

## Am I a carer?

### Self-identification and why it matters

Many people struggle to recognise that the help and support they provide for loved ones means they are a 'carer' as well as a parent, friend or partner.

#### But she's my partner

Andrew takes care of his partner Joanne and their children when her rheumatoid arthritis is bad. For a long time, he didn't speak out about his situation:

*"I don't treat myself as a caregiver, I'm just doing my role as her other half. I didn't talk about being a carer because I know it makes Joanne sad as she wants to be her own independent person."*

#### But they're my child

Adrian's stepchild had a mental health breakdown as a teenager, but he found he didn't identify himself as a carer for the first three years.

*"I didn't refer to myself as a carer, or even think of myself in that way. I think it's because I didn't know any other carers who were 'like me' or were supporting a child who had the same needs. None of the services we encountered made reference to me as a carer or encouraged me to get support, which only reinforced me not seeing myself as a carer for so long."*

#### But she's my friend

Being a carer for someone with mental health needs doesn't always have a clearly defined role, but it is still caring. Helen cared for her friend when she was admitted to hospital following a mental health breakdown.

*"I considered my role to be to give her plenty of emotional support and remind her who she is beyond the illness. The label 'carer' didn't matter, it was important she knew I was there voluntarily and because I loved her."*

## Who is a carer?

- Carers UK define a carer as a person of any age who provides unpaid care and support to a family member, friend or neighbour who is disabled, has an illness or long-term condition, an addiction, or who needs extra help as they grow older.

## Why is it important?

- Without recognising yourself as a carer, it's impossible to access any of the support that may be available to help manage the challenges of being an unpaid carer.
- Since April 2024, unpaid carers are entitled to take five days unpaid leave every year under the new Carers Leave Act. Your employer may also offer additional support, so always check to see what is available.

This information is intended as a guide only and you should seek legal advice where necessary. Working Families will not be liable for any losses subsequent to the use or misuse of this information and guidance.