

Are you a Carer?

There are an estimated half a million carers of people diagnosed with a life limiting illness at any one time, these are ordinary people caring for someone who has become ill and whose illness is progressive and may not be curable. However, though many thousands of people become carers each year, many do not recognize their role and their new title, they are not aware that they are now a carer. Surprisingly too, professional care providers do not always acknowledge that family members or friends are carers, and that they too have needs and require support to enable them to carry out their new role.

Anyone can become a carer; carers come from all walks of life, all cultures and can be of any age. Many feel they are doing what anyone else would in the same situation; looking after their mother, son, or best friend and just getting on with it. They don't choose to become carers: it just happens and they have to get on with it; if they did not do it, who would and what would happen to the person they care for?

A carer spends a significant proportion of their life providing unpaid support to family or friends. In total, there are an estimated six million carers in the UK, including more than 170,000 who are under the age of 18. Nearly a third of carers are caring for more than 50 hours or more each week

Carers experience many different caring situations. A carer could be someone looking after a new baby with a disability or caring for an elderly parent, someone supporting a partner with a substance misuse or mental health problem. Despite these differing caring roles, all carers share some basic needs.

Carers may suffer ill-health due to their caring role. To care safely and maintain their own physical and mental health and well-being, carers need information, support, respect and recognition from the professionals with whom they are in contact. Improved support for the person being cared for can make the role of the carer more manageable.

It is important that carers take care of themselves—this can be positive both physically and emotionally for themselves but also for the person being taken care of. However, all too often carers can be so preoccupied with the health and well-being of the person they are caring for, that their own needs take a back seat.

Carers are the largest source of care and support in each area of the UK. It is in everyone's interest that they are supported. With an ageing population, the UK will need more care from families and friends in the future. This is an issue

that will touch everyone's life at some point. Carer support concerns everyone.

Support for carers is widely available across Bassetlaw in many forms both NHS and through local and national charities. Bassetlaw Health Partnership (until recently Bassetlaw PCT) offers carer support from all its clinical teams, in particular: **Bassetlaw Hospice, Macmillan Nurses, Community Nursing Team, Community Matrons, Specialist Care Support Team, Rapid Response and Out of Hours service.**

If you are a carer and are supported by any of the above teams, ask how they may be able to help you in your role as a carer.

Carer Assessments are also available to those caring for someone with cancer or a long term condition. The assessment consists of questions on the impact on your life of caring for someone. It can reveal to you how your life is affected by caring and what can be done to support you. It is also an opportunity to express your thoughts and fears.

On completion of the assessment, we are then able to: Offer advice, support and practical help, discuss the possibility of respite, sign post to other voluntary and support services, refer for financial advice and discuss any concerns about future needs.

**Also available is a Carers Support Session for carers at
Workshop Library, Memorial Avenue, Workshop.
Every Friday 13:00-15:00**

You will have the opportunity to meet other carers and professionals for advice and support, or just a chat. We are able to offer the service of experienced Health Care Support Workers to support the person you are caring for while you attend.

For further information, please contact: Gill Bradley, Senior Nurse, Hospice Services on (01777) 863 270