

7 MINUTE BRIEFING

Informal Carer



KNOWSLEY SAFEGUARDING ADULTS BOARD

PREVENTION THROUGH PARTNERSHIP



1. What does informal carer mean?

The Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) has described an informal/unpaid carer as “**someone who provides unpaid help to a friend or family member needing support, perhaps due to illness, older age, disability, a mental health condition or an addiction**”, as long as they are not employed to do so, they don't need to live in the same household to be a carer.

Each carer's experience will be unique to their own circumstances:

- someone in their seventies who cares 24/7 for their spouse with severe dementia is a carer
- a teenager who offers emotional support and helps to keep the household running when the changing nature of their parent's mental health requires is also a carer

The two situations are quite different, but both are examples of informal carers in the UK today.

2. How many people provide informal carer?

The ONS Census (2021) suggests that the number of unpaid carers across the UK is 5.7 million. This means that around 9% of people are providing unpaid care. 59% of those providing informal care are women.

Because we do not always know who is providing unpaid care, Carers UK research estimates the number of unpaid carers could be as high as 10.6 million (2022).

According to Carers UK, one in seven people in the workplace in the UK are juggling work and care.

3. The Care Act 2014

Duties introduced through the Care Act (2014) aim to put carers on an equal legal footing as the cared for. Local authorities are required to carry out an assessment to assess if a carer is eligible for support, if a carer is assessed as having needs a support plan is introduced.

The assessment lets you discuss your situation and the tasks you already undertake as well as caring which can include:

- Caring responsibilities for a child
- Maintaining a habitable home
- Developing and maintaining family and other personal relationships
- Engaging in recreational activities
- Making use of necessary facilities in the local community
- Accessing and engaging in work, training or education

4. Carers and the law

Informal carers are not required to meet specific care standards. However, if wilful neglect or mistreatment has arisen, carers may be prosecuted under [Section 44 of the Mental Capacity Act \(MCA\) 2005](#).

Other criminal law may also apply to financial abuse, physical assault, domestic abuse, or other types of abuse.

Informal carers are not regulated or inspected for the quality of the care they deliver; so, it can be challenging for practitioners and other services to know when and how to get involved.

Carers do not always identify as carers, they may not feel they are a carer, or the role may have built up slowly over time.

5. Right to family life v intervention

It is not always easy to determine where private decision-making in families and their support networks should end and intervention should start to ensure safety and uphold the rights of the adult with care and support needs and/ or their carer.

The key question is whether the person being cared for is at direct risk of abuse or neglect, the same applies for the Carer. If a person is at risk of abuse or neglect, then support should be offered.

Examples of abuse can include:

- hurtful comments or threats to abandon the person
- the person does not have enough food to eat or warm enough clothes, while the money they have been given is being used elsewhere
- the carer is being physically assaulted by the person they care for

6. Carer Breakdown

We must consider pressures that carers may be under and explore the reasons why they take the actions they do. Obvious abuse or neglect should start an immediate safeguarding response whilst considering both of their needs at the same time.

To reduce risk to the carer and the overall stability of the informal support network we need to look at supporting the carer in their role. This may include:

- Carer's assessment or review of a Support Plan
- Respite, day service and other ways to enable to carer to take a break
- Referral to a carer's support agency
- Referral to a specialist charity e.g. Alzheimer's Society or Parkinsons UK
- Training for the carer in managing the needs of the adult
- Equipment to make a task easier
- Behaviour management

7. Contact details and further information:

You can request a carers assessment by contacting the Knowsley Carers Centre on **0151 549 1412** or by clicking [here](#).

[Support for carers | Knowsley Council](#)

[Knowsley Carers Centre](#)

[Knowsley All Age Carers Strategy 2020-2025](#)

[Carers | Knowsley Safeguarding Adults Board](#)

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