



A Guide to Identifying and Supporting Carers in Your Practice

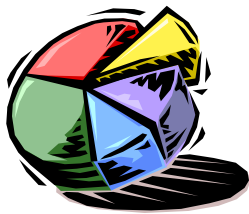


A carer is someone who, without payment, provides help and support to a relative, friend or neighbour who otherwise may not manage because of their disability, frailty or illness.

Why Identify Carers?

Many carers have health problems of their own which they may neglect. These health problems are often caused or exacerbated by the physical and emotional demands of their caring role.

If the carer's health fails the likelihood is that statutory services will have to pick up some or all of the caring role. Support for carers therefore is likely to be both a cost-effective use of resources and something that is right in principle.



Statistics

- Currently **1 in 10 adults** in the UK are carers and nearly half are men.
- The chances of becoming a carer are rising dramatically, expected to be **1 in 5 by 2010**.
- **80%** of carers say that caring has had an adverse effect on their health.

How to Find Which of Your Patients are Carers

- **Pool your knowledge as a team**

Doctors, receptionists, practice nurses, district nurses, community psychiatric nurses, practice manager etc will all know someone who is a carer. You will be surprised how many carers you know without having been aware of their roles.

- **Add questions about caring to existing literature, such as:**

- surgery leaflet
- new patient questionnaires
- repeat prescription forms.

- **Ask questions about caring at routine health checks.**

- Well woman and man clinics
- Older people's health checks
- Diabetic clinics
- Flu vaccination
- Asthma clinics

- **Promotional material**

- Designate an area for displaying carer information in the waiting room.
- Self-registration leaflets for those patients wishing to be added to the Carers Register can be displayed in the waiting room.
- Leaflets can be given out as appropriate by district nurses, health visitor's etc. during the course of their work.

Registration Pathway

1. Carer fills in self-registration form giving consent to be added to register. Forms are available at: www.gatesheadcrossroads.org.uk or by contacting Gateshead Crossroads Primary Care Worker.
2. Form is handed in to reception at their GP surgery.
3. The computer held notes are tagged with a Read Code (918A), some details on their caring role can be added.
4. Someone in the practice then needs to ensure the carer is given a Carers Information Pack. Packs are available from the Primary Care Worker at Gateshead Crossroads.
5. Ongoing support and recognition of the carer by the practice. It would be excellent practice to consider an annual offer of a health check to the carer.
6. Regular maintenance of the register. Situations will change and some carers may find they no longer have a caring role. Regularly highlighting carer issues on the notice board and in the practice newsletter may help patients to keep the practice informed of any changes in their circumstances.



Note: Some practices may want to record patients who have a carer Read Code (918F). Consent would need to be sought to cross-reference their notes with the person caring for them. However, this would not always be appropriate as they may be registered with another practice.

How You Can Support Carers

- **A named lead – ‘link worker’** in each practice makes the administration of the register easier, ensuring the whole team is kept informed of any carer-related events, information or legislation.
- **Signposting** carers to appropriate services, e.g. the Primary Care Worker at Gateshead Crossroads. All staff members need to be aware of contact numbers.
- **Consultation** with carers is important on issues such as care arrangements for the person they are caring for. Too frequently nobody stops to ask if the carer can cope.
- **Information** about illnesses and treatments will help carers manage the demands on them. Letting them know they are entitled to have a carer’s assessment from Social Services is also important.
- **Health checks** for carers would ensure that carers’ health is protected as much as possible. Carers often neglect themselves in their efforts to look after someone else.
- **Prioritising appointments:** Some practices already have lists of patients who are prioritised for appointments. Consider giving carers the same priority, especially those in stressful or demanding situations. It can be difficult sitting in the waiting room for long periods with a child or adult who has behavioural problems; carers can also become extremely anxious about leaving the person they care for to attend lengthy surgery appointments.

We must continue in our efforts to identify carers and provide information to assist them in their caring role. Despite advances in policy and practice, a significant proportion of carers remain hidden, unaware of their entitlement to services and benefits.

By promoting the links between Primary Health Care and Care or Voluntary Organisations, we should be able to offer support to carers before they reach crisis point.

If you have any queries or require information for your surgery, please contact Primary Care Worker, Gateshead Crossroads on 0191 478 2423.

The booklet is available on our website and can be downloaded at www.gatesheadcrossroads.org.uk. Our website contains a full guide to Gateshead Crossroads services, including how to access our services and useful carer links.

We would appreciate your comments on this guide as this will help us to improve our Primary Care Service. Our contact details are on the back page of this guide.

How to Contact Us



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**If you require this information in other
formats, please contact us.**

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