Many people do not see themselves as carers straight away: they are mums and dads, husbands, wives, partners, brothers, sisters, friends and neighbours. They are simply doing what anyone would, caring unpaid for a loved one or friend, helping them through when they are unable to do things for themselves.

A carer is anyone of any age who provides unpaid care by looking after an ill, frail or disabled family member, friend or partner. Being a carer can put great pressure on someone, put a strain on their relationship with the person they look after, and prevent them from having a life of their own away from their caring role.

Recognising yourself as a carer can be the gateway to getting a range of help and support which can take some of the pressure off you and allow you some time for yourself.

It also means that in the event of a crisis, for example if you yourself are taken unwell, you will be able to easily access respite and other emergency support for the person you look after.

In this section we provide some general advice on looking after vulnerable adults with physical disabilities and health problems, people with dementia, people with mental health problems, and children with disabilities - click on one of the links to the left.