

## Support for carers – how community pharmacy teams help

Community pharmacy teams have always provided support for carers via the wide range of services they provide. This support and practical assistance can have a massive impact in assisting carers as this case study below outlines.

### **Carer case study – Kamala\***

Kamala's dad has several health issues, including dementia. He used to visit the local community pharmacy regularly to pick up his medication, sometimes alone and sometimes with Kamala's mum. As her parents' health deteriorated, particularly her dad's dementia, Kamala started to accompany her dad to the pharmacy. Over time, it was then Kamala going alone to pick up prescriptions for her parents.

The pharmacist had seen Kamala's dad's health deteriorating and often asks after Kamala's parents, as well as making small talk about other things. One day, after a particularly difficult period, Kamala went to the pharmacy to collect her dad's prescription. The pharmacist asked how Kamala's mum and dad were doing. She then turned to Kamala and said, 'And how are *you* doing?' At which point Kamala burst into tears. The pharmacy was busy, with people queuing up but the pharmacist got Kamala a tissue, comforted her and said, 'You need to get some help.'

Kamala had the number for Carers Leeds but hadn't contacted them. The intervention from the pharmacist was the push she needed to seek help. Kamala contacted Carers Leeds, and this led to her receiving a range of information, advice and support from the charity as well as a Carers Assessment from the Adult Social Care.

Kamala believes that many carers will be in the same position as her, picking up a prescription from the same community pharmacy, week in week out. She thinks pharmacists are well placed to identify unpaid carers and signpost them to information, advice and support. Her experience with community pharmacy, certainly had a real impact on her life.

\*not her real name

We know this is not a one-off example and pharmacy teams across WY are supporting carers in a similar way. The key message is the need to identify carers and tell them about the services available in the pharmacy and signpost them to support organisations.

**There are nearly 7 million carers in the UK; almost 5 million of these people are carers in England.**

### **Who is a carer?**

A carer is a person who provides unpaid care for a family member, partner or friend who cannot cope without their support due to an illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction.

The term 'carer' is sometimes confused with a care worker or care assistant; however, the difference is that a carer is unpaid whereas a care worker or care assistant is paid for looking after someone.

The sort of roles and responsibilities that carers provide can vary greatly. It can range from help with everyday tasks such as helping someone get dressed and personal care such as bathing, to emotional support such as helping someone cope with the symptoms of a mental illness or an addiction.

Sometimes people refer to carers as full-time carers or part-time carers; however, there is not a minimum time requirement that means they are more or less of a carer. There is also no minimum age restriction on what "qualifies" someone as a carer.

### Carer support organisations

There are two main charities that support carers, [Carers Trust](#) and [Carers UK](#). Both organisations provide expert advice, information and support; connect carers with groups and volunteers; campaign on behalf of carers and work with local authorities and organisations to improve services throughout the UK. [The carers trust](#) provides support for young carers.

### Further information

The CPWY website contains [signposting information](#) including to local directories to help pharmacy teams find support for patients for a wide range of issues from long term conditions to housing.

Community Pharmacy England has further information and resources on their website [www.cpe.org.uk](http://www.cpe.org.uk) which include a template leaflet for pharmacy contractors to use to assist them in advising carers on managing medicines.

[Carers Leaflet – Managing Medicines](#)

### Young Carer Health Video for Health Professionals

Please find the link below to a video that was created by young carers highlighting the challenges they face, how they would like to be treated and what health professionals can do to support them. [See us Show us Support us \(vimeo.com\)](#). The [RPS Medicines Ethics and Practice](#) also includes guidance in Section 3.7.9: Collection and purchase of medicines by children.

### Carers Leeds [www.carersleeds.org.uk](http://www.carersleeds.org.uk)

The case study was provided by Carers Leeds following feedback from a carers experience in community pharmacy. Carers Leeds is a charity that provides information, advice and support to unpaid adult and parent carers across Leeds. This includes an Advice Line, carers support groups, one to one support and support in hospitals. Some of our services are universal – open to all carers – and some are targeted at specific groups of carers.