

## Let's talk about Carers' Top Tips...

Whether you're new to \*caring and want to fast track your knowledge, or you've got lots of caring experience, but are keen to learn more tips, we've got you covered.

This factsheet has been created from Salford Adult Carers' lived experiences of caring and Gaddum staff. It contains a wealth of financial, practical and emotional top tips for caring.

\*A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a partner, family member, or friend, who due to illness, disability, a mental health difficulty, or substance misuse cannot cope without their support.

'Person with Care Needs' is the person who you as an unwaged carer help to look after.

- Register with [Gaddum](#), your local carers charity. They can support with statutory support such as [Carer's Assessments](#), look at benefits, offer 1:1 chats with a Carers Link Worker to help you navigate your caring role and signpost you to support services in the local community. They offer [activities, groups, and walks](#) so you can do fun and relaxing things for you, as well as running workshops, courses and drop-ins. There's a mix of face-to-face, telephone and online support, to suit your needs. You can also make a positive difference by shaping services for carers, by attending [Focus Groups](#), filling in surveys etc.
- Check out local carer groups. They're run by carers, for carers, with regular get togethers, where you can have a chat, a cry if you need, and do some fun and relaxing activities. It can be really helpful to utilise the lived experiences of other carers and get some advice from people who know what you are going through. Examples of local carer groups:

### [Carers and ex Carers Support Group \(Dementia\)](#)

A friendly, welcoming group in Swinton of carers and ex-carers of people with dementia. They meet at Humphrey Booth Resource Centre on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, 10am – 12pm. Email [Jackie.gandy@virginmedia.com](mailto:Jackie.gandy@virginmedia.com) or call 0161 736 4059.

### [Carers Together](#)

A weekly carers group in Eccles, on Wednesdays from 10am, at Barley Farm. Email [carerstogethergroup@gmail.com](mailto:carerstogethergroup@gmail.com)

### [Neuro](#)

A group for parents and carers who care for neurodivergent individuals. They meet fortnightly on Mondays, 1pm – 2:30pm at Emmanuel Church Centre.

Email [neurosalford@yahoo.com](mailto:neurosalford@yahoo.com)

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\*Information correct as of Summer 2023.

## [Phoenix Carers](#)

A weekly support group for carers. They meet on Friday afternoons 1pm - 2.30pm at the Make Space Centre in Walkden. Email [hello.phoenixcarers@gmail.com](mailto:hello.phoenixcarers@gmail.com)

## [Salford Parent Carers Forum](#)

A group of Parent Carers of children aged 0-25 with special educational needs or disabilities. Email [info@salfordpcf.com](mailto:info@salfordpcf.com)

## [Time Out for Carers](#)

A weekly support group for unpaid carers in Salford. They meet Wednesdays 12pm – 3pm at Spring Bank Community Centre. Email [jean.elliott@ntlworld.com](mailto:jean.elliott@ntlworld.com) or call 0161 727 8406.

- It can be really helpful to talk to other carers or to support services about your caring role. Although your Cared For's health condition(s) may be very different to someone else's, carers can often experience similar themes of feelings e.g. loss of identity, less time for ourselves etc.
- Know your [Rights](#) as a Carer. For example you have a legal right to choose whether or not to be a carer, the right to identify what care you are willing and able to give and the right to a Carer's Assessment.

Your local authority ([Salford City Council](#)) has a duty of care to protect your wellbeing from the impact of caring. For example you have the right to personal dignity, protection from abuse, the option to participate in work, education, training if you choose, and access to social activities etc.

You have the right to request flexible working and the right to unpaid Carer's Leave (2024). You may be eligible for benefits such as Carer's Allowance, Carer's Credit, a Carer's Personal Budget etc.

The Person with Care Needs might be eligible for benefits such as Personal Independence Payment, Attendance Allowance, Disability Living Allowance for children etc.

- Go at your own pace... Maybe you've become a carer recently, maybe you've been caring for a long time, or maybe your caring role has increased, due to your loved one's health deteriorating. No matter your circumstance, be gentle with yourself and go at your own pace.

You may receive a lot of information at once, from support services, fellow carers, friends or family. This will most likely be given with the best of intentions - but it can be overwhelming none-the-less. So go slow with the information. Look for reliable sources, break it down, take one thing at a time and go at your own pace. (Including reading these Top Tips!)

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- Look at [Lasting Power of Attorney](#) (LPA) with the Person with Care Needs sooner, rather than later, because if they want to set up LPA(s), they have to be completed whilst the Person with Care Needs still has mental capacity.

LPAs are legal documents that let the 'donor' (Person with Care Needs) appoint one or more people (known as 'attorneys') to help them make decisions, or to make decisions on their behalf (and in the best interests of the Person with Care Needs, making sure their wishes are respected).

There are two types of LPAs:

1. Property and Financial Affairs.
2. Health and Welfare.

[Property and Financial Affairs LPA](#): "If the person you look after is 18 or older and wants help managing their bank account and other financial affairs, both now and in the future (for when they are unable to make a decision), they could grant a Lasting Power of Attorney for Property and Financial Affairs to a specific person (for example you as their carer)."

- Carers UK.

[Health and Welfare LPA](#): "Gives your attorney the power to make decisions about your daily routine (washing, dressing, eating), medical care, moving into a care home and life-sustaining medical treatment. It can only be used if you're unable to make your own decisions."

- NHS.

- If you are supporting someone who is transgender or non-binary and they want to change their name and title, this can be done by [deed poll](#) for a nominal price, before legally changing their gender.
- Check out national and local charities which offer support for the Person with Care Need's healthcare condition(s). For example [Stroke Association UK](#), [Dementia UK](#), [Parkinsons UK](#), [Age UK](#), [Cancer Research UK](#), [National Autistic Society](#), [Scope](#) (Disability equality charity) etc.
- Getting out and about can be difficult at times. The following may help, if the Person with Care Needs is eligible:

A [Radar Key](#) is a universal key that can be purchased for £5 in Salford, or online, so people with disabilities can access locked public toilets around the country.

A [Blue Badge](#) is a parking permit that allows people with disabilities to park closer to their destination. To qualify for a Blue Badge, you must meet certain criteria. For example if you're registered severely sight impaired, are getting certain benefits, have a disability which means you cannot walk or find walking very difficult.

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[Travel vouchers for disabled people](#) allow you to buy travel (at a quarter of the price) and use them instead of cash to pay for taxis, private hire vehicles and community transport anywhere in Greater Manchester.

For example, you can get £20 worth of travel vouchers for just £5. You can buy up to a maximum of £120 worth of vouchers per year.

Just make sure you check out the eligibility criteria and that your local taxi company accept the vouchers, before buying any vouchers!

- Let your [GP Surgery](#) know you're a carer, so they can update their database. You'll be signposted to support, invited for free flu jabs etc.

If you try to book a GP appointment and there are no appointments left, let the receptionist know that you are a carer and what impact not getting an appointment will have (on you / the Person with Care Needs). They may have some emergency appointments they can open up.

- If the Person with Care Needs gives explicit consent ([proxy access](#)) to the GP Surgery that they're happy for confidential information to be shared with you (they can specify how much information), it means you can speak with staff about their blood test results for example and help with getting their prescriptions etc.
- Utilise smartphone apps e.g. '[NHS App](#)', '[Hey Pharmacist](#)' for reordering medication, reminders and to keep up to date with vaccines etc.

Check out [Jointly](#), an app developed by Carers UK, designed by carers for carers. It combines to-do lists, medication lists, calendars, group messaging (if you share caring responsibilities with someone) and more. It's normally £2.99 but Salford Carers can use [Jointly for free](#) until 31<sup>st</sup> March 2024 currently, with the access code: DPCN9987.

- It can be helpful to make a 'cheat sheet' of what medications the Person with Care Needs takes, when they take it and what condition each medication is for, and keep this in both your wallets, in case you need to access this information quickly.
- You can get a [Carers Emergency Card](#), so if you (the carer) are ever in an accident, help for the person you care for will be arranged.
- File medical appointments, hospital discharge notes and consultant letters etc in a 'health folder'. Use dividers if the Person with Care Needs has more than one health condition, so you can stay organised. Take this 'health folder' with you to their GP and Hospital appointments, so you can refer to information easily and don't have to remember everything.

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- [Pharmacies](#) can support Carers and the Person with Care Needs. For example pharmacies can use Medication Blister Packs / PilPouches if the Person with Care Needs struggles to open prescription bottles, or needs help with taking the right medication, at the right time. Some pharmacies will drop off and deliver prescriptions straight to your front door. The NHS also has tips for carers on [managing medicines](#).
- Don't be afraid to ask for help. [Ask your family, extended family, friends and neighbours for support](#) (as well as professionals) and be specific with what you need help with. For example ask if they can look after the Person with Care Needs, for an hour, a few hours, a day etc, so you can have some respite (a break from caring), and go for a walk, have a nap, see a friend - to look after your own health and wellbeing.

If your friends are meeting for coffee, but you need to be near the Person with Care Needs, ask if your friends can come to a coffee shop near you, or to your house, so you can still join in, but have less travel time.

If applicable, at Christmas, instead of physical gifts, you could ask family and friends if they could look after the person you care for, for a few hours.

The Person with Care Needs' friends may be able to help out. For example they could drop in or telephone your loved one every now and again. This can lessen your emotional caring role and means the person you care for will have some company.

You could ask a family member if they'd mind making an extra meal or two, to help you out.

- If you can [meal plan and batch cook](#) for the week ahead, it's a great way for you and the Person with Care Needs to have healthier meals. You'll also save money, time and energy and have less food wastage!
- Having some 'easy meal' recipes for when you're tired can really help too. For example, a jacket potato with filling, pasta, omelette, soup and a hot roll, baked beans on toast, a slow cooker recipe with leftover veg, pizza and salad, microwave rice, or a bacon buttie are some quick and easy recipes.
- [Make time for you](#), for your health, wellbeing, and enjoyment. It's important to look after yourself. Your needs and wants are just as important as the person you look after!
- After a potentially busy or stressful caring task such as taking the Person With Care Needs to a hospital appointment, build in time for you afterwards e.g. reading, seeing a friend, or going for a swim etc.

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- If you're having a hard time whilst you are caring for someone, make sure you prioritise you, as well as the person you care for. Even if it's to excuse yourself to go to the bathroom so you can take 5 minutes, have a cry, [regulate your breathing](#) and feel calmer.
- [Journalling](#) is a great way to manage all the thoughts and emotions that come with caring. Getting your feelings down on paper, so they're out of your head can be very therapeutic. It can also help with working out solutions to problems.
- Understand the difference between requests and [boundaries](#).
  - Requests involve asking something e.g. 'please don't shout at me'.
  - Boundaries are things we can do to protect ourselves. e.g. 'If you keep shouting, I will need to leave the conversation.'

Reflect on what your boundaries might be. i.e. what your limits are, so you can protect your physical, mental, emotional health and wellbeing.

Communicating and maintaining boundaries can be difficult, but it helps to create healthy relationships, where people feel safe and respected.

- Remember, it's okay to say no. You have the right to say what care you're willing or unable to give. If it's no longer workable to keep caring, you'll be supported to explore whether other family members can provide care, or what services will need to be put in place.
- [Macmillan Nurses](#) are specialist nurses who provide support to people with cancer and their families. They can help with information, support, symptom management, palliative care and carer support.
- Hospices provide care for people who are nearing the end of their lives. If you are caring for someone with a terminal illness or life-limiting condition, you can talk to your doctor about whether hospice care is right for them. [Hospice UK](#) has resources to support carers.
- If you feel your rights are not being upheld, you can cite laws relating to carers. There are handy [summaries](#) of these laws online, as well the laws in full. For example the [Care Act 2014 \(easy read\)](#), [The Children and Families Act 2014](#) and [The Carer's Leave Act 2023](#).

Thank you so much to all of the Salford Carers who shared their Caring Top Tips during Carers Week 2023. We were delighted to facilitate this event after Salford Carers requested it at a [Carers Focus Group](#) earlier in the year.

If you'd like to share any of your caring top tips, please get in touch on [salford.carers@gaddum.org.uk](mailto:salford.carers@gaddum.org.uk) or call 0161 834 6069 and we'd be happy to add them to this co-produced factsheet.