

CARERS ASSESSMENTS

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Carers have a legal right, under statutory law to an assessment of their needs. This is your chance to discuss with social services what help you need with caring. You can also discuss any help that would maintain your own health and balance caring with other aspects of your life, like work and family. Social services use the assessment to decide what help to provide you with.

SOME COMMON QUESTIONS ABOUT ASSESSMENTS

Do I qualify for a carer's assessment?

The law says you have a right to an assessment if you care for someone for 'a substantial amount of time on a regular basis', this is not defined any further.

Whether you are a carer living with or away from the person you care for, caring full time or combining care with paid work - you have a right to a carer's assessment. If you are aged over 16, your right to an assessment is not affected, even if the person you care for does not want to receive help from social services.

You also have a right to an assessment if you intend to look after someone, for example, if your friend or relative is in hospital and you expect to look after them when they come back home. It may also be very helpful to ask for an assessment if you intend giving up work.

If you look after a disabled child you also have a right to an assessment. You do not always have to be the child's parent, but must have parental responsibility for the child.

Sadly, not all professionals are aware of carers' right to an assessment and some carers are wrongly told that they are not entitled to one. If this happens to you and you believe you are entitled to an assessment, you should put your request in writing and ask why you are being refused an assessment.

You should also seek advice from a local carer's organisation or Citizen Advice Bureau.

CONTACT DETAILS

Southwark Carers
Cambridge House
1 Addington Square
Camberwell
London
SE5 0HF
- 020 7708 4497

Bermondsey CAB
8 Market Place
Southwark Park Road
London
SE16 3UQ
- 0844 499 4134

Peckham CAB
97 Peckham High Street
London
SE15 5RS
- 0844 499 4134

Southwark Carers

Cambridge House 1 Addington Square, Camberwell, London, SE5 0HF
T: 020 7708 4497 E: info@southwarkcarers.org.uk W: www.southwarkcarers.org.uk

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What is the purpose of a carer's assessment?

The person carrying out the assessment shouldn't assume you want to take on a caring role or continue caring. They should ask if you are able and willing to carry out the tasks involved. For instance, you may find it hard to move someone in a wheelchair due to your own health problems or you may suffer from stress in coping with the challenging behaviour of the person you care for. You still care about the person you look after, but you may no longer be able to care for them physically and mentally.

As well as looking at the help you need, the assessment can be useful in:

- Exploring how you feel about caring with a professional
- Giving you information on benefits and support that is available to you such as carers groups.
- Deciding if you want to stay or return to work and how to make this possible.
- Looking at how caring may affect you in the future and what help you might need.

How do I get an assessment?

You may be offered a carer's assessment by your social services department. If not, you can ask for one.

You can also ask your GP or district nurse to contact social services for you.

If the person you look after is in hospital, speak to a nurse and ask to be put in touch with a hospital social worker. For more information on this please refer to our hospital discharge leaflet.

CONTACT DETAILS

NHS Assessment Centres

King's Hospital

Betty Alexander Suite
Dulwich Hospital
East Dulwich Grove
London SE22 8PT
- 020 3299 6404

Guy's and St Thomas' Hospital

Elderly Care Unit at St Thomas' Hospital
Ground floor, Lambeth Wing
Westminster Bridge
London SE1 7EH
- 020 7188 7188 extension 82000

District Nursing Teams:

Aylesbury Health Centre

Taplow House Thurlow Street London SE17 2UN
- 020 7771 3920

Bermondsey Health Centre

108 Grange Road
Bermondsey London SE1 3BW
- 020 7771 3527

Townley Road Clinic

121 Townley Road East
Dulwich London SE22 8SW
- 020 7771 3618

Lister Health Centre

101 Peckham Road
Peckham London SE15 5LJ
- 020 7771 3809

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Is there anything I can do to help me prepare for my assessment?

You may find it hard to think about what is involved in caring, as you just see it as part of everyday life. It is even harder to pinpoint what is involved in looking after someone with mental health needs.

If possible, talk to the person you care for before you call social services and agree what points you want to raise. You will both be involved in the assessment. If there are aspects of your situation you would rather discuss in confidence with a social worker, you are entitled to ask for a separate assessment on your own.

If either you or the person you care for has difficulty communicating, let social services know and they will provide help.

You may find this checklist useful in preparing for your assessment:

Housing

- Do you and the person you care for live together or apart? Is this arrangement satisfactory? If not, what changes are needed?
- Does the person you care for have difficulty moving about in the home? (e.g. can they climb the stairs or bathe on their own?)
- Aids or adaptations to your home may make it easier for you and the person you look after.

Health

- Does the person you care for have any health problems you find hard to deal with?
- Are you getting enough sleep?
- Do you have any health problems?
- Are you stressed, anxious or depressed?

Work

- Are you struggling to combine work and caring?
- Have you had to reduce your hours of work?
- Would you like to return to work?

Other interests

- Do you want to do any training or adult education?
- Do you want to pursue any leisure interests but can't because of your caring role?

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Time

- How many hours a week do you care? Include all the time you spend with the person you care for, the tasks you do for them and how long they take you.

Tasks

- Consider the help that you provide - Housework / shopping / laundry / bathing / assisting with toiletry needs / cooking / dealing with money or pensions / administering medications etc.
- List the tasks you would most like help with, putting the most important first.
- Do you have to help during the day or night - or both?
- Are there things you enjoy which you can't do any more due to caring responsibilities? E.g. cinema, hobbies, seeing friends
- When was the last time you had a whole day to yourself to do as you pleased?

Feelings

- Do you feel you don't have a choice about providing care?
- What would you most like to change about your situation?

Relationships

- Is caring affecting your relationship with the person you look after, family and friends?
- If you are a parent, is caring making this role harder?
- Do you feel you have time for your children?

Dealing with emergencies and unplanned events

- Do you need help in planning what happens if you suddenly become ill or have an emergency?
- Do you know who to contact in an emergency?

The future

- Are you concerned at all about the future for you and the person you care for?

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What will happen at the assessment?

Usually a social worker or a member of social services will carry out the assessment. A meeting may also be needed with your GP or nurse if a lot of care is required.

The quality of carers' assessments can vary, with some workers having a good understanding of how to help carers, but this is not always the case. It is important the social worker is aware of your situation. You are entitled to have a friend or advocate present at the assessment.

If you feel certain aspects of your caring role were not fully covered during your assessment, you may contact the social worker and arrange a follow up visit. This is quite common - people's lives are often complex and it can be tough to talk about difficult issues regarding close relationships.

The social worker should explore with you the various support and services available to help you to look after the person you care for. Social services can give help and support directly to you, or give help directly to the person you care for.

If your caring situation is likely to continue for at least the foreseeable future, the social worker should set a date to review your needs and see if the help provided is working out. This is usually at least on an annual basis and more frequently if you are new to caring and your situation is complex.

What will happen after the assessment?

It is important that you are able to make an informed choice about how much you do (or want to take on in the future) as a carer. When social services decide what help and services to provide, they have to take into account the results of both your carer's assessment and the community care assessment of the person you care for. They will summarise this in a care plan for the person you look after – a copy will be given to both of you.

Local authorities are required to set out how they make decisions about whether or not to provide services. These are termed eligibility criteria. The needs identified in the assessments are compared against their eligibility criteria. If the needs of the person that you look after match these eligibility criteria, the local authority must provide services to meet their needs.

CONTACT DETAILS

Southwark Council
Health & Social Care Call Centre
- 020 7525 3838
csc@southwark.gov.uk

Cambridge House Advocacy
- 020 7358 7000

Southwark Carers
Cambridge House
1 Addington Square
Camberwell
London
SE5 0HF
020 7708 4497

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You can obtain a copy of their eligibility criteria by phoning your local authority and asking for their Better Care, Higher Standards Charter.

Social services are only required to meet the needs that no-one else is willing to meet. It is important that if you are unable or unwilling to provide care or any aspect of caring, that this should be taken into account by the local authority when deciding what services to provide. For example, you may be willing to provide the bulk of the care as long as you get a regular break or services to fit around your job. Try to be clear about what level of care you can manage. If you feel under pressure to accept inadequate services, seek advice from Citizens Advice Bureau, your local Carers Centre or ring CarersLine.

Social services cannot refuse to meet a need they have identified solely on the basis that they do not have the money or other resources.

The person that you look after can refuse help from social services. This may leave you as a carer with very little or no support. If this is the case, it is important that the local authority should consider other areas of support which may ease some of the pressures of caring. For instance, help with cleaning your own house or washing could benefit you. Taxi fares may assist you to get to hospital appointments or help get you to work on time. A mobile phone could help you keep in touch and give you peace of mind. These services are examples of carers' services which will be provided to you rather than the person you care for.

Social services must make it clear which services are for you and which are for the person you are looking after.

What happens if I am not satisfied with the outcome?

You may be unhappy with how your assessment was carried out. You may be dissatisfied with the decision about what services will be provided to you and the person you look after. Advice centres like the Citizens Advice Bureau or a disability organisation can help you make a complaint or give you details of lawyers able to advise on community care law.

Social services have a procedure for dealing with concerns and complaints that must be followed.

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8 Market Place
Southwark Park Road
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SE16 3UQ
0844 499 4134

Peckham CAB

97 Peckham High Street
London
SE15 5RS
0844 499 4134

Carers Line

0808 808 7777

Social Services Complaints

The Complaints Manager
Liberata (L B Southwark)
P.O.Box 782
Bromley
BR1 3YE
Southwark-complaints@liberata.com



Further Information

Carers UK provide a downloadable guide to challenging decisions and making a complaint.

<http://www.carersuk.org/Information/Helpwithcaring/Challengingdecisionsandcomplaints>

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