

# Supporting Carers



**A Toolkit for Primary Care**



## Principles



Principle one:  
Recognition of  
carers is key



Principle four:  
Work with voluntary sector  
to ensure carers look after  
themselves



Principle two:  
Record accurately  
and respond



Principle five:  
Monitor changes in a  
carers' situation



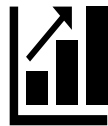
Principle three:  
Find flexible ways to  
accommodate carers'  
needs



Principle six:  
Success relies on leadership,  
behaviours and systems



Purpose



Monitoring  
Progress



Carers support  
pathway



Resources



# WHAT DOES THIS TOOLKIT AIM TO DO?

We want to make it easy for primary care to provide the best possible support for carers

Drawing on expertise from across Frimley, as well as academic evidence, this toolkit aims to provide clear practical steps to help primary care colleagues create the systems and behaviours which really support carers in primary care.



# WHY DO WE NEED A CARERS TOOLKIT?



Supporting carers has potential to stabilise health and improve outcomes for both carer AND the person they support. An important focus for scarce healthcare resources.

Our healthcare system relies on the assumption that carers are looking after themselves: they play a critical role in the health and social care ecosystem. It's in everyone's interests to make it easy for carers to look after themselves.

On average carers experience 11 fewer days of good health per year than the rest of the population. When they do access primary care, they are less likely than the rest of the population to report a positive experience.



# WHY DO WE NEED A CARERS TOOLKIT?

## Population data:

3 in 5 adults in the UK will become an unpaid carer.

Carers are estimated to save the economy £132 billion per year.

At any one time, AT LEAST 9% of the population are Carers (representing 76,000 people in Frimley ICS area).

## Health-related data:

- 21% of carers who provide 50+ hours of care per week are in poor health (vs 11% of the general population).
- 70% of carers come into contact with health professionals, yet GPs only tend to identify 7% of carers.
- Around 66% of carers feels that healthcare staff don't help to signpost them to information or support.

*Carers experience significant health inequity and have been prioritised in Frimley ICS as part of the CORE20Plus5.*

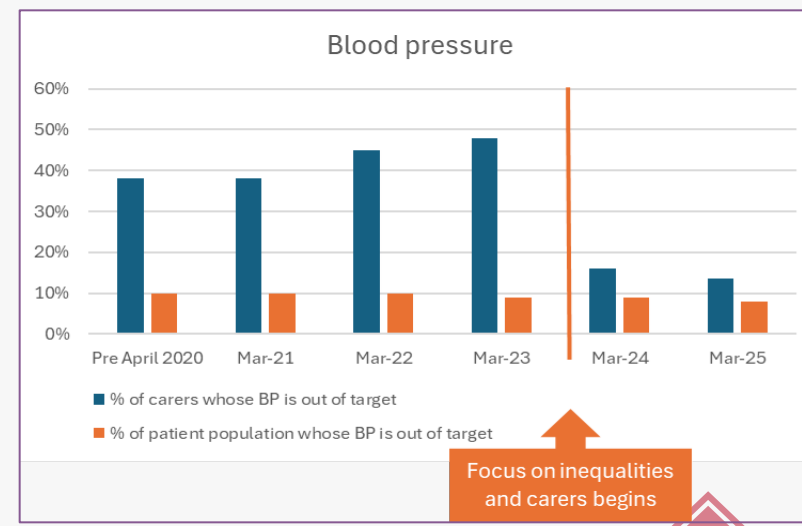
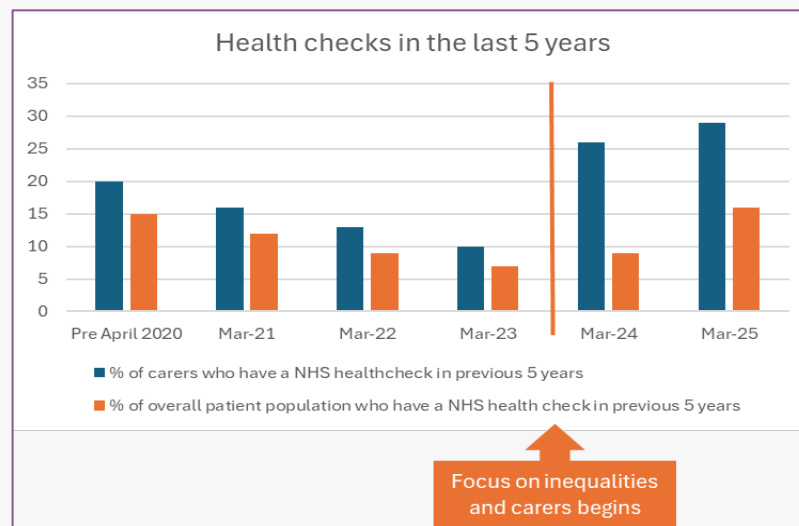
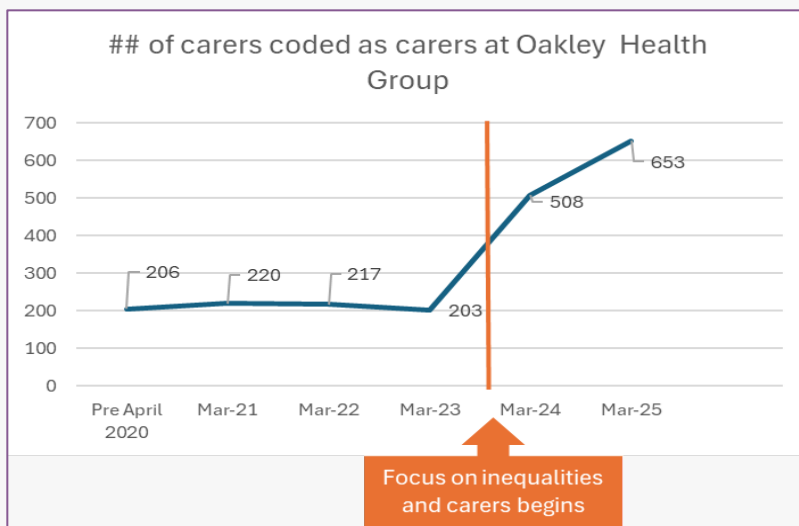


# WHY DO WE NEED A CARERS TOOLKIT?

A more systematic approach could help practices achieve QOF domains:

- An increase in uptake of screening, health check and vaccination rates
- A reduction in crisis events involving carer breakdown
- Improved wellbeing for carers and better care for those they support

Implementing this approach in Oakley Health Group seems to have generated improvements:



# KEY PRINCIPLES IN SUPPORTING CARERS

“  
An unpaid carer is anyone including children and adults 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

”

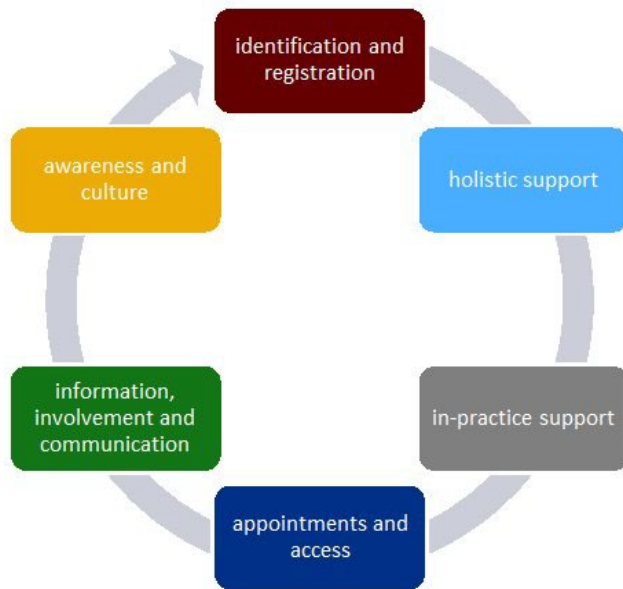
NHS England (2022)

It can be difficult to support carers in a way which they value:

- For some, caring is part of their relationship. It's expected as part of faith or family commitment. Accepting help can feel like a failure to deliver basic responsibilities.
- Caring can reduce a carer's ability to notice and act upon health problems.
- There's a tension between carers' needs and rights, and those of the person they are caring for. There is no 'right' answer to this challenge: each case must be discussed and negotiated individually.
- Caring takes up a lot of time. It can be very difficult to leave the person being cared for, even for a short time. Finding an opportunity to schedule and attend health appointments is very challenging.



# KEY PRINCIPLES IN SUPPORTING CARERS



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

This toolkit introduces a series of principles designed to mitigate these challenges and provides practical ways to implement NHS England's quality framework.

## Principles

- Recognition of carers is key, and is everyone's responsibility
- Record accurately, and respond
- Find flexible ways to accommodate carers
- Encourage carers to look after their needs
- Monitor changes in the carer's situation
- Success relies on leadership, behaviours and systems



# 1 PRINCIPLE ONE

Recognition of carers is key,  
and is everyone's responsibility

Take every opportunity to ask:

“

Do you look after someone  
who could not manage  
without you?

”

**New patients** have an opportunity to identify themselves as a carer on the registration form

**Existing Patients** are encouraged to register as a carer, through a range of methods

#### **Virtual/online**

- Practice website
- Quarterly practice newsletter
- Social Media

#### **In person opportunities**

- Information board in the practice
- Waiting room screen
- Carer registration forms placed at reception
- Conversation at PPG
- Regular agenda item in clinical meetings

#### **Reminders to clinicians and other practice staff to ask about carer status**

- Flag on EMIS – ‘ask if the patient is a carer’
- Regular reminders and update on the agenda in clinical meetings
- Lanyards or magnets to remind people to ask

#### **Ask directly, and ask in the right way**

- Ask ‘frequent attenders’: could this be the result of caring strain?
- Ask those with chronic conditions: ‘do they have a carer?’
- If patient attends with friend/relative, ask more about their role
- Ask at diagnosis/chronic disease reviews
- Ask at flu clinics
- Ask at paramedic home visits

**Consider the language: ‘do you look after someone who could not manage without you’ is clearer than ‘are you a carer?’**



# 2

## PRINCIPLE TWO

### Record accurately and respond

**Systematic recording is key. Carers we spoke to explained that poor recording is a significant source of frustration and stress.**

- Once carers' records are flagged, it is important that they are contracted to provide signposting and resourcing (see principle 4).
- If possible, link records between carer and the person they look after (this is highly desirable, but requires consent from both parties, so is not ALWAYS possible).
- For every carer who is identified:
  - Alert the carers' champion (see principle 6)
  - Ensure the carers' record is updated
  - Ensure they are sent a carers' pack

**Coding considerations: See SNOMED codes overleaf**

- Mark as 'permanent active problem' on EMIS so that carer status is automatically visible to clinicians and other professionals.
- Record next of kin to enable linking between carer record and the person they support.
- Flag on EMIS 'ask about communication preferences' and ensure record is updated with relevant preferences as they are identified.
- If a patient dies and is coded as 'having a carer' find any linked carer or next of kin record and update with 'patient no longer a carer'.\*

\*First check they are not caring for anyone else.



# PRINCIPLE TWO

Record accurately and respond

## SNOMED CODES for carers



### Patient themselves providing care (can also use 'is a carer')

- Concept ID: 224484003
- Description ID: 337525019

### Provision of information or services for carers

- Concept ID: 839291000000101
- Description ID: 2178071000000113

### Is no longer a carer

- Concept ID: 199361000000101
- Description ID: 301361000000110

\*Approved by [NHS England](#)



# PRINCIPLE THREE

## Find flexible ways to accommodate carers' needs

Q: How can I help a patient with finance and benefits advice?

A: Contact Citizen's Advice Bureau or Princess Royal Trust for Carers

Q: How can I help a patient prepare an emergency plan?

A: Contact Princess Royal Trust for Carers

**There are a lots of ways to achieve this- some suggestions are set out below:**

- Review coded carers list to prioritise health inequalities (e.g. CORE20PLUS5).
- Identify and invite carers who are eligible for health checks.
- Ensure follow up on any identified needs (e.g. additional bloods, vaccinations, social prescriber, GP and consultant referrals).
- Make every contact count (e.g. offer to vaccinate both carer and patient, even if appointment is for a different issues).
- Proactively schedule longer appointments (e.g. 50-minute appointment to take both people's history, do health checks and vaccinations).
- Offer appointments outside of working hours (makes it easier for carers to find someone to look after the patient while they visit the surgery).
- Offer home visit, telephone, virtual appointments.
- Make use of local voluntary sector expertise to support carers



# PRINCIPLE THREE

Find flexible ways to accommodate carers' needs

**Example: Bracknell & District PCN: A co-produced minimum offer for carers**

**If there is no reply when calling a carer:**

Please try at least one more time, and at least 20 minutes later.

**When texting a carer to alert them to a phone appointment:**

Please specify whether it will be an AM or PM appointment.

**When calling a carer:**

Please find a mechanism to ensure that the surgery's number is not withheld, this helps the carer to prioritise the call.

**When scheduling appointments:**

Please allow flexibility over the location of the appointment, as far as possible.

**When scheduling routine appointments:**

Please offer evenings and weekends as far as possible, and allow the carer/ patient an option to wait to see their preferred clinician (rather than take the next available appointment).

**If the carer is accompanied by the person they look after:**

Please consider the use of chaperones to support the person they look after, so that the carer can have a private consultation, as appropriate.



# 4 PRINCIPLE FOUR

Work with voluntary sector to ensure carers look after themselves



**Support carers to understand that keeping themselves well is in the best interests of the person they care for.**

- Share information on local support options for carers (see resources section).
- Encourage carers to:
  - Consider respite, before crisis or burn-out occurs
  - To make space for their own interests or social needs, if they possibly can
  - Create and share emergency & contingency plans

## **Signpost to voluntary sector**

Encourage involvement with Princess Royal Trust for Carers  
(See resources section for contact details)



# PRINCIPLE FOUR

Work with voluntary sector to ensure carers look after themselves



## Case study

A man with caring responsibilities for his children, and elderly parent, did not follow up on health complaints for several years. This was later diagnosed as a stage four tumour. The man felt unable to seek help earlier because he couldn't make time for the appointment when so many people were depending on him.

However, in becoming seriously ill, he was now no longer able offer support. Had there been opportunity to identify this person as a carer, healthcare professionals could have emphasised the need for him to stay well, particularly so that he can offer care in the way which he wanted.

*This case study is a composite. Details changed to protect anonymity*



# PRINCIPLE FIVE

## Monitor changes in a carers' situation

### **Don't assume that the situation remains stable or unchanged**

- Continue to ask 'are you still looking after someone at home who cannot manage without your help?'
- Ask about changes in extended family's health, especially for those living in multi-generational households.
- Where appropriate, re-code the record and/or signpost to more suitable support.

Ensure all practice staff explore these issues sensitively: significant changes can be emotional and confusing for the carer (e.g. hospital admission, death).



# PRINCIPLE SIX

Success relies on leadership, behaviours and system

**These principles cannot be implemented without a focus on leadership, behaviours and systems.**

- Identify a Carers Champion who is senior enough to ensure the principles are followed, and who can model the required behaviours and language.
- Ensure clinicians and non-clinical colleagues are supported to understand the principles and pathway.
- If possible, identify additional roles (e.g. Health inequalities co-ordinator) to help maintain a focus on carer requirements.

“

The Carer Champion acts as the main contact person for carers, colleagues and local carer organisations. They will maintain the practice resources for carers and take a lead in developing new initiatives. To successfully support carers in a practice, all staff need to be aware and involved

”

Oakley Health Group's description of the Carer's Champion Role

The resources section contains more information, guidance and training options



# MONITORING YOUR PROGRESS IN SUPPORTING CARERS

NICE Quality standard QS200 (19<sup>th</sup> March 2021) outlines the markers of quality for supporting adult carers.

The data sources which inform these standards are not available at PCN or practice level.

So we recommend developing local data collection which allows these standards to be measured, alongside qualitative feedback from carers.

Carers are identified by health and social care organisations encouraged to recognise their role and rights

Carers are supported to actively participate in decision-making and care planning for the person they care for

Carers are regularly given the opportunity to discuss with health and social care practitioners the value of having a break from caring and the options available to them.

## Measure

- Number of carers is known to local health and care organisations
- Average time it takes for carers to recognise their caring role

- Proportion of carers who feel they have been involved or consulted as much as they wanted to be to actively participate in decision-making and carer planning for the person they care for.
- Proportion of carers who feel they have encouragement and support in their caring role

- Proportion of carers who use support or services to take a break from caring
- Carer quality of life

## Data Source

- NHS Digital Short and Long Term data collection
- Qualitative engagement

- NHS Digital Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers In England
- Qualitative engagement

- Qualitative engagement
- NHS Digital Personal Social Services Survey of Adult Carers In England



# CARERS SUPPORT PATHWAY

## Encourage patients to identify themselves

- **New patients** have an opportunity to identify themselves as a carer on the registration form
- **Existing patients** are encouraged to register as a carer, through a range of methods:
  - Virtual / online
    - Practice website
    - Quarterly practice newsletter
    - Social media
  - In person opportunities
    - Information board in the practice
    - Waiting room screen
    - Carer registration forms placed at reception
    - Conversations at PPG
    - Regular agenda item in clinical meetings
  - Reminders to professionals to ask about carer status
    - Flag on EMIS '*ask is patient is a carer*'
    - Regular agenda item in clinical meetings
    - Reminders in clinical communications
    - Lanyards or magnets to remind clinicians to ask
  - Ask directly, and ask in the right way:
    - Ask 'frequent attenders': could this be the result of caring strain?
    - Ask those with chronic conditions: 'do they have a carer?'
    - If patient attends with friend / relative, ask more about their role.
    - Ask at diagnosis / chronic disease reviews
    - Ask at flu clinics
    - Ask at paramedic home visits
    - Consider the language: '*do you look after someone who could not manage without you*' is clearer than '*are you a carer?*'

## CODING CONSIDERATIONS

- Mark as "permanent active problem" on EMIS so that carer status it is automatically visible to all clinicians.
- Record next of kin on EMIS to link the carer to the person they support.
- If a patient dies and is coded as "*having a carer*" find linked carer record and update with *patient no longer a carer* (first check they are not caring for anyone else).

## New patient registers and self-identifies as a carer

- Patient coded as a carer (automatically via e-registration)
- Carers Champion alerted
- Registrations clerk to send welcome text and carers' pack
- Find out about communication preferences and update record

## Existing patient self-identifies or is identified as a carer

- Carers Champion is alerted
- Patient coded as a carer by Carers Champion
- Carers Champion makes contact and sends carers' pack.
- Find out about communication preferences and update record

## SNOWMED CODES:

- **Patient themselves providing care** (can also be coded as 'is a carer').
  - CONCEPT ID 224484003
  - DESCRIPTION ID 337525019
- **Provision of information or services for carers**
  - CONCEPT ID 839291000000101
  - DESCRIPTION ID 2178071000000113
- **Is no longer a carer**
  - CONCEPT ID 199361000000101
  - DESCRIPTION ID 301361000000110

## Find flexible ways to accommodate carers' needs

- Review of coded carers' list to prioritise health inequalities (e.g. CORE20PLUS5)
- Identify and invite carers who are eligible for health checks
- Ensure follow up on any identified needs (e.g. additional bloods, vaccinations, social prescriber, GP and consultant referrals).
- Make every contact count: (e.g. offer to vaccinate both carer and patient, even if appointment is for a different issues).
- Proactively schedule longer appointments (e.g. 50 minute appointment to take both people's history, do health checks and vaccinations).
- Offer appointments outside of working hours (makes it easier for carers to find someone to look after the patient while they visit the surgery)
- Offer home visit, telephone, virtual appointments.
- Make use of local voluntary sector expertise to support carers.
- Implement the 'minimum offer'

## TRAINING AUDIT AND QUALITY ASSURANCE

- Quarterly EMIS search of new carer registrants to ensure they have received the carers pack
- Regular QI reviews of the carers' register. How many now have dementia, or are on a disease register? How many are no longer carers?
- Mandatory carer awareness training for all colleagues via Bluestream



# CHECKLIST

Is this in place?

What actions do you need to take?

Yes

Partly

No

## 1) Recognition of carers is key, and is everyone's responsibility

Do patients know that they should tell you about their carer status? Are all the appropriate channels and approaches in place (see slide 9) Virtual / on-line information? In person opportunities? Reminders and support to colleagues to ensure they ask directly about carer status, and to ask in the right way?

## 2) Record accurately and respond.

When someone tells you they are a carer, is the information acted upon properly? (see slides 10 and 11) Is the Carers' Champion alerted? Is the carer record updated properly and linked to the relevant patient, where possible? Are they sent a carers pack? Are communication preferences noted?

## 3) Find flexible ways to accommodate carers

Do carers have more flexible access to primary care and other support (see slide 12 and 13)? Are those with CORE20PLUS5 identified and prioritised? Are flexible appointments offered, using Make Every Contact Count principles? Is the desirable minimum offer in place?

## 4) Work with voluntary sector to ensure carers look after themselves

To what extent does your practice encourage carers to create and share contingency plans? And to consider their own wellbeing, respite needs? Do you share information about local support and events for carers? (see slide 14)

## 5) Monitor changes in the carer's situation

To what extent does your practice pro-actively monitor changes in a carers' situation? (see slide 15)

## 6) Success relies on leadership, behaviours and systems

Does your practice have a senior leader who is a carers champion? Are other roles focused on supporting carers too? Is mandatory training in place for all colleagues? (see slide 16)



# WITH THANKS TO

Oakley Health Group for their detailed support in the creation of this toolkit.

Many thanks also to Bracknell & District PCN, the Princess Royal Trust for Carers in Hampshire and the five carers who provided verbal consent for their views to be included in this toolkit.

We really value your generous insights and advice.

We acknowledge Age without Limits for providing freely available, non-copyright images used throughout this slide deck.





# USEFUL RESOURCES



# COMMUNICATION TO CARERS

## SMS Message

### Carer Information

You have informed us you are a carer; we have lots of useful information on our website:

<https://oakleyhealth.org/carerinformation> 

Some helpful links:

<https://www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/guides-and-tools/looking-after-someone-guide/> 

<https://carercentre.com/> 

<https://www.connecttosupporthampshire.org.uk/information-and-advice/carers/> 

[https://hereforhartdirectory.org.uk/search?category\\*\\*\\*5B\\*\\*\\*5D=729&keyword=](https://hereforhartdirectory.org.uk/search?category***5B***5D=729&keyword=) 

 **SNOMED Code: Provision of information on services for carers (procedure) (83929100000101)**

Date

Dear

You have recently informed us that you are a Carer.

Please find enclosed a copy of the Carers UK 'Looking after someone' booklet and the 'Here for Hart' Carers leaflet.

Both are full of useful information and resources. If you would like an electronic copy please let me know as the Carers UK booklet also contains lots of links to further information. It is also available as a PDF on the Carers UK website.

The Oakley Health Group website (see below) has a Carer Information section which contains links to local resources and groups as well as links to information regarding Carer's assessments, benefits, and emergency planning.

I hope you find the information of benefit.

Please do get in touch via the practice email, which can be found at the bottom of this letter, if you have any further queries.

Kind Regards

Carer Champion



# OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY RESOURCE USED AT OAKLEY HEALTH GROUP

## Current Outreach Resources

**Physical Carers pack** consists of:

- **Cover letter** with
  - Named carers champion,
  - Practice website address and telephone number
  - Directs to Carers page on practice website
- **Carers UK 'Caring for someone' in England booklet** – This is currently being updated for 2025-26 and will be amended accordingly.
- **Here for Hart carers leaflet**
- **Here for Hart Discounts for carers**  
(currently e-leaflet print out as allows Here for Hart to keep this up to date)

**E-Carers pack** consists of:

- **Named carers champion,**
- **Link to Carers page on practice website**
- **Link to Carers UK 'Caring for someone' in England booklet** – This is currently being updated for 2025-26 and will be amended accordingly.
- **Link to Princess Royal Trust for Carers in Hampshire website**
- **Link to Here for Hart directory**
- **Link to Connect to Support Hampshire**

**Carers Information Boards across all practice sites:**

consists of continually updated information/posters including:

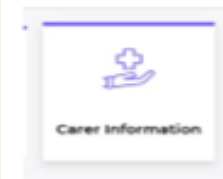
- **Carer definition**
- **Local events & support for carers**
- **Here for Hart directory**

(Currently awaiting a board move around as more space is needed.)

\*See Slide 5



**Practice Website:**



- **Carers page with**
  - Carer definition
  - Named carers champion
  - Carers Declaration\*
  - Carer's form (once submitted – sent to OHG generic inbox for action, which is monitored all day)
  - Local resources
  - Other Support available
  - Young Carers Support
- **Patient News section** - E.g. shared the State of Caring Survey July 2024 and Home and Well Carers Hub information.

**Waiting Room screen across all practice sites:**

consists of continually updated information/posters including:

- **Encouraging patients to identify themselves if carer.**
- **Local events & support for carers**

(Currently awaiting a board move around as more space is needed.)

**Social Media - Currently use Facebook page and Instagram:**

consists of continually updated information/posters including:

- **Encouraging patients to identify themselves if carer.**
- **Local events & support for carers**

**Practice Newsletter - Currently shared via email to virtual PPG, practice website, Facebook page and Instagram.**

Printed copies easily available in all waiting rooms and some community hubs (e.g. Yateley Industries).



# OUTREACH AND COMMUNITY RESOURCES



The Princess Royal Trust for Carers in Hampshire  
01264 311680

Citizen's Advice Surrey Heath 0808 2787936

Farnborough Citizen's Advice 0808 2789712



# NATIONAL GUIDANCE & TRAINING

**NICE Guidelines on supporting Adult Carers** highlights the aim to ensure carers know their rights (a carers assessment for example) and using every opportunity (GP appointments, home visits etc) to identify and support carers.

**NHS England » Supporting carers in general practice: a framework of quality markers** Offers a framework for six 'quality markers' for improving how all staff at a general practise can support and identify carers

**Carers Trust** has a module called "Understanding Carer Identification" with videos which covers different types of carers (young, adult, under-represented groups etc)

**Carers Trust** also have a "Good Practice Document - Identification of Carers in GP Practices" which provides ideas on how to embed carer identification in primary care.

**Carer Contingency Campaign Pack: Supporting Carers and Strengthening Local Care Systems - Resources - Carers Trust**



# DIGITAL RESOURCES

If you are interested to find out about digital resources, please contact  
[Lucy.Asquith@healthinnovationoxford.org](mailto:Lucy.Asquith@healthinnovationoxford.org)

She is able to share a list of digital resources for carers and primary care, however these are excluded from the toolkit as they have not been verified or endorsed.

