

Supporting you.

Your pocket guide to finding 'me time' when looking after a friend or relative.



Carers
First

We care
for you.



Carers like me want to know...

What welfare benefits am I entitled to?

Figuring out what benefits you're entitled to can be a challenge, but the right information can make the process so much smoother. Fortunately, we can help you to find out more about benefits for you and the person you care for.

We helped Rose who cares for her husband Karl who has terminal cancer to claim her benefits and she told us;

“Life is so much better now. I use the Carers Allowance to buy better food which I can cook with my new cooker (from a grant secured by Carers First). I feel so glad that I can take better care of my husband.”

Visit the website to find out how can you check the benefits you may be entitled to www.carersfirst.org.uk/help-and-advice/topics/checking-the-benefits-you-can-claim/

How do I find out my rights?

Carers have legal and contractual rights to help make their roles easier. These can range from rights at work to the right to a carer's assessment and to take time off during an emergency. We're here to help you to identify and understand your rights and make sure you're getting the support you need.

How do I talk to someone at work?

It can be difficult to talk to your employer about your caring responsibilities, but you have legal and contractual rights to protect you. Speaking to someone at work gives them the chance to support you as you balance your responsibilities. Need advice on opening up a conversation with your employer? Let us help.

www.carersfirst.org.uk/help-and-advice/topics/working-when-you-are-caring/

I'm being discriminated against at work, what should I do?

You have a legal right not to be discriminated against due to your caring role, including protection against harassment and being treated less favourably than other colleagues based on your role as a carer. If you feel you are being discriminated against and would like advice and support, visit the Carers First website.

www.carersfirst.org.uk/help-and-advice/topics/working-when-you-are-caring/



What courses should I take to make caring for someone easier?

There are training courses available to help you in your caring role, from first aid to manual handling to cooking. If you'd like to find out more, visit the Carers First website.

www.carersfirst.org.uk/help-and-advice/topics/training-to-help-you-in-your-caring-role/

I'm feeling overwhelmed with my caring role, who can help me?

If you're looking after someone, we're looking after you. If you need advice and support, get in touch. You can find out more about how we can help you on our website here:

<https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/get-support/>

To speak to us about the issues listed and more, get in touch via <https://www.carersfirst.org.uk/> or call **0300 303 1555**.

Tips for boosting your mood when you're feeling down.

Caring for someone can be the most rewarding thing you can do by helping someone live their best life. It may also bring a host of difficult and confusing emotions, and that is completely normal – it shows how much you care! But you can't pour from an empty cup, which is why we're sharing our top tips for boosting your wellbeing when you're having a tough time.

- 1. Try to focus on the positives**
This may feel easier said than done, but writing down the things you love about your life can help you to feel more positive when all you can see are the negatives. Positives that fellow carers report include spending time with the person they care for and knowing they are making a difference in the life of someone they care about. You are also getting to spend time with the person you care about, you are helping them to experience things in life that they may not be able to without you and that's incredible.
- 2. Try a relaxation technique**
Whether meditation or mindful walking, relaxation techniques can be as short and simple as you like and can make a big difference to your day.
- 3. Talk to friends or family**
Your loved ones don't want you to suffer in silence and talking to someone you trust can make a big difference. If they know you need extra support, they can also offer to help with more than just listening.

Marian, who cares for her mum who suffers with Alzhiemer's, shared with us how reaching out to her family has helped her.

“My brother provides much needed respite care on Saturdays – this makes something as simple as going for a walk with my husband possible. My sister stays overnight to give me respite care as Mum wakes in the night.”



4. **Connect with other carers**

Connecting with fellow carers, who understand what you're going through, can help you to feel less alone. Take a look at our 'Connecting with Carers' section (page 11) for advice on finding support groups near you.

5. **Write down your feelings in a diary**

If you don't feel comfortable talking to other people, a diary is a friend you can turn to any time, day or night.

Denise, 56, who cares for her son, Jamal with mental health difficulties told us how reaching out to her friends helped her.

“My friends from the group were a lifeline and a great comfort to me as I went through such difficult times with Jamal. They were always there at the end of the phone or to meet for a coffee when I needed it”

6. **Wellbeing**

We have wellbeing groups that operate in the areas we support. We want to be there to support you whether that be mentally or physically, and we host groups where you can talk and even have a virtual wellbeing programme! Find out more about it on the website:

www.carersfirst.org.uk/help-and-advice/topics/virtual-wellbeing-programme/

How to ask your friends and family for support.

We understand that it is not always easy to ask for help, but if you have a family member or friend that you trust, confiding in them can make all the difference. **Here is our four step guide to asking for support from family and friends.**



- 1. Share how you feel**
It can be difficult to share your feelings with friends and family, but they can't help if they don't know that you need support. It is okay to ask for help, and you might be surprised by the support your network can offer in return.
- 2. Say yes when help is offered**
We understand that asking and accepting help can be hard! If your friends and family are offering, then they want to lend a hand which is lovely! You will always benefit from accepting their support when you need it.



“Mum adores football and she’ll watch any game on so her and my husband will watch the football and I’ll use that time just to go and have a bath, catchup on a mini-series or talk to friends virtually”

Marian, cares for her mum who has Alzheimer’s.

- 3. Be honest about what you do and do not need**
Sometimes in their attempts to be supportive, friends and family can accidentally make life more difficult for carers. Don’t be afraid to say what you do and do not need. If you are afraid of hurting someone’s feelings, make it clear how much you appreciate their support, but direct their attention to the areas that you truly need their help with.

- 4. Let them know when you just need someone to listen**
Sometimes, we need advice and guidance. Others, you might just need someone to listen. It’s okay to let family and friends know when you just need to lend their ear for a while, rather than their help in finding a solution.

We can also offer emotional support. Get in touch now via the **Carers First website** or call **0300 303 1555**.

Financial Support for Carers.

Looking after a friend or relative can take its toll on your finances, **but support is available**. There are benefits out there designed to make life easier for you and the person you care for.

Examples of support available to you include:

- Carer's Allowance
- Universal Credit
- Pension Credit
- Respite care

The person you care for may have the following available to them:

- Attendance Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment
- Disability Living Allowance

If you are not eligible for any support, you could also consider:

- Requesting flexible working
- Reducing or changing times of working hours
- Working compressed hours

It's okay to ask for help - these benefits exist to help make life a little easier for you and the person you care for. For advice and support on claiming what you are entitled to, visit our website or give us a call on **0300 303 1555**.

www.carersfirst.org.uk/help-and-advice/topics/checking-the-benefits-you-can-claim/



Recognising burnout, and what you can do about it.

As a carer, it is very easy to get caught up caring for someone else and to forget to **take care of yourself**. This can have an impact on your mental and physical health and lead to burnout, so it's important to find **"me time"** when possible. Here are our top tips for taking care of you.

- 1. Stay well**
We understand that finding time for yourself is not always easy, but rewarding yourself when you can will help to prevent you from feeling overwhelmed. You cannot pour from an empty cup so remember to take some time for yourself and the things you love.
- 2. Try to get enough sleep.**
One of the best things you can do for the person you care for is look after yourself, this starts with making sure you have enough sleep. There are lots of apps and relaxation techniques available to help you rest up and revitalise after a busy day.
- 3. Make plans with friends or family when you have the opportunity.**
Being social is important to prevent feelings of loneliness and isolation. Schedule some fun activities with others so you have something really good to look forward to in your schedule.



“As a carer, you put all your own needs secondary and put the other person first. But you can’t look after someone else unless you look after yourself. All carers need to be alive to that to be the best carer.”

Kulbir, 50, cares for her mum Ranjit.



4. Create a daily care plan and make sure to schedule a break.

This can help to split your day into manageable chunks and help you to feel in control. Be honest with yourself and listen to your body, so you can make sure you have time to take care of yourself too.

5. Remember, you are just as important as the person you care for.

We understand that taking a break as a carer is one of the hardest parts of the role, but it is okay to take some time for yourself. Time apart is also good for the person you care for, and you will appreciate the time you spend together more as a result.



Connecting with carers.

Connecting with other carers can help you to feel less lonely and gives you the opportunity to share your experiences with someone who understands. Here are just a few ways you can **connect with your fellow carers**, both online and near you.

1. Online support groups

There are many online support groups and forums that bring together carers to discuss the things that matter to them – all it takes is a quick Google search.

2. Local support groups

If you would like to meet someone face-to-face, we can help you to find local support groups or connect you with other carers near you. Why not take a look at our website to see the local groups running right now?

3. Workshops

As well as helping you to find local support groups, our website can point you in the direction of local workshops where you can connect with other carers.

4. Caring Confidently

This is a 4-week course held quarterly which has been developed with carers, for carers. In essence the course is designed to enable you to be more resourceful in your caring role. It will focus on increasing resilience, improving wellbeing, and developing knowledge and strategies to do the best that you can.

www.carersfirst.org.uk/local-support/caring-confidently-course/

5. Give us a call

We are here to support you while you are supporting someone else. We are just a phone call away, and can provide emotional support, as well as financial and practical help. All you need to do is get in touch with our friendly team!

| For support, visit the **Carers First website** or call **0300 303 1555**.

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

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

Carers
First

**We care
for you.**