



# 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**

This booklet was produced by  
the Bournemouth University PIER  
Partnership:



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>

# Foreword

## **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, Christchurch 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+.**

**Here are some of us:**



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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# Getting Support Straightaway

## **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:**

Caring for someone in **BOURNEMOUTH,  
CHRISTCHURCH OR POOLE:**

**Adult Social Care Helpdesk Contact Centre**

**01202 123 654**



# 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 128 787** (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](http://www.crispweb.org) or [www.helpandcare.org.uk](http://www.helpandcare.org.uk) or contact the Bournemouth and Poole **CRISP Carers Resource on 01202 128 787 (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.

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

**1. Citizens Advice Bureau, Bournemouth, Christchurch & Poole**

[www.citizensadvicebcp.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicebcp.org.uk)

03444 111 444 (Mon-Fri)

**2. Money Advice Service**

[www.moneyadviceservice.org.uk](http://www.moneyadviceservice.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.



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'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**

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# Accept the things I cannot change

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'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**

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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**

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# 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.

# Equipment



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 128 787** 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 128 787** to find out more information.

# Remember to look after yourself

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.

**Looking after your own health including taking time out for yourself is key to coping with the challenges of being a carer.**

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‘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.



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' 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 128 787 to meet with carers like us.**



# Last Word

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

## BOURNEMOUTH, CHRISTCHURCH and POOLE

### **CRISP Carers Resource**

[www.crispweb.org](http://www.crispweb.org)

**01202 128 787**

Sign up to their **Carer's Information Service**.

Respite care, free training.

**Help & Care** 0300 111 3303

based in Bournemouth

[www.helpandcare.org.uk](http://www.helpandcare.org.uk)

Vast source of information, advice & support to find the right support for you.

### **Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole Adult Social Care Contact Centre**

**01202 123 654**

[asc.contactcentre@bcpcouncil.gov.uk](mailto:asc.contactcentre@bcpcouncil.gov.uk)

**Citizens Advice Bureau  
Bournemouth, Christchurch  
and Poole**

[www.citizensadvicebcp.org.uk](http://www.citizensadvicebcp.org.uk)

**03444 111 444**

### **Healthwatch Dorset**

[healthwatchdorset.co.uk](http://healthwatchdorset.co.uk)

**0300 111 0102**

Provides free, independent information on health & care services & encourages feedback on service delivery.

# Contacts

## NATIONAL

**Carers UK** [www.carersuk.org](http://www.carersuk.org)

**0808 808 7777** (Mon & Tue)

Information on benefits, carers assessments, services available and how to challenge decisions.

**Samaritans**

[www.samaritans.org](http://www.samaritans.org)

**Call 116 123 (24 hours a day, 365 days a year)**

[jo@samaritans.org](mailto:jo@samaritans.org)

**Carers Trust** [carers.org](http://carers.org)

Via network partners.

Support and advice. Access to much needed breaks. Emergency help. Group support. Access to training.

**NHS Carers Direct Helpline**

0300 123 1053 7 days/week

Information on carer's assessments, benefits, direct payments, plus local sources of help.

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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**

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