

## **Helping to Identify and signpost carers to support services in Richmond upon Thames**

### **A guide for GP reception and pharmacy front line staff**

#### **Who are we and what do we do?**

Richmond Carers Centre is a local charity supporting unpaid carers in the London Borough of Richmond upon Thames. We offer advice, information and emotional support to carers over the phone, by email and in person at the centre. This includes support navigating the social care system, signposting and referrals to other organisations and listening support.

Carers who register with us can also access additional services such as carers' workshops, regular group activities, short breaks and trips, counselling, complimentary therapies and our quarterly newsletter. Feedback from carers has shown that it is the emotional support they receive over a period of time and knowing that support is there that really helps.

#### **What is an unpaid carer?**

An unpaid carer is 'a person who, without payment, provides support to someone who would not manage without their help. This may be due to a physical or learning disability, mental health condition, long-term illness, addiction or substance misuse'. According to the 2011 Census, unpaid carers number approximately 15,000 in the borough of Richmond, of which over 1,600 are registered with Richmond Carers Centre. Anyone can become a carer, at any age, and often carers do not realise that they are even providing a caring role. People don't choose to be a carer, it is usually a consequence of a change in circumstance. We support anyone affected by that circumstance, including wider family members, not just those people providing the bulk of the support.

## **Things that might affect carers include:**

- Social isolation
- Loss of a sense of identity
- Loneliness
- Deteriorating emotional and physical health and wellbeing
- Worsening medical conditions
- Financial difficulties as a result of giving up work to care
- Difficulties at work or in education

## **Identifying Carers**

There are a number of things to look for that may suggest a person is a carer, which we have listed below as a quick reference list

### **They are in attendance with the patient and;**

- The patient is newly diagnosed or newly registered
- The patient has recently been discharged from hospital or their condition has changed/worsened
- You may recognise them from numerous attendances
- The condition of the patient is chronic/severe enough that it is reasonable to question their ability to manage without care and support from another individual

### **The person attending with the patient may be very attentive to or make notes on:**

- Future appointments, where to go, who to speak with, etc.
- Medicines/prescription guidance
- Preparations such as fasting/non-fasting

### **The person attending with the patient may:**

- Speak on behalf of the patient
- Be in possession of relevant documents/appointment letters
- Physically support the patient to the waiting area

### **A patient attending on their own may still be a carer. They may:**

- Seem distracted and in a rush to leave
- Appear restless or agitated/stressed by the situation
- Ask a number of times how long it will be until they are seen
- Mention that they cannot be late home/back, suggesting someone

may be depending on them

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- A carer may present on behalf of the patient to
- Ask questions relating to the patient's condition or medication
- Collect prescriptions/buy over-the-counter treatments not for themselves
- Book appointments for the patient

### **Why are GP and pharmacy staff so important?**

We believe that GP and pharmacy staff are in a key position to help identify and signpost hidden carers. These are carers who may not access services at all during the time they are providing a caring role, or at least not until they reach a crisis point or develop a need for care themselves. This is because many carers do not understand what a carer is, or they do not identify with the term. At the point these hidden carers come into contact with GP and pharmacy staff there is an opportunity to help them understand that there is support available to them in the borough. This is a key mechanism by which hidden carers are identified and signposted to support, which can help carers early in their caring role, before they have developed a need themselves or reached a crisis point.

Broaching the conversation can be difficult, so asking a standard question when registering or updating patient details may help, for example:

#### **You could ask:**

- Do you provide care and support for someone who wouldn't manage without your help?
- Is there someone providing you with support that is vital for you to be able to manage?

If the question is directed at the patient you may see a reaction/change in the carer's expression, and they may ask you for information on another occasion.

## How can you signpost or refer to Richmond Carers Centre?

- We send leaflets to pharmacies and GP surgeries every quarter and can always send more if you need them. You can give the leaflets to carers or display them in your waiting room and on noticeboards.
- There are links to referral forms on our website, as well as many other sources of information ([www.richmondcarers.org](http://www.richmondcarers.org)).
- You can call the support team for information or advice on what to do if you are worried about someone. We have a 24 hour answerphone so if the line is busy we will call you back.

**CARERS SUPPORT LINE**

**020 8867 2380**

**[info@richmondcarers.org](mailto:info@richmondcarers.org)**  
**[www.richmondcarers.org](http://www.richmondcarers.org)**

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