

Section 2

Who is a carer?

A carer is anyone who spends regular and substantial time looking after, or being responsible for someone who is too ill or disabled to manage alone, and is not paid for doing so.

Very often people do not recognise themselves as 'carers' because they are wives, husbands, partners, sons, daughters, parents, friends or neighbours, who find themselves in a caring situation, sometimes suddenly, sometimes gradually, and simply get on with what needs to be done.

A carer does not always live with the person they are caring for, but their help may be essential to enable that person to carry on living in their own home.

It can be a help to know that you are a carer; it is a way of recognising that you are doing a very important job that can be demanding physically and emotionally. It may be a help to know your work is being recognised by others and that there may be services and benefits available that will help you.

For many people, caring for someone is often a very rewarding experience—but even in the best circumstances carers can become tired and frustrated. Carers may become isolated and feel resentful because they feel their life is restricted or no one seems to understand or offer to help and then feel guilty for having such angry feelings.

Help is out there—please use this directory to find the support you need.

Thinking of becoming a carer?

You may be someone who is not yet a carer, but think you may become one soon due to the increasing age or disability of someone close to you. It is a good idea to think very carefully before moving in with someone else, or before they move in with you. Caring can go on for many years, often without much help from others. The person you care for may resist any help from outside and you may have an increasingly responsible role.

Will your own health stand up to the extra pressure, remembering that we are all getting older?

It may be wise to speak to other people such as family, friends, your GP, your employer and Community Care Services before you make a decision (please see Section 7-14 for contact details).

Other organisations may be able to help you:

Kingston Carers' Network **020 8547 1614**

Email: admin@kingstoncarers.org.uk

Website: www.kingstoncarers.org.uk

Siddeley House
50 Canbury Park Road
Kingston upon Thames
Surrey KT2 6LX

Carers UK

0808 808 7777

Website: www.carersuk.org.uk