

All age carers' handbook

Supporting you every step of
the caring journey



Welcome

Welcome to your all age carers' handbook. You might not call yourself a carer. Being a carer means offering support to someone who needs help with their everyday life. This guide is here to support you in that important role.

The council would like to acknowledge and thank Berkshire Healthcare National Health Service (NHS) Foundation Trust. Sharing the written content of their friends, family and carers' handbook, helped in the production of this booklet.

Disclaimer:

Every effort has been made to ensure the information in this handbook is accurate and up to date. However, the council cannot guarantee that all information is complete or free from error.



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Who is this handbook for?

This handbook is for anyone who is in an unpaid caring role. A carer can be anyone, no matter the age or relationship to the person you support. As a carer, your situation might be living with the person you support or providing support from a distance.

Carers have told us that having information early on helps. This handbook is for carers and its aim is to provide information and guidance to help carers feel informed, including what to expect from Bracknell Forest Council services and where to go for further support both locally and nationally. The council recognises that support from family, friends and the community is essential to all those who need care, whether they have a physical or mental health condition. It is recognised that it is important to work alongside carers and give them support too. Caring for someone can take its toll and can be physically, emotionally and practically demanding.

Bracknell Forest is committed to supporting our carers and this handbook also references the Bracknell Forest All-Age Integrated Carers Strategy 2024-2029 – Caring for our Carers - the next five years. This strategy sets out the vision for carers living in Bracknell Forest. The document recognises and values the significant support that unpaid, young carers, parent carers and adult carers provide to some of the most vulnerable residents in our community. It acknowledges that caring for someone else can also have an impact on carers' own health and wellbeing, educational attainment, and employment opportunities. The aim of the strategy is for our carers to have a better quality of life outside of their caring role. The collective vision is to enable all carers in Bracknell Forest, children, young people and adults, to be able to access the support they need and to be recognised and valued in their community.



Am I a carer?

A carer is someone at any age who helps another person, usually a relative or friend, in their day-to-day life. This help is unpaid. The person you support may have physical or mental health problems, learning disabilities or may misuse drugs or alcohol. The other person would struggle to manage without your support.

You don't see yourself as a carer. You see the support you give as an extension of an existing relationship. No matter how you see yourself, you are a carer if you provide or arrange care for someone who struggles to cope without your support. They don't have to be living with you, but if they rely on you then you may be entitled to support as a carer.

A young carer is someone under 18 who cares for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support.



How do you feel about being a carer?

Carers express many different feelings about being a carer.

Some carers have told us that they find their caring role rewarding, a responsibility taken on, with a positive commitment and outlook. On the other hand, the caring role may prevent carers from doing other things that are important like having a job or making time to see friends. Other carers have told us that they feel isolated.

Caring can also change your relationship with the person you care for and with others in your family. You may feel unprepared for how your life has changed.

As a carer you have legal rights. Knowing your rights can help you get the support you need.

We have summarised some of the most important aspects that we think are useful for carers to know.



Carers' legislation

The Care Act 2014 sets out carers' legal rights to assessment and support. The Care Act relates to adult carers (aged 18 and over) who are caring for another adult. This is because young carers (aged 18 and under) are assessed and supported under a separate children's legal framework. However, the Care Act 2014 does refer to a whole-family approach when working with adults, including ensuring children are not left with inappropriate or excessive caring roles, as well as support with transition to adulthood (please see page 8).

The Children and Families Act 2014 gives young carers (and parent carers) similar rights to assessment as other carers have under the Care Act. A young carer is someone under 18 who helps look after someone who has a mental health illness, drug or alcohol problem or long-term health condition. Being a young carer can have an impact on a young person's health and wellbeing, so it is essential they are identified, recognised, included, supported and referred onto services where appropriate. We take a 'no-wrong-door' approach for young carers—whichever service you contact first, staff will listen, identify caring roles early, and help you access the right support without having to repeat your story.

Regulations under the Care Act 2014 set out how assessments of adults must be carried out to ensure the needs of the whole family are considered. This includes assessing what support an adult needs to enable them to fulfil their parental responsibilities towards their children, or to ensure that young people do not undertake inappropriate caring responsibilities.

This may sound complex, but you are not expected to navigate this on your own.

Carers' rights

How we can support you as a carer

The Care Act gives local authorities a responsibility to assess a carer's need for support. Local authorities must provide information, advice and support to prevent, reduce and delay a crisis. Your wellbeing is important and support should try to prevent any deterioration in your health and wellbeing.

Your rights as a carer

If the person you care for is detained under the Mental Health Act, you may have specific rights, especially if you are their nearest relative. This is a legal term and is not the same as next of kin or carer.

The nearest relative is the person appearing highest in the following list, if over 18 and living in the UK (and being the eldest where there is more than one):

- spouse or civil partner
- son or daughter
- father or mother
- brother or sister
- grandparent
- grandchild
- uncle or aunt
- nephew or niece
- people who have lived with the detained person for over five years

There are exceptions. If you normally live with or provide care for the person, you may be identified as the nearest relative.

Hospital staff can help you understand whether you are the legal nearest relative.

Rights of the nearest relative include:

- asking for an assessment if the person refuses care
- being informed or consulted about admission
- objecting to certain types of detention



As a young person and a young carer, you have rights.

You have the right to:

- be seen and listened to
- privacy
- education
- be told anything that will affect you
- be asked for your opinion
- get information and advice in confidence from the right people
- independence
- respect
- help, support and time out from caring
- stop being a young carer if you want
- have fun
- a transition assessment. This is to assess your needs as you approach adulthood (18) and your aspirations.

What is a carer's assessment

Under the Care Act 2014, carers are entitled to an assessment of their own needs, regardless of the level or type of care they provide. The assessment is a chance to talk about how your caring role affects your wellbeing, and to explore any support that might be helpful to you – whether emotional, practical, or social.

An advocate is someone who can help you make decisions or to say what you want. Advocates can help you access information and services, explore choices and options, speak out about issues that matter to you and defend and promote your rights and caring responsibilities. If you would like an advocate to attend the assessment with you, let the assessor know and they will arrange it.

Subjects that might come up during your assessment could include:

- practical and emotional support
- a contingency plan
- how to balance employment with caring, for example flexible working
- how best to help and support the person you care for
- confidentiality and information sharing
- your rights if the person you support refuses consent to share information
- your own health, wellbeing and leisure needs
- help with understanding recovery options that the person you support is being offered
- welfare benefits
- culturally appropriate support that is specific to your needs
- are you supporting more than one person?

Depending on the outcome of your assessment, you may be offered a range of information and/or support.

You may have said that you feel willing but not able to continue with your caring support role or you are not willing or able to provide the support to the person. With this information about your wishes, it can be ensured that a person's needs are supported appropriately.

Care plan

A care plan is a written agreement that describes the support that someone using our services will receive, from whom and when, including information on what to do in the event of a crisis. A care plan should make sense, be helpful and reflect what the person receiving services thinks and feels. With the person's consent, families and carers should be involved as much as possible in the development of a care plan.

As a carer or family member you should be given a copy of the plan. You should be invited to regular meetings to discuss the plan unless the person you care for has not given their consent.

If you are concerned that the care plan is not being followed, or if you have not been invited to any meetings or you are not being involved as much as you would like, you should speak to one of our professionals involved with supporting the person you care for. Both you and the person you care for can ask for the care plan to be reviewed at any time.

Following your young carer's assessment, a support plan is devised of information and practical help for not only yourself but your family. This is shared either directly with you or through the lead professional. A lead professional takes overall responsibility for coordinating support for a young carer and their family, acting as a single point of contact so they do not have to deal with multiple services separately.

They ensure that the young carer's needs are assessed, that a clear plan is in place, and that all agencies work together effectively to improve outcomes and reduce any gaps or duplication in support.



Contact adult social care

If you would like information, advice, support, or to request a carer's assessment, please contact adult social care:

Email: adult.socialcare@bracknell-forest.gov.uk, visit the adult social care portal at: adultportal.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/web/portal/pages/home or call 01344 351500.

Contingency plan

A contingency plan covers situations when you are unable to provide care. This could be because of an emergency or any other reason. It's important to have a contingency plan so that the cared for will still get the care they need in the event you are unable to provide it.

The plan may contain details such as a contact name and number of someone who is willing to help in an emergency. It may also include details of the support you provide for your loved one/cared for so that they can be continued by someone else.

Carers UK have helpful resources on their website (carersuk.org) to help you consider what to put in your contingency plan.

Bracknell Forest Council also have information on their website about an emergency card. Visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/care-and-support/support-carers-bracknell-forest/caring-emergencies

Contingency plans can be shared across multiple agencies. They should be reviewed regularly to reflect any changes.

Emergency carers card

If you are suddenly unable to continue caring, an emergency carers card helps professionals identify the support arrangements in place for the person you care for.



Sharing information and confidentiality

With the consent of the cared for, we will aim to effectively communicate and engage with you. We will explain why, if for legal reasons, we can't share information and we will listen to you.

Confidentiality and information sharing can be complex, especially where a person withholds consent or does not have the capacity to consent.

Our staff are bound by law and professional standards, including a duty to keep information about carers and their families confidential. We follow clear guidance to ensure information is only shared appropriately, usually with consent or where there are safeguarding concerns.

We work closely with health partners, including Berkshire Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, whose Friends, Family and Carers Charter promotes working in partnership with carers and keeping them informed.

What types of information exist?



General information:

information in the public domain such as leaflets, websites, legislation, rights of the cared-for and carers, contact information for local and national services, how to access help including out of hours service contact details in the event of a crisis.



Personal information:

specific information about the cared-for, e.g. diagnosis, medication and its side effects, the care plan, discharge care planning, and contingency planning.



Sensitive personal information:

information of a highly personal nature about the cared-for, which could be use of illegal substances, details of previous sexual or emotional abuse, breaches of the law and cared for's views about family members.



What is consent?

The word consent means giving permission or agreement for something to happen. This guidance only covers what consent means in relation to using and sharing confidential information about the cared for.

Has the person you care for given their explicit consent to share information?

The individual you are caring for needs to give their explicit consent for their confidential information to be shared with you by the health and care professionals working with them.

The cared for can decide:

- who information can be shared with
- what information can be shared, for example whether this is limited to certain health issues or whether all information can be shared
- for what purpose the information can be shared, for example whether only in emergencies or wider consent to contact nominated others to discuss general health issues

Staff are encouraged to regularly review with the cared for any agreement to share or withhold consent. Staff should explain to you what information can be shared and explain why they cannot share certain information.

Staff must document these discussions in the cared for's record.

What happens if the person I care for does not have capacity to give consent?

If the cared for lacks capacity to give consent, then information may be shared with you if the health and care team considers it in the cared for's best interest.

Information sharing can also be authorised by someone who has been appointed as a health and welfare Lasting Power of Attorney (LPA) or health and welfare deputyship through the Court of Protection for the individual receiving care, as long as it is in the person's best interests.

If you know that a health and welfare LPA exists for the individual you are caring for, please let our staff know at the earliest opportunity. Staff will ask to see the document, take a copy and upload onto the cared for's record.



What general information can be shared?

Providing the information does not compromise the confidentiality restrictions requested by the cared for, family or carers should be given general information about:

- the mental health or physical health diagnosis (if known)
- what behaviour is likely to occur and how to manage it
- medication – benefits and possible side effects
- local care provided in a home setting and community services
- guidance on the cared for's safety
- an outline of the care and treatment pathway
- local and national support groups and resources

Our staff will work with you to ensure that you have sufficient information to allow you to care for the cared for safely. This may be more general advice rather than sensitive information about the cared for, to respect the individual's preferences.

Staff should talk to you to check what information you already know as this will help them assess what level of information can be given when sharing general information.

Where practicable, our staff should provide family/carers with the opportunity to see a professional on their own to have discussions in confidence. You should be able to voice your views and any concerns you may have.

Listening to you or offering emotional and practical support does not breach confidentiality.

If you are experiencing difficulties caring for someone because you do not have the information you need, you can discuss this with the team. They can explain to the cared for the benefits of sharing information with you, however, any decision not to share will need to be respected.



Does the person you care for have a Lasting Power of Attorney?

It is important to note that there is no legal basis for a person's friend, family or carer (acting as the next of kin) to have legal decision-making authority. Making a lasting power of attorney (LPA) is the best way to give someone you trust the legal authority to make decisions for you if you lose mental capacity. There are two types:

- property and finance
- health and welfare decisions

You must have mental capacity to make an LPA. It must be registered with the Office of the Public Guardian. There is a cost involved but people on a low income or benefits may be exempt or pay a reduced fee.

If the person you care for lacks mental capacity and does not have a health and welfare LPA, the Court of Protection may appoint a 'health and welfare deputy'. Friends, family or carers can consider applying to become a deputy.

It is important to plan ahead; with the person you care for to ensure you know their wishes and that you have the legal authority to make decisions in their best interest.

When can confidentiality be broken?

Any decision to break confidentiality must always be made in the best interest of the cared for and to achieve the best possible outcome for them.

Confidential information can only be disclosed in exceptional circumstances such as where the cared for or someone else's health and wellbeing is under serious risk or where there is a public interest or legal reason for disclosure without consent.

If this decision is made, our staff would explain to you, as the carer, or to the cared-for person how and why the decision to breach consent is in their best interest.

In your initial and transition assessment, we ask for consent to share information with other services or professionals to support you as a young carer. This includes your family.



Where there is a safeguarding concern, statutory guidance mandates information sharing between agencies - Working Together to Safeguard Children (2023)

Benefits (financial support)

As a carer at any age, you may be entitled to certain benefits or you may want to understand more about the benefits due to the person you care for.

The most up to date information about government benefits for carers is available from the Department of Work and Pensions (DWP) and Money Helper (formerly The Money Advice Service), their website is moneyhelper.org.uk

It may help to start by looking for the following information:

- the main benefits and tax credits that you can claim
- how benefits interact with each other
- how to claim each benefit
- how much you will get

The government website also has links to benefit calculators which may assist you to work out entitlements. Visit: www.gov.uk/benefits-calculators

Please also contact SIGNAL, see page 21.





Financial support

As a carer you may be entitled to these sources of financial support below:

- **Carers' allowance** at the age of 16. You can find out more and apply at: www.gov.uk/carers-allowance
- **Citizens Advice Bureau** can offer knowledge and support to anyone who needs practical advice.
 - **Citizens advice East Berkshire** visit: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/about-us/
 - **CAB carers' help and support** visit: www.citizensadvice.org.uk/family/looking-after-people/carers-help-and-support/
- **Carers' Card** provides a form of ID as a young carer, as well as access to the Carers' Card discount scheme. Visit: www.carerscarduk.co.uk/
- **Money Helper** provide free and impartial advice to carers on financial matters. Their website is full of useful advice and support, visit: www.moneyhelper.org.uk/en/benefits/benefits-if-youre-sick-disabled-or-a-carer/financial-support-for-young-carers
- **Leisure Save Scheme:** The Leisure Saver Scheme offers savings on specific leisure activities at Bracknell Leisure Centre (Everyone Active) and Downshire Golf Complex. Check their website for eligibility, visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/leisure-and-events/leisure-saver-scheme

Understanding medication

Medication may be involved in the treatment of the person you care for. Carers can speak to healthcare professionals if they have any questions or concerns.

When a medication is dispensed by a pharmacy to the person being cared for it will usually be supplied with a Patient Information Leaflet (PIL). This is a useful source of information that explains what a particular medication is for, how it should be taken and possible side effects.

You can also:

- speak to a pharmacist or your general practitioner (GP)
- check the cared for's information leaflet that comes with the medication
- visit: www.nhs.uk or call **111**

In an emergency

If you think the person you care for is having a severe reaction to their medication:

- call the team who is caring for them and ask to speak to the duty doctor, or
- call the NHS helpline on **111**, or
- go directly to the accident and emergency department at your local hospital

Further information and resources

You may want to access the following websites if you want more information about medication and health conditions:

Choice and medication

A database of expert information on medication choices and side effects.

Visit: choiceandmedication.org

MHRA (Medicines and Healthcare products Regulatory Agency)

For the latest information and updates about medical devices and drugs, visit:

www.mhra.gov.uk

Easyhealth

Information about health conditions that is easy to read, includes pictures and can be downloaded and printed. Visit: easyhealth.org.uk

NICE (National Institute for Health and Care Excellence)

An independent organisation that produces evidence-based national guidance about medicine, treatment and procedures. Find out more at: www.nice.org.uk

Mental health services

What will happen once the person being cared for is referred?

Once referred mental health staff will arrange an initial assessment with the cared for. The team will ask about current needs and difficulties including any thoughts that they are finding distressing. The team is likely to ask the cared for about any physical conditions, social history and current support networks such as friends and family.

The team will discuss a care plan. This is a joint plan of the actions to be taken by the team and the cared for following the assessment. Within our mental health teams, this will typically include how often the team will visit the cared for and referrals to other services that they may benefit from. Additionally, any physical investigations that they may require such as blood tests or an Electrocardiogram.

The care plan will be regularly reviewed by a multi-disciplinary team.

The Mental Health Act

The Mental Health Act 1983 (MHA) provides the legal framework that allows some people who are unwell to be admitted to hospital and have the appropriate care and treatment, including medication. It is the main piece of legislation that covers the assessment, treatment and rights of people with a mental health disorder.

In most cases when the cared for are treated in hospital or another mental health facility, they have agreed or volunteered to be there. They may be referred to as a voluntary patient. However, there are cases when a person can be detained (also known as sectioned) under the MHA and treated without their agreement.

People detained under the MHA are in urgent need of assessment and/or treatment for a mental health disorder and are a risk of harm to themselves or others.

Community Treatment Order (CTO)

A Community Treatment Order (CTO) allows certain detained patients to be treated safely in the community rather than remain in hospital. Certain conditions may be attached to a CTO around compliance with medication and engagement with the professionals.



Information about diagnosis

Caring for someone who has an illness or health condition can be difficult without clear information about their diagnosis, treatment options and medication. Understanding their diagnosis enables you to plan for the future and may mean other health and social care needs are also identified.



Rethink mental illness

The Rethink mental illness website (rethink.org) is a source of information on mental health conditions in an easy to read and understandable format.

The website provides comprehensive information on symptoms, diagnosis, treatment and support. It also has a library of factsheets that cover useful topics such as antipsychotics, hearing voices, mental health and prisons, and talking therapies.



Mind

Visit mind.org.uk for several resources.



Alzheimer's Society

Visit alzheimers.org.uk for several resources.

SIGNAL Carers Service

SIGNAL Carers Service is a friendly, welcoming service for anyone aged 16+ who looks after or provides support to an adult, or young person aged 16+, who lives in Bracknell Forest; this could be a partner, parent, adult child, friend, or neighbour. SIGNAL supports carers of all backgrounds and it does not matter if you are new to caring or have been undertaking the role for many years.

SIGNAL offers a reassuring place to turn when things feel overwhelming or you are simply unsure what help is available. Their team is trained to listen, guide and support you through whatever challenges you are facing. They can offer practical advice, talk through financial or benefits questions, and help you understand your rights as a carer. Sometimes, just having someone who 'gets it' makes all the difference.

SIGNAL also believes in the importance of carers having their voices heard. They work to make sure your views matter, whether you are navigating health services, care planning, or trying to keep your own wellbeing on track. They know that when carers feel informed and empowered, they are better able to balance caring with looking after themselves. They can also help you to connect with other carers who understand what it is like to be in a similar situation.

SIGNAL know that many carers juggle their responsibilities alongside work, family life, or their own health needs so their support is flexible too. You can speak to them over the phone, by email, video call or if necessary at home. Arrangements can be made for you to receive this support outside of their office hours. Whatever you choose, their aim is to make things easier and ensure you feel supported rather than alone.

Accessing their service is simple.



Call **01344 266088**,
email: info@signal4carers.org.uk
or complete their online contact form at:
signal4carers.org.uk/contact/

Dementia Advisory Service

The Dementia Advisory Service supports people with a diagnosis of dementia and their carers, by offering information, advice, and signposting to relevant services.

The Dementia Advisory Service will support an individual throughout the journey with dementia unless they are receiving more intensive support from other certain services within the community mental health team for older adults.

Service details:

- Dementia Advisory Service,
Church Hill House,
51-52 Turing Drive,
Bracknell,
Berkshire
RG12 7FR
- Call **0118 904 6900**
- Email: dementia.adviser@bracknell-forest.gov.uk
- Website: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/dementia



Respite for you, the carer

Caring for someone can be rewarding, but it can also be tiring and emotionally demanding. It is important that carers are able to take breaks to look after their own health and wellbeing.

Under the Care Act 2014, carers have a right to an assessment of their needs. As part of this, we will explore whether you need support to take a break from your caring role.

What do we mean by a break?

A break (sometimes called respite) can look different for everyone. It doesn't always mean staying somewhere overnight. It could include:

- a few hours to yourself during the day
- time to see friends or family
- attending a group or activity
- having someone step in to support the person you care for
- taking a short holiday

The most important thing is that the break works for you and helps you to rest, recharge, and maintain your wellbeing.

How can breaks be arranged?

Depending on your situation and what matters most to you, support may include:

- replacement care for the person you care for, so you can have time away
- direct payments, which give you flexibility to arrange your own support or breaks
- access to community activities or day opportunities for the person you care for
- short-term or emergency support, where appropriate
- support from local organisations such as SIGNAL, who offer advice, groups and wellbeing support

Planning ahead

It can also be helpful to think about:

- what would happen if you needed time away unexpectedly
- who could step in to support the person you care for
- having an emergency plan in place

Remember

Taking a break is not selfish, it is an important part of continuing in your caring role and maintaining your own health. We will work with you to understand what kind of support would make the biggest difference.



Understanding recovery

Recovery in mental health and learning disability services has a particular meaning, which is a little different from our usual understanding of the word recovery as it might apply to a physical health problem.

It refers more to a change in outlook that is related to leading a meaningful, purposeful life, with or without ongoing episodes of illness. It refers to the ongoing journey that someone will take in sustaining their own health and wellbeing – and how they are supported in doing this.

This can commonly include:

- having the tools to sustain one's own health and wellbeing even with on-going symptoms
- a process or journey that involves regaining various aspects of life that may have been lost or severely compromised by mental illness or a learning disability

There is no one size fits all. It is about the individual journey and circumstance.

When we talk about providing recovery-oriented services, we mean services that:

- are person-centred.
- are collaborative and respectful
- promote self-management and self-determination
- work in equal partnership with the cared for and carer
- promote optimism and hope
- take a broad and responsive approach (debt, housing, employment, social networks, therapies, medication, community support)

Recovery will have a different emphasis depending on the service, for example dementia, adult mental health, child and adolescent mental health services and learning disability. However, in all these situations it is important to us that the carer is involved in how we are delivering recovery-oriented care.

Getting help in a crisis

For emergencies (fire, health, crime), phone 999

For a crime or nuisance behaviour that is not an emergency, phone 101

The council has these out of hours services:

Social services emergencies (emergency duty service)

Call: **01344 351999**

Emergencies (not social services)

You can contact us in an emergency, out of hours, between 5pm and 8.30am:

- Monday to Friday
- weekends
- bank holidays

Out of hours, we are only able to deal with emergencies that are likely to have a significant impact on safety or emergency planning matters.

Call **01344 352000** and select the appropriate option.

For more information visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/council-and-democracy/get-in-touch/out-hours-emergencies

Samaritans:

Someone to talk to 24 hours a day, for any age.

Call: **116 123** or visit: www.samaritans.org

The care plan will include what to do if the person you care for suddenly becomes unwell. Within mental health, this is called a crisis.

The service you are accessing should provide you with contact details of who to speak to in a crisis.

Hospital care and wellbeing

Going into hospital

Most people are cared for at home or in the community, but sometimes a hospital stay is necessary for treatment or recovery. This could be for physical health or mental health reasons.

Types of admission:

- **voluntary (informal) admission**
The person agrees to go into hospital and can leave at any time. They are not legally required to take medication or treatment.
- **compulsory admission (Mental Health Act)**
If someone is detained under the Mental Health Act, they need medical permission to leave (called Section 17 leave) and may be required to follow treatment plans.

What carers should do:

- bring any essential items for the person (medication list, personal items)
- keep a record of hospital contacts and key dates
- ask about visiting times and involvement in care planning

Leaving hospital

Discharge planning is an important step to ensure a smooth transition back home or into the community. Carers should be involved in this process.

Discharge plans should include:

- follow-up appointments with health professionals
- medication details and any changes made during the hospital stay
- relapse prevention plan, what to do if the person's health deteriorates
- community support arrangements, such as home visits or therapy sessions

Some people may leave under a Community Treatment Order, meaning they receive care in the community under certain conditions. If these conditions are not met or the person becomes unwell, they may be recalled to hospital.

Physical health services

People with mental health problems are at increased risk of physical illness. Carers also neglect their own wellbeing. Both need attention.

For the person you care for it is recommended that you provide:

- regular physical health checks.
- monitoring lifestyle factors (diet, exercise, smoking).
- blood tests or observations such as blood pressure.

For carers the advice is to:

- register as a carer with your GP
- ask for a carer's assessment (see page 9)
- make time for rest, exercise, and social contact
- do not ignore your own health needs, book check-ups, and seek support when needed

Supporting someone during hospital care

Knowing how best to support someone during a hospital stay can be challenging.

Here are some suggestions that might be helpful

If any amendments are needed to the care plan, please inform Bracknell Forest Council

- note what approaches have helped or not helped before
- understand their mental health diagnosis where possible
- keep a record of medication, treatment changes, and questions for professionals
- maintain a diary of appointments and meetings
- continue shared daily activities when possible

Carers are encouraged to be involved in care planning, which may include:

- attending meetings or health appointments
- providing background information
- agreeing to home visits
- joining family sessions or therapy
- attending carer support groups or events

Carer wellbeing

Carers sometimes focus on the person they are caring for and neglect their own wellbeing. We know it is hard, but it is important that you try to look after your own wellbeing. We have asked carers what has helped them, and we have collated their responses:

- make time for yourself
- learn to say 'no' as you cannot do everything
- do not neglect your own health needs
- find time to rest and get enough sleep
- try to focus on the positive aspects of your life
- what do you enjoy? What are you good at?
- find an exercise you enjoy that gives you time for yourself
- talk to someone: a friend, family member or support from a carers' group
- keep important telephone numbers accessible in or by your phone
- ask your GP to register you as a carer as this will make it easier when seeking support and benefits
- ask for a carer's assessment or a review of your needs as this can help identify other ways to support you

Crisis care

Mental health crises can happen when someone is in acute distress or at risk of harm.

How can you help?

- stay calm and reassuring
- focus on understanding rather than arguing
- avoid responding to anger with anger
- look for calming strategies and triggers
- seek professional help if needed

Looking after yourself during a crisis:

- ask for help, it is not weakness
- call Samaritans on **116 123** if you need to talk
- make sure you eat regularly and get enough sleep.
- keep a diary of events
- delegate tasks and rest when you can

Crisis care suggestions

Some mental health issues can result in crises when a person is not coping with their acute distress, agitation or anger and they or others may be at risk of harm and need urgent help. This information may be useful if you are supporting someone in this kind of situation.

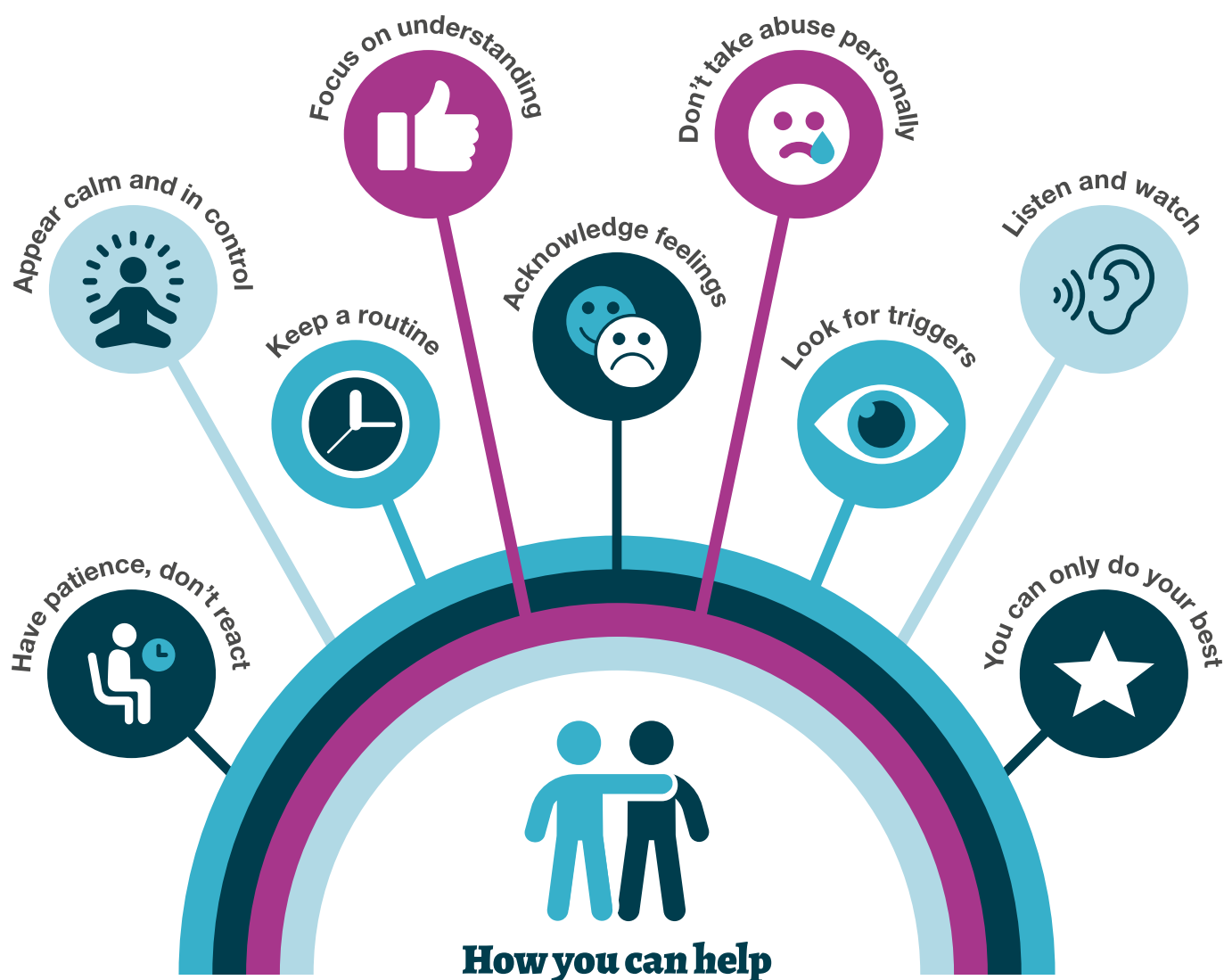
How can you as a carer help?

- appear to be calm and in control, this could be challenging for you, but it will be reassuring for them if you can
- focus on understanding, rather than replying, if the person has ideas that seem unhelpful or unrealistic, do not challenge these or simply agree with them, ask how you can help them cope with the situation and their feelings rather than debating their beliefs while they are agitated
- try not to respond to anger with anger and do not take any abuse personally
- watch specifically for what helps to calm them, mention their name frequently and aim to listen as much as possible rather than talk
- keep a routine and offer meals and drinks even if they are unwanted, distract them, if possible, with music, games, walks, and things they usually enjoy
- tell them what you are doing presently if they are paranoid, for example, tell them “I’m going to make a sandwich now” as you leave the room to do this, avoid unnecessary phone calls they can overhear and remember that television and radio may cause anxiety
- acknowledge their feelings, calmly reassure, then try asking how you can help. Pressurising, pleading or strongly advising them what to do may increase tension, as will telling them to stop self-harming if that is an issue
- look for triggers that happen just before flare ups, this could be a change in routine or when too much is going on, when you recognise the triggers, it may be possible to avoid new or stressful experiences for a while





- wait and do not react too quickly, use your experience and knowledge of the person you care for to weigh up whether you think the situation will resolve itself or whether you need to involve others and seek professional help, make sure you ask for support if you need it
- remember that you cannot control another person's behaviour, you can only do the best you can with the information you have at the time, and you cannot take responsibility for their actions, you can only try to help





How do you get this?

- when you are feeling under pressure, it is not weak to ask for help - it is a sensible use of resources
- call the Samaritans on **116 123** at a time you can talk privately if you need to offload, talking to friends or family can also be helpful, but there may be differences in how they see the situation
- do not neglect yourself, eating and sleeping and other self-care will help you keep going
- you may find it helpful to keep a diary to record key events, you can then read back through it to remind yourself with what you have already coped
- forget the 'to do' list and delegate daily jobs if you can, when things are quiet, do not feel guilty about having a rest or a treat, it is not selfish; it is survival under pressure



Useful resources



NHS Mental Health Services:
Visit: www.nhs.uk/mental-health



Mind:
Visit: www.mind.org.uk



Carers UK:
Visit: www.carersuk.org



Bracknell Forest Carer Support:
Contact your council for carers' assessments and local services.
Visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/care-and-support/support-carers-bracknell-forest



SIGNAL Carers Service:
Free information, support and advice for adults (including young adult carers transitioning) who provide help and support to another adult.
Visit: signal4carers.org.uk



Supporting siblings – SIBS:
Growing up with a disabled brother or sister can be a complicated and challenging experience - you are not alone. Many adult siblings juggle multiple caring responsibilities, feel isolated and need support in their sibling role.
Visit: www.sibs.org.uk/support-for-adult-siblings

National charities

The following list provides details for a few highlighted charities whose services may be beneficial for you or the person you care for.



Age UK

Services for older people, including respite care, social clubs, local groups, support with recovery, befriending and visiting schemes, as well as practical help at home.

Visit: ageuk.org.uk

Call **0800 678 1602** (8am – 8pm, 365 days a year)



Alzheimer's Society

Advisers provide support by phone, email, social media and through the online forum Talking Point.

Visit: alzheimers.org.uk

Call **0333 150 3456** (Monday to Wednesday: 9am – 8pm, Thursday and Friday: 9am – 5pm, Saturday and Sunday: 10am – 4pm)



Autism Berkshire

This free service provides advice, workshops, courses and activities for autistic adults throughout Berkshire, aged 18 and above, who have an autism diagnosis – or are waiting for assessment

Visit: www.autismberkshire.org.uk/introducing-the-berkshire-adult-autism-support-service/



Beat Eating Disorders

Support and information to help people with eating disorders, and those who care for them, understand the illness and take positive steps towards recovery.

Visit: beateatingdisorders.org.uk

Call **0808 801 0677** (3pm – 8pm, 365 days a year)



Carers UK

Services designed to help carers cope with the pressure of caring, including online information and telephone advice.

Visit: www.carersuk.org

Call **0808 808 7777** (Monday to Friday, 9am – 6pm excl. bank holidays)



Carers Trust

Carers Trust works to transform the lives of unpaid carers. It partners with its network of local carer organisations to provide funding and support, deliver innovative and evidence-based programmes and raise awareness and influence policy.

Visit: carers.org



Cruse Bereavement Care

Helpline, drop-in centres, one-to-one support, and bereavement groups that can help you make sense of how you are feeling.

Visit: cruse.org.uk

Call **0808 808 1677** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 3pm)



Money Helper (formerly The Money Advice Service)

Find out what benefits are available to you and how to apply.

Visit: moneyhelper.org.uk

Call **0800 138 7777** (Monday to Friday, 8am – 6pm excl. bank holidays)



Rethink Mental Illness

Practical advice and information about The Mental Health Act, social care, welfare benefits, carers' rights, living with mental illness, medication, and more.

Visit: rethink.org

Call **0808 801 0525** (Monday to Friday, 9.30am – 4pm excl. bank holidays)



Samaritans

Listening service providing emotional support to anyone in crisis.

Visit: www.samaritans.org

Call **116 123** (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)



The Silver Line

A free, confidential telephone service for older people, run by Age UK, offering friendship, conversation and support.

Visit: thesilverline.org.uk

Call **0800 4 70 80 90** (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)

Support and contact information



Bracknell Forest Council's young carers' service



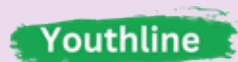
New Hope provides a friendly, free and confidential service to anybody who is looking for help with drugs and alcohol addictions.

Visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/drugs-and-alcohol-advice/new-hope-drugs-and-alcohol-service

YOUNGMINDS

Young Minds supports with your feelings, emotional well-being and mental health.

Visit: www.youngminds.org.uk



Youthline provides a free, confidential counselling service for young people of secondary school age and up to 25.

Visit: www.youthlineuk.com



ChatHealth

ChatHealth text messaging service puts you directly in touch with a member of the health visiting or school nursing teams for advice and information. It enables you to confidentially text a professional who may be able to support you.

Visit: chathealth.nhs.uk



Talking Therapies is for people aged 17+ that are experiencing low mood, anxiety or stress. You can self-refer or ask your GP/ another trusted professional to refer on your behalf.

Visit: www.berkshirehealthcare.nhs.uk/talking-therapies



Kooth provides free, safe online support for young people (Aged 11-17). Speak to counsellors online, read articles written by young people and write in a daily journal.

Visit: www.kooth.com



Breaks for Carers

Find out about short replacement care and time out, visit:

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/care-and-support/support-carers/breaks-carers



Boloh (Barnardo's Helpline)

Call 0800 151 2605

or visit: helpline.barnardos.org.uk/

**The
Children's
Society**

The Children's Society

Visit: www.childrenssociety.org.uk/



The Mix

Helpline 0808 808 4994

Crisis text 85258 (text **THEMIX**)

Or visit: www.themix.org.uk/





Education and employment support



Elevate Bracknell Forest provides careers guidance to pupils aged up to 18 (See link for more information on eligibility)
Visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/children-and-family-services/elevate-careers-guidance-young-people



Activate Learning at Bracknell and Wokingham college can provide career support.
Visit: bracknell.activatelearning.ac.uk/college-life/supporting-you/careers-support/



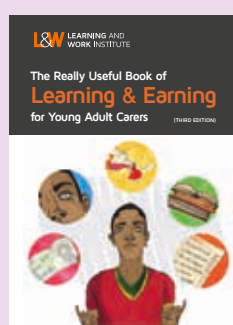
Support at university for carers, provides advice.
If you're responsible for providing unpaid care to a family member, partner or friend. They can advise whether you are able to get extra support during your studies.
Visit: www.ucas.com/applying/applying-university/students-individual-needs/students-caring-responsibilities



The Department for Work and Pensions (DWP) can support with a range of things, such as help finding a job, benefits and much more.
Visit: www.gov.uk/browse/working/workplace-personal-pensions

You can also arrange to see a job coach at the DWP.

- www.gov.uk/contact-jobcentre-plus
- www.gov.uk/find-a-job



The Really Useful Book for Learning and Earning for Young Adult Carers (RUBLE):
Download a copy at: learningandwork.org.uk/the-really-useful-book-of-learning-and-earning-ruble-for-care-leavers/

Schools and colleges can provide help and support if they are aware of your caring role. Ask if they have young carers' lead or anyone else you can talk to or if they have a group for young carers.



Information for carers, travel, venues and concessions

Going places, prepared by SIGNAL
Call **01344 266088**

The Traveline website provides information about bus routes and timetables.
Call **0871 200 22 33** or visit: www.traveline.info

Companion bus pass

Visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport/travel-and-public-transport/companion-bus-pass

Concessionary Bus Pass

Call Bracknell Forest Council Customer Services on **01344 352000**
or visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport

Railcard subsidy

Visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/roads-parking-and-transport

Disabled Persons Railcard

Visit: www.disabledpersons-railcard.co.uk/

The Blue Badge scheme provides a range of parking concessions for people with severe mobility problems, including children, who have difficulty using public transport. The scheme is managed by Bracknell Forest Council.

For more information visit: www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/blue-badge-scheme or call Bracknell Forest Council customer services on **01344 352000**.



Community and volunteer transport schemes

Ascot Volunteer Bureau

Provide transport to medical appointments to older people who live in the SL5 postcode. For further information visit: ascotvolunteerbureau.org.uk

Bracknell Forest R Bus

The R Bus is a service run by Bracknell Forest Council for people with learning disabilities. Individuals access this through the Community Team for People with Learning Disabilities.

Crowthorne Community Minibus

Providing day trips for elderly/disabled residents of Crowthorne.

For details of upcoming trips and details of how to book visit:

www.ccminibus.org.uk/upcoming.php

Crowthorne Good Neighbours

Volunteer driver service for the Crowthorne area. Transport requests are for medical appointments. Please be aware, 48 hours' notice is needed.

Opening hours (booking): Monday to Friday, 10am – 12 noon. Call **01344 761001**.

The Ark Trust

Door to door volunteer transport service for people who live in Bracknell Forest

Young carers can access this but need to be accompanied by an adult on every trip.

This is not a taxi service or a replacement to transport for the cared for. You must book in advance. There is no guarantee of availability.

Call **01344 266899** or email: info@theark.org.uk

Visit: www.theark.org.uk

The Ark Trust,
Trax, Mill Ride North (off Fernbank Road),
Ascot,
Berkshire,
SL5 8JW



Community support

Message in a bottle

This is an emergency information scheme for older or vulnerable people. A plastic bottle is provided containing a form with essential personal and medical details. The form is completed and stored inside the fridge, and green cross stickers are placed:

- one on the fridge door
- one on the inside of the front door

In an emergency, the stickers alert emergency services to look in the fridge for the bottle. The information helps responders quickly understand medical needs, conditions, allergies, medication locations and emergency contacts. This system gives reassurance, faster care, and peace of mind for users and their families.

Call **0121 441 4544** or email: mdhq@lionsclubs.org.uk

Befriending service

The befriending service supports people in Bracknell Forest who feel lonely or isolated. It offers a circle of support and helps people build community connections. The free service is mainly for adults with long-term health conditions or mobility issues, but anyone unsure about eligibility is encouraged to get in touch so they can be connected to the right local support.

Call **01344 266911**

or email: community@theark.org.uk

Visit: www.theark.org.uk/hive

Open Monday to Friday, 10am – 4pm

Service provided by The Ark Trust





Community services and activities

Over 50s Swim Session – Get Active

A pay as you go swim session designed for people over 50 to stay active. Sessions run weekly.

- Bracknell Leisure Centre, Bagshot Road, RG12 9SE
- call **07935 062787 / 01344 454203** or email: **bracknellwellbeing@everyoneactive.com**
- bus routes: 4, 171, 172, 194

Knit and Natter – Get creative

A free, friendly, social knitting group where people can meet others, share tips, and enjoy company.

- Bracknell Library, The Avenue, Bracknell, RG12 1AT
- call **01344 423149** or email: **bracknell.library@bracknell-forest.gov.uk**
- bus routes: 4, 171, 172, 194

Kerith Revive café – Get connected

A free, welcoming community café offering free tea and coffee, space to meet others, relax, use Wi Fi, or bring activities.

- K2 Building, Church Road, Bracknell, RG12 1EH
- call **01344 862699** or email: **info@kerith.church**
- bus routes: 4, 171, 172, 194

Bracknell and District Citizens Advice – Get help

Provides free advice and opportunities to volunteer. Open six days a week with extended mid week hours.

- The Columbia Centre, Market Street, Bracknell, RG12 1JG
- call **01344 418997** / freephone advice line: **0808 278 7914** (Monday to Friday, 9am – 5pm)
- bus routes: 4, 171, 172, 194

Waterstones non-fiction book club – Get learning

A monthly, free non fiction book club open to all.

- Waterstones, The Lexicon, 46 Braccan Walk, Bracknell, RG12 1HA
- call **01344 488124** or email: **bracknell@waterstones.com**
- bus routes: 4, 171, 172, 194



Social prescribing service

A non medical, free service helping people connect to local activities, groups, and services to improve wellbeing.

- Time Square, Market Street, Bracknell, RG12 1JD
- call **01344 352000** / callback option: **01344 325000**
- or email: social.prescription@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Mind (general support)

- For publications (accessible formats), email: publications@mind.org.uk
- helplines: www.mind.org.uk/information-support/helplines/
- local Minds: www.mind.org.uk/about-us/local-minds/
- online community (Side by Side): www.mind.org.uk/information-support/side-by-side-our-online-community/

Andys Man Club

Every Monday evening (excluding bank holidays), 7pm – 9pm

Email: info@andysmanclub.co.uk or visit: andysmanclub.co.uk

The Rowans Centre, Pond Moor Road, Easthampstead, Bracknell, RG12 7JZ

Alternative Venue: Great Hollands Community Centre, Bracknell, RG12 8UX

Parent Carer Circle

Parent Carer Circle supports parents of young adults aged 18 to 25 who are experiencing mental health challenges. It offers a relaxed, welcoming space where parent carers can:

- share experiences
- offer and receive peer support
- connect with others who understand

Call **0118 904 6800** or email: bracknellcmhtadmin@berkshire.nhs.uk

Starbucks, 2 Princess Square, Bracknell, RG12 1LS

First Friday of every month, 12 noon – 1.30pm



Carers' drop-in

The weekly carer drop-in is a non-urgent support space for carers aged 18+ who are supporting someone with a mental health condition.

It offers a place to:

- ask general questions
- receive guidance and signposting
- talk through concerns or ideas
- connect with the carers lead practitioner

It is not a carer's assessment, but staff can help you navigate support options and direct you to appropriate services

Call **0118 904 6800** (Monday to Friday, 9am–5pm)

or email: bracknellcmhtadmin@berkshire.nhs.uk

Church Hill House, 51–52 Turing Drive, Easthampstead, Bracknell ,RG12 7FR
(Report to the Physio Reception on arrival)

Every Tuesday, 2pm – 3.30pm

Emergency mental health support

For urgent issues with the person you support:

- call the Crisis Team **0800 129 9999** (24/7, 365 days a year)



Further information and community support

For full and up-to-date information about the wide range of support groups, services, and activities available to carers in Bracknell Forest, please visit the Bracknell Forest Council Carers Support webpage:

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/care-and-support/support-carers-bracknell-forest

Carers' Support Group

The Carers' Support Group invites carers to join a friendly, supportive space where they can:

- meet other carers
- make new friends
- gain information about mental health
- share experiences and views
- help improve the healthcare experience

Room 5, Easthampstead Baptist Church, South Hill Road, Bracknell, RG12 7NS
First Thursday of every month, 5.30pm – 7pm

You can also explore local groups, clubs, events and wellbeing activities using the Bracknell Forest Community Map. This interactive map helps you find community resources that support health, wellbeing and connection across the borough:

bfcommunitymap.commonplace.is/





Mental Health Recovery Network (MHRN)

The Mental Health Recovery Network (MHRN) supports adults aged 18+ in Bracknell Forest who are living with, recovering from, or at risk of mental ill-health.

The service helps people:

- Build confidence, life skills and resilience
- Understand their mental health
- Stay socially included
- Prevent relapse
- Access community groups and wellbeing opportunities

Support is person-centred, focused on helping people stay in control of their lives despite mental health challenges. Mental Health recovery facilitators provide one to one support, group sessions, social groups, wellbeing workshops, peer support, and a range of community-based activities

Main MHRN contact

Call **01344 351715** or email: mhrn@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Connecting Minds (18–30 peer support group)

Call **01344 351715** or email: mhrn@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

For 17 year olds wanting to join, email: ansa.khan@bucksmind.org.uk

Dogs for Good community sessions

Call **01344 351715** or email: mhrn@bracknell-forest.gov.uk (booking required)

Over 60s (60 and Beyond) social group

Email: mhrn@bracknell-forest.gov.uk

Happiness Hub

General information via Bracknell Forest Council:

www.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/mental-health-and-wellbeing

Referral Information

For referral criteria and forms:

Call **01344 351715** or email: mhrn@bracknell-forest.gov.uk



**Mental Health
Recovery Network**



Concerns, complaints and compliments

We welcome all positive feedback, but we need to know when we are getting it right and when we need to improve.

If you feel you are not being provided with appropriate information or involved as you would like in the care that is being provided, please raise any concerns with the relevant team/service in the first instance. If you remain dissatisfied, please feel free to use our digital feedback form on the link below or scan the QR Code:
selfservice.mybfc.bracknell-forest.gov.uk/w/webpage/request?service=adult_social_care_feedback



Out of hours support

Dial **999** for emergency services where the person is at immediate risk. Call **111** for non-emergency help. You will be directed to help that meets you/the person you care for, physical, mental, or social care needs in a timely and safe manner.



Further information

Visit your local authority's adult social services website and search "carer".

Notes



If you need a reasonable adjustment to communicate with us, please call 01344 352000 or email: customer.services@bracknell-forest.gov.uk.