

Starting Caring

If this is the first time you've recognised you are an unpaid carer, or if you are a new unpaid carer, here are a few simple things you can do which may help you and the person you care for:

1. Does the person you care for receive support from someone else? If not, it's worth finding out if they are eligible for any services. To do this you, or the person you care for, can contact your local Community Resources Team (Llŷn area **01758 704099**; Caernarfon area **01286 679099**; Bangor area **01248 363240**; Eifionydd-North Meirionnydd **01766 510300**; South Meirionnydd **01341 424499**) or Children's Duty Team **01758 704455**. Or you can contact Carers Outreach Service (Arfon and Dwyfor **01248 370797** or Meirionnydd **01766 772956**) who will provide information about local services and how to access them.
2. Find out where you can get general information about your rights as an unpaid carer and about local services for unpaid carers which may help you. Carers Outreach Service would be a good starting point. You could contact a national carers organisation such as The Carers Trust (**02920 090087** www.carers.org/wales) or Carers Wales (**02920 811370** www.carersuk.org/wales)
3. Get up-to-date information about the condition of the person you care for. The social worker, community nurse, community pharmacist or GP may be able to provide information. Alternatively, there could be a condition specific group or organisation which you could contact. Cyngor Gwynedd has published a booklet *Looking after someone?* which includes a list of support groups and organisations for you and the person for whom you care. The latest version is available on the Council website or hard copies are available from the libraries, GP surgeries, Carers Outreach Service and other 3rd sector organisations.

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4. Take up the offer, or ask for, a Carer's Needs Assessment. The person for whom you care does not need to have an assessment for you to have an assessment of your needs as an unpaid carer. Cyngor Gwynedd's social services have produced a useful booklet about assessments, which is available from the Community Resources Teams or Carers Outreach. It is also available on the council website

www.gwynedd.llyw.cymru/en/Residents/Documents-Residents/Health-and-social-care-documents/Carers/Carers-Needs-Assessment.pdf

5. Look after yourself! This is important both for you and the person you care for. Caring can at times be difficult, stressful and exhausting. Carers can be affected by feelings of isolation, guilt, depression, resentment and anger. It is important to try to find ways of dealing with these feelings and it's vital that you take care of yourself and your own health (see the leaflets on *Keeping Fit and Well* and *Time for Me*).

Every caring situation is unique, but it is not reasonable to expect any carer to continue caring without help or support. The support may be in practical terms, such as access to information and services to which you might be entitled - including having a break. Sometimes you might just need someone to whom you can talk. All these services are available in Gwynedd from either the statutory sector (e.g. social services and health) or the third sector (voluntary sector).

Unpaid carers save the country billions of pounds; never hesitate to ask for help or support. It is your right and you deserve it!