Useful contact numbers

**Adult social services**
01670 536 400
[www.northumberland.gov.uk/sds](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk/sds)

**Emergency duty team**
*(social care out of hours)*
0845 600 52 52

**Age UK Northumberland** *(information line Mon-Thurs 10am-1pm)*
0845 095 01 50
[www.ageuk.org.uk/northumberland](http://www.ageuk.org.uk/northumberland)

**Alzheimer’s Society**
0191 274 27 27
[www.alzheimers.org.uk](http://www.alzheimers.org.uk)

**Carers Northumberland** *(local information for carers weekdays)*
0844 800 73 54
[www.carennorthumberland.org.uk](http://www.carennorthumberland.org.uk)

**Carers Direct**
*(national information and advice line 7 days a week)*
0808 802 02 02
[www.nhs.uk/carersdirect](http://www.nhs.uk/carersdirect)

**Children’s services** *(Northumberland County Council)*
0844 800 73 54
[www.northumberland.gov.uk](http://www.northumberland.gov.uk)

**Escape Family Support** *(24hrs)* *(Drugs, alcohol, substance misuse)*
07702 833 944
[www.escapefamilysupport.co.uk](http://www.escapefamilysupport.co.uk)

**NHS Direct**
0845 46 47
[www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk](http://www.nhsdirect.nhs.uk)

**Social Care and Health Information Points**
Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust and Northumberland County Council have recently opened new social care and health information points in libraries in Amble, Berwick, Haltwhistle, Morpeth and the information centre in Cramlington where you can get advice and assistance about the range of support available in your area. Call adult social services on 01670 536 400 for opening times.

Version 1. June 2012.Saved by: michele.obrien@nct.nhs.uk
Looking after your health and wellbeing

Caring for a friend or family member when they are ill, disabled or frail can be very rewarding but it can also be incredibly stressful and exhausting at times and take a toll on your own health and wellbeing.

This self assessment is yours to keep and aims to help you think about your own health, how your caring role affects your life and to consider things you can change to make caring easier.

The purpose of the wellbeing check is to help you access health interventions early and to continue caring safely in a way that suits you, without your own health suffering.

Using the wellbeing check

You can complete this self assessment in your own time or ask someone to help you. When you are ready the person who offered you the check will return to discuss it with you and offer advice.

Some changes you identify you will be able to manage yourself and some you will need help with, either from a professional or from friends and family.

Dependent upon the role of the person who offered you the check this may involve referral to other support e.g. to Adult Services for a carer’s needs assessment or to Carers Northumberland, with your permission of course.

Summary

There is a section at the end for you to use to record the things you want to change and the people who can help you. One carer has said she will keep the grid on her fridge to remind herself not to forget her own needs!
### Summary of things to do

Use the next two pages to record the things you want to change and the people who can help you to make those changes. This section should be completed with the person supporting you with your wellbeing check.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Changes</th>
<th>What needs to happen?</th>
<th>Who will help me?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| e.g. to make more time for myself to go to an exercise class once a week | a) find out about classes nearby  
b) talk to family about possible cover  
c) see if friend would like to join me | Age UK for info.  
Family |

*Carers tip*

It’s best to make changes that are realistic and achievable; small changes can sometimes make the biggest difference.

### Review

Your caring role and your own health may change over time. You will find the Carers Wellbeing Check worth completing at least annually, to help you to keep on top of your own health needs or to make decisions about the level of care you provide.

### Help from adult social services*

If you are regularly providing someone with a substantial amount of care, you are entitled to ask for an assessment of your own needs by a care manager from adult social services. This can happen even if the person you care for refuses help. If the person who you care for has a care manager, or if they agree to ask for a social services assessment to look at their own needs, you may be happy for the care manager to consider your needs alongside theirs. But if not, or if you would like to discuss your situation separately, you can ask for an assessment of your own.

Care managers can help to point you to sources of support that could make caring easier for you. If necessary, they can also arrange services to support you, or the person you look after (though there will usually be charges for these).

You may find it helpful to fill in this booklet and bring it along when you meet a care manager (though you don’t have to).

### Other useful information

**Northumberland Family and Friends Carers’ Guide**

This is a comprehensive information booklet to help you think about your own needs, where to get help and things you can do. You can ask for a free copy from Adult Services or Carers Northumberland*.  

*Key Contacts*

Please see the back page

“My GP knowing I’m a carer means he asks me how I’m doing even when I’m there for my wife – I’ve become much more conscious of how I’m feeling and more aware of the bigger problems we’d have if I wasn’t able to look after her if I was ill or exhausted. I don’t mind asking for help when things get difficult.”

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*Key Contacts*

Please see the back page
Your health

When you care for someone else, it's very easy to forget about your own health. However, it is important to look after yourself so that your health doesn't suffer and you can continue caring for as long as you want to.

Is there anything about your physical health that worries you?  

Have you had any health related advice that you have put off following up?  

Have you been offered any type of health check or screening in the last 12 months but not taken up the offer?  

Have you had a fall or any problems with your balance in the last 12 months?  

If your caring role involves you moving or handling the person you care for or equipment e.g. hoist or wheelchair, is there any pain associated with this?  

Have you experienced any of the following?  

- Increased thirst  
- Increased or frequent passing of urine  
- Changes in your bowel habits or blood in stools  
- Changes in your breast (men too)  
- Chest pain  
- Breathlessness  
- More tired than usual  

During the last few months have you often felt down, depressed or hopeless?  

Do you worry about your memory getting worse?  

Tick  Yes  No

If you have answered 'yes' to any of the above you should call your GP surgery to make an appointment, if you have not already done so. Prevention and early intervention is always the best option and in most instances GP consultation will give you peace of mind and one less thing to worry about.

"I said I didn't have time to go for the cancer screening, then she said to me 'what would you say to your daughter if she said that' and it made me think........ I've called and made a new appointment."

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Make a note of things that you would like to discuss further. For example, things you want to change, what would help or any other concerns you have:

Carer's tip

Find out about your right to request flexible working arrangements - this can suit both your employer and you as a carer. Always get advice before giving up work to care.

Did you know?......Carers Northumberland can give you information about your rights as a carer in employment.
Juggling work and care (optional)

It may feel you are juggling two jobs when you are holding down a paid job and caring for someone, but work can be important for your wellbeing, income and for maintaining social contacts. Think carefully before giving up work to care, your work will provide you with financial security, time away and a sense of identity separate from caring.

Do you feel you are struggling to balance your work and caring responsibilities?

Tick

Yes  No

Is your job at risk because of the level of caring you are providing?

Tick

Yes  No

Do you need information about your employment rights as a carer?

Tick

Yes  No

Have you checked with your HR department or Union whether your employer has carer friendly policies?

Tick

Yes  No

Returning to or starting work

Do you want to return to employment or plan for a return when caring ends?

Tick

Yes  No

Is your caring role preventing you from accessing education or training opportunities?

Tick

Yes  No

Did you know? …..Jobcentre Plus will fund replacement care to allow you to take part in their employment training sessions to help you return to work.

Make a note of things that you would like to discuss further. For example, things you want to change, what would help, or any other concerns you have:

E.g. it would be easier for me to keep appointments if…………..

Carer’s tip

We make up all sorts of excuses for not going to the doctor’s when we should – but our health is important too. Make it a priority and, if you need to, ask for help.
Healthy lifestyle

With so much of your time and energy focused on caring for someone, eating healthily or getting any form of exercise may be the last thing on your mind, but a healthy lifestyle will help reduce stress levels and improve sleep. Exercise doesn’t have to be vigorous to be worthwhile and you may be able to do it alongside caring.

Are you taking regular medication?
If yes – when did you last discuss your medication, either prescribed or bought over the counter, with your doctor or pharmacist?

Date........................

Do you need any help or advice with:

- Your eyesight?
- Your hearing?
- Your foot care?
- Your oral health or getting a dentist?

Do you have any problems preparing meals or skip meals due to being too busy?

Are you smoking more, drinking more alcohol or using drugs to help you cope?

Do you find it hard to get to sleep or sleep continuously through the night?

Do you manage to get any form of exercise over the week, aside from the physical strain of caring for someone?

Make a note of things that you would like to discuss further. For example, things you want to change, what would help or any other concerns you have:

Carer’s tip

You may be entitled to claim a Carers Allowance – did you know many carers don’t claim the benefits and tax credits they are entitled to? Make sure you are not missing out.

“Because Dad agreed to apply for Attendance Allowance and got it, I could get the Carers Allowance – it’s made such a difference.”

Northumberland Fire & Rescue Service provide a Home Fire Safety Check and fit smoke alarms free of charge to members of the public who live in the Northumberland area.

Call Freephone 0800 731 1351
Your caring role

Thinking about the demands caring places upon your life will help you identify the type of support that would help you most to continue caring or to talk about ways to reduce your caring responsibilities. Many older carers feel it reduces their stress if they can help to plan for the future when they may not be available to care.

“I get so stressed, but I need to share these tasks with the family and stop thinking I’m the only person that can do it. I need to remember me.”

Are there any caring tasks that you would prefer not to do or that cause you difficulty?

Do you find your role as carer has changed and is more challenging as you get older?

Are there any caring tasks that you would like help to develop more skills/confidence in? (E.g. First aid; giving medication; moving and handling etc.)

Is there anything about the illness or condition of the person you care for that you don’t fully understand? (e.g. symptoms, treatment, medication)

Do you know what to do in an emergency involving the person you care for?

Do you have any financial concerns, perhaps about welfare benefits or debts?

Would you like more information or support in:

  Managing day to day tasks for care at home
  Managing home repairs, safety and security
  Getting a short break from your caring responsibilities
  Benefits entitlement check
  Planning for the future

Tick Sometimes Yes No

Make a note of things that you would like to discuss further. For example, things you want to change, what would help or any other concerns you have:

Did you know...........

We need at least 5 portions of fruit and vegetables a day to get our nutrient fix and stay fit and healthy. Try stocking up on dried fruit and tinned vegetables – they still have the vitamins and minerals you need and are easy to add to meals. You can also ask to see a health adviser if you or the person you care for have a weight problem.

Carer’s tip

Try to go to bed at the same time each day, even at the weekend, getting your body into a routine will help you sleep better.
Your emotional needs

Caring can place huge demands on your time and energy and for many carers stress is simply a fact of life, but many carers also feel overwhelmed leading to anxiety and depression. It is not unusual for carers at times to have feelings of guilt, anger, feeling trapped or grief and loss. However, carers can also feel very positive about caring.

“I get depressed thinking about the future as my dear husband’s dementia gets worse and worse. I worry and feel anxious and sad for him.”

Do you sometimes feel overwhelmed?

Tick

Yes

No

Do you find the behaviour of the person you care for upsetting at times?

Tick

Yes

No

Do you worry about what would happen if you took ill or in the event of an emergency?

Tick

Yes

No

Do you worry about what might happen to the person you care for in the future?

Tick

Yes

No

Do you have the opportunity to have time away from caring, to do the things you enjoy?

Tick

Yes

No

Would you like information or help about meeting other carers for mutual support?

Tick

Yes

No

Keeping safe

Do you ever feel unsafe in your caring role?

Tick

Sometimes

No

(E.g. by the behaviour of the person you care for; loan sharks; anti-social neighbours etc.)

Do you worry about losing your patience with the person you care for?

Tick

Yes

No

Are there people in your neighbourhood who make you feel anxious by their behaviour towards you or the person you care for?

Tick

Yes

No

Make a note of things that you would like to discuss further. For example, things you want to change, what would help or any other concerns you have:

Did you know? ..........

Having a Carers Emergency Card will give you peace of mind and urgent British Red Cross back up if you need it. Call Carers Northumberland to register.

Important

If you have answered sometimes to the ‘keeping safe’ questions it may be helpful for you to talk to someone about what to do or for more support.

It isn’t unusual for carers, for instance living with someone with dementia or with mental health problems, to be harmed by the person due to the symptoms of their illness. Caring for someone can be extremely stressful and stretch the most placid people to the limits of their patience – but the important thing is to share these feelings or experiences with someone so that you can get the support you need before things get too much. The aim will always be to help in a way that suits you and the person you care for and not to take control from you, unless the situation is very bad.

If you or the person you support are being victimised by others, due to your situation, this may be what we call “hate crime”. If this is happening to you, or if you are worried that someone may be mistreating the person you care for, don’t keep it to yourself - tell someone!

To report an incident or concern call adult social services on 01670 536 400