

Supporting older carers

Tool 4: Supporting older carers to access support

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This tool aims to support practitioners and / or teams to measure where they are in relation to supporting older carers to access services, and to identify ways they can improve their practice.

When supporting older carers to access services, professionals need to be proactive because older carers do not necessarily self-identify. Other tips have emerged from existing research and the project. Read through the summaries below of what carers say is important to them when trying to access services. As you work through the questions, use the section below to write down your thoughts about how you might develop your own action plan.

Older carers need professionals who:

- > Are in tune with their situation.
- > Are kind and empathetic
- > Use interpersonal skills and take the time to listen to and understand older carers and their lives, continually adapting their approach to meet the older carer's changing needs.
- > Are flexible and understand that carers may be under immense stress and may find it hard to find time for meetings.
- > Take their lead from older carers and provide support and information at the carer's pace.
- > Support the older carer's wellbeing e.g. help them to think about how their social relationships and interests might be maintained and supported alongside their caring role.
- > Help older carers to ensure their GP knows about their caring role in order that their own health needs are met.

What older carers need from services:

- > Respite services which are flexible (e.g. available at times that best support the carer), familiar to the cared-for person, consistent, affordable, regular and reliable.
- > Access to peer support groups where they have time to talk with those in a similar position and support for the cared-for person on site (e.g. memory groups alongside carers groups).
- > Substitute paid carers they know and trust so they can take regular breaks for themselves.
- > A range of ways of accessing services and carer support.
- > Flexibility in the times services available.
- > Out of hours help.
- > A named professional to contact in a crisis.
- > Acknowledgement that their views are sought and any feedback they provide is acted upon.



Questions for reflection

- > **What can you do more of to support older carers?**
- > **How can you address the potential barriers to older carers accessing services in your area?**



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