



Northern Health  
and Social Care Trust

## Support for Family Carers



Committed  
to carer support

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and Social Care Trust

## Foreword

We are committed to providing a programme of support for informal and unpaid family carers to develop skills and promote physical and mental health wellbeing. The programme is co-produced with carers and we have heard many excellent examples of what support can look like and how it can help to maintain the caring role.

Health and social care organisations provide a range of support and as a carer you may come into contact with a number of professionals. We have been told that it would be helpful to describe the role of each of these professionals and so have provided you with this information.

The rest of this booklet details some of the other suggestions we have received from carers on what support can look like, how it can look different to everyone and ideas that will help you develop your own support network.

To all the carers who have given us suggestions - you have taught us so much, we had so much fun, we loved meeting with you and our ongoing connection is so valuable. Thank you for giving up your time to help us with this booklet.

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**Support: to help someone  
emotionally or in a  
practical way**

Support from family, friends and care providers is definitely helpful but it is useful to know what other support is available to help you in your caring role.

**Support comes in many forms  
and can look like different things  
to different people.**

Over the next few pages you can read about the types of support available.

## **1. Healthcare Professionals**

Throughout your caring role you are likely to come into contact with a range of different staff from local health or social services. You will be familiar with the term key worker or named worker – this will be a healthcare professional who is your point of contact for the care of your loved one.

### **General Practitioner (GP)**

As a starting point for your own health care needs you will attend your GP. You can see a GP in their surgery and they will advise you about any health worries you may have. Your GP can talk to you about the impact of your caring role, any symptoms and problems you may have and refer you to other health and social care professionals who could provide support. It is worthwhile letting your GP know that you are looking after someone. Your GP can also make a referral for the person you care for into the appropriate service to ensure you receive the right support.

## **Social Workers**

Social workers can work in the hospital or in the community in different teams or services. These teams or services can offer an assessment for the cared for person. They can also offer the opportunity to complete a carer assessment along with you which will enable you to discuss the extent of your caring role. This will help to understand or review your situation.

Social workers help identify your needs to enable them to set up support if it is required. They can also offer advice on practical matters such as short breaks, welfare benefits or they can link you with other appropriate organisations.

**These teams or services can offer you or the cared for person an assessment to understand or review your situation.**

## **Community Care Support Worker**

Community care support workers work alongside social work teams and may visit you with or without that social worker. They can offer information, support and advice on local health and social services. They can also advise on the use of equipment and provide information about local community and voluntary organisations that offer support. They may also offer to carry out a carer assessment.

## **Occupational Therapist (OT)**

Occupational therapists treat and rehabilitate people with physical and mental health conditions. They use specially selected activities to help people who have recently come through an illness/injury or who live with a disability to be as independent as possible. They can also carry out a carer assessment.

## **Specialist Nurse**

Specialist nurses are registered nurses with a high degree of knowledge and skill in a specialised area, for example diabetes, MS or Mental Health.

## **District Nurse**

District nurses provide care and support to patients within their own home. District nurses work closely with GPs and other health care professionals to provide a service tailored to meet individual needs.

## **Community Psychiatric Nurse (CPN)**

Community mental health nurses/CPNs are registered nurses who are trained in mental health. They can talk to you about ways to cope with a mental illness as well as more longstanding mental health concerns such as depression or Alzheimers. They can also help with medication.

## **Physiotherapist**

A physiotherapist can help someone who has been affected by injury, illness or disability through movement and exercise, manual therapy, education and advice. They help patients of any age to manage pain and prevent disease.

## **Consultant**

A Consultant can be based in a community or hospital setting and will practise within a specialty ie, Psychiatry, Rheumatology, Neurology. They will carry out investigations and procedures necessary to establish a diagnosis, and then give advice and provide treatment where necessary. They will often offer follow up/review appointments to keep a check on how their patient is progressing.

## **2. Carer Assessment**

A carer assessment is an opportunity for you to tell your named worker about the extent of care you provide and how it affects your life. It is NOT an assessment about your ability to care for your relative or friend. Along with your named worker (for example a social worker, OT, CPN), you will have the opportunity to chat about how your caring role affects you, and to identify any extra support needed to help you continue to care.

### **What will I get from a carer assessment?**

Carers have found that preparing for the assessment has helped them to think more clearly about their caring situation. Having a carer assessment gives you the time to think about how caring affects your physical and emotional health, what you find difficult at the minute and any concerns you have for the future.

**This is an opportunity for you to tell your named worker about the extent of care you provide and how it affects your life.**

More information can be found on our carer assessment leaflet.

**<http://www.northerntrust.hscni.net/site/wp-content/uploads/2019/06/Carers-Assessment-Leaflet-for-carers-2019.pdf>**

### 3. Carer Hub

The Carer Hub based within the Northern Health and Social Care Trust is a central point of contact for all carers and staff members who may require signposting or information about what's available across the area.

**The Carer Hub is a dedicated  
telephone number that you can  
call Monday to Friday 9am to 5pm  
028 2766 1210**

The Carer Hub produces a carer support programme twice a year. This programme offers classes for example; first aid training, mindfulness and peer support opportunities like our Carer Catch Ups across each area of the Trust. The programme is developed by carers for carers based on the Take 5 Steps to Wellbeing initiative.





Take 5 encourages each of us to look at how we can support ourselves through five simple steps:

**Be Active** – going for a walk, joining a class, gardening, just getting fresh air, exercising makes you feel good.

**Connect** – connecting with people around you and building on these relationships will help support you every day.

**Keep Learning** – don't be afraid to try something new, take on a different responsibility or rediscover an old hobby. Learning something new will make you more confident.

**Take Notice** – stop, pause and take a moment to yourself. Look for beautiful, new or extraordinary things in your everyday life.

**Give** – do something nice for a friend or stranger, volunteer your time, look out as well as in.

## 4. Supporting Ourselves

When we think about support it's worthwhile to take stock of how we can support ourselves in everyday life and throughout stressful periods. Whilst support from others is important, we can also think about how we support ourselves.

We can support ourselves through our daily practices and routines e.g. good quality and quantity sleep, nutrition, exercise and hydration.

**Don't underestimate the importance of these key daily practices. If you are lacking in one area it can impact your overall wellbeing.**

We can support ourselves by taking some time out to do things that we enjoy or through relaxation such as mindfulness, whether that be through an active mindfulness practice or by taking part in an activity like gardening or completing a word search.

**Try to set aside a small amount of time each day to do something for yourself – this will support your wellbeing.**

Also think about the strengths and qualities that you have gained over the years. What challenges have you faced in the past? How did you get through them? When we think about previous challenges we have faced and our own strengths, we can then recognise how resilient we have been. This can lead to us having more confidence to face new challenges.

## 5. Online Support

To help you think about your own strengths and internal support you can access a free e-learning course on building resilience through the Northern Trust Carer website.

Visit **[www.carersdigital.org](http://www.carersdigital.org)** Create an account using your own personal email address and enter the free access code DGTL2770

'About Me' will help you understand the importance of building networks and how you can identify and find resources to help.

**This interactive way of learning helps to build emotional and physical resilience and prevents caring becoming overwhelming.**

Through this website you can also download free resources and guides to help with your caring role and get nutritional advice and you can also download the Jointly app for free using the access code.

Jointly is an app that helps you to share the care or organise the care for the person you look after. The app has many features like messaging, setting tasks, calendar function. You can share the care with other family members as they can be assigned roles. Jointly is secure and works offline.

## 6. Other types of support

As we have mentioned support can come in many forms. Think about your friends, family and groups you may be involved with.

If you find it difficult to identify or find other types of support, take a look at the suggestions below which may help you tap into external support in your community.

Libraries - including the free Libraries NI app where you can access, lend and read books or magazines electronically including podcasts

Local community or church groups

Exercise classes or leisure centre activities

Craft classes

Condition specific community and voluntary groups

Community Navigator for your locality

Your neighbours

Recovery College classes

Carer support programme

Barnardos Young Carers Service

Carers Northern Ireland

## Peer Support

Something we have learned and witnessed from carers who attend the classes is the importance of peer support. Across our programme we see a growing community of carers supporting carers. We believe this type of support to be invaluable and is one of the reasons why we encourage carers to come along to classes or catch-ups. The support programme offers the chance to meet others in a similar position with a listening ear and have a break from caring.

All of these suggestions could provide you with an opportunity to connect with others and build relationships which will ultimately support your wellbeing.

As we are all different we will all find different ways to support ourselves – there is no right or wrong. The one necessity is that you intentionally take action for yourself.

If you would like more information on the support listed in this booklet you can contact the Northern Health and Social Care Trust Carer Hub by:

**Email:** [carers.coordinator@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:carers.coordinator@northerntrust.hscni.net)

**Telephone:** 028 2766 1210

**Website:** [www.carersdigital.org](http://www.carersdigital.org)

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# Notes

# Notes



INVESTORS  
IN PEOPLE

Accredited  
Until 2021

Our Vision

**To deliver excellent integrated  
services in partnership with  
our community**

If you would like to give feedback on  
any of our services please contact:

**Email:** [user.feedback@northerntrust.hscni.net](mailto:user.feedback@northerntrust.hscni.net)

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