

— SUPPORT FOR CARERS

Carer's assessment: how to ask in London and what it unlocks

Which London council to ask, the one-outcome eligibility test, and how a carer's assessment can unlock respite, breaks and direct payments for you.

By the JNP Sidona team · 27 October 2026 · 12 min read

A carer's assessment is a free conversation with the council about how looking after someone affects your own life, and what would help you keep going. Under the Care Act 2014, any adult who gives unpaid care and may need support has a legal right to one, whatever their income and however much or little care they give. In London you ask the adult social care team of the borough where the person you care for lives, which may not be your own borough.

KEY POINTS

- Ask the council for the borough where your parent or partner lives. Carers are supported by the cared-for person's council, not the council where the carer lives.
- You qualify if the care you give is necessary, and as a result your health is at risk or you can't achieve just one of eight everyday outcomes (such as work, free time or seeing friends), and this has a significant impact on your wellbeing.
- You can qualify even if the person you care for does not, and you do not need to live with them or care full time.
- Breaks for you are usually provided as care for your relative. They may be charged for it after a financial assessment, but you can never be charged, and they must agree to it.
- Support can often be taken as a direct payment, so you choose who provides it.
- Say honestly what you can and cannot keep doing. The council must ask whether you are willing, as well as able, to carry on.

What is a carer's assessment?

It is the council's look at your needs as a carer, separate from your relative's needs. Section 10 of the Care Act 2014 says that where it appears a carer may have needs for support, now or in the future, the council must assess them. The duty applies regardless of the council's view of how great your needs are, or of your finances or the finances of the person you care for.

The assessment must cover whether you are able and willing to keep caring, now and in future, how caring affects your wellbeing, and the outcomes you want in your own life, including work, study and leisure.

It is not a test of how well you care. The statutory guidance says that, where appropriate, your views should be sought in a separate conversation from your relative's assessment, which helps if you would find it hard to say "I can't do this much longer" in front of your mum or dad.

Who counts as a carer?

The Act defines a carer as an adult who provides, or intends to provide, care for another adult. Care includes practical and emotional support, so keeping an eye on your dad by phone, sorting his post and calming him at night all count. The NHS says anyone over 18 who looks after someone because they are ill, older or disabled can ask.

You do not need to live with the person: the Act sets no such condition, and Carers UK says the amount or type of care does not matter. You do not need to be claiming Carer's Allowance, which is a separate DWP benefit. Paid care workers and volunteers are not normally carers under the Act.

This guide covers adults caring for adults. Young carers under 18 are assessed under [section 17ZA of the Children Act 1989](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17ZA) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17ZA>), with a separate [young carer's assessment under section 63 of the Care Act](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/63) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/63>) as they approach 18. Parents caring for a disabled child have a parent carer's needs assessment under [section 17ZD of the Children Act 1989](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17ZD) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/1989/41/section/17ZD>). Ask the children's services team of the same council.

Which London council do you ask?

The council for the borough where the person you care for lives. The statutory guidance is explicit: carers' needs are met by the local authority where the adult needing care is ordinarily resident, not the authority where the carer lives.

This is easy to get wrong in London, where families are often spread across boroughs. If you live in Croydon and travel to Lewisham three times a week to look after your mother, ask Lewisham.

Royal Greenwich puts it plainly on its own carers page: you may get some support from the borough you live in, but you may get more through the council where the person you care for lives.

The routes differ by borough. The table covers Lewisham and four nearby boroughs in south and south-east London. For anywhere else in London, the GOV.UK lookup below the table finds the right team.

How to ask for a carer's assessment in five south London boroughs (checked 9 October 2026)

Borough	How to ask	Local carers' help
Lewisham (https://lewisham.gov.uk/my-services/social-care/adult-support-for-carers/help-and-support-for-carers) 	Phone 020 8314 7777 and choose option 1, or email gateway@lewisham.gov.uk. You can choose a face-to-face, video or phone assessment.	Imago's carers service 0300 373 5769, which also help you arrange a statutory assessment. For a break at home, see carers' respite care in Lewisham (carers-respite-care-lewisham) page
Southwark (https://www.southwark.gov.uk/adult-social-care/unpaid-carers-support/carers-assessment/who-contact-carers-assessment) 	For carers of older people or people with physical disabilities: online referral form, or 020 7525 3324, or OPPDContactteam@southwark.gov.uk. Weekdays 9am to 5pm.	The council says Mobile Care can help you complete an assessment.
Lambeth (https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/adult-social-care) 	Non-urgent: the online adult social care public referral form on the council's contact page (https://www.lambeth.gov.uk/adult-social-care-health/contact-adult-social-care-team). Urgent: phone	Carers' Hub Lambeth, 7501 8970 or connect@carershub.org

Borough	How to ask	Local carers' help
al-care-and-health/carer/s/carers-assessment-care-plan)	020 7926 5555, select Adults, then option 1 if your relative has no current service or option 2 if they do. Video, phone or face to face.	
Greenwich (https://www.royalgreenwich.gov.uk/adult-care-and-health/care-someone/asking-someone/request-carers-assessment)	Phone 020 8921 2304 or email aops.contact.officers@royalgreenwich.gov.uk . If your relative has a social worker or care coordinator with Oxleas NHS Trust, contact them instead.	The council says local community hubs can help with forms and assessments.
Bromley (https://bromley.gov.uk/careers/carers-assessments)	Online carer's self-assessment form; the council then contacts you to discuss it.	The council points carers to Bromley Well for advice and support.

For any other borough, use the [GOV.UK council lookup](https://www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services) (<https://www.gov.uk/apply-needs-assessment-social-services>) with your relative's postcode and ask adult social care for a carer's assessment. Numbers and forms change, so check the council's page before you call.

Can it be done with your parent's assessment?

Yes, if you both agree. The guidance lets councils combine a carer's assessment with the cared-for person's needs assessment. If either of you does not agree, they must be done separately. You can also have a carer's assessment whether or not your relative has had one. If your relative has not been assessed yet, our guide to the [care needs assessment](/blog/care-needs-assessment) (</blog/care-needs-assessment>) explains how theirs works.

Who qualifies for support after a carer's assessment?

The threshold is national. It is set by regulation 3 of the Care and Support (Eligibility Criteria) Regulations 2015, and every council in England must apply at least this standard. You have eligible needs if all three of these are true:

1. Your needs arise because you are providing necessary care to an adult. (If you are doing things your relative could safely do themselves, the council may offer advice in place of support.)
2. As a result, your physical or mental health is getting worse or is at risk of doing so, **or** you cannot achieve **any one** of the eight outcomes below.
3. As a consequence, there is, or is likely to be, a significant impact on your wellbeing.

Note the difference from the test for the person you care for, who must be unable to achieve two or more outcomes. For a carer, one is enough.

The eight carer outcomes in the eligibility regulations, with what the statutory guidance tells councils to consider

Outcome	What the council considers
Caring for a child	Parenting, or looking after grandchildren while their parents work
Caring for anyone else	Other adults you look after, such as your other parent
Keeping a habitable home	Whether your own home is safe, with water, electricity and gas
Nutrition	Whether you have time to shop and cook for yourself and your family
Relationships	Whether caring stops you keeping up with family and friends
Work, training, education or volunteering	Whether you can stay in your job, study, or look for work

Outcome	What the council considers
Using local facilities	Whether you have time for things like a gym or swimming pool
Recreation	Whether you have any free time, for example to read or have a hobby

What "unable to achieve" means for carers

The regulations say you count as unable to achieve an outcome if you:

- cannot do it without help
- can do it, but it causes you significant pain, distress or anxiety
- can do it, but it endangers, or is likely to endanger, your health or safety, or that of anyone you care for, including children

The guidance gives an example: a carer who holds down a full-time job alongside caring, but is significantly distressed by doing both, should not be treated as able to work.

If your load changes over time, for example when your relative has bad spells or during school holidays if you also have children, the council must consider your needs over an appropriate period, not just on the day.

You can qualify even if the person you care for does not. The guidance says the decision about you must be made without considering whether your relative has eligible needs. This matters when a parent is managing "on paper" only because you are doing a great deal behind the scenes.

What support can a carer's assessment unlock?

If you have eligible needs, the council agrees a support plan with you, with a personal budget showing what it costs to meet them. The help falls into two kinds, and the difference decides who pays.

Support given directly to you

The statutory guidance and the NHS list examples such as:

- relaxation classes, or gym or leisure centre membership
- training in safe moving and handling
- help with taxi fares, housework or gardening
- help to stay in, or return to, paid work
- support groups and advice on carers' benefits

The council can charge you for this kind of support, but it does not have to. The guidance says that in many cases charging carers would be "a false economy". Lewisham's carers page says most councils do not charge carers for support. Bromley says the assessment, advice and information are free, and any costs for services will be discussed before support is arranged.

A break from caring: respite and replacement care

For many carers, what would help most is time off. The guidance calls this "replacement care": someone else looks after your relative so you can go to your own appointments, sleep, work, or have a longer holiday. It might be a carer visiting while you go out, someone sitting with your relative overnight so you can catch up on sleep, or a longer break.

Because replacement care is a service to your relative, the rules work like this:

- The council must not charge you for it, under any circumstances.
- Your relative may be charged, under the council's normal charging rules, after a financial assessment.
- Your relative must agree to the care being arranged for them in this way.
- If your relative has no eligible needs of their own, the replacement care is still written into your support plan and paid from your personal budget, with their agreement.

Our guide to [respice care](/blog/respice-care-guide) (/blog/respice-care-guide) compares the types of break, from a few hours at home to a short stay away.

Direct payments for carers

The statutory guidance applies its direct payment rules to carers as well as the people they care for, and Lewisham's carers page confirms carers may receive them. A direct payment lets the person who holds it choose who provides the help. For a break at home, that is usually your relative's direct payment. It can be yours if the replacement care is written into your own support plan. Either way, it can be used to pay a home care agency. Two rules to know:

- Direct payments can pay for short care home stays, as long as they do not exceed four consecutive weeks in any 12-month period. The guidance gives a carer's respite break as an example.

- A direct payment cannot normally be used to pay the recipient's spouse or partner, or a close relative living in the same household (such as a son, daughter, parent or sibling), unless the council decides it is necessary.

Some councils use other routes: Lambeth describes a one-off carers personal budget for needs that cannot be met another way. Our guide to direct payments for home care explains how the money is managed.

Council complaint, then the Ombudsman

How a carer's assessment leads to support. Based on the Care Act 2014 and the care and support statutory guidance.

How to prepare for a carer's assessment

Councils offer face-to-face, phone or video assessments, and the statutory guidance allows phone or online assessments where appropriate. The NHS says assessments usually last at least an hour. You can bring someone with you.

If you would have substantial difficulty taking part, for example in understanding the information or saying what you want, and there is no appropriate family member or friend to support you, the council must arrange an independent advocate for you. This right comes from [section 67 of the Care Act](https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/67) (<https://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/section/67>), and the statutory guidance confirms it covers carers' assessments as well as the assessment of the person you care for.

Steps to prepare

A little preparation turns a general chat into a clear record of what you do.

- 1 Keep a note for a week or two.** Write down every task, how long it takes, and when it happens, including nights, phone calls and travel across London to get there. Note when you last had a full day off.
- 2 Match your notes to the eight outcomes.** For each one, write whether caring stops you doing it, or lets you do it only with significant distress or risk. Remember that one outcome can be enough.
- 3 Write down your own health and work.** Include lost sleep, back pain, anxiety and missed appointments, and say if you have cut your hours or are thinking of leaving your job. A risk to your health is a route to eligibility on its own.
- 4 Decide what you are willing to keep doing.** The council must ask whether you are willing, not just able. It is fine to say you will do the shopping but cannot keep doing personal care.
- 5 Say what would help.** A regular afternoon off, a night's sleep each week, a fortnight away once a year. Concrete requests are easier to write into a plan.

Ask for the paperwork. The council must give you a record of your assessment and a copy of the eligibility decision.

How long will it take?

The Care Act sets no fixed deadline. The statutory guidance says an assessment "should be carried out over an appropriate and reasonable timescale taking into account the urgency of needs". The council should tell you how long it expects to take and keep you informed. Carers UK warns there can be a waiting list. Ask for the expected timescale when you first call and write it down. If the wait becomes unreasonable, use the complaints route below.

If you suddenly cannot care, because you are ill, in hospital or at breaking point, tell your relative's council that it is urgent. Section 19 of the Care Act lets the council meet urgent needs before it has carried out any assessment, and the guidance says the lack of a needs or carer's assessment must not be a barrier to action. If anyone is in immediate danger, call 999. For your own health, talk to your GP or call NHS 111.

What if the council says you're not eligible, or nothing happens?

If you are found not to have eligible needs, the council must give you a copy of its decision and information and advice on what could meet or reduce your needs and prevent them getting worse, such as local carers' services. Ask for this if it does not arrive.

There is no formal appeal. If you disagree with the decision, or you are waiting too long, use the council's complaints procedure. If you are still unhappy, the [Local Government and Social Care Ombudsman](https://www.lgo.org.uk/how-to-complain) (<https://www.lgo.org.uk/how-to-complain>) can investigate, free of charge. You normally need to finish the council's complaints process first. The exception is when the council has not replied within a reasonable time, which the Ombudsman says should in most cases be up to 16 weeks. The Ombudsman normally only looks at complaints made within 12 months of you knowing about the problem.

If you turned down an assessment before, you can still ask now. The guidance says that if someone refused and later asks, the council must carry it out.

Your rights at work as a carer

If you are employed, you also have a right to [carer's leave](https://www.gov.uk/carers-leave) (<https://www.gov.uk/carers-leave>): unpaid time off to give or arrange care for a dependant with a long-term care need. GOV.UK sets out the rules:

- You have the right from your first day with your employer.
- You can take up to one working week every 12 months, as a whole week or as single days or half days. A "week" means the time you usually work over 7 days.
- You must give notice of at least 3 days for a half day or a day. For anything longer, the notice must be at least twice the length of the leave, so 2 days off needs 4 days' notice.
- You do not need to give evidence of your relative's care needs. Your employer cannot refuse, but it can ask you to take the leave at a different time if your absence would cause serious disruption.

Emergencies are covered by a separate right, [time off for dependants](https://www.gov.uk/time-off-for-dependants) (<https://www.gov.uk/time-off-for-dependants>). If your parent is taken ill or injured, or their usual carer does not turn up, you can take a reasonable amount of time off to deal with it without giving notice. Tell your employer as soon as you can. Your employer does not have to pay you for it.

Questions families ask

Will the council take over caring if I say I can't cope?



My partner doesn't want "strangers" in the house. Can I still get a break?



Can I get any help while I wait for the assessment?



Is my support plan reviewed, and can I ask for a review?



How we can help

We cannot carry out a carer's assessment or influence the council's decision. Where we can help is with the break itself. JNP Sidona is a CQC-registered homecare agency based on Lewisham High Street, and we provide [respite care in London](/respite-care-london) (</respite-care-london>): a carer who comes in so you can rest, work or go away, paid for privately or through a direct payment. Jackie,

our registered manager, offers a free home assessment and a written care plan, and we give a quote after that. See the [areas we serve](/areas-we-serve/) (/areas-we-serve), or our [guide to paying for care in London](/paying-for-care-in-london/) (/paying-for-care-london).

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About this guide

Written by the JNP Sidona team using the official sources listed above, which we checked on 9 October 2026. Rules, rates and thresholds change, usually each April, so always confirm the current position with the source or your council. This guide is

general information, not medical, legal or financial advice. If you spot something out of date, email info@jnpsidonasupportservices.co.uk (mailto:info@jnpsidonasupportservices.co.uk) and we will correct it.