



**KINGSTON
CARERS
NETWORK**

Local Health Professionals Toolkit

June 2026



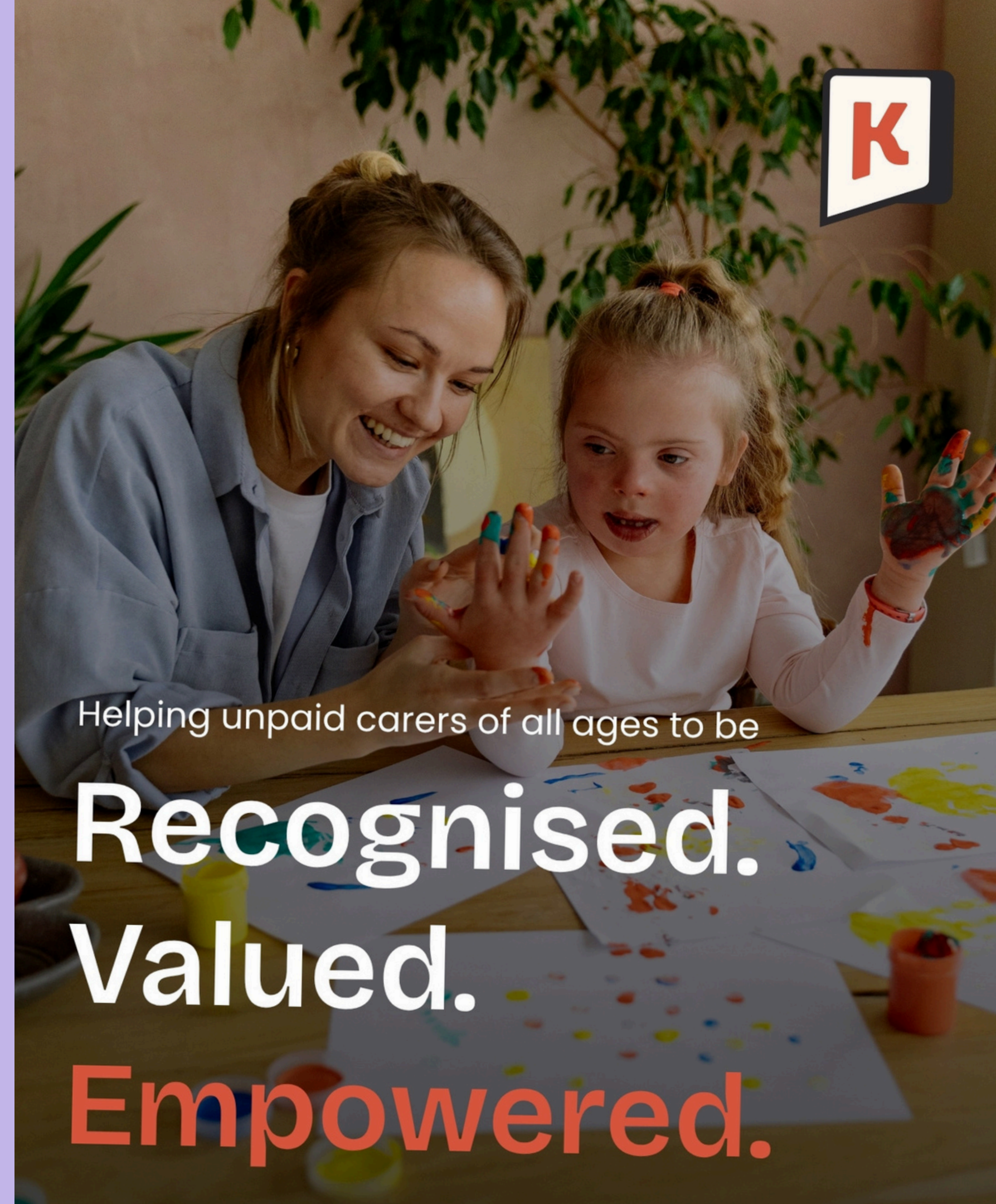
About Kingston Carers Network (KCN)

Founded over 30 years ago, Kingston Carers Network (KCN) is the only charity in the borough providing dedicated support to unpaid carers of all ages.

We exist to ensure carers are recognised, valued and enabled to live and care well.

We do this by providing tailored information, advice and support to unpaid carers.

We also advocate for improvements to local services to better meet their needs.



Helping unpaid carers of all ages to be

Recognised.

Valued.

Empowered.

About this toolkit

This toolkit is aimed at anyone working in the healthcare sector.

If you are a health care professional, you are likely to have regular contact with unpaid carers.

You therefore have a vital role to play in identifying carers and helping them access local services and support.

This toolkit aims to help you do this.





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**1. Who are unpaid
carers?**





Who are unpaid carers?



A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to a family member or friend who could not otherwise manage without their help.

They may be caring for someone who has a disability, a physical or mental illness or a substance misuse problem.

Someone might become a carer suddenly – following a stroke or accident for example – or their caring responsibilities might gradually develop and increase over time.

Many people, however, do not necessarily identify as a carer, which can provide a barrier to them accessing relevant services and support.



Roles of an unpaid carer



Caring responsibilities can be highly varied and unpredictable, covering all aspects of practical, personal and emotional care. They can include:

- Shopping, cooking and cleaning
- Managing medicines or money
- Providing personal care
- Helping get people out the house and attend appointments
- Keeping an eye on someone
- Providing emotional support
- Advocating for their loved one and helping them navigate health and social care services



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2. Unpaid care in Kingston





Unpaid care in Kingston

Over a fifth (22%) of people are currently providing unpaid care in the UK.

This means that there could be as many as 37,477 unpaid carers in Kingston.

Age profile

The majority of self-reported carers are female (60%) and in the 50–64 age group.

Disability

Over a fifth (22%) of unpaid carers in Kingston are registered disabled.

Ethnicity

70% of self-reported carers are female; 17% identify with Asian and 2% with Black ethnicities.



Unpaid care in Kingston

Time spent caring

One in five carers in Kingston are undertaking 20-49 hours of care per week.

One in four are undertaking more than 50 hours of care per week.

Employment and economic activity

A significant majority (72%) of carers in the borough are of working age (25-64 years).

Yet nearly half (42%) of carers in Kingston are not in work.



Value of unpaid care

The value of unpaid care provided in Kingston is estimated at £336 million.



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3. Impact of caring





Impact of caring

Caring and finances

Nearly half (47%) of carers in Kingston report that their caring responsibilities have created financial difficulties to some extent; for nearly 10%, caring has created significant financial difficulties.

Caring and employment

35% of carers have reduced their hours and more than a fifth have taken a lower paid or more junior role to fit around their caring responsibilities.





Impact of caring

Health

28% of carers in Kingston report that they are neglecting their own health needs, in terms of getting enough sleep or eating well.

43% of carers report they had a mental or physical health condition develop or get worse as a result of caring.

40% of carers report they have postponed or cancelled a medical appointment, test, scan, treatment or therapy because of their caring responsibilities.

More than two thirds of unpaid carers in Kingston experience loneliness.

Suicidality

Unpaid carers are increasingly being seen as a high-risk group for suicide. Recent research in England has found that more than 40% of parents caring for a child with a long-term illness or disability have thought about suicide while caring for their child.

Caring as a social determinant of health



NHS England identified caring as a social determinant of health in 2021 following a review of the GP Patient Survey.

It found that carers are at increased risk of illness, specifically musculoskeletal conditions, cardiovascular disease, generalised cognitive deterioration and function and poor sleep.

Further information: [Caring as a social determinant of health](#) (Public Health England, 2021)

"..Premature death, higher levels of disease and neglect of their own health care needs are known to be common amongst carers.

They are also twice as likely as non-carers to experience poor physical and mental health, with these outcomes exacerbated by social isolation, poor information and support, and financial stress.

Older carers are a particularly high-risk group: they are more likely to be living with long-term conditions and disability."



Impact of being a young carer

Education

36% of young carers reported being bullied about their caring role.

Young carers are missing over a month of education every year as a result of their caring responsibilities.

40% of young carers and young adult carers say they either 'never' or 'not often' get support in their school, college or university.





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4. Carer identification and support





Barriers to identification

One of the barriers to accessing support is that many people with caring responsibilities simply do not identify themselves as being a carer.

There are many reasons why people do not associate with the label “unpaid carer”:

Family duty: “It’s just what I do.”

Shame or stigma: associated with caring or the illness or disability of their loved one

Evolving journey of caring: responsibilities creeping up over time

Absence of a diagnosis: such as dementia, autism, mental illness



Barriers to identification

Similarly, while healthcare professionals may see and recognise that someone is undertaking caring responsibilities, they are not yet routinely recording them as unpaid carers or adding them to a carers register:

PCN	# Carers	# of carers
Canbury Churchill Orchard and	799 (1.9%)	3.823
Chessinaton and Surbiton	700 (2%)	3.085
Kinaston	714 (1.2%)	5.368
New Malden and Worcester Park	1.377 (2.2%)	5.568
Surbiton	591 (1.8%)	2.705
Total	4.181	20.549

Source: SWL ICS, May 2026



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5. Carer legislation and guidance





Legislation

The **Care Act 2014** states that carers' own needs are as important as the people they care for.

It sets out a duty to involve unpaid carers in the care planning process, recognise and address their contributions to care, give them a choice about caring (willingness and ability to care), assess any impact on their wellbeing or ability to provide care and provide support to meet assessed needs.

Further information:

[Care Act 2014](#)

[Care Act Factsheets](#)

The **Health and Care Act 2022** requires NHS providers to involve carers in decisions about care, including discharge planning.

It sets out a duty for Integrated Care Boards to promote the involvement of patients, and their carers, in any decisions which relate to the prevention or diagnosis of illness in the patients, or their care or treatment.

Further information:

[Health and Care Act 2022](#)



Quality Markers for GP Practices

Published by NHS England, and endorsed by the Care Quality Commission as a model of good practice, the six quality markers address aspects of health and wellbeing that carers have said are important to them:

1. Identification and registration
2. Holistic support needs
3. In-practice support
4. Appointments and access
5. Information for carers
6. Awareness and culture

Specific examples of good practice:

- Keeping a register of carers
- Offering flu vaccinations and regular health checks
- Setting up alert systems for carers
- Hosting support groups and clinics
- Ensuring carers have privacy when needed
- Treating carers as equals

Further Information: [Supporting carers in general practice: a framework of quality markers](#) (NHS England)



CQC Assessment Framework

Unpaid carers are explicitly referenced in 6 Quality Statements within the CQC's updated Assessment Framework:

Assessing needs: "The needs of carers of people using services are also assessed and met. This supports their health and wellbeing in their carer roles and helps them to provide safe and effective care to the people they support."

Consent to care and treatment: Where necessary, people with legal authority or responsibility can make decisions within the requirements of the Mental Capacity Act 2005. This includes the duty to consult others

such as carers, families and/or advocates, where appropriate.

Person-centred care: "People who use services and those close to them (including carers and dependents) are regularly involved in planning and making shared decisions about their care and treatment, so it is centred around them and their needs."

Providing information: "People who use the service, their family, friends, and carers are provided with information that it is accessible, safe and secure and supports their rights and choices."



CQC Assessment Framework

Listening and involving people: “People, their family, friends and other carers feel confident that if they complain, they will be taken seriously and treated compassionately.”

Learning, improvement and innovation: “Staff and leaders ensure that people using the service, their families and carers are involved in developing and evaluating improvement and innovation initiatives.”

Further information: [Assessment framework – Care Quality Commission](#) (Care Quality Commission, updated May 2026).





NICE Quality standards

[Dementia: assessment, management and support for people living with dementia and their carers](#) (NICE, 2018)

Covers diagnosing and managing dementia (including Alzheimer's disease). It aims to improve care by making recommendations on training staff and helping carers to support people living with dementia.

[Supporting Adult Carers](#) (NICE, 2021)

Covers the provision of support for adults aged 18 or over who provide unpaid care for 1 or more people aged 16 or over with health and social care needs. It describes high-quality care in priority areas for improvement.





Triangle of Care

Triangle of Care is a quality improvement scheme for health and social care providers that promotes safety, recovery and wellbeing by including and supporting unpaid carers.

Further information: [The Triangle of Care](#)



The Triangle of Care has six key standards:

1. Carers and the essential role they play are identified at first contact, or as soon as possible thereafter.
2. Staff are 'carer aware' and trained in carer engagement strategies.
3. Policy and practice protocols re: confidentiality and sharing information are in place.
4. Defined post(s) responsible for carers are in place.
5. A carer introduction to the service is available, with a relevant range of information across the care pathway.
6. A range of carer support services is available.



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6. Local commitments to unpaid carers





Kingston All Age Carers Strategy

[Kingston's All Age Carers Strategy \(2022-2027\)](#) was co-produced by young and adult carers across the Borough. It aims to paint a picture of what it is like to be an unpaid carer in Kingston, what is important to carers, what issues they are facing, what is working well and more importantly what can be improved.

The priorities set out in the strategy address health and wellbeing, access to respite, information and advice, minimising the financial impact of caring, and enjoying a life outside of caring.

Implementation of the strategy is overseen by the Kingston Carers Partnership Board which is made up of unpaid carers and professionals from across health, social care, children's services and the voluntary and community sector.





No Wrong Doors for Young Carers MOU



A Memorandum of Understanding was signed by Kingston Council's Adult Social Care service and Achieving for Children in June 2025, committing both organisations to work together to identify, assess and support young carers and young adult carers. Key outcomes include:

'No Wrong Doors' principle: young carers and their families should not be turned away or redirected when they approach a service for support.

Systems wide approach: recognises needs for different services to work together to support young carers.

Whole family approach: should consider needs of entire family, not just young carer.

Signed by Directors of Adult Social Care and Children's Services in June 2025.



Young Carers Covenant

CARERS TRUST

The Young Carers Covenant

We are committed to a fair future for all young carers and young adult carers

We agree that:

Young carers and young adult carers are children and young people first; they should be recognised and listened to.	No young carer or young adult carer should take on caring roles which are inappropriate, excessive, or which negatively impact their life opportunities, health or wellbeing.
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We are committed to a future where all young carers and young adult carers:

Are identified at the earliest opportunity ✓	Are able to thrive in education ✓
Can access and succeed in employment/training opportunities ✓	Have time for themselves ✓
Are safe and secure ✓	Can access support for themselves and their family ✓
Feel they have choices in their lives ✓	Have good physical and mental health ✓
Can access and benefit from the rights they have ✓	Live free from poverty ✓

The Young Carers Covenant sets out 10 outcomes that young carers have defined themselves as being key to their health and wellbeing, education and future prospects.

Local signatories to the Young Carers Covenant include:

- Achieving for Children
- Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames Council
- Kingston and Richmond NHS Foundation Trust
- Kingston Carers Network
- Sir Ed Davey MP

Further information: [The Young Carers Covenant – Carers Trust](#)



Neighbourhood Health in Kingston

Unpaid carers have been identified as one of three 'golden threads' underpinning neighbourhood health delivery in Kingston:

"Ensure unpaid carers of all ages are explicitly recognised as providers of care to be considered within each agreed priority area. This means making their needs and perspectives a defined responsibility in all priority areas rather than focusing on engagement alone."

**Kingston and Richmond Provider Alliance,
2026**





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7. The role of healthcare professionals





The role of healthcare professionals

Healthcare professionals have a vital role to play in identifying carers and helping them access relevant services and support by:

- Proactively identifying and recognising unpaid carers
- Offering carers timely and relevant information
- Connecting carers to local support services
- Supporting carers to access a Carers' Assessment
- Providing support following the outcomes of the Carers' Assessment
- Involving carers in decisions about health and carer services
- Involving carers in decisions about the treatment and care of the person they care for





Identifying Carers

How to set the scene

Looking after someone is personal, so it's important the conversation feels safe, kind and not judgmental.

Try to:

- Start with empathy: "That sounds like a lot to manage."
- Be curious, not directive: "Do you ever get a break from it?" rather than "You should get help."
- Normalise support: "There's a lot to navigate. There are people out there who can help cut through all that admin."





Identifying Carers

When to have the conversation

It's usually best to have the conversation when:

- The person is talking about someone they're helping or supporting regularly
- A discussion about health, wellbeing, caring responsibilities or support needs arises naturally
- You're in a setting that feels private or relaxed, like a one-to-one chat or a moment of connection during a group activity

It can just be a natural response to what someone is saying. You don't have to plan it in advance.





Identifying Carers

How to spot a support-ready carer

Look out for someone who:

- Talks about helping a loved one manage an illness, condition, disability or addiction.
- Mentions feeling tired, stressed or overwhelmed by what they have to do as part of caring for someone else
- Says they don't have much time for themselves
- Is juggling work, family life and ongoing care responsibilities





Identifying Carers

What to say

You don't need to persuade someone to adopt a label. Just let them know that support exists and that it starts with one phone call.

Try:

- "Sounds like you do a lot. Did you know there's someone you can speak to - no forms, just a chat about what's out there, so you can spend less time on the admin?"
- "They'll listen and help you figure out what could make things easier - for you and the person you look out for."





Identifying Carers

What not to worry about

You don't need to have all the answers.

- Encouraging the first step is enough.
- You don't need to convince someone to say: "I'm a carer". Helping them describe what they do can open the door

*Caring is Personal: Campaign Toolkit,
croydon.gov.uk, 2025*





Recording Carers

GP practices are encouraged to keep a register of patients with caring responsibilities as part of proactive prevention measures. Ideally, the register should be linked to patient records.

Recording patients with caring responsibilities can help local health care systems understand how many unpaid carers are registered with primary care (both adults and young carers under the age of 18), and how many unpaid carers have a documented carer contingency plan that can be accessed by healthcare professionals if needed.

NHS England have published a recommended cluster of SNOMED CT codes to use for recording unpaid carers in patient records. These are shown on the next page.

Further Information: [Coding Unpaid Carers \(SNOMED\), NHS England 2022](#)

Further enquiries: england.nhsthinkcarer@nhs.net

Recording Carers

SNOMED code	Description	Definition
224484003	Patient themselves providing care	Person who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.
302767002	Cares for a relative	Person who looks after a family member who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.
13663210000000106	Has Carer Contingency Plan/ Has Carer Emergency Plan	Carer has contingency plan in place for a situation when they cannot provide care and relevant information is accessible to professionals.

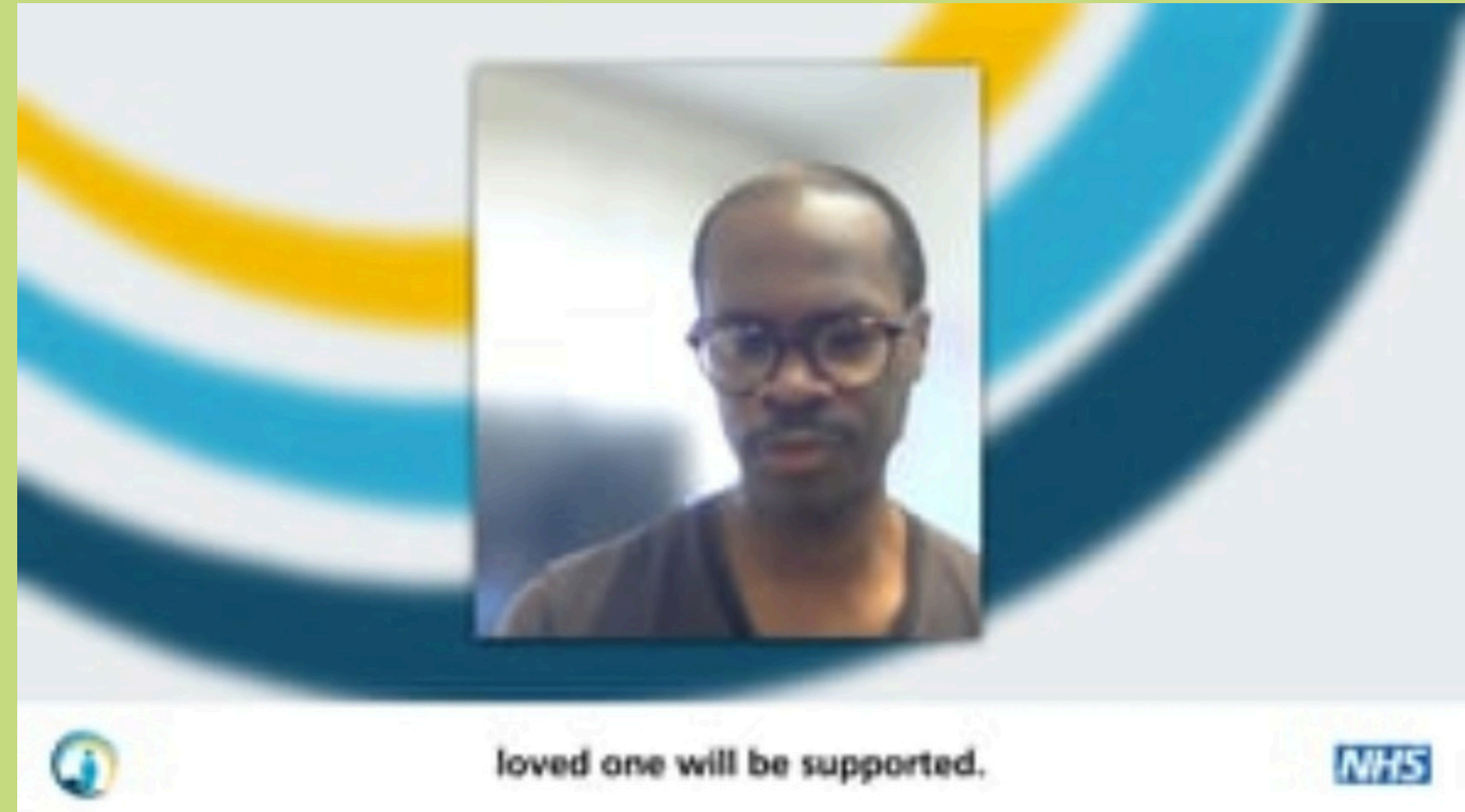
Carers Contingency Planning

A Carers Contingency Plan (CCP) sets out what will happen if an unpaid carer is suddenly unable to provide care for their loved one.

In London, unpaid carers can record and share their carer contingency plan with health and social care professionals via the digital Universal Care Plan (UCP).

Healthcare professionals can support unpaid carers to develop and record their Carer Contingency Plan within the UCP. As of May 2026, people can also directly create and edit their own universal care plan via the NHS app.

Further information: [Guidance for Professionals: Supporting Editable Access for Patients](#)



Guidance for the public: [How to view, start and update your Universal Care Plan using the NHS App.](#)



Supporting Carers

Health professionals can play a vital role in signposting and referring carers to local services and support. These might include:

- Benefits and financial support
- Peer support
- Health and wellbeing services
- Counselling
- Respite

Further information on local services available to carers in Kingston is available in the next section.





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8. Local carer services and support





Kingston Local Offer to carers

The Council's website provides details of what services and support are available locally for unpaid carers.

It also provides information and advice on carers' rights and entitlements, as well as how to look after yourself and plan for the future.

Quick Links:

- [Looking after yourself as a carer](#)
- [Requesting a carers assessment](#)
- [Financial support for carers](#)
- [Taking a break from caring \(respite care\)](#)
- [Planning for back up care](#)
- [Making care and financial decisions for someone else](#)
- [Workplace rights for unpaid carers](#)



Kingston Carers Network

KCN provides a range of services to adult carers. It also carries out carers assessments on behalf of the local authority.

Adult services:

- Advice and information
- Counselling
- Peer support groups
- Monthly drop in 'tea and toast' sessions
- Mental health peer support
- Benefits advice and tribunal representation
- Statutory carers assessments





YOUNG CARERS PROJECT

KCN's Young Carers Project aims to ensure that young carers (5-18 years) have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive and to enjoy positive childhoods.

Young carer services:

- Term-time after school sessions
- Holiday respite activities
- One-to-one mentoring
- Targeted family support
- Young adult carers peer support (18-25)





Carer Support Groups in Kingston

There are also a number of carer support groups in Kingston:

MENCAP carers Support Group

Kingston Mencap run a carers group for unpaid family carers who support a person with a learning disability.

Further information: Gill Wood on 07759 363 747 or email gillcwood@outlook.com

Kingston Mental Health Carers Forum

A lived experience forum for families caring for loved ones with mental health difficulties.

Further information: info@kmhcf.org.uk
[07983 063578](tel:07983063578)

Kingston University KU Cares

A dedicated team based within the university who are young adult carer students. Support is available from the point of application through to graduation.

Further information:

kucares@kingston.ac.uk.

[Young adult carers | Kingston University London](#)



SWLSTG Mental Health Trust

The South-West London and St George's Mental Health Trust (SWLSTG) provides a range of services and support to carers, friends and families of people accessing Trust Services. This includes:

Recovery College

The College offers a variety of both face-to-face and online courses that carers of people who have accessed services in the previous year can attend including a 'Wellbeing Skills for Carers, Friends and families' with five standalone sessions.

To enrol: 0203 513 5818 or email recoverycollege@swlstg.nhs.uk

Carers, Friends and Families Reference Group

This group meets every eight weeks on a Thursday evening to discuss the quality and safety of services, as well as patient and carer experiences. The group includes carers, family members and representatives from local organisations that support carers, including Carers' Centres. To join:

involvement@swlstg.nhs.uk

Further information:

- [Advice and Information for carers, friends and families](#)
- [Support for carers](#)

Kingston and Richmond NHS Foundation Trust

Kingston Hospital's Carers Clinical Liaison Service provides support to unpaid carers whilst the person they care for is in hospital.

Practitioners within the team will work with unpaid carers to develop a carer's support plan, which includes a carers agreement. The team will also support carers to access local services, understand their rights and help them plan ahead for a future emergency.

Carer's agreement

A carers agreement tells staff how much care (such as feeding, washing, dressing) unpaid carers would like to give whilst the person they care for is in hospital, and what care they would like the hospital to provide.

Carer's Passport

The passport sets out the hospital's commitment to carers, which includes allowing carers to:

- visit out of normal visiting hours
- provide assistance with personal care, meals and drinks in hospital
- be actively involved in meetings about the person's treatment and care
- be involved in discussion and planning for hospital discharge
- potentially stay overnight
- receive 10% discount on hot food in the hospital restaurant

Further information

[Carers' Clinical Liaison Service](#)
[Carer's agreement](#)



Connected Kingston

A curated collection of information, advice and local activities relevant to unpaid carers in Kingston. Available here: [Connected Kingston - are you looking after someone?](#)



[Home](#)

[Events](#)

[About](#)

[Contact us](#)

[Get Involved](#)

[My Favourites](#)

Are you looking after someone?

There are many local groups and activities that may be of help to you and the person you care for.

Support for Carers

We've worked together with Kingston Carers' Network to put together a [list for carers](#) where you will find information about local and national support. For carers between the ages of 5 and 18 you

Dementia and Neurodivergence

Find out more about the [clubs, services and activities available in Kingston for people living with or looking after someone with neurodivergent conditions,](#)

Support After a Death

This collection includes a range of community and national [services that can support you after the death of someone close.](#)



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9. Further information and resources



Further Information and Resources



Organisations

Carers Trust

[Carers Trust | Transforming the lives of carers](#)

Carers UK

[UK | Carers UK](#)

Toolkits and resources

[Carers Hospital Discharge Toolkit](#)

Toolkit for London Hospitals and Community Providers (2023)

[Identifying and Supporting unpaid carers in England to improved integrated system working](#)

A resource for health and social care professionals (2025)

[Carer Contingency Planning Campaign Pack](#)

Resource for organisations supporting carers to help guide carers through contingency planning (2024)



KINGSTON CARERS NETWORK

418 Ewell Road
Surbiton
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020 3031 2757

www.kingstoncarers.org.uk

[Make a referral - Kingston Carers Network](#)

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