm (Monday to Friday)

Carer's Allowance

0845 6084321 - 8.30am - 5.00pm (Monday to Thursday) lines close at 4.30pm on Friday

The Citizens Advice Bureau (CAB)

offers a useful online advice guide. For more information see www.citizensadvice.org.uk – or contact your local CAB office Local Authority Welfare Rights Services and a number of voluntary agencies can give support and advice. For further information, visit: www.carerscentre.com or call them on 0800 161 3839.



Taking Care of Yourself

We recognise that being a carer can affect your own well-being and that it can be difficult to put your own needs first. Some carers identified that it can also help to connect with those who have been through similar experiences. **This is why Cygnet has Carer Networks.**

Cygnet's Carer Network

Do you have ideas about what would make Cygnet even better? Cygnet believes that service users, residents and carers can be influential partners in supporting change and improvements across our services by giving helpful feedback. We are looking for individuals with a lived experience of our services to join Cygnet's Carers Network and help influence and shape the design and improvement of our health and social care services.

In the voluntary role of a Service User or Carer Representative, you will be supported by Cygnet staff as equal partners in the development of local services and policies. For further information, please email Family, Friends and Carers



Family&Friends@cygnethealth.co.uk



Useful Resources

Florid - www.florid.org.uk

A website run by and for service users and carers – contains a directory of mental health services and services for carers, information about medications and a blog/chat room.

Carers Direct - www.nhs.uk/carersdirect

An NHS-run website containing information, advice and support for carers.

Carers Week - www.carersweek.org

Information about the annual week-long event to raise the profile of carers.

Caring with Confidence - www.caringwithconfidence.net

Caring with Confidence offers free learning and development opportunities to help carers build skills and knowledge.

Carers Trust - www.carers.org

This interactive website provides comprehensive information and details about local support services for carers.

YCNet - www.youngcarers.net

A supportive, online community of young carers for discussion or advice.

Young Carers Initiative (YCI) - www.youngcarer.com

A website providing information for young carers and their families.

Carers UK - www.carersuk.org.uk

Carers UK is the leading campaigning, policy and information organisation for carers.

Carers Direct Helpline **0808 802 0202**

This NHS-run helpline for carers offers advice and information about all aspects of caring. The helpline is open from 8am to 9pm Monday to Friday and from 11am to 4pm at weekends. Calls from UK landlines and Vodafone, T-Mobile and o2 mobile phone networks are free.

Recommended Reading

The Recovery Letters by James Withey and Olivia Sagan

A heartfelt collection of letters written by people recovering from depression, addressed to 'Dear You'. Providing hope, support and valuable insight for anyone touched by depression.

We're All Mad Here: Guide to Living with Social Anxiety by Claire Eastham

Covering everything from surviving university and the workplace through to social media, parties and dates, this guide details everything the author has learned through her experiences of living with anxiety.

Mindfulness: Guide to finding peace in a frantic world by Mark Williams & Danny Penman

Featuring downloadable audio meditations, this seminal book developed by leading mindfulness experts will suit even the most hectic life; from one-minute practices to a complete 8-week guide.

Notes on a Nervous Planet by Matt Haig

After experiencing years of anxiety and panic attacks, Matt Haig is on a mission to answer the biggest questions life has thrown at him: How can we stay sane on a planet that makes us mad? How do we stay human in a technological world? How do we feel happy when we are encouraged to be anxious?

The Bell Jar by Sylvia Plath

The novel is partially based on Plath's own life and her descent into mental illness and has become a modern classic. It follows Esther's spiral into serious depression as she grapples with difficult relationships and a society which refuses to take her aspirations seriously. The conscious caregiver helps readers with information about how to handle the emotional stress, practical information on medical needs and finance and how to care for themselves and their loved ones at the same time.

Overcoming Distressing Voices, 2nd Edition by Mark Hayward & David Kingdon

This accessible self-help manual takes those affected by distressing voices on a journey of recovery and healing, based on the latest psychological research. It includes explanations of what distressing voices are and what causes them and practical steps to reduce the distress that hearing voices causes. It provides consideration of the impact on friends and family, and advice for how they can help.

Additional Resources

Open Britain a one stop shop for accessible tourism in the UK

T: 0845 124 9971

E: info@tourismforall.org.uk

Get me out of the 4 walls offers respite breaks and holidays for disabled people and carers

E: referrals@getmeout.org.uk

Revitalise offers short term respite care for when you need a break

E: info@revitalise.org.uk

The Respite Association

T: 01566 783383

E: info@revitalise.org.uk





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