

Carers Assessments

Carer's assessments are for adult carers of adults (over 18 years) who are disabled, ill or elderly.

The assessment gives you a chance to discuss what support or services you need with the local council. The assessment will look at how caring affects your life, including for example, physical, mental and emotional needs, and whether you are able or willing to carry on caring. Local authorities have a duty to carry out a carer's assessment where a carer appears to need support. The assessment can be offered even if the carer has not asked for one.

You are entitled to an assessment regardless of the amount or type of care you provide, your financial means or your level of need for support. You don't necessarily have to live with the person you are looking after or be caring full-time to have an assessment. You can have an assessment whether or not the person you are looking after has had a needs assessment, or if the local council have decided they are not eligible for support.

If you and the person you are looking after agree, a combined assessment of both your needs can be undertaken at the same time. If you are sharing caring responsibilities with another person, or more than one person, including a child under 18, you can each have an assessment.

If you have not been offered a Carers Assessment, you can ask for one yourself by contacting West Berkshire Council Adult Social Services <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=29942> . You can contact them by phone, in writing or on-line.

The Assessment

The assessment can be done over the phone or at a meeting. It consists of a series of questions designed to help you think about the different ways that caring affects your life. It should cover:

- your caring role and how it affects your life and wellbeing
- your health – physical, mental and emotional issues
- your feelings and choices about caring
- work, study, training, leisure
- relationships, social activities and your goals
- housing
- planning for emergencies (such as a Carer Emergency Scheme) – the local council should be able to tell you more about what they can do to help you plan for an emergency

You should be asked about these issues, but if not you can raise them yourself. The aim of the assessment is to help you get the support that you need. So it's best to give your honest opinion about your caring role, the care you provide and your feelings about being a carer.

The council must provide you with an independent advocate to assist you in the assessment process (and after) if:

- without support you would have 'substantial difficulty' in communicating your wishes, or understanding, retaining and assessing information during the assessment and
- there is no other appropriate person who is able and willing to help you

What happens after the Assessment?

After your assessment, to be able to receive services and/or direct payments from the local council, you will need to meet the national eligibility criteria and therefore have what the law calls 'eligible needs'. You can find out more about the national eligibility criteria here <http://info.westberks.gov.uk/index.aspx?articleid=29334>

Generally speaking, you will have eligible needs if there is (or is likely to be) a significant impact on your wellbeing as a result of you caring for another person.

There are three questions that the local council will need to consider when making their decision.

1. Are your needs the result of you providing necessary care?
2. Does your caring role have an effect on you?
3. Is there, or is there likely to be, a significant impact on your wellbeing?

If the answer to all three questions is yes, then it is very likely that you have eligible needs.

If the local council decides that you meet the eligibility criteria, then providing you want them to, they must meet these needs and draw up a support plan detailing how these needs will be met. They have a legal obligation to meet these needs.

They may do this by

- providing services directly to you,
- by providing services to the person you care for,
- or a combination of both.

The local council can provide services themselves, or arrange services through another organisation. Alternatively, you or the person you care for can request direct payments, which are payments which enable you to buy services to meet your eligible needs.

If the decision is that you are not eligible for care and support, the local council must provide you with advice and information. This should be relevant to your specific circumstances and your local area including:

- details of the needs that have been identified
- how to access care and support
- local care providers and services

If you want to know more, Carers UK have produced a useful factsheet which you can download here <http://www.carersuk.org/files/helpandadvice/4765/factsheet-e1029--assessments-and-the-care-act-updated-27-march-2015.pdf>