

Carers First

Carers Checklist when supporting someone with a mental health condition

Caring for someone with a mental health condition can often present unique challenges which make it feel different to other caring roles. That's why we have created this guide to help you access relevant information and support for you and the person you care for.



Your caring role

Help the person you are supporting to get a diagnosis

If the person you care for has been struggling with their mental health, it can be really helpful to get a diagnosis. This can be arranged by visiting their GP who will be able to diagnose conditions like anxiety or depression. In some cases, the GP may refer them to a specialist mental health service for further advice or treatment.

Having a diagnosis will enable you to access specialist support related to their condition, such as medication, therapy, a community team or crisis support.

Getting a diagnosis can also allow family members to support the individual as their carer. For example, a carer can speak to medical professionals on the individual's behalf, help them to manage their finances and implement care plans.

Understanding someone's mental health condition

Once the person you care for has a diagnosis, it can be helpful to get a good understanding of the mental health condition. This can include being familiar with the symptoms of the condition and knowing the types of support available. For more information on common mental health conditions and their symptoms, take a look [here](#).

Knowing more about the condition can also help you feel more confident in your caring role. You'll be able to help manage their symptoms and find suitable therapies or support. You may also begin to feel more prepared for things like changes in behaviour and a **mental health crisis**.



Setting boundaries

When caring for someone with a mental health condition, it is important to think about and understand your boundaries. Boundaries outline what support you are comfortable with doing as part of your caring role. Boundaries can help ensure your needs are met, they can manage expectations and maintain positive relationships with others.

Make an emergency plan

We often don't want to think about emergencies happening but in case of a mental health crisis, it's important to have things in place to safeguard your loved one and yourself. Planning for times when you may not be able to offer care or support, will give you comfort in knowing that the person you are supporting will continue to receive the support they need. For more information about planning for an emergency please see our pages on planning for the **future**.



Looking after you

It is really easy to get caught up in your caring role and forget to look after yourself. But looking after your wellbeing is key - for both you and the person you care for.

Register as a carer with your GP

By registering with your GP as a carer you will get access to an annual health check and annual vaccination programmes like the flu vaccination. Your GP will also be aware of your situation and will be able to support you in other areas such as your mental wellbeing.

Tell your employer

It can really help if your employer is fully aware of your caring responsibilities. It gives them an opportunity to understand your situation and to have an understanding that if something comes up with the person you care for it may have an impact on your ability to work.

Your employer might also be able to provide you with more support to enable you to work alongside your care role. This can include:

- Flexible working.
- Carer / Dependants leave.
- Time off for emergencies.
- Protection from discrimination.

Make time for yourself

Try to prioritise regular time to look after you. This could be something which relaxes you, brings you joy or connects you with other people. It could be helpful to take a look at our [online wellbeing sessions](#) and consider joining a [peer support group or events in your local area](#). These groups are a great way to create a support network of people around you who understand the challenges of being a carer.

Take a break

Taking a break from your caring role will enable you to recharge. Regular [respite breaks](#), either a few hours or even a few days will support you and your own wellbeing. You could ask for friends and family or look into finding replacement or respite care for a short while.

Managing at home

Whether you live with the person you care for or not, there are things you can put in place to make the home of the person you care for safer and easier to manage.

Technology

A lot of carers say that they use technology in their day to day lives to help with their caring role. For example, some carers use voice recognition technology like Siri or Alexa around the house. You can use it to call for help, play favourite music or for setting reminders to take medication. Carers have also used door sensors or camera doorbells to monitor when people leave or arrive at the house. Where people are particularly vulnerable, these monitors may be placed around the home. When there are multiple people caring for one person, some have carers have used shared drives, like a google docs to keep a log of when medication was taken, or when particular tasks were undertaken, to avoid them being done twice.

Join the Herbert Protocol scheme

The Herbert Protocol is a national scheme that encourages carers to put together useful information which can be used in the event of a vulnerable person going missing. You can find more information on the Herbert Protocol and a link to the form [here](#).

Arrange a Self and Well Check

A Safe and Well Check consists of members of your local fire and rescue service visiting your home, to carry out an inspection of your home (or the home of the person you care for) to ensure maximum safety. Arrange a visit by contacting your local **fire and rescue service**.





Finances

Get a benefits check

Using the easy tool provided by [Turn2us](#), complete a quick and easy assessment to see what benefits or support you may be eligible to apply for.

Check if you're eligible for a reduction on household bills

If you are in receipt of benefits such as Attendance Allowance or a Personal Independence payment you may be eligible for a reduction on some household bills such as your utility bills.

Check if you're eligible for a council tax reduction

If you live with the person you care for and they have received a formal diagnosis, speak to your local authority about a potential reduction in your council tax. If you live separately, but the person you care for has made adjustments to their home to accommodate for their diagnosis, they can also apply.

Plan for the future

We would recommend you start thinking about planning for the future and finances. To think about your own future needs but also for the person you are supporting. For more information on power of attorney for a time when you may need to manage the person you are supporting's finances, please see our article [Lasting power of attorney](#). We also have some great advice available about [future care planning](#) to support you both.

Further resources and support

Understanding different mental health conditions.

Understanding and managing medication for someone with a mental health condition.

Can carers make decisions on behalf of someone with a mental health condition?

How to support someone going through a crisis with their mental health.

Notes

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

.....

www.carersfirst.org.uk
0300 303 1555
hello@carersfirst.org.uk

Head Office:
Unit 4 Michael Gill Building,
Tolgate Lane
Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG