

Carers' assessments – help for parent carers

What is a carer's assessment?

The aim of a carer's assessment is to give you a chance to tell social services about the things that could make looking after your child easier for you. This may result in getting services or direct payments to meet your own assessed needs.

A carer's assessment focuses on you as a parent and your needs. Social services should discuss issues like the help you need, and whether there is anyone else who helps or if you are your child's only carer.

The carer's assessment should also consider your wellbeing, including health and safety issues, and important commitments like relationships and employment.

What the law says

Parents of disabled children (called parent carers in the legislation), young people and young carers have strengthened rights to an assessment of their needs under the Children and Families Act 2014.

The Children and Families Act amended the Children Act 1989 (sections 17ZD, 17ZE12 and 17ZF). Under it, local authorities must assess parent carers if:

- 'it appears to the authority that the parent carer may have needs for support', or they
- 'receive a request from the parent carer to assess the parent carer's needs for support.'

These assessments are called parent carer's needs assessments. The Act also says that:

A parent carer's needs assessment must include an assessment of whether it is appropriate for the parent carer to provide, or continue to provide, care for the disabled child, in the light of the parent carer's needs for support, other needs and wishes. (Children and Families Act 2014 section 17ZD (9))

They must also take into account:

- 'the well-being of the parent carer', and
- 'the need to safeguard and promote the welfare of the disabled child cared for and any other child for whom the parent carer has parental responsibility.' (Children and Families Act 2014 section 17ZD (10))

This 'wellbeing' duty is an important addition. It means local authorities must consider a person's:

- personal dignity and respect
- physical and mental health and emotional wellbeing
- protection from abuse and neglect
- control by the individual over day-to-day life
- participation in work, education, training or recreation
- social and economic wellbeing
- domestic, family, and personal relationships
- suitability of living accommodation
- contribution to society.

Assessment under the Children's Act 1989 can lead to the provision of services which support families, including short breaks. The assessment is the process social services use to gather information about your child and family, so they can make a decision about what help you may need. The Working Together to Safeguard Children guidance emphasises the importance of the assessment being child and family centred. The approach should also be holistic, addressing the child's needs within their family and wider community.

You don't need to have a diagnosis for your child to get an assessment or help from social services – if your child needs help or support, an assessment of their needs should still be made. Consider making a complaint if this doesn't happen.

 **Need advice?**
Call our freephone helpline
0808 808 3555
helpline@contact.org.uk
Open Monday to Friday, 9.30am–5pm



When can I ask for a carer's assessment?

All parent carers have a right to ask for an assessment of their needs at any time. This can be, for example, if your needs have changed – you may wish to take up education, training or employment. You do this in the same way as asking for an assessment for your child.

However, it is important to note that **any assessment of your disabled child should take into account the needs of the rest of the family members, including parents and siblings, and consider their needs as a carer and capacity to continue with caring.** So, for example, if your child is being assessed for an Education, Health and Care (EHC) plan, your local authority should ask if you get any help from social services and, if necessary, make sure social services carry out a social care assessment. This should also consider the needs of parents and family members. For social care, help and support should be given to the child and family as soon as a need is identified. Any help or support identified should not wait until the completion of an EHC needs assessment.

How do I ask for a carer's assessment?

Many social services departments have 'children with disabilities' teams. You should find their number in the telephone directory under the name of your local authority, social services or children's services, or on your local authority website. You can contact these teams and ask for a carer's assessment.

Parents

Parents should use the Children and Families Act 2014 to ask for an assessment. It gives strengthened rights to assessments for parents carers, young people and young carers regarding work, education and leisure. See sample letter 1.

Young carers

An assessment for a young carer is triggered where there is an 'appearance of need'. That means it is not necessary for the young person to request this, so any assessment of you or your disabled child should take into account any brothers and sisters, and whether they are providing care.

Other people who help care

The Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995 remains in force for other family members who are providing care to a disabled child. For example a grandparent, aunt or uncle who provide care, but who do not have parental responsibility for the child. These people may be able to access assessments if they are providing substantial and regular care (usually defined as 35 hours or more care per week). See sample letter 2.

After the carer's assessment

Following assessment, the local authority must then decide whether the parent has needs for support, whether the disabled child has needs for support, and if so whether those needs could be met (wholly or partly) by services under the Children Act 1989, section 17.

They may decide there is no need for services, which could result in your case being closed with no further action taken. If you disagree with this decision you can challenge it using the local authority's complaints procedure.

If the outcome of the assessment recommends the provision of services then you can ask for direct payments to arrange the necessary services yourself instead of the council providing these directly. Your local council or carers' centre may be able to advise further or put you in contact with a service which supports users of direct payments.

What happens as my child gets older?

Parents

Parents who care for disabled children and young people who may need support to prepare for the transition to adult services have rights to an assessment under the Care Act 2014. This is called a child's carer's assessment 'in transition'. When these assessments take place isn't specified in the Act, but it states that they should take place when of most 'significant benefit' to the young person or carer.

Young carers

Young carers who are approaching the age of 18 and are providing care and support to their disabled sibling may be eligible for help in their own right under the Care Act 2014. This is regardless of the age of their sibling. When a young carer approaches their 18th birthday they can ask for an assessment of their needs to find out what support can be put in place to help them achieve their aspirations, for example to go to college or work.

Our factsheet *Introduction to The Care Act 2014 – England* explains rights for carers and young people around transition.





The care plan

In many local authority areas a panel decides the package of services that may be offered. A care plan should be agreed between social services and you and your family, to meet any identified needs.

The plan should give details of:

- what services will be provided
- for how long the services are needed
- what the local authority plans to achieve by providing the services
- what each person and agency is expected to do
- the date of the next review.


Importantly, the care plan should be reviewed regularly to make sure any services remain appropriate.

You can ask social services if you can use direct payments. This is where you receive the money yourself so you can buy the support that you and/or your child needs. You may decide to use direct payments to use a short breaks service, for example. More information about direct payments is in our guide *Getting direct payments to buy social care for your disabled child – England and Wales*.

It is important to seek advice if your needs change or your local authority has told you a service is no longer available.

Further information

The carer's assessment guide has further advice and is available from Carers UK. The guide also lists examples of some of the services which may be offered following the assessment. Examples include help with driving lessons, housework and gardening. See:


 www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/practical-support

The Contact guide *Getting social care services when your child has additional needs – England* explains the process of getting help from social services for you and your family.

Your local carers' organisation may also be able to support you to approach social services for an assessment. To find your local carers' centre visit:

 www.carers.org/carers-services/find-your-local-service

Other useful booklets from Contact

 We have a range of free guides for parents, including:

- *Aids, equipment and adaptations*
- *Holidays, play and leisure*
- *Special educational needs in England – series of factsheets explaining help a child may get in education*
- *A guide to claiming Disability Living Allowance for children*
- *Personal Independence Payment and other benefits at 16*
- *Understanding your child's behaviour*
- *Helping your child sleep*
- *The tax credits guide*
- *Siblings*

All our guides are free to parents who call our helpline, and are free to download.

Our helpline


If you're not sure about any aspect of caring for your disabled child and would like to talk to someone, please call our advisers on our freephone helpline.

 **0808 808 3555**

 **helpline@contact.org.uk**

 **www.contact.org.uk**





Sample letter 1 – to ask for a carer’s assessment if you are a parent

(Your address)

(Your telephone number)

(Date)

Social services address

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to request a carer’s assessment under the Children and Families Act 2014. I have been caring for **(name and address of the person you are caring for)** since **(date)**. S/he is my **(daughter/son)**.

(Name of daughter/son) needs help because s/he **(list the conditions or disabilities the person has, for example she is ... years old, has and needs assistance)**.

The main things **(name of daughter/son)** needs help with are **(having a bath, cleaning, dressing etc)**.

The main difficulties I have **(list the things you need, for example a break from caring)**. Please contact me at the above address or telephone number to let me know when you will be able to carry out an assessment.

Yours faithfully,

(your name)

Sample letter 2 – to ask for a carer’s assessment if you are not a parent

(Your address)

(Your telephone number)

(Date)

Social services address

Dear Sir/Madam,

I am writing to request a carer’s assessment under the Carers (Recognition and Services) Act 1995. I have been caring for **(name and address of the person you are caring for)** since **(date)**. S/he is my **(granddaughter etc)**.

(Name of person) needs help because s/he **(list the conditions or disabilities the person has, for example she is ... years old, has ... and needs assistance)**. The main things **(name of person)** needs help with are **(having a bath, cleaning, dressing etc)**.

The main difficulties I have **(list the things you need, for example a break from caring)**. Please contact me at the above address or telephone number to let me know when you will be able to carry out an assessment.

Yours faithfully,

(your name)

Got a question?
Call the Contact freephone
helpline: 0808 808 3555
helpline@contact.org.uk
www.contact.org.uk

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