

Think Carers

Your guide to help
support carers



What is a carer?

A carer can be a child, young person or adult. They might be looking after a family member, partner or friend who would not be able to cope without their support.

This could be due to illness, a long-term condition, frailty, a physical or learning disability, mental health, trauma or addiction.

There are around 124,000 unpaid carers in Essex, but we estimate this number could be far greater.

Whether people identify as a 'carer' or simply see themselves as a partner, parent or friend, Essex County Council is committed to ensuring people can access information, advice and support when they need it and early into their caring role.

This guide includes everything you need to start conversations around carers and where more support for carers is available.

It will help you identify a carer and provide them with avenues to support and guidance.

Helping us to identify carers means we can support them when and where they need it. It also helps us address the disadvantage that carers can face.

How can you recognise a carer?

Unpaid carers can be different ages, genders, ethnicities and faiths.

The intensity of a caring role can vary greatly with some people providing support all day every day, some carrying out multiple caring roles, whilst others will be providing lower levels of support, such as helping out with shopping or collecting medication.

People may identify as a carer and be receiving support through the local authority, health service or a carers organisation. Others may not currently be aware of what support is available to them or how to access it.

Caring roles are varied and unique to every person. A person looking after a partner with dementia, a parent caring for their child with additional needs and a young carer supporting a parent with an addiction are just a few examples of unpaid carers.



Be curious

If you notice the signs that someone might be in a caring role, don't ignore it, delve a bit deeper.

Ask questions

Once you have noticed that someone might be in a caring role, ask them how they are doing, using the 'discussion prompts' in this guide.

Know where carers can go for support

Direct a carer to support using the details in the 'further support' section of this guide.

Share your knowledge with colleagues

Speak to your colleagues and people from other organisations you work with about the importance of identifying carers and share what you've learnt from this guide.



How to start the conversation

People in a caring role may not identify as a carer nor recognise the term carer.

There can be an association of the term carer as a person in paid employment as a care worker as opposed to someone providing unpaid support to a family member, neighbour or friend.

‘Do you look after someone?’ may be a more appropriate and relevant question than ‘Are you a carer?’

Below are some additional conversation prompts you could use to help people reflect on if they are in a caring role, how that may be impacting them and what information may be of use to them.

Do you currently look after someone that could not cope without your help?

Do you pick up prescriptions for someone else?

Are you doing shopping for another person?

How are you? (not the person you care for but you)

Are you unable to spend time doing other things because you are supporting someone else?

Are you willing/able to continue caring?

Do you currently receive any support from other people or organisations?

Do you get a break from your caring role?

What impact is your caring role having on you?

Have you spoken to anyone about this?

Would you like to know more about support that is available?

Once you have started the conversation with a carer using these prompts, you can then signpost them to support available and more information.

Where to signpost

There is a range of support available to carers in Essex.

This can be found at:

www.essex.gov.uk/carers





Carers Assessment

People can choose to have a formal carers assessment. This is something the council will carry out.

This is not a test of a carer's capabilities but an in-depth conversation to understand a caring role and what support can be put in place. There are services in place to support a carer's wellbeing, to access a break from a caring role and to get detailed information relevant to their caring role.

If the person you are talking to would like a carers assessment, please advise them to contact the council. More details on carers assessments can be found at: www.essex.gov.uk/carers

If you have any questions about this guide please email: essex.carers@essex.gov.uk

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