

While carers provide a valuable service to society, and looking after family members or friends brings great rewards, there is growing evidence about the increased psychological distress, strain and overall health deterioration endured by carers. Carers UK Survey 2015 reported that 76% of carers are concerned about the impact of caring on their health over the next year.

Although there **are** a number of clinical assessment tools already available to help measure carers' health and carers burden/strain e.g. the Hospital Anxiety and Depression Scale (HADS) there are none that take into account the broader spectrum of the caring role/circumstances.

The GP Carers Well-being Tool aims to help health staff evaluate the impact that caring has on the carer's health. This tool is helpful in determining level of stress on carers and can be used to prioritise need and support plans for the carer. It has been designed to help to support and inform your clinical decision around the role of the carer.

Each carer's circumstances will be unique to them and therefore the impact on their health will differ. They will frequently be unaware of the accumulative impact that caring can have. This process may in fact be the first time a health professional has asked them about their caring role and is therefore an opportunity to raise awareness of the importance of the carer looking after their own health.

Changes to the law

Under the new Care Act* (Department of Health, 2014) local authorities now have a duty to provide services to carers that prevent, reduce, or delay them developing a need for support. This needs to be done in cooperation with health. (Clause 3)

If a carers presents 'with need' it is your responsibility (provided consent has been given) to refer them on to social services for a formal carers assessment. This is true for those new to caring and those who may have been caring for some time. It applies to all carers young or old.

*Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014.

Practitioners Carers Well-being Tool (CWT):

The statements in the CWT may help you understand whether the carer is under particular strain and whether a referral to support services may help mitigate against this. The document is designed to be read through to the carer to assess the impact level that each criteria is having on the patient's health and well-being. A referral using the online Carers Prescription is recommended (eg. to Carers Support) whatever the score. If the score is medium to high, a referral for a Carers Assessment should be considered (again this can be made using the Carers Prescription).