Chief Cook and Bottle Washer

A guide for older male carers written by older male carers

Male carers share their experiences

Ideas and advice from those who know what it’s like

Where to find help & support
Chief Cook and Bottle Washer is a film created by the BU PIER partnership and 11 male carers over the age of 85. Carers share their insights on being an older carer; how life has changed and their key messages for practitioners.

https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VWgEaUHs97s
This booklet is different.

We are a group of 11 male carers over the age of 85 and we have written this guide in partnership with Bournemouth University, CRISP Carers Resource and Healthwatch Dorset.

The aim is to share our experiences. We outline the help available and seek to provide reassurance that you are not alone. There are many men caring for wives and loved ones and there is help and support in Bournemouth and Poole.

Please do ask for support, we did. At first, we were not sure where to start or who to ask and that is why we have created this booklet, to make the way easier for you.
Are you a carer?

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to family or friends who could not manage without their help.

Perhaps you are providing regular support to a loved one but do not see yourself as a carer. Of course, we often have many other roles aside from being a carer, we are all husbands too.

Maybe you have picked up this booklet because you are feeling desperate right now, we have at times. Maybe you are simply looking for more information on what support is out there. If you need this information right now then please go to page 7.
You are not alone

Over **51,000** carers in England are **men** aged **85+**.

Carers aged 85+ are the **only** carer group where men outnumber women.

Older male carers are the least likely to **ask for help**.
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First things first:

Go to reception at your local GP surgery and tell them you would like to register as a carer.

Ask them for the name and the contact details of the Carer Lead. We have found that some Carer Leads are more proactive than others but every surgery has to have one and it is their job to actively engage with carers.

Once you are registered as a carer, you can request an appointment with your GP or the Carer Lead if you would like to discuss the support available.
A Carer’s Assessment

You are entitled to have a Carer’s Assessment. This is your lawful right under the Care Act 2014. You can have this assessment even if the person you are caring for refuses social care services.

A carer’s assessment is a conversation with a professional social worker to discuss how being a carer affects you and the way you are able to live your life. It is an opportunity to ensure your needs are being met and to discover the support and services that are available to you. **Please contact:**

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<th>Caring for someone in <strong>BOURNEMOUTH:</strong></th>
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<td>Adult Social Care Helpdesk</td>
<td>Care Direct</td>
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<td>01202 633 902</td>
<td>01202 454 979</td>
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Respite Care

Who is looking after you?

A number of us have used respite care but in the beginning we did not even know it existed.

Respite care is when services arrange for someone to care for your loved one to give you a break. Don’t under-estimate how important this is to help you with your physical and mental well-being.

For respite, contact CRISP Carers Resource on 01202 458 204 (see Contacts).
Support To Help You In Your Caring Role

Your surgery also has a **Practice Nurse** and a **Community Nursing Team**, both of whom provide care training and equipment. Ask at reception to book an appointment.

**Community Matron Teams** (referral via GP) provide services to over 75s with long term ill-health or complex needs. Ask your GP for a referral.

The **Intermediate Care Service & the Long-Term Conditions Therapy Team** provide Physiotherapists, Occupational Therapists and rehab nurses to enable independent living, again ask your GP for a referral.
Specialist Support

There is a range of diverse and specialist support from cancer groups to mental health, dementia to sensory loss, strokes to stoma therapy and incontinence.

Contact one of the organisations listed to help point you in the right direction such as www.crispweb.org or www.helpandcare.org.uk or contact the Bournemouth and Poole CRISP Carers Resource on 01202 458 204 (weekdays).
Financial Support

Financial support is available to carers. Some benefits are means tested but not all.

**Carer’s Allowance** is the main benefit for caring 35+ hours per week. It is not means-tested but it does overlap with the State Pension. For example, if your state pension is less than Carer’s Allowance (currently £64.60) then you can get the difference paid or it may trigger a top up on other benefits you may receive.

**Attendance Allowance** helps with the costs of long term illness or disability for those over age 65.
**Pension Credit** is an income related benefit designed to top up your weekly income.

**Other benefits** may be available including help with health and household finances or if you have served in the Armed Forces including National Service.

* * * *

**To find out what you are entitled to, contact:**

1. **Citizens Advice Bureau, Bournemouth & Poole**  
   www.bournemouthcab.co.uk  
   03444 111 444 (Mon-Fri)

2. **Money Advice Service**  
   www.moneyadviseservice.org.uk  
   0800 138 7777 (Call free, Mon—Sat)

3. **Contact gov.uk. Helplines:**  
   Carer’s Allowance 0800 731 0297  
   Attendance Allowance 0800 731 0122  
   Pension Credit 0800 731 0469
A different life

Once you start caring for your loved one the balance of your relationship will change. This can be hard to come to terms with not just due to practical issues but emotionally too. Many of us, as carers, did not come to terms with it but found ways to live with it.

Being a carer can affect intimate relationships, friendships, family, hobbies and jobs. It can be hard but accepting the change in life-stage does help. Even as an older person, adapting is a positive thing to do.
‘She’s still my wife but she’s nothing like she used to be; she has no incentive to do anything at all, so I’ve become chief cook, bottle washer and all the rest of it’.

Paul
Accept the things I cannot change

‘You could never plan it. When it happens it hits you. The initial impact is dramatic. Then you feel anger until you realise how bad it is and then you get into a routine.’

Jim

I can’t give advice to other people because we’re all different. The only thing I can say that works for me is that I have accepted the situation’

Harry
Caring for a loved one

Being a carer means you end up doing tasks which you may not have done before. Some of us found we had to learn new things such as lifting safely, cooking and cleaning. Carrying out washing, bathing and personal care may be particularly challenging. It can also be hard for the person you are caring for as they may feel a loss of dignity and helpless.

‘I thought don’t tell me...show me’

Eric

Many of us found that health or care staff never showed us how to provide care so make sure you ask for guidance when you need it.
Your Local Authority can provide some equipment for free, such as bath lifts, grab rails, a washable mattress or a second banister.

‘I wish I’d asked for grab rails earlier because it may have prevented her falling’  John

Ask them for an occupational therapy assessment.
Learn new care skills

FIRST AID.

Learn First Aid with The Red Cross. The courses are FREE.

Call CRISP Carers Resource on 01202 458 204 to find out more information.

CARER’S COURSES AND WORKSHOPS

Training and workshops to help carers in Poole & Bournemouth.

Call CRISP Carers Resource on 01202 458 204 to find out more information.
Caring for yourself is critical for your physical and mental wellbeing. It can be hard to find time for yourself; many of us had hobbies such as music, allotments, photography but once we became a carer there was no time for these things anymore.

‘I keep myself active purposefully. But the rest of it is depressing...eventually it gets to you because there is nothing. It’s an entirely different existence from what I had before.’

Jim
When I was first a carer I went to a course run by Poole Council and one of the topics was asserting yourself and not to let the person you are caring for run your life. She didn’t want me to go on respite and leave her. She is now coming round to it. It’s taken 5 or 6 years. I try and do it once every 3 months.’

Max
Stay Social

Keeping engaged in the community and retaining social networks helps emotional well-being, for example, many GP surgeries have carer support groups. If you struggle to get out to social events perhaps you can find something for your loved one to do which would then enable you to have time for yourself.

‘I don’t feel isolated in the sense of not knowing where everybody is, but nobody rings much, nobody knocks at the door much and in that sense you tend to be on your own’. Paul

It sounds simple but ensure your basic needs are met. Healthy eating, regular mealtimes and exercise are all critical to optimal health. Aim to go out for a walk every single day and ensure that you get enough sleep even if it means having a nap in the day.
‘My son says that I’m working too hard. But I think it is the hard work that keeps me going, that keeps me active’.

Max
No longer a carer

For some of us in the group, our loved ones are now in residential care. However we still consider ourselves to be carers and we still access the support and networks available.

Three of us are now bereaved carers. As well as coping with the loss of a loved one it can leave a huge gap in your life. It can feel very lonely.

The CRISP Carers Resource Centre will continue to offer support to you. You can contact them on 01202 458 204 to meet with carers like us.
Hopefully you have found some solace in the messages and the stories shared within. This is not an easy path and the way is rarely straightforward. **Don’t be reluctant to ask for help.**

We hope you find all the information useful. We wanted to highlight that most of the services work wonderfully most of the time. There are occasions when perhaps someone isn’t quite as helpful as you’d expect or someone hasn’t got back to you when they promised they would. It is easy to get despondent when experiencing a setback but please persevere.

We wish you all the best on your journey and don’t forget, **you are not alone.**
Contacts

POOLE and BOURNEMOUTH

CRISP Carers Resource
www.crispweb.org
01202 458 204
Sign up to their Carer’s Information Service. Respite care, free training.

Bournemouth Council
Care Direct
01202 454 979
caredirect@bournemouth.gov.uk
For Care Assessments

Poole Council
Adult Social Care Services
01202 633 902
sshelpdesk@poole.gov.uk
For Care Assessments.

Help & Care 0300 111 3303
based in Bournemouth
www.helpandcare.org.uk
Vast source of information, advice & support to find the right support for you.

Citizens Advice Bureau
Bournemouth & Poole
www.bournemouthcab.co.uk
03444 111 444

Healthwatch Dorset
healthwatchdorset.co.uk
0300 111 0102
Provides free, independent information on health & care services & encourages feedback on service delivery.
## Contacts

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<td>Carers UK</td>
<td><a href="http://www.carersuk.org">www.carersuk.org</a></td>
<td>Information on benefits, carers assessments, services available and how to challenge decisions.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>0808 808 7777 (Mon &amp; Tue)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Samaritans</td>
<td><a href="http://www.samaritans.org">www.samaritans.org</a></td>
<td>Call 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td><a href="mailto:jo@samaritans.org">jo@samaritans.org</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>NHS Carers Direct Helpline</td>
<td>0300 123 1053 7 days/week</td>
<td>Information on carer’s assessments, benefits, direct payments, plus local sources of help.</td>
</tr>
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‘Enjoy today because it’s here, yesterday’s gone and you can’t do anything about it and you’ve no idea what’s coming tomorrow’

Paul