



COMING HOME CARER SKILLS

Module 2: Looking after yourself and building your skills

A short guide for family carers, with questions to write in

Coming Home Carer Skills. For England, Wales, Scotland and Northern Ireland

October 2026

About this course

Coming Home Carer Skills is our own free course for family carers. Its topics follow the 16 Care Certificate standards (2025) from Skills for Care, NHS England and Skills for Health. It is not the Care Certificate, it is not a qualification, and those organisations have not endorsed it.

This guide to Module 2, Looking after yourself and building your skills, is correct at October 2026. We've written it in good faith as general information to help family carers. It isn't legal, financial or medical advice, and it can't teach practical skills such as moving someone or first aid. For those, ask the person's nurse or therapist, or find an in-person course. To the extent the law allows, we can't accept liability for any errors or omissions, or for decisions made on the strength of this guide. In a medical emergency call 999. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service.

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How to use this guide

This guide goes with the online module. Read one section at a time. There are questions near the end, with space to write, and example answers at the back.

If you are worried about someone's health, contact their GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service. In an emergency, call 999.

01

Your health matters too



Caring can fill your days. It is easy to put the person you care for first every time, and yourself last.

But your health matters too. When you are well, you are better able to care. Looking after yourself is part of caring, not time taken away from it.

Tell your GP practice that you are a carer. Ask them to note it on your record. Then they can think about your needs too, and tell you about support near you.

Keep your own appointments. If it is hard to leave the person you care for, tell the practice. Ask what they can offer, such as a home visit.

Look after the basics. Try to eat regular meals, get outside when you can, and rest when you get the chance. Small things count.

Make time for things you enjoy. An hour for a hobby, a walk or a chat with a friend is not selfish. It helps you keep going.

Ask for a carer's assessment. It is a talk about how caring affects your health, your work and your free time. Module 1 explains how to ask for one where you live.



Get help

Worried about your own health? Talk to your GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service. In an emergency, call 999.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): nidirect, "Looking after yourself as a carer", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/looking-after-yourself-carer; NHS England, "Healthy caring" leaflet (2016), www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/nhs-practcl-guid-caring-v1.pdf; NHS website, "Carer's assessments", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carers-assessments/; nidirect, "GP out of hours service", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service

02

When caring wears you down



Caring can wear you down slowly. You may not notice until you feel very tired. It helps to know the signs.

Signs to look out for. The NHS website lists signs like these:

- sleeping badly, or much more than usual
- feeling snappy, or low
- worrying all the time, or feeling it is all too much
- finding it hard to concentrate or make decisions
- eating much more or much less than usual
- not wanting to see people

Noticing these signs is not a failure. It means you need more support.

What can help. Talk to someone you trust: a friend, a relative, your GP, or the Carers UK helpline. Take a break, even a short one (see section 3). Do not try to do everything at once. Set small goals you can manage.



Get help

When to get help.

- If you are struggling to cope, or what you are trying is not helping, see your GP.
- In England, if you are 18 or over, you can also refer yourself to NHS talking therapies.
- If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111. In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service.
- If you need to talk to someone now, call Samaritans free on 116 123, day or night.
- If you feel you might harm yourself, or someone is in danger, call 999.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "Stress", www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/stress/; Samaritans, "Contact a Samaritan", www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/; nidirect, "How to use your health services", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-use-your-health-services; nidirect, "GP out of hours service", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service

03

Taking a break



Everyone needs a break from caring.

Small breaks. An hour for a walk, a class or a coffee. A friend, relative or neighbour could sit with the person. Some charities have sitting services: a volunteer keeps the person company for a few hours, often free or for a small charge.

Bigger breaks. The person might go to a day centre, have a paid carer at home, or a short stay in a care home while you go away. This is called respite care, or replacement care.

Help with breaks. Start with an assessment, for you and the person.

- **England.** Ask your council for a carer's assessment, and a needs assessment for the person. The council only pays towards breaks after an assessment. It may ask about money.
- **Wales.** Ask your council for a carer's needs assessment. The Short Breaks Scheme, paid for by the Welsh Government and run by Carers Trust Wales, offers carers breaks and activities.
- **Scotland.** Ask your council's social work service for an Adult Carer Support Plan. The council must think about whether you need short breaks, and publish a statement about them.
- **Northern Ireland.** Ask your Health and Social Care Trust for a carer's assessment. Trusts can arrange day sitting, night sitting or a short stay in a care home. Services differ by area.

**Tip**

Plan for an emergency. Who could step in if you fell ill suddenly? Write down what the person needs, and keep it easy to find.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "Carers' breaks and respite care", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carer-breaks-and-respite-care/; Carers Trust Wales, "Short Breaks Scheme", www.shortbreaksscheme.wales/; mygov.scot, "Short breaks from caring", www.mygov.scot/help-for-carer/short-breaks-from-caring; Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, section 35, www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/9/section/35; nidirect, "Looking after yourself as a carer", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/looking-after-yourself-carer

04

You are not alone



Caring can feel lonely. But there is support, and other carers understand what it is like.

Carers' centres. Many areas have a local carers' centre or carers' service. Your carers' centre, or your council, can tell you about support near you. Carers Trust has a search to help you find carer services. In Northern Ireland, ask the Carer Coordinator at your Health and Social Care Trust. They may have a list of carers' groups.

Carers' groups. Meeting other carers can help. You can share how you feel with people who understand, and swap ideas.

Online. If it is hard to get out, Carers UK runs online meet-ups on Zoom. Care for a Cuppa is a weekly chat with other carers. Share and Learn sessions cover all sorts of topics, from wellbeing to tips on caring. In Wales, Carers Wales runs online Me Time sessions.

Talk to someone. The Carers UK helpline, 0808 808 7777, gives advice about caring. If you need to talk about how you feel, Samaritans will listen, day or night, on 116 123.



Try this

Family and friends. People often want to help but do not know how. Tell them one thing they could do, such as a weekly visit or the shopping.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "Carers' breaks and respite care" (local carer's centres and Carers Trust), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carer-breaks-and-respite-care/; nidirect, "Support services for carers", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/support-services-carers; Carers UK, "Online meetups", www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/online-meetups/; Samaritans, www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/

05

Keep learning



Caring often means learning new things: about the person's health, about services, and about your rights as a carer.

Use places you can trust.

- the NHS website
- your government's website: GOV.UK, GOV.WALES, mygov.scot or nidirect
- carers' charities such as Carers UK and Carers Trust
- your council, or your Health and Social Care Trust in Northern Ireland

Be careful with advice from adverts, cold calls or social media. If you are not sure, ask the GP, the pharmacist or a carers' charity.

Learn practical tasks properly. If you need to help with something practical, such as helping someone move, ask the person's nurse or therapist to show you first. If you have not been shown how, do not try it. A carer's assessment can also lead to training, such as how to help someone move safely.

Get hands-on training. For first aid, look for an in-person course from the British Red Cross or St John Ambulance.

**Try this**

Keep a notebook. Write down tips, names and phone numbers as you learn them. It helps you, and anyone who steps in for you.

Take this course at your own pace. Come back to any module whenever you like.

Sources (read 8 Oct 2026): NHS website, "Carer's assessments" (training is one thing an assessment can lead to), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carers-assessments/

06

Get help



- **Carers UK helpline:** 0808 808 7777 (free). Advice for carers in all four nations. Online meet-ups for carers: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/online-meetups/
- **Your local carers' centre:** find carer services near you through Carers Trust: carers.org/help-for-carers/carer-services-near-you
- **Your council:** ask about a carer's assessment and help with breaks. Find your council: www.gov.uk/find-local-council
- **Wales:** the Short Breaks Scheme: www.shortbreaksscheme.wales/
- **Scotland:** short breaks and your Adult Carer Support Plan: www.mygov.scot/help-for-carer/short-breaks-from-caring
- **Northern Ireland:** contact your Health and Social Care Trust and ask for the Carer Coordinator: www.nidirect.gov.uk/contacts/health-and-social-care-trusts
- **Someone to talk to, day or night:** Samaritans, 116 123 (free): www.samaritans.org
- **Get hands-on training:** for practical skills such as first aid, look for an in-person course from the British Red Cross (www.redcross.org.uk) or St John Ambulance (www.sja.org.uk).



Get help

Worried about your health, or someone else's? Contact your GP. If you need advice quickly, call NHS 111 (or go to 111.nhs.uk). In Northern Ireland, contact your GP out of hours service (www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service). **In an emergency, call 999.**

07

Your questions

**Write here**

Write your answers in the boxes. Take your time, and come back to them whenever you like. There are example answers at the back of this guide to compare with your own.

1. When did you last do something just for you? What was it, and how did it feel?

2. Write down three signs that tell you that you are getting too tired.

3. Who could you ask to sit with the person you care for, for an hour, so you can have a break?

4. What would you do with an hour to yourself each week?

5. Who could you talk to if caring starts to feel like too much?

6. Which part of the UK do you live in? Who would you ask about getting help with breaks?

7. If you were suddenly ill, who could step in? What would they need to know about the person you care for?

8. Write down one thing you would like to learn about caring, and where you could learn it.

08

Quick quiz



Tick one answer for each question. The answers, with the reasons, are at the back of this guide.

1. Bilal says looking after himself is selfish, because his mum needs him. What is true?

- ☐ He is right, carers should always come last
- ☐ Looking after yourself is part of caring
- ☐ Only paid carers need breaks
- ☐ He should wait until his mum is better

2. For weeks you have been sleeping badly, snapping at people and feeling it is all too much. What could this mean?

- ☐ You are a bad carer
- ☐ Caring may be wearing you down, and you need more support
- ☐ Nothing, just ignore it
- ☐ You should stop caring today

3. You feel you cannot cope any more, and what you are trying is not helping. What is a good next step?

- ☐ Keep it to yourself
- ☐ Talk to your GP
- ☐ Wait a few months
- ☐ Only ask on social media

4. Your friend feels she might harm herself. What should you do?

- ☐ Tell her to sleep on it
- ☐ Call 999
- ☐ Send her a leaflet
- ☐ Wait for her next GP appointment

5. A neighbour offers to sit with your mum on Thursday afternoons. What would you do?

- ☐ Say no, it is your job
- ☐ Say yes, and tell the neighbour what your mum likes
- ☐ Say yes, but tell your mum nothing
- ☐ Ask the neighbour to pay

6. Morag lives in Scotland. She is getting an Adult Carer Support Plan. What must the council think about?

- ☐ Whether she needs short breaks
- ☐ Whether she owns a car
- ☐ Whether she has paid carers already
- ☐ Nothing about breaks

7. You find it hard to leave the house, but you would like to meet other carers. What could you try?

- ☐ Nothing, you must go out
- ☐ An online meet-up, such as Carers UK's Care for a Cuppa
- ☐ Only phone the council
- ☐ Wait until caring ends

8. You see a social media post saying a new remedy will help your dad. What should you do?

- ☐ Buy it straight away
- ☐ Ask his GP or pharmacist first
- ☐ Stop his usual medicines
- ☐ Share it with everyone

09

Answers



Your questions

There are no wrong answers to most of these questions. These are examples to compare with your own.

1. There is no wrong answer. It might have been a walk, a chat with a friend, a hobby or a quiet cup of tea. If you cannot remember, that is a sign to plan some time for yourself soon. Small things count.
2. Your signs are personal. Common ones are sleeping badly or much more than usual, feeling snappy or low, not wanting to see friends, finding it hard to concentrate, or feeling it is all too much. Keep this list somewhere you will see it.
3. You might ask a relative, a friend, a neighbour or someone from your place of worship. Some charities have volunteers who sit with people. Your carers' centre or council can tell you what is available near you.
4. Anything that helps you feel like you: a walk, a class, gardening, seeing friends, reading, or simply resting. Write it down and plan when it could happen.
5. You could talk to a friend or relative, your GP, the Carers UK helpline (0808 808 7777) or a carers' group. If you need to talk to someone at any time, day or night, Samaritans are free on 116 123. If you might harm yourself, call 999.

6. England: ask your council for a carer's assessment, and a needs assessment for the person you care for. **Wales:** ask your council for a carer's needs assessment, and look at the Short Breaks Scheme. **Scotland:** ask your council or carer centre for an Adult Carer Support Plan; the council must think about short breaks. **Northern Ireland:** ask your Health and Social Care Trust for a carer's assessment.

7. Think of one or two people who could help at short notice. Write down the person's routine, their medicines, what they like to eat and drink, the GP's number and who else to call. Keep it somewhere easy to find, and tell your helpers where it is.

8. For example: how to help someone move safely (ask their therapist, or ask about training at your carer's assessment), first aid (an in-person course from the British Red Cross or St John Ambulance), or your rights as a carer (Carers UK or your council). Use places you can trust.

Quick quiz

1. Looking after yourself is part of caring. When you are well, you are better able to care. Your health matters too.

2. Caring may be wearing you down, and you need more support. These can be signs that caring is wearing you down. It is not a failure. Talk to someone.

3. Talk to your GP. If you are struggling to cope, see your GP. You can also call Samaritans on 116 123.

4. Call 999. If someone might harm themselves or is in danger, call 999.

5. Say yes, and tell the neighbour what your mum likes. When someone offers help, try saying yes. Share what the person needs and likes.

6. Whether she needs short breaks. In Scotland, the council must consider whether you need short breaks when it makes your plan.

7. An online meet-up, such as Carers UK's Care for a Cuppa. Carers UK runs online meet-ups where you can chat with other carers.

8. Ask his GP or pharmacist first. Learn from trusted places. Ask the GP or pharmacist before trying anything new.

10

Sources

Every source was read on 8 October 2026. Each section also lists its own sources at the end.

- **Section 1. Your health matters too.** nidirect, "Looking after yourself as a carer", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/looking-after-yourself-carer; NHS England, "Healthy caring" leaflet (2016), www.england.nhs.uk/wp-content/uploads/2016/04/nhs-practcl-guid-caring-v1.pdf; NHS website, "Carer's assessments", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carers-assessments/; nidirect, "GP out of hours service", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service
- **Section 2. When caring wears you down.** NHS website, "Stress", www.nhs.uk/mental-health/feelings-symptoms-behaviours/feelings-and-symptoms/stress/; Samaritans, "Contact a Samaritan", www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/; nidirect, "How to use your health services", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/how-use-your-health-services; nidirect, "GP out of hours service", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/gp-out-hours-service
- **Section 3. Taking a break.** NHS website, "Carers' breaks and respite care", www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carers-breaks-and-respite-care/; Carers Trust Wales, "Short Breaks Scheme", www.shortbreaksscheme.wales/; mygov.scot, "Short breaks from caring", www.mygov.scot/help-for-carer/short-breaks-from-caring; Carers (Scotland) Act 2016, section 35, www.legislation.gov.uk/asp/2016/9/section/35; nidirect, "Looking after yourself as a carer", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/looking-after-yourself-carer

- **Section 4. You are not alone.** NHS website, "Carers' breaks and respite care" (local carer's centres and Carers Trust), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carer-breaks-and-respite-care/; nidirect, "Support services for carers", www.nidirect.gov.uk/articles/support-services-carers; Carers UK, "Online meetups", www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/your-health-and-wellbeing/online-meetups/; Samaritans, www.samaritans.org/how-we-can-help/contact-samaritan/
- **Section 5. Keep learning.** NHS website, "Carer's assessments" (training is one thing an assessment can lead to), www.nhs.uk/social-care-and-support/support-and-benefits-for-carers/carer-assessments/



Coming Home

Less to hold in your head.

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