

What is a Carer? And, Learning from Safeguarding Adult Reviews

A carer is anyone who provides unpaid care and support to a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or substance use, cannot cope without their support. 'Care and support' can mean practical help or emotional support. Caring for someone with ongoing needs can be an extremely emotionally and physically demanding experience. Whilst many carers do this willingly and without complaint, sometimes over many years, the impact on their own health, wellbeing and capacity or ability to continue caring can go unrecognised, by themselves and others.

Safeguarding Adults Boards undertake Safeguarding Adult Reviews (SARs) to promote effective learning and improvement action to prevent future deaths or serious harm occurring. Oldham SARs have identified learning for services related to unpaid carers including: a lack of knowledge about the existence of a carer; a lack of understanding about the level of care being provided by a carer which then masks the person's level of care and support needs and could also therefore mask the true extent of the demands on the carer and the impact on their own health and wellbeing; and a belief that if the person has capacity, there is no benefit to investigating existence of or involving a carer.

A carer's role can often be viewed as an advocate for those who lack capacity rather than their potential as part of the care and support solution for the person they care for.

Request a Carer's Assessment and More Information

To request a Carer's assessment either contact the social worker of the person or contact Adult Social Care:

- Phone: 0161 770 7777
- Email: carers.services@oldham.gov.uk

The Oldham Council carer's team have a dedicated role to complete carer's assessments, offer emotional support, signposting and provide advice/information.

For more information visit or call:

[The Care Act 2014](#) and [Care Act Fact Sheets Assessments and the Care Act – Carers UK](#) -

Oldham Care Services

[Carers Direct](#) - free helpline: 0300 123 1053

[Age UK](#) - free helpline: 0800 055 6112

[Independent Age](#) - free helpline: 0800 319 6789

[Contact](#) (for families with disabled children) - free helpline:

0808 808 3555

What does a Carer's Assessment involve?

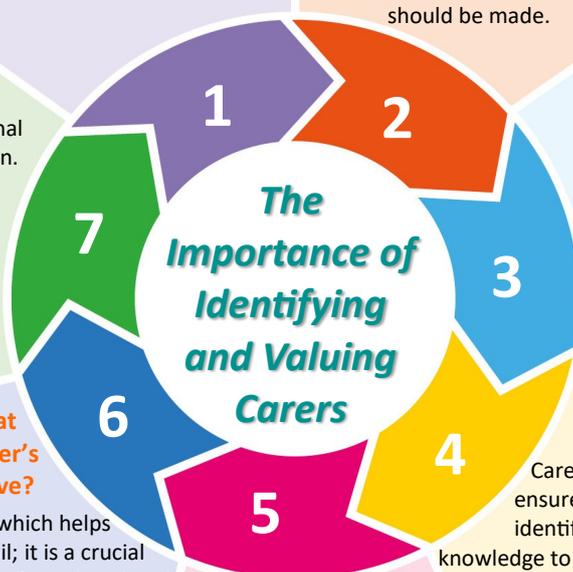
A Carer's Assessment is a supportive conversation which helps carers to think through their situation in more detail; it is a crucial way of helping them to be more aware of their situation, plan ahead and make decisions that will help them to manage their caring responsibilities realistically and protect their own wellbeing. A carer can have an assessment even if the person they care for does not get any help from the council. If the person and the person they care for agree, a combined assessment of both of their needs can be undertaken at the same time.

A Carer's Assessment considers carer's needs, regardless of the level of support or their financial circumstances and will cover:

- whether they are willing and able to carry on providing care
- their caring role and responsibilities and how these may affect their life and wellbeing
- their health; physical, mental and emotional issues
- their feelings and choices about caring
- work, study, training, leisure
- relationships, social activities and their goals
- housing
- planning for emergencies (such as a [Carer Emergency Scheme](#)).

Examples of questions that may be explored include:

- Is the carer able to get enough sleep or is their sleep disturbed by their caring role?
- How many hours a week do they provide care?
- Is there any equipment that would help the person they care for and allow the carer to care for them more safely?
- Does the carer need any training? For example, in first aid or in moving and handling the person they care for?



The Importance of Identifying and Valuing Carers

Is a Carer Entitled to Benefits or Services? Is there a charge?

If the person is looking after someone for 35 hours a week or more, they may be eligible for [Carer's Allowance](#): the main benefit for carers. [Attendance Allowance](#) is a benefit that helps with the extra costs of long-term illness or disability, which can be either physical and/or mental. It is for those who have reached State Pension age.

A Carer's Assessment will help to identify the type of support or services they need to maintain or improve their physical or emotional wellbeing. This can include signposting to voluntary sector services that are free at the point of access or they may be entitled to receive a carer's personal budget. Where the local council charges for carers services, such as carers breaks, they must carry out a financial assessment to work out whether the person has to contribute.

Examples of the kind of help that could be available to a carer are: someone to take over caring so they can take a one-off or regular break; gym membership and exercise classes to relieve stress; help with taxi fares if they don't drive; help with gardening and housework; training how to lift safely; putting them in touch with local social or peer support groups so they have people to talk to; and advice about benefits for carers.

Website: www.oldhamsafeguarding.org

Email: OldhamSafeguardingAdultsBoard@Oldham.gov.uk

The Importance of Carers

Carers are part of a strengths-based approach and can be key to identifying solutions. They can be a key partner in the care planning process; identifying solutions and providing support. They can help prevent the escalation of needs and provide greater insight into a person's real situation – they are expert partners and should be valued and treated as such.

Supporting carers helps to maintain and protect their health and wellbeing and can prevent future carer breakdown that can lead to services providing additional support to both the carer and the person they care for.

Carers are estimated to save the UK economy £132 billion per year, in Oldham this equates to over £380 million. This support is integral to developing a sustainable health and social care economy where all participants are seen and valued as equal partners.

Where the adult is reluctant to consent to the involvement of others who contribute to their care and support it is important to outline the benefits. Where the adult does not want the carer involved and it is a low risk situation, the adults wishes must be respected and the decision recorded. However, if there is reason for concern, consent can be overridden under Section 11 of the Care Act where there are high risks or Section 42 of the Care Act where there is a safeguarding concern. If the adult lacks capacity a best interest decision should be made.

Carer's Rights

Carer's have rights and can ask for help and how to go about getting that help. The local council must offer accessible advice and information about the support they offer carers including advice/information about a carer's right to an assessment.

Under [the Care Act 2014](#), the local council must undertake a Carer's Assessment for any carer over the age of 18 who they think may need support now, or in the future and have a duty to provide them with the financial and practical support they might need.

Additionally, carers juggling work with their caring role, also have employment rights. These include the right to request flexible working and to take unpaid time off during emergencies without affecting their employment.

Identifying a Carer

Carers should be identified as early as possible to ensure that appropriate support is offered. Early identification can support the carer with the tools and knowledge to enable them to manage their caring role while still having a life of their own and maintaining health and wellbeing.

Frontline practitioners play a critical role in helping people to recognise they are caring and signposting them to advice, support and information services. However, despite the large number of people providing care, many who take on caring responsibilities simply do not identify with the term 'carer' because they are related to the person they care for. So, as part of any Care Act Assessment or first contact following a referral into a service it's important to ask about the significant people in their life, who help with their care and support needs – even if it's just going for lunch and a chat twice a week. This may not always be the person recorded as their next of kin.

Because people don't see friends/family as carers it's important to ask people 'who is important in your life?' and 'what is it about them, or their role, that makes them important?'. Asking 'what does a typical fortnight/month look like?', can help practitioners understand social connections and interactions that are key to maintaining the person's wellbeing and individual resilience and can help to identify if there is someone who could be eligible for support as a carer.

