

Carers Policy

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Definition of a Carer

Carers are people who, without payment, provide help and support to a family member, friend or neighbour who cannot manage on their own due to physical or mental illness, disability, substance misuse or frailty brought on by old age.

Caring roles can include administering medication, lifting and handling and personal or emotional care. Carers should not be confused with paid care workers, care assistants or with volunteer care workers.

A “Young Carer” is defined as a person under 18 who carries out significant caring tasks and by doing so, shoulders a level of responsibility for another person which is inappropriate for their age.

This situation often arises when parents who have long term conditions are not offered appropriate help and support, although it is a fact that most children of disabled or sick parents do not have to take on such responsible caring roles.

The person receiving care may not be registered at the Carer’s Practice. When this situation arises, because the Practice will not be always be able to ascertain that the Carer/Patient relationship has ceased, the Carer may be asked to re-confirm their Carer status.

Where the person receiving care is a registered patient at the Carer’s Practice, the Carer/Patient relationship can be verified more frequently, resulting in practice-held information being able to be modified when significant events such as death or de-registration occur.

It is important to estimate the total number of Carers within the Practice Catchment Area.

The objective of this Protocol is to ensure that all Carers registered with the Practice are identified and referred to Adult Care Services.

The Practice will do its utmost to facilitate this process by actively identifying, supporting and referring known Carers who are patients of the Practice or where the person receiving care is a registered patient of the Practice.

The Practice will support Carers by:

- Identifying a “Carer’s Champion” to ensure that the support to Carers by the Practice is being undertaken and to be available to Carers as the first line of liaison
- Providing relevant information, Local Authority resources and contact points
- Providing suitable appointment flexibility and understanding
- Providing care, health checks and advice to enable them to maximise their own health and needs
- Routinely direct identified Carers (with consent) to local support services and, where appropriate, refer for Carers Assessment via Social Services
- Offering a flu jab annually

Identifying Carers

There are two proven methods of identification:

1. Self-Identification
2. Pro-active Practice Identification

The Practice undertakes the following activities as part of each method.

Notice Boards

The Practice displays a poster on existing notice boards requesting Carers to contact the Practice to provide details of their caring responsibilities. However, during appropriate seasonal times (e.g. flu clinics) a notice board is dedicated to Carer information, for enhanced visibility.

New Patient Registration Forms

The Practice's new patient registration form incorporates the following two questions:

1. Do you look after someone?
2. Does someone look after you?

This information is used in the new patient screening appointment, tagging the patient's notes and arranging referral to Care Services.

Health Professional Identification

All Health Professionals in the surgery ask Carers to complete a Carer referral form when they ascertain a patient is a Carer. Many Carers may be identified as a result of Learning Disability Health Checks, Dementia Annual Reviews or Dementia Screening DES.

This is regularly discussed at multi-disciplinary team meetings to exploit personal knowledge. This will be of particular value at the High-Risk Patient meeting.

Upon identification of a Carer the Practice will take the following steps:

- The Medical Record of the Carer should be edited to insert the 'Carer' read code
- If necessary, an 'Alert Message' should be added to the Carer's Record on the front desk to alert Receptionists in order for them to prioritise booking appointments where necessary
- The medical record of the person receiving care will be allocated a read code ("has a carer") and cross reference the carers details in the text box
- Chronic Disease Templates used by Nurses and Doctors when consulting Patients include data entry spaces for inserting a Carer's name and contact details

Competency

All Carer registrations will, in the first instance, be reviewed by the patient's usual doctor who will confirm that the patient is competent to give a valid informed consent.

Young Carers

Young carers are children and young people aged 5-18 who help to look after somebody in their family because they have a disability, illness, mental health difficulty or misuse drugs or alcohol. If you identify a young carer, you are encouraged to signpost them to local support services.