



Are you a carer?

A guide for residents who provide care and support to a family member or close friend



Harlington Hospice



Harlington Care



Hillingdon Carers Partnership

Working together for unpaid carers



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This guide is produced by Hillingdon Council and the Hillingdon Carers Partnership, who work closely together to support unpaid carers in Hillingdon. If you have recently become a carer – or have recently recognised that you are a carer – this guide will help you to find the right support to help you to manage your caring role.

This guide is not intended for people who are employed to provide care.

In Hillingdon, we pride ourselves on the great range of help available to unpaid carers and most services are free of charge. If you don't feel you need help right now, please contact the Hillingdon Carers Partnership anyway, so you know what is available if you start to feel the need for support.

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Are you a carer?

A carer can be any age, including children, and provides help to someone who wouldn't be able to manage their daily lives or who might be at risk without that help.

A carer might:

- provide practical help like washing, dressing, using the toilet, eating and drinking or getting in and out of bed
- offer supervision in terms of the personal safety of their loved one and others
- give psychological and emotional support
- manage the crises often associated with acute mental health conditions
- help their loved one to live as normal a life as possible including going into the community, having social contact with others or pursuing a hobby
- manage health appointments, medications and contact services for support
- manage the household budget, undertaking shopping, cooking and cleaning.

If you provide any of these services – or other help – then it is likely that you are a carer.

Carers can be parents, children, husbands, wives, life partners, neighbours or extended family members.



What does being a carer mean?

For many, caring is a natural part of an established relationship and it is common that people do not recognise themselves as carers.

Becoming a carer can happen in many ways. It might be as a result of:

- a slow process that develops gradually over time as a partner ages and develops a long-term condition such as heart disease or respiratory disorders
- a lifelong commitment such as a parent with a disabled child or a family member with a long-term acute mental health condition
- a sudden life-changing event such as an accident, a severe illness or episode such as a stroke or cancer, or
- a life-limiting, degenerative condition that means someone gradually requires more care and support, such as Parkinson's disease or multiple sclerosis.

For many, caring is a positive and rewarding experience but it can also be challenging. It is common for carers to experience impacts on their own lives, such as loss of income or financial hardship, loneliness and isolation, low mood, stress and anxiety or poor health as the needs of their loved ones take precedence over self-care. But rest assured, there is plenty of help out there and services are designed to overcome these challenges.



Although this guide is targeted at people who have recently become carers, the information on how to access help and support still applies if you have been caring for someone for a long time but were not aware that you might be able to get help.



What help and support is available?

A key message is that you are not alone, an email or phone call is all it takes.



Hillingdon Carers Partnership is led by Carers Trust Hillingdon. By contacting them, they will ensure that you also have access to the specialist support offered by their partners, Social Services and other council services and a broad range of other local and national charities.

That one call means you can access:

- **Information and advice:** Carers Trust Hillingdon's Advice Centre carries a range of information and fact sheets for carers. Their skilled Advice team can conduct a full welfare benefits check, help you to claim carer-related financial benefits and advise on other cost-savings that being a carer might mean, such as Council Tax discounts or Blue Badges. They will also be able to help you to navigate the often complex health and care system to get the right services in place for your loved one if they are needed.
- **Health and wellbeing:** There is always a great programme of activities on offer to help you to look after yourself, have time out from caring and to get support with the more challenging aspects of caring. These range from hobby groups to exercise classes to Carers Cafés and support groups – all opportunities are



designed to help carers stay connected and keep doing the things they enjoy, or to take up a new hobby.

- **Training:** you will find that you feel unprepared for some aspects of caring, such as managing a wheelchair, giving first aid, managing challenging behaviour or moving someone without hurting your back. There is a comprehensive range of training available and, if it is not available, the team will work really hard to try to provide it in the future through their well-established partnerships.



- **Specialist support:** In addition to core services, Carers Trust Hillingdon also works in close partnership with others. By registering as a carer, they can ensure that you receive specialist dementia support from the Alzheimer's Society, mental health support from Hillingdon Mind or time out from caring through the Carers Short Breaks service. This offers respite (replacement) care in the home for your loved one so you can have a break. The service is provided by Harlington Care who offer fully-trained care workers that can take over for a few hours.



How do I get help and what is a carer's assessment?

You only need to get in touch with us, we will do the rest.

Getting the right support usually starts with a carer's assessment. This is a review of the impact of your caring role so that the team can make sure that the right services are wrapped around you and your family. An assessment can be conducted in your home, at the Advice Centre or by phone. They will ensure that you are then supported by other services that will meet your needs. As well as services from the Partnership, they will also ask permission to refer you onwards if needed. This might be for a Social Services assessment for your loved one or to another charity that offers other specialist support.

Carer's assessments are for carers over 18 years old.



Can I be a carer if I'm under 18?

The answer is a resounding yes! Caring can start at any age and the Young Carers' Service works with children as young as five years old.

Caring as a child or young person can have a huge impact on personal development, educational attainment, mental health and wellbeing, aspirations and the life choices a young carer might make. Hillingdon's skilled Young Carers' team will assess the impact of a primary or secondary caring role on a child or young person and tailor packages of support accordingly.


They work closely with schools and colleges, Children's Services at the council, and other charities to ensure that young people are not disadvantaged by caring in their formative years. They also provide opportunities for young carers to enjoy as normal a childhood as possible.


If there are children in your household that provide care, or are affected by a caring situation, please use the same number to get help and support for them too.




How do I get in touch?

You can contact details Carers Trust Hillingdon by phone, email or online:


 01895 811206


 office@carerstrusthillingdon.org

 www.carerstrusthillingdon.org

For more information on social care and the services that the council offers, contact:

 www.hillingdon.gov.uk/socialcare

 socialcaredirect@hillingdon.gov.uk

 01895 556633 (Monday to Friday, 8am to 6pm)

