







Supporting carers in general practice: a framework of quality markers

NHS England and NHS Improvement



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Publishing approval number: 000594

Version number: Version 3

First published: 11th June 2019

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1. Introduction

1.1 The purpose of this paper

This paper offers a series of practical ideas that have been developed in partnership with carers, primary care teams and other key stakeholders. Collectively, these provide a framework for improving how general practice can better identify and support carers of all ages, and set a clear ambition to:

- improve carers' health and promote positive wellbeing;
- · reduce carer crisis and family breakdown;
- reduce unwarranted variations in carer support, and;
- meet demand more appropriately and better manage demand on service.

The framework provides a range of practical actions grouped into themes that have been developed from carers, and their representatives, and focuses on key areas where the support offered to carers by general practice could be improved.

The framework is not an additional mandatory requirement. Participation by GP practices is voluntary and can be promoted and supported at Integrated Care System, CCG, Primary Care Network or individual practice level.

The framework builds on the work started by the NHS England *Commitment to Carers* (1), which sought to give the five and a half million unpaid carers (2) in England the recognition and support they need to provide invaluable care for loved ones.

The framework also reinforces *An integrated approach to identifying and assessing carer health and wellbeing* (3), which remains a model of good practice for health and care services to work together in agreeing how they will identify, assess and support carer health and wellbeing.

The provision of joined up and more response services, services that have been designed around the needs of patients and carers, is central to the transformation of the NHS in order to, "ensure that care is delivered to those most in need and most able to benefit from it" (4).

A central purpose for developing this framework has been to "develop quality markers for Carer Friendly[sic] GP practices...in order to reduce carer breakdown and improve carer health-related quality of life" (5).

Within the NHS Long term Plan, the ambition for granting carers greater recognition and support so that their own health and wellbeing needs will be addressed is clear, "we will do this through introducing best-practice Quality Markers for primary care that highlight best practice in carer identification and support" (6)...[to] help carers identify GP services that can accommodate their needs" (7).

1.2 Acknowledgements

The development of this paper was informed by the support and advice of the Department of Health and Social Care, officers of the Care Quality Commission, NHS England regional nursing staff, members of individual clinical commissioning groups, those who work to support carers in NHS provider organisations, and the many national and local carer support organisations we have met with and spoken to.

We extend our special thanks to Carers Trust, Carers UK and The Children's Society, for their continued advice, encouragement and support.

Particular thanks are extended to those clusters of general practices that have worked with us at various times to refine the quality markers so as to ensure that we have produced a practical, quality-focussed tool that will support best use of time and resources.

We have also spoken to a number of carer support organisations and the NHS England Young Carer Health Champions to see what they think, to check that the right things are being covered, and to see if they were aware of additional good practice that might help us in our work.

Finally, we wish to acknowledge the individual and collective contributions made by carers from vulnerable communities.

2. What are quality markers?

2.1 General

NHS England has developed some questions that can be used by general practices to "demonstrate how effective they are in recognising and supporting carers" (8).

These questions are known as "quality markers" and have been taken from what carers and their representatives have told NHS England over the past four years.

Next to each question are some practical ideas that general practices can put into place to help them develop the support they give to carers (see Appendix A).

The practical ideas have been taken from things that some doctor's surgeries are already doing to support carers.

The questions ask the general practice to show how they go about supporting carers, recording this on the attached declaration template (see Appendix B), which can be used as to demonstrate what a practice is doing to support carers.

2.2 Use of the quality markers

To help manage the workload on general practices, the quality markers have been designed so that they will also provide evidence for other organisations, including the Care Quality Commission (CQC), that are responsible for making sure general practices provide safe and high-quality care. The CQC supports the use of these quality markers to help general practices support carers.

The CQC currently inspects each general practice on a regular basis, depending on the amount of support a general practice requires.

NHS England and the CQC both recognise that the provision of role of being a carer can sometimes lead to increased anxiety and depression, as well as injury and poor physical health; identifying someone as a carer and doing something positive as a result can be an important step in improving carer health and wellbeing.

Ultimately, improved support of carers can lead to reduced carer and family breakdown, improved use of resources, and healthier, happier carers and people for whom they care.

2.3 What are the benefits of using the quality markers?

We have heard of a number of benefits associated with effective support for carers. These benefits cover a range of perspectives - for the carer, for the person being cared for and for the practice team - and these are summarised in Appendix C.

Benefits for the general practice team that are associated with supporting carers effectively include:

- timely identification and registration of carers makes it easier to offer practical things (like health checks and 'flu jabs) to maintain good physical health
- timely identification and referral of young carers can help reduce the impacts of inappropriate caring during childhood
- having an up-to-date carers register helps to target health screening for particular areas of risk, such as depression, high blood pressure, etc.
- early identification of carer health problems can lead to faster treatment and improved health outcomes
- improved support for the carer can lead to better care planning and more effective implementation of the subsequent care plan
- improved physical health and emotional wellbeing of carers can lead to reduced demand on services
- the improved physical health and emotional wellbeing of carers may lead to savings in a general practice's prescribing budget.

3. What do the quality markers cover?

The quality markers ask a general practice to identify six things:

- how the practice identifies and registers carers
- how the practice uses its carer's register to support holistic carer health and wellbeing needs
- how the practice organises itself to understand and respond to the needs of carers
- how the practice makes it easier for carers to access its services
- how the practice communicates with, involves and informs its carers
- how the practice promotes a carer-friendly culture

For each of the six questions, a selection of practical ideas is listed. These practical ideas have been taken from what carers have told us has been helpful in meeting their needs and are suggestions only, they are not intended to be restrictive; if a practice has done something else to respond to the needs of carers, it can include this on the declaration at Appendix B.

We have included responses to some frequently asked questions about this scheme, for your information. These are included at Appendix D.

A range of resources has been developed to help healthcare staff identify and support carers. Details of some of these are included at Appendix E.

The framework for quality markers



4. What are we asking practices to do?

We are asking general practices to choose at least two things from the list of practical ideas, to identify how they meet each of the six quality markers.

It is important that general practices focus on all six quality markers, equally, to demonstrate how they work together as a system for supporting carers.

A practice should record what it has done in the relevant section of the declaration.

The practice should also discuss with its patients and carers, possibly through its patient reference/participation group, what it has been doing to support carers and how it is responding to the needs of carers. This can be included as one of the practical things a practice has done on the declaration.

The completed declaration can be used to help the practice demonstrate how it is identifying and supporting carers.

We also propose that the declaration be made available as part of the evidence to be submitted to the CQC inspection, which recognises this work as good practice; by being able to demonstrate ongoing support for carers, the aim is to make it easier for practices to gather this evidence together for the Care Quality Commission inspection.

Where a practice is already involved in a carers award scheme, carers incentive scheme, or carers recognition scheme, we suggest that existing approaches are reviewed by the CCG or general practice against the six quality markers to judge whether all aspects of identification and support are adequately covered, and schemes revised as appropriate.

5. How will carers know their practice is carer-friendly?

We are proposing that general practices can either review themselves or review each other on an annual basis. It might be useful for neighbouring practices in a particular locality to exchange and explore approaches, information and good practice about how to engage with, involve and support carers.

Practices may choose to include the declaration in the practice newsletter, display it on the practice, or display it as a poster in the practice, to let the wider patient and carer community know what it is doing to identify and support carers.

We have heard that many practices provide a Carers Information Pack, containing key information about local community, preventive and other local support services; the declaration can be included in these packs as a visual representation of a practice's offer of support to its carers.

6. Development of the quality markers

The quality markers have been co-designed and developed with Carers Trust Network Partners, clusters of GP and GP practice staff, CCG officers, local authority commissioners, officers from the Care Quality Commission, carers from within vulnerable communities, STP and ICS networks, and the NHS England Young Carer Health Champions, all of whose views have helped to clarify and refine the quality markers.

Feedback and insight was also collected through formal presentations and workshops at the Carers UK State of Caring conferences 2017 and 2018, NHS Expo 2016 and 2017, and the National Children and Adult Services conference 2017.

We were particularly interested to hear about how the quality markers can help general practices provide evidence of carer identification, involvement and support for:

- the quality and outcomes framework (QOF)
- the personalisation of care
- local incentive schemes
- work to reduce health inequalities

In addition to agreeing the quality markers, we were asked to develop a support pack for implementation, to include:

- A summary of the quality markers and supporting practical ideas
- An example of the annual online declaration
- Clear identification of the benefits of the scheme for carers, the person being cared for, and for practice teams
- A set of frequently asked questions about the scheme

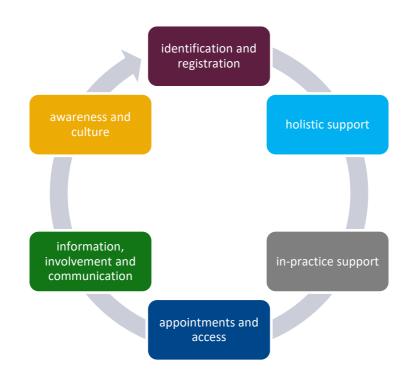
7. Notes

- 1. NHS England, Commitment to Carers, 2014
- ONS, Census 2011. Comparison of data for 2011 census with 2001 census can be accessed at: https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/healthcaresystem/articles/2011censusanalysisunpaidcareinenglandandwales2011andcomparisonwith2001/2013-02-15
- 3. NHS England, An integrated approach to identifying and assessing Carer health and wellbeing, 2016. Copies of the Commitment to Carers and An integrated approach... can be accessed at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/ourwork/pe/commitment-to-carers/
- 4. NHS England, Next steps on the NHS Five Year Forward View, 2017, P.42
- 5. NHS England, ibid, P.45
- 6. NHS England, The NHS Long Term Plan, 2019, P.17
- 7. NHS England, *ibid*, P.35. The NHS Long Term Plan can be accessed at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/long-term-plan/
- 8. Department of Health and Social Care, *Carers Action Plan 2018-2020:* Supporting carers today, 2018, P.10



Appendix A

Supporting carers in general practice: quality markers and practical ideas



NHS England and NHS Improvement



Quality marker	Practical ideas
Quality marker	Does the practice keep a Carers Register?
identification and	 How many patients are registered with this practice? How many young carers are registered with the practice?
registration	How does the practice proactively identify young and young adult carers?
	Does the practice review disease registers, long term condition registers and at risk registers to help identify carers of all ages?
how does the practice proactively identify carers?	Does the practice use a form to enable carers of all ages to request being placed on the carers register?
	Is an alert system in place so that the whole practice team is able to see that someone is a carer when accessing their notes?
	Does a named person have responsibility for maintaining the Carers Register?
	How frequently is the Carers Register updated?
	Does the practice encourage carers to self-identify in the surgery, on their website, and through newsletters?
	Other – what else does the practice do to help identify carers?

Quality marker	Practical ideas
Quality marker	Are all carers given an opportunity to discuss what matters them, including their own health, wellbeing and other support needs?
holistic support	Does the practice support carers maintain their physical health and emotional wellbeing? For example:
	 Are all carers encouraged to have a flu vaccination? Are all carers are offered a regular health check? Are all carers screened for anxiety and depression?
how does the practice use its Carers Register to support carer health and wellbeing?	Are carers who attend the appointment of a patient encouraged to book a separate appointment for themselves to discuss what matters to them, including their own health and wellbeing needs?
	Is the practice aware of local carer support services?
	Does the practice refer carers to local social prescribing schemes, including referral to a link worker, so as to develop tailored plans to connect the carer with local preventive services and local community-based support?
	When discussing and planning a carer's own care, support and treatment, does the practice work with the carer to develop and agree a contingency plan for use in an emergency or when the carer is not available/no longer able to provide support?
	Are all carers, including young carers, advised of their right to request a carer's needs assessment?

Quality marker	Practical ideas
Holistic support (continued)	Does the practice provide carers with a 'Carers Passport'?
	When referring carers to secondary care, does the practice inform the receiving healthcare provider that they are a carer?
	When referring carers to secondary care, does the practice ask what implications this could have for the person being cared for?
	How does the practice proactively refer young carers for assessment or support from the local authority or young carers services?
	Does the practice provide information to carers of all ages about how to access services for their own health through the practice?
	Does the practice refer carers to local self-management support, to help maintain good physical health and help manage any long term/chronic conditions the carer may have?
	Does the practice have an agreed process for actively identifying, referring and supporting those, including children and young people, to reduce or prevent inappropriate caring responsibilities, as a result of taking on caring roles through a patient being given a life-changing diagnosis, or having a life-changing accident?
	Other – what else does the practice do to meet carers' holistic support needs?

Quality marker	Practical ideas
	Does the practice have a GP who acts as a strategic lead for carers?
in-practice support	Does the practice have a designated 'Carers Champion/Carers Lead' responsible for operational support for carers?
	Does the practice publicise contact details of the 'Carers Champion/Carers Lead' in- practice and in publicity produced by the practice?
how does the practice understand and promote the	Does the practice know how to refer carers to the local carer support organisation?
needs of carers within the practice?	Does the practice have agreed processes in place for referring adult and young carers to local carer support?
	Does the practice enable the local carer's support organisation to run clinics for carers on the practice premises?
	Does the practice enable a carer's support group to meet at the practice?
	Other – how else does the practice promote the needs of carers?

Quality marker	Practical ideas
	Does the practice offer registered carers priority appointments?
appointments and access	Does the practice offer carers flexible appointments for carers themselves and the person they care for?
	Does the practice offer designated clinics for carers?
how does the practice make it easier for carers to access	Does the practice offer designated clinics for young carers?
services?	Do practice staff take carers' needs into account when booking appointments?
	Are carers able to book a double appointment so they may be seen when they accompany the cared for to an appointment?
	Does the practice allow carers to make 'virtual appointments' by offering telephone and video consultations?
	Are carers able to order repeat prescriptions online?
	Do clinicians visit carers who are unwell, if they are unable to leave the person they care for at home?
	Other – how else does the practice make it easier for carers to access its services?

Quality marker	Practical ideas
	Does the practice provide up-to-date information to carers, including those not currently identified and is this information clearly displayed in the practice?
information, involvement and	Does the practice provide a Carers Information Pack?
communication	Does the practice operate and promote use of a Carers Passport with other local health and care services?
how does the practice inform, involve and communicate with carers?	Is the information the practice provides to carers clear and accessible, according to the identified needs of the practice population?
	Does the information the practice provides meet the requirements of the Accessible Information Standard?
	Does the practice actively involve and consider the views of carers in planning care, treatment and support for the cared-for?
	Does the practice use and promote a form to enable the person with care needs to give consent to sharing information with their carer?
	Does the practice work with the carer to develop and agree a contingency plan for use in an emergency or when the carer is not available/no longer able to provide support?
	Does the practice provide clear information on how carers can join its patient participation group/patient reference group?
	Does the practice work with its carers to build and share knowledge about local carer support and preventive services?

Quality marker	Practical ideas
Information, involvement and communication (continued)	Does the practice use digital and social media to communicate with carers of all ages?
	Is information for carers provided in the practice itself, on the practice website and in practice newsletters?
	Are there posters and leaflets on display aimed at carers of different ages?
	Other – how else does the practice communicate with, inform and involve its carers?

Quality marker	Practical ideas
	Can each member of the practice team correctly define the terms 'carer' and 'young carer'?
awareness and culture	Is carer awareness included in all staff inductions and job descriptions?
Somers	Do all practice staff receive carer awareness training?
how does the practice promote a carer-friendly culture?	Are all practice staff confident in engaging with patients who are carers, including young carers, young adult carers and their families?
	Do all staff have a basic knowledge of the types of services available to carers and can staff explain to carers how these services can be of benefit?
	Are children and young people who regularly book or attend appointments with an adult who needs assistance with day-to-day living asked if they provide any care and offered appropriate support?
	Are adult carers, young adult carers and young carers represented on the practice Patient Participation Group?
	Where the person with care needs consents, is the carer involved in discussions around future care planning and shared-decision making?

Does the practice listen to its carers and take action on what carers say?
 Does the practice carry out an annual carer's survey? Does the practice carry out a separate annual survey of young carers? Can the practice demonstrate changes that have been made as a result of feedback given to the carers survey?
Does the practice involve its Patient Participation Group in its work around quality markers for carers?
Are young carers given the opportunity to ask questions and to be listened to?
Are staff encouraged to identify themselves as carers?
Do staff members who are carers feel that the practice is supportive and willing to accommodate their needs?
Does the practice have carer-friendly employment policies?
Other - what else does the practice do to promote a culture of carer awareness?



Appendix B

Declaration template

At **[NAME OF MEDICAL PRACTICE**] we are committed to identifying and supporting carers according to the requirements of the Care Quality Commission and as evidenced against the NHS England quality markers for general practice.

Quality marker	How achieved	
identification and registration		
holistic support		
in-practice support		
appointments and access		
information, involvement and communication		
awareness and culture		
How did the practice involve carers in this declaration?		
NAME:	DATE:	



Appendix C

Supporting carers in general practice: summary of key benefits

Benefits for carers

- The identification of a carer can help them get better support for their caring, physical health, and emotional wellbeing needs
- Young carers are identified early and have inappropriate care needs prevented or reduced through referrals to local young carers services and / or the local authority,
- Carers can be offered health checks and 'flu jabs, to help maintain their good physical health
- Carers report feeling more confident in their caring role
- Carers report feeling they are providing safer care
- Carers report feeling enabled to have a life outside of their caring role
- Carers enjoy improved wellbeing through reduced anxiety, depression and stress
- Carers will be better informed and more aware of the support services available to them
- Reduction in injury due to improved manual handling techniques
- Reduction in illness because of improved self-care
- Carers can be fast-tracked to preventive and low-level support, including wellbeing checks
- Reduction in Carer/family crisis and breakdown
- May require less care, themselves

Benefits for the cared for

- Increased confidence and trust in the person providing care
- Reduction in anxiety and feelings of guilt
- Improved understanding of when to ask for specialist help and support
- Reassurance that the supported carer will continue to provide care, according to the needs of the cared for
- Reassurance that the person will be treated with dignity and respect, and as an individual with specific and changing care needs
- Reassurance that carer will be involved in care planning
- Overall, improved wellbeing
- May require less care, themselves

Benefits for the practice team

- Identification and registration of carers makes it easier to offer practical things (like health checks and 'flu jabs) to maintain good physical health
- Identification and registration of carers makes it easier to screen regularly for depression and other health problems
- Earlier identification of carer health problems can lead to faster treatment and improved health outcomes
- Improved carer health and wellbeing could lead to reduced demand for services
- Support for carer can lead to better care planning and more effective implementation of subsequent care plan
- Improved physical health and emotional wellbeing of carers can lead to reduction in prescribing and associated costs



Appendix D

Supporting carers in general practice: your questions answered

What does this scheme involve?

This scheme asks six questions that can be used by general practice to demonstrate how effective it is in recognising and supporting carers. The scheme has been recognised as good practice by the Care Quality Commission (CQC).

Why is this scheme necessary?

Carers have told NHS England that the support they receive is variable. This scheme is an attempt to help general practice be more consistent in identifying carers and taking positive steps to promote their health and wellbeing.

How will carers and the wider public know that a practice is carer-friendly?

We are proposing that general practices can either review themselves or review each other, using the online declaration to show how they meet each of the six quality markers.

A practice may wish to involve its Patient Participation Group or, where capacity allows, the local carers support organisation in this work, in which cases this can be included as an additional action the practice has taken.

Does this scheme attract an incentive payment?

No. Participation in this scheme can help practices realise a number of health, social and financial benefits through improving the support they offer to carers.

What if my practice is already involved in a scheme to identify and support carers?

In order to avoid duplication of work, we suggest that existing approaches are reviewed by the CCG/GP practice against the six quality markers to assess whether all aspects of identification and support are adequately covered, and schemes revised as appropriate.

What do we have to do?

We are asking practices to answer six questions to demonstrate how they go about supporting carers.

Next to each question are some practical ideas that practices can do to help develop the support they give to carers.

By choosing at least two practical things for each of the six questions, practices will be able to demonstrate that they are caring towards and supportive of carers.

How do we record what we are doing to support carers?

Simply complete the online declaration, selecting which practical ideas you have done from the drop down list.

Where a practice has done something not listed to support carers, please tick the "other" box for each question and add the details of what has been done.

Are we limited to doing only those practical things listed?

No, we do not wish to stifle innovation, these are included merely as suggestions. If a practice is doing other things to support carers, these should be included under the relevant quality marker on the online declaration.

Is this scheme mandatory?

No this scheme is entirely voluntary.

However, there are a number of benefits for carers, for the people being cared for, and for practices themselves, that can be achieved by participating in this scheme.

More details on these benefits are included on the attached summary of key benefits in Appendix C.



Appendix E

Supporting carers in general practice: resources for supporting carers

The DHSC, Carers UK and Carers Trust have jointly developed the Carers Passport online resource to share the ideas, tools and best practice examples needed to set up a scheme which works for carers, for general practice, and for the community: https://www.carerspassports.uk/

As part of the Carers Action Plan, **Carers Trust** has been commissioned by the DHSC to develop a range of resources for professionals that can be used by GP practices to improve their understanding of young carers, and how an offer of support can be made to them and their families, to reduce excessive or inappropriate caring: https://professionals.carers.org/training-resources-identification-support-young-carers

Carers Trust has also published a "quick-start toolkit", containing a variety tools and practical guidance to enable GP practice teams to identify and support patients who are carers: https://professionals.carers.org/qp-practice-quick-start-toolkit

Carers UK publishes a wide range of useful publications for policy-makers, healthcare professionals and the public, which can be accessed at: https://www.carersuk.org/for-professionals

Among its publications, Carers UK publishes a report based on findings from its annual State of Caring survey, which typically receives around 8,000 responses.

The Children's Society has developed a range of guidance and information for helping health professionals identify and support young carers: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/sites/default/files/gp-pack-guide_0.pdf

The Children's Society can support healthcare staff and provide bespoke training and consultancy packages for professionals can be accessed at: https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/youngcarer/resources-for-professionals

Care Quality Commission (CQC) Full details of the CQC guidance on the regulation of General Practice can be accessed at: http://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/gps

The CQC also identifies where a general practice has demonstrated best practice in supporting carers, other vulnerable patients, and patients more widely. Further details of best practice can be accessed at: http://www.cqc.org.uk/guidance-providers/gps

NHS England summary guidance on social prescribing can be accessed at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/publication/social-prescribing-and-community-based-support-summary-guide/

NHS England's resources for carers can be accessed at: https://www.england.nhs.uk/commitment-to-carers/