Carers Assessment – how can it help me?

Working out the support you, and the person you care for need, is called having an “assessment”. The law says you have a right to an assessment if you look after a friend or relative who cannot manage without your help. 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. 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.

It 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. It is not about judging the way you are caring for someone. It is a chance for you to make sure that we understand your needs as a carer from your point of view, and for us to tell you about the kinds of support that might assist you to care and also aid you in preserving your own health, enabling you to continue your caring role.

Social services use the assessment to decide what help to provide.

What is the purpose of a carer's assessment?

The purpose of a carer's assessment is to discuss with social services the help you need with caring, plus help to maintain your own health and balance caring with your life, work and family commitments. Social services use the assessment to decide what help to provide.

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 be 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.
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 such as carers groups.
- Deciding if you want to stay or return to work and how to make this happen.
- Looking at how caring may affect you in the future and what help you might need.

How do I get an assessment?

You can ask for a carer's assessment from your social services department. 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.

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

You may find it hard to think 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 private with a social worker, you are entitled to ask for a separate assessment on your own.

You can send for our checklist on carers assessment to help you prepare for your assessment:

What will happen at the assessment?

Usually a social worker or a member of social services will carry out the assessment. You can ask to talk confidentially to the person carrying out the assessment, without the person you care for being present. If you wish, you can 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 will explore with you the support and services 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.

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.

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.

As a Carer you are entitled by law to an assessment in your own right (Carers and Disabled Children Act 2000) if:

- Caring has a major impact on your life AND
- The person you care would be eligible for community care services.

Then you can request that Social Services assess both your needs. You can also request a Carers assessment for yourself even if the person you care for has refused to be assessed.

Once your assessment is completed, requests for Carers services which require funding from Flintshire County Council will be considered by the Community Care Panel who allocate funding. You will be notified of the Panel's decision. There are a range of services available directly from the voluntary sector that we will also tell you about.
If you are unhappy with the Panel’s decision you can appeal and the Carer’s Champion will normally assist you to provide additional information for the panel to reconsider.

**Young carers**

If you are under 18 and looking after someone, we are keen to make sure that your family gets the support they need to that your education and social life do not suffer. Barnardos Young Carers project can also provide advice and support and can be contacted on 01352 714914.

**As a Carer you can request an assessment:**

- At the same time the person you care for is being assessed
- Or at a different time to that of the person you care for
- Or if there is a change in circumstance, which may include changes in the your ability to care.

Your knowledge and experiences as a Carer will be an important part of any assessment and your insight will be recognised and valued. Confidentiality will always be kept and information will not be shared without your agreement. You should expect an assessment to be handled thoughtfully and all your concerns and needs should be discussed.

Once you have requested an assessment a Carers Assessment Form will be completed. The person carrying out the assessment will go through the form with you step by step or you can contact NEWCIS who will be able guide you through the form.

Flintshire Adult Social Care has developed ‘Fair Access Eligibility Criteria’ which are applied following an assessment to decide if people, including carers, are eligible for services. To be eligible for carers services, you must be providing **substantial** care on a **regular** basis and be able to show how provision of a service will enable you to continue in your caring role.

Details of Flintshire’s eligibility criteria for adults can be found in our leaflet, "Fair Access to Care".

**Direct Payments**

Once your needs as a Carer have been assessed, you can choose to have a ‘Direct Payment’ to enable you to arrange services yourself which can offer a
wider choice and flexibility. This can be used to purchase services for yourself, but not to buy services for the person you care for.

**CARERS ASSESSMENT CHECKLIST**

*This checklist shows the areas that you can discuss during a carers assessment, or the assessment of the person you care for*

**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.
- Do you have to help with - Housework... shopping... extra laundry... bathing... toileting... cooking... other personal care... ensuring they don't come to any harm... dealing with money/pensions... administering medications... keeping them company... going to the shops with them... taking them to hospital?
- Do you have to help during the day or night - or both?
- Does anyone else help? Who and for how long?

Would you like some help with these jobs?

List the tasks you would most like help with, putting the most important first.

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?

**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?

**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?
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?

FEELINGS
Do you feel you don’t have a choice about providing care? You may feel that you can't carry on at all, or only if you reduce the amount that you do. Tell the social worker about these feelings.

What would you most like to change about your situation?

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?

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.

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?