

## **Information, Advice, and Getting Support from Social Care**

### **Introduction**

As a carer, it's important to get the right information when you are caring for someone. Whether you're a new carer or you've been caring for a long time, this factsheet can tell you where to find the information and advice you need. It will also cover how adult social care works, and what you can do to get more help.

### ***Am I a carer?***

A carer looks after a family member, friend, partner or neighbour who needs support due to illness, disability or old age. The help carers give is unpaid, though you may still receive Carer's Allowance or other benefits. You do not have to care full time, receive Carer's Allowance or live with the person you care for to be a carer.

Please note that any organisations listed are included for information only, and listing does not mean recommendation.

### **Carers Information Service**

Our Carers Support Centre is located at 24 George Street, Croydon, CR0 1PB – open Monday – Friday (excl. Thursday) 10am-1pm.



020 8649 9339 (option 1)



[enquiries@carersinfo.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@carersinfo.org.uk)



[www.carersinfo.org.uk](http://www.carersinfo.org.uk)

The Carers Information Service provides information, advice and support for carers who either live in, or care for someone who lives in the London Borough of Croydon. We are part of the John Whitgift Foundation and supported by Croydon Council.



The Carers Information Service runs the Carers Support Centre, a drop-in advice and support hub for carers. You can find the following support at the centre which offer a range of services, including:

- **Drop-in advice and support** from an advice worker,
- **Information and advice** by email, over the phone, via video call, or via our website,
- **Casework support** for carers with more complex queries,
- **Regular advice surgeries** covering benefits, debt, mental health and more,
- **Form-filling appointments** helping you submit important applications to the fullest level of detail,
- **Carer's Assessments** to assess a carer's support needs,
- **Carer's Café** offering free refreshments with access to books, games, Wi-Fi, and peer support (open Mon, Weds, Fri – 10:30am-12:30pm)
- **Workshops and events** such as writing clubs, choir practices, and book clubs,
- **Information literature** including information packs on what to do as a carer looking for answers in Croydon,
- **Online and physical directory of local services** for carers,
- **Regular newsletter and e-bulletin**,
- **Free membership of the Carers Support Centre**, proof of your caring role,
- **Emergency Carers Cards**, a card you carry to be viewed by emergency services in the event you are unable to carry on your caring role.

### **I am a young carer, where can I go for help?**

If you are under 26 and look after a friend, neighbour or relative in a way that might normally be expected of an adult, you are a young carer.

Young carers give all different kinds of support. You may do practical things like cleaning and cooking, help with medication, sort out appointments, help care for younger siblings and/or provide emotional support and a shoulder to cry on.

If you are a young carer, it's important to get support for yourself. Even talking about your situation and getting things off your chest can help. The Off the Record Young Carers Service offers emotional support, social activities, help with education and counselling to young carers in Croydon.

If you are aged 7-25, live in Croydon and care for someone with a physical disability, mental health issue, long-term illness or learning disability, call the Young Carers Service on 020 8251 0251 (Mon to Sat, 3pm-6pm) or email: [youngcarers@talkofftherecord.org](mailto:youngcarers@talkofftherecord.org).

The Carers Information Service also provides services to carers 18-25.

### **What is social care and support?**

Social care is support provided by a local authority's adult social care department (also known as adult social services) to someone who needs extra help due to illness, disability or old age. Support provided by social care is based on a person's needs, rather than their condition or diagnosis.

Support provided by social care may include:

- Information, advice and signposting to other sources of support,
- Equipment to prevent, reduce, or delay a person's needs and support dependence,
- Equipment and adaptations to ensure a person's home remains safe and accessible,
- Daytime activities such as lunch clubs and day centres,
- Support to get out and about,
- Telecare – a range of devices installed in a person's home to support their independence,

- Practical care and support at home,
- Respite care in a range of settings so you can have a break,
- Direct payments to have more control over choosing and managing support,
- 24-hour care in a residential home.

## Care Needs Assessment

You can ask for support for an adult by asking for a Needs Assessment under the Care Act of 2014.

You may wish to look at what information is available from community support organisations before requesting an assessment. You can use our directories online or via hard copy to have a look at local support organisations.

Local councils must conduct an assessment if a person appears to have needs for support, even if their needs are at first glance not substantial enough to meet the eligibility criteria. A person can refuse a needs assessment, should they wish. When asking for a Needs Assessment, you can also ask for an assessment of your own needs as a carer, known as a Carer's Assessment. Find out more on this in this factsheet.

In Croydon, most Needs Assessments are conducted by Croydon Adult Social Care. However, there is an exception: when the person in need of support lives outside Croydon – it is the responsibility of the social care department where the person lives to carry out a Needs Assessment. For example, if you live in Croydon but the person you care for lives in Lewisham, you should speak to the adult social care team in Lewisham for a Needs Assessment. However, if you live outside Croydon but the person you care for lives in Croydon, you should ask Croydon Adult Social Services for a Needs Assessment.

### *Requesting a Needs Assessment*

To request a Needs Assessment, you will need to contact Croydon Adult Social Care:

- Call: 020 8726 6500
- Online referral: <https://my.croydon.gov.uk/contactreferrals>
- Write to: The Contact Centre, Adult Social Care, Bernard Weatherill House, Mint Walk, Croydon, CR0 1EA

Based on the information provided during this initial assessment, a range of advice and information will be suggested. Where a further, more in-depth assessment is required, a referral will be made by Croydon Council's central duty team to the relevant team in adult social care. For example, this could be the learning disability team, the physical disability team or an older person's team.

Someone from the team, usually a social worker or care manager, will contact you to arrange the assessment. If the person you care for needs an interpreter, you can ask for one to be present during the assessment.

### *How a Needs Assessment works*

A Needs Assessment looks at how a person can be supported to maintain their wellbeing, independence and quality of life. As the carer, you can be involved in the assessment, as long as the person you care for agrees.

The person doing the assessment should be appropriately trained with the right skills and knowledge to do assessments. Assessments are typically conducted in person, though a supported self-assessment can be offered where the person is able to complete the assessment themselves and this is verified by the social worker. If the person you support has problems with communication or may lack the mental capacity (ability to make informed decisions) to complete the form on their own, a self-assessment is unlikely to be appropriate.

The Care Act states that the person who needs support should be involved as much as possible in their assessment. If the person would have 'substantial difficulty' in understanding the assessment process, an appropriate person should support them. You, as the carer, may fulfil this role. However, if there is no one appropriate to support the person, the council must appoint an advocate.



The Needs Assessment of the person you care for should look at the following:

- The person's needs and how you meet their needs as a carer.
- Their choices and goals. For example, if they wish to take up a new activity, meet up with friends, etc.
- Their preferences for their day-to-day care and support, including any cultural needs.
- What support is needed to prevent or delay further needs from developing. For example, Croydon Council may offer a period of reablement to help the person regain skills.
- The needs of their family/carer(s).

Visit Carers UK for more information on Needs Assessments: [www.carersuk.org/needs-assessment](http://www.carersuk.org/needs-assessment)

The Needs Assessment should look at the person's needs regardless of any support you provide as a carer. It is therefore important to be clear about the support you provide, the impact it has on you and what additional support would make a difference (e.g. replacement care so you can have a short break, support workers visiting the home to help with personal care, etc.). Be as honest as possible - it is not an admission of failure to say you are struggling.

### **Care Plans**

If the person you care for is assessed as being eligible for support, the council should create a care plan, explaining how their eligible needs will be met. Even if you as the carer are already meeting the assessed needs, the care plan should record this. Care plans should be drawn up collaboratively between the person who needs support and the council. As a carer, you should be involved in drawing up the care plan, as long as the person you care for agrees.

Care plans should be kept under regular review, typically annually at least. If the needs of the person you care for change, you can request a care plan review. Any request should be properly considered and only turned down for a good reason.

Once the final care plan is agreed to, the person you care for should be given a copy. You should also receive a copy with the person's consent. If you do not receive a copy, it is important to request one, as it may help you in future should you have any concerns about care or if circumstances change.

## Reviews

People's needs can change over time, so Needs Assessments should be reviewed regularly. Typically, reviews are carried out on a yearly basis. If a review is not scheduled but the level or nature of needs has changed, ask for an earlier review.

## Eligibility

After the Needs Assessment, Croydon Council will decide if the person you care for is eligible for support. Under the Care Act, all local authorities must apply the national eligibility criteria when making this decision.

To meet the eligibility criteria, a person must:

- Have a mental health problem or physical condition (not necessarily diagnosed) that means they have care and support needs.
- Be unable to meet two of the listed outcomes (goals) as a result of their condition. These include: maintaining nutrition, being safe in their own home, maintaining a habitable home, developing or maintaining relationships, being able to access education, employment or training if they want to, etc.
- As a result of not meeting these outcomes, there is or is likely to be a significant impact on their wellbeing.

Find the full eligibility criteria on the Social Care Institute for Excellence (SCIE) website:  
<https://www.scie.org.uk/assessment-and-eligibility/>

## Financial Assessment

If the local council assesses the person you care for as requiring support, including respite, they will be financially assessed to determine whether they need to pay for all or part of their care. The financial assessment assesses capital and income. Capital includes savings, investments, property, land and business assets. Income includes benefits, pensions and earnings, though some forms of income will be disregarded.

*If you have less than £23,250 in savings, you may get some or all of your adult social care costs covered.* A financial assessment will determine any financial support you are eligible for.

*If one's capital is more than £14,250, but less than £23,250, a 'tariff income' of £1 for each £250 above the lower limit will be added to their weekly income for the purposes of the assessment.*

*If you have savings over the £23,250 threshold, you will not be eligible to receive financial support on your Needs Assessment through Croydon Council.*

For more information visit:

<https://www.croydon.gov.uk/adult-health-and-social-care/paying-adult-social-care/paying-residential-care-or-care-home>

## Carer's Assessments

Any carer over 18 has the right to a statutory Carer's Assessment, under the Care Act 2014. This is usually carried out by the local authority or their commissioned service.

A Carer's Assessment is a way of recording the impact caring has on your life and exploring your support options. If you meet the eligibility criteria, you may be entitled to support from the local authority to meet your assessed needs.

The Carers Information Service is commissioned by Croydon Council to provide Carer's Assessments for adults caring for another adult in the borough, whose cared for does not have a package of care in place.

Your assessor will ask you questions about your caring role, how caring affects you, your goals and what would help you reach those goals. The assessor will use your responses to see if you meet the eligibility criteria for further support. You may also be given information and advice during the assessment to support you in your caring role.

Once the assessment has been completed, you may receive a Carer's Personal Budget to meet your eligible assessed needs.

In the case that you would like to request a Carer's Assessment, please contact the Carers Information Service on 020 8649 9339 (option 1) or email [enquiries@carersinfo.org.uk](mailto:enquiries@carersinfo.org.uk).

Your Carer's Assessment is free of charge. If the person you care for receives a support service, a financial assessment will be provided to arrange costing. For example, if you are offered a service, the person you care for may be assessed by Croydon Council for their ability to pay. Please note that you can request a review of your Carer's Assessment every 12 months.

### *Preparing for a Carer's Assessment*

Here are some ideas to help you prepare for your Carer's Assessment. Write down the answers and take any notes with you to your assessment.

1. Keep a diary of the needs of the person you support, as well as your caring responsibilities.
2. Think about which tasks you would most like help with. Put these in order of priority.
3. Would adaptations to the home, or an item of equipment, make caring easier or safer?
4. Think about the impact caring has on your physical and mental wellbeing. Do you feel more tired, stressed or isolated?
5. Is your caring role making it more difficult to pursue your work, study or leisure interests?
6. How is your family life affected by your caring role?
7. Do you want to continue in your caring role? If you do, would you like to do less?
8. Think about what would happen in an emergency. Who would look after the person you care for?