

Getting into Work:

A Guide for Young Adult Carers in England





Your notes

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About Carers Trust

Carers Trust is a major charity for, with and about carers. We work to improve support, services and recognition for anyone living with the challenges of caring, **unpaid**, for a family member or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or addiction problems.

We do this with a UK wide network of quality assured independent partners, through our unique online services and through the provision of grants to help carers get the extra help they need to live their own lives. With locally based Network Partners we are able to support carers in their homes through the provision of replacement care, and in the community with information, advice, emotional support, hands on practical help and access to much needed breaks. We offer specialist services for carers of people of all ages and conditions and a range of individually tailored support and group activities.

Our vision is of a world where the role and contribution of **unpaid** carers is recognised and they have access to the trusted quality support and services they need to live their own lives.

Who this guide is for

This handbook is for young adult carers who want to get into work. It will be particularly useful if you are looking for work for the first time, have been out of work for a while or if you are in work but looking for a new job.

Young adult carers are young people aged 16–25 who care, unpaid, for a family member or friend with an illness or disability, mental health condition or an addiction.

This handbook gives advice on how to find work and suggests ways of overcoming the difficulties young adult carers may face once in work.

You will learn more about where to look for work, how to include the skills you have gained from caring in your applications and interviews and how to speak to your employer about being a carer.

The advice and information in this handbook is based on the experiences of the young adult carers we have spoken to.

Although most of the information will be useful wherever you live in the UK some of the sources of help and advice only apply if you live in England.

Jargon buster

Application form – a document some employers use to find out more about you. They will ask you to outline your qualifications and experience and will include questions to find out how suitable you are for the role. More about application forms on page 14.

Colleague (co-worker) – another member of staff who you work with.

Competency based interview questions – questions that ask for examples of situations where you have used your skills before.

Contract – a written agreement between the employer and employee that tells you the terms and conditions of employment. More on contracts on page 19.

Covering letter – a document written by you that explains to an employer why you want a particular job and why you would be good at it. This letter is usually sent with your CV. More about covering letters on page 14.

CV (Curriculum Vitae) – a document created by you that outlines your skills, qualifications and experience. More about CVs on page 14.

Desirable skills – set out in the person specification (see overleaf). They are the skills an employer would like you to have but are not essential to get the job.

Essential skills – set out in the person specification (see overleaf). You will need to have all (or most) of these skills to get the job.

Fixed term contract – a contract of employment that ends on a specific date or once a particular piece of work or project is complete.





Flexitime – where employees have more flexible working hours. You will have to work an agreed number of hours a day, week or month.

Full-time – as a full-time worker you will usually work 35 hours a week or more.

HR (Human Resources) – the HR department is usually responsible for hiring and firing staff, identifying and meeting training needs, making sure the work environment is safe and looking out for the general wellbeing of employees.

Job description – a document that tells you what you will be doing in the job. It will include the duties and responsibilities of the role. This document is often used when a job is advertised.

Line manager – the person directly responsible for you and your work. They will ask you to complete specific tasks and will give feedback on your work. They are usually the person you would go to if you have a problem at work.

Notice period – the amount of time you must work between resigning (or when your employer ends your contract) and leaving your job.

Part-time – as a part-time worker you will usually work less than 35 hours a week. The number of hours you work will be outlined in your employment contract.

Per annum – means ‘per year’. It is usually used when talking about salary.

Person specification – a document that is often used when a job is being advertised. It tells you what skills you need for the job. These are often used alongside a job description.

Private sector – companies that are run by individuals or groups of individuals to make money.

Pro rata – means ‘in proportion’ and relates to a part-time job. If a job’s salary is advertised as being pro rata, you will earn a proportion of the full-time salary based on the number of days/hours you work.

Public sector – organisations that provide government services such as local councils.

Recruitment agency – used by some employers to find candidates for jobs. They often have websites and/or branches where they advertise jobs.

Salary – the sum of money you are paid for doing your job. This is usually paid monthly. It is usually the same amount every month.

Situational interview questions – questions that ask what you would do in a certain situation, that is ‘what would you do if ...?’.

Third sector/Voluntary sector – organisations that do not make a profit and are not run by the government. Charities fall into this group.

Wage – the fixed amount you are paid per hour/day. Unlike a salary, if you work more hours/days you will earn more money.

Zero hours contract – where you do not have an agreed number of minimum working hours. You will be asked to work when you are needed but do not have to agree to work when you are asked.



Choosing the right job

You may already have an idea of what sort of job you would like but make sure you think about the range of options that are available to you.

You may be interested in temporary (short-term), permanent (long-term), full-time or part-time roles. The type of job you are looking for will depend on things like your studies, your previous work experience and your caring role.

You should consider:

- What you enjoy doing.
- What interests you.
- What skills you have.

There are lots of different jobs – many you might never have heard of! Try and think as broadly as possible. Do your research to find out what's out there and think about the new things you would like to try when in work.

There are a number of online tools you can use that can help you to choose the job for you, alternatively you could speak to a careers adviser. They will have suggestions of what sort of work would suit you and your interests.



As well as the type of job, think about the type of organisation you would like to work for. Every workplace is different.

Things to think about:

- Would you prefer to work for a larger or smaller organisation?
- Would you prefer to work for a private company, a charity or in the public sector?
- What values are important to you? Does the employer share these?
- Do you want to be close to home or are you happy to travel further away?

Where to get careers advice

The National Careers Service

The National Careers Service offers useful information to help you make decisions on what jobs you might enjoy and gives advice on how to get the job you want.

You can find lots of helpful information at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>.

To speak to one of its careers advisers you can free phone 0800 100 900. As well as giving you advice over the phone they can direct you to local careers advisers where you can have a face-to-face appointment.

You can also contact an adviser via their live webchat tool, email or post, or ask them to phone you at a time that is good for you.



Gaining experience

If you are unsure of what you want to do or want to gain some new skills you could consider:

- Work experience/volunteering.
- Apprenticeships.
- Traineeships.
- Internships.

You are likely to learn useful employment skills that will be valued by any employer, and you may be able to earn money at the same time.

Explore all your options for learning on the job (as well as advice and information on college and university) on the National Careers Service website at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>.

Apprenticeships

You might want to do an apprenticeship. You will be employed and receive training to get a qualification.

- You need to be 16 or over to do an apprenticeship.
- They take between 1–4 years to complete.
- You will earn at least the minimum wage rate for an apprentice. There are different rates depending on how old you are. Check online to see how much you should earn at www.gov.uk/apprenticeships-guide/pay-and-conditions.
- You will get at least 20 days paid holiday a year, plus bank holidays.

- You will work at least 30 hours a week.
- Apprenticeships are free if you are under the age of 24.

As with any job, it's good to know what your choices are. You can do an apprenticeship in almost anything from construction, to veterinary nursing to catering.

As well as the many choices available you should think about what you are good at, what you enjoy doing and what you would like to learn more about.

Read more at www.apprenticeships.org.uk

Internships

Another way to gain new skills while earning is to do an internship.

An internship is often a short-term role. They can be valuable in helping you to decide the sort of work you enjoy, what you are good at and to learn new things that you can include in future job applications.

In a paid internship you will have fixed duties and set times you have to be at work. You are considered to be a 'worker' and so will be entitled to be paid at least the national minimum wage.

If you are an unpaid intern, you are technically a volunteer. As a volunteer you agree with the organisation your duties and times you will work but these are not imposed on you. It is a good idea to do as your employer asks, as long as their request is reasonable, to gain the most from your experience.

Find out more at www.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/255483/making-internships-work-interns-guide.pdf.



Your job search



There are many places you can look for a job:

- Online.
- Local and national newspapers.
- Noticeboards in shops.
- Recruitment agencies.
- At Jobcentre Plus.
- Word of mouth, that is through family and friends



You can also apply 'speculatively' – this means approaching employers who are not advertising. This way they can get in touch with you if/when a job comes up.

You should look in a number of these places to give yourself the best chance of finding the job you want.



Help from Jobcentre Plus

Claiming Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA)

You may be able to claim Job Seeker's Allowance (JSA) to help you while you are looking for work. You will be allocated a work coach/adviser who will be able to offer advice on how to improve your chances of finding a job.

You may get support if:

- You are over 18 (there are some exceptions if you're 16 or 17).
- Not in full-time education.
- Are available for work.
- Are actively looking for work.
- Work on average less than 16 hours a week.

The amount of JSA you get will depend on things like your income and savings. If you are aged 18–25 you could receive up to £57.90 a week.

Be aware, there is a limit to the amount of benefits you can claim. You should speak to a benefits adviser to check that claiming JSA will not affect any other benefits you are receiving.

Citizens Advice can offer you free, independent benefits advice at www.citizensadvice.org.uk. Some Carers Trust Network Partners can also offer benefits advice. Check Carers.org for your nearest service.





You can apply for JSA online at www.dwpe-services.direct.gov.uk/portal/page/portal/jsaol/lp.



Or over the phone: 0800 055 6688.

You will need to go to regular meetings with your work coach to make sure you receive your money every week. As well as going to meetings, you will have to be able to show you are making a real effort to find work.

Telling Jobcentre Plus you are a young adult carer

It is up to you whether you tell your work coach you are a young adult carer. If you decide to tell them, they may be able to point you in the direction of other support that is available. They might also have suggestions on what types of jobs would suit you and your caring role, or point you towards more flexible workplaces.

You can ask your work coach if your Jobcentre Plus has a Carers Lead. This person will be an expert on carers and might be able to give you more support than your usual work coach.

If your work coach is aware you are a carer they may also be more flexible about when you need to go to Jobcentre Plus. You must go every two weeks (usually at a time they tell you) to get your JSA.

For more information visit www.gov.uk/jobseekers-allowance/overview.



Getting help from the Flexible Support Fund

Some work coaches may have access to the Flexible Support Fund. This is a discretionary fund that could mean you get given extra money for things your work coach thinks would help you get into work. The money could be used, for example, to buy a new suit for an interview or to help pay travel costs when you first start work.

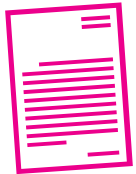
If you are struggling financially, you can ask your work coach about this funding and if they are able to help. Some rules apply so be prepared for them to say no.

For more information visit https://about.universalcredit.service.gov.uk/kms/Pages/Flexible_Support_Fund.htm.



The application process

The application process will be different depending on the type of jobs you are applying to.



You are likely to be asked for one or more of the below:

- A CV.
- A covering letter.
- An application form.

On all of these you must write about the skills you have. Think about the skills you have gained through your education, your leisure time – known as extra curricular activities – and your caring role.

The skills you have learnt as a young adult carer will be valuable to an employer and can help you stand out. These might include:

- Time management.
- Organisation.
- Communication.
- Negotiation.

You should give examples of when you have had to use these skills. It is up to you whether to use examples from caring but these might be a good way to demonstrate your skills.



Always look at the job description and personal specification to find out the skills the employer is looking for. You should try and talk about as many of these as you can when completing your application to show you are suited to the role.

“We are looking for candidates with the right skills for the job and a passion for the role and our organisation. If you can demonstrate this in your application you will stand out.”

Employer

It is good to keep a record of any activities you have been involved in and your key achievements so you can refer back to this when applying for a job. This is sometimes called a record of achievement.

Perfecting your applications is not easy and there is a lot of competition for jobs which means it can take some time before you get an interview. If you are not successful with your application, stay positive. The time you spent on the application will help you when applying to other jobs in future.

If you are really struggling, it might be worth thinking about how you can gain more relevant skills to the jobs you are applying for. You could consider volunteering, work experience or an internship to give you more to write about in your applications. There is more about this on page 8.

Explore your options on the National Careers Service website at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk>.



Interview tips

Getting an interview means that on your application you have shown the employer you have the skills for the job and they can see your potential. Now it's time to show them at the interview that you are the right person for the job.



Most employers will give you a time and date for your interview. You may also be asked to do a test or trial shift. You should do your best to go at the time they have asked. If the time does not suit you, you can ask them to rearrange. They may be more willing to change it if you explain why you need to.

Make sure you know the name and contact number of your interviewer so you can contact them if you need to move the interview at the last minute. If you have a caring emergency and cannot attend, do your best to let them know. They may be able to rearrange for another time. Again, they are more likely to do this if you explain why you cannot go.

Once you have agreed a time and date you will need to speak to the person you care for about how they will be supported while you are at the interview. It may also be a good time to discuss what would happen if you got the job (more on this on page 20).

Talking about caring in the interview

In the interview it may be good to talk about the skills you have learnt from your caring role. Interviewers will often ask some 'competency based questions'. These aim to find out how you have used your skills in the past.

Questions are likely to be based on the job description and person specification so make sure you look over these. Think of some practice questions and examples for your answers before your interview.

If you get asked these sorts of questions you might be able to give examples of your caring skills in your answers:

- What is your greatest achievement?
- Tell us about a time you prioritised effectively.
- Can you tell us about a challenging situation you have faced and how you handled it?
- Tell us about a time you had to be highly organised.

Gaps in employment history can be unattractive to an employer. If these gaps are because of your caring responsibilities it would be helpful to explain this if you are asked. Having a good reason for a gap, such as a caring role, should not be held against you.

“We would not be put off by gaps in your employment history if these could be reasonably explained.”

Employer





Asking questions at the interview

There will probably be an opportunity to ask questions at the end of the interview. It is useful to prepare a couple in advance.

Some suggestions:

- Will any training be offered as part of this job?
- Do you offer flexible working to your employees?
- Are there any opportunities for progression in this role?
- Will I need to travel for any overnight trips?

Get more interview tips at <https://nationalcareersservice.direct.gov.uk/advice/getajob/interviews/Pages/default.aspx>.



Make a note of questions you could ask.

Balancing work and caring

Even before your interview it is a good idea to think about what to expect when starting your new job.

Getting a new job is a great chance to learn new things and to have a break from your caring role. You will need to make some changes to help you juggle your new responsibilities.

Balancing a new job with your caring role might be hard but it will get easier. It is important to stick with it and give yourself time to adjust. Your new employer knows it is hard for anyone starting a new job and they will not expect you to be able to do everything straight away.

Remember, all employers value timekeeping, communication, enthusiasm and honesty.

Checking your contract

Once you've accepted your new job you will be asked to sign a contract. Make sure you understand what you are signing. You should spend time making sense of what you are agreeing to and ask if you have any questions.



Before signing, make sure you can commit to what your contract is asking of you. You will need to think realistically about how you will balance the job with your other responsibilities like studying and/or caring.

You should look for:

- The number of hours you are expected to work.
- If this is a permanent, fixed-term or temporary role.
- How much you will be paid.
- How many days of holiday you will get.
- If you get paid sick leave.
- If you get paid emergency leave.
- Whether you are able to have another job.
- Your start date.
- Your notice period.

You should ask for a copy of your contract. You can refer back to this if you have any problems during your employment.

Talking to the person you care for about your new job

You will need to talk to the person you care for about your new job and how it will affect you both.

Make sure you make it clear that the job is important to you. Let them know how excited you are about the new opportunity to learn new things, gain experience and earn some money.

You might need to talk about:

- If there is someone else who can help while you are away.
- Who the person you care for should go to if there is a caring emergency.
- If there is anything you can do to make the person you care for more comfortable while you are at work.
- The fact that sometimes work will have to come first.
- Getting an assessment.

Getting an assessment

As your situation has changed you might want to request an assessment from your local council to find out what extra support you could get. As a young adult carer you have the right to an assessment.

If you have already had an assessment, you may be able to get a review when you get a new job as your circumstances have changed. You should contact your council to ask about this.

To find out more about assessments check out our guide Know your Rights: Support for Young Carers and Young Adult Carers in England at www.carers.org/knowyourrights.



Managing at work

Talking about your caring role at work



Whether you decide to tell your employer you are a carer or not is up to you. You have a right to privacy and confidentiality. You do not have to tell your employer about your caring role unless you feel comfortable doing so.

If you tell your employer they may be able to offer extra support or have ideas about how to balance work and caring. They might even be a carer themselves!

By telling your manager early on about your caring role they will be in a better position to support you should you need it. They are likely to be more understanding about taking time off at short notice and to attend appointments if they know the reason why. It is much better to have these conversations when you are not stressed about the person you care for.

“As a line manager it can be useful to know what my staff are dealing with outside of work. If they are upset, worried or feeling under pressure I like to know so that I can offer them the appropriate advice and support.”

Employer

Tips for telling your employer you are a young adult carer

- Find a time that is convenient for you both.
- Make sure you both have plenty of time so the conversation is not rushed.
- Find a place that is quiet and private.
- Before the meeting think about what you are willing to share with your employer. You do not need to talk about the condition of the person you care for but you can if you feel comfortable.
- Before the meeting think about how your caring role might sometimes affect your work, for example needing to take time off at short notice.
- Think about some solutions for you and your employer to discuss.
- Write down what you want to talk about so you don't forget in the meeting. Write down what you both agree. Keep this as a record that you can refer back to.



Requesting flexible working

Once you have settled into your new job you might decide a more flexible working pattern would help you to juggle caring and working more easily. This could mean starting later, finishing earlier, working from home sometimes or working less hours.

Flexible working might mean you can attend appointments with the person you care for or support them when they most need your help.

You should speak to your manager or HR department (if you have one) about your options. You might be able to come to an informal agreement about your working pattern.

It would be helpful to explain why flexible working would make a difference to you. Your employer is likely to be more understanding if they are aware of your caring role. You can refer back to the tips in the last section on how to tell your employer you are a young adult carer.

Employment law around who is an employee

Anyone can informally ask their employer for more flexible working arrangements. All employees have the *right* to request it. Employment law around who is considered an employee is complicated but you can check with your employer or contact Acas for advice on your employment status. Call the Acas helpline on 0300 123 1100 or visit www.acas.org.uk.



Your right to request flexible working

- Employees who have worked for their employer for 26 weeks have the right to ask for flexible working.
- This is only a right to ask. Your employer can say no if they have a business reason.
- You will need to write to your employer to formally request flexible working.
- Your employer must meet with you, usually within three months of your written request
- You do not have to tell your employer why you want flexible working but it will help if you tell them as much as you feel comfortable to about your caring role. Your employer is more likely to accept your request if you explain why you are asking.
- Your contract should be changed if flexible working is agreed. You should be certain of the changes you want as it can be difficult to change your contract back. You could always ask for a trial period to see if the new way of working works for you.
- You can only ask your employer once a year for flexible working.

You can read more about flexible working at www.gov.uk/flexible-working/overview.

You may be able to appeal or take your employer to an employment tribunal if you think your employer's decision is unfair. Contact Citizens Advice for more information. See www.citizensadvice.org.uk.



What to do in a caring emergency



It is important you let work know if you are not able to go in, if you are going to be late or if you need to leave early.

They might ask you why. It will look better if you are honest about your caring situation rather than making excuses. This is why it is particularly useful to let your employer know about your caring role before a crisis happens.

Tell your employer you will get back to work as soon as possible. Reassure them that you will complete the tasks you have been set when you return to work.

Your right to unpaid emergency leave

All employees have a right to unpaid time off to deal with emergencies for someone who depends on them for care. This means if you are considered an employee you have a right to time off if you have a caring emergency. Ask your employer or contact Acas for advice on your employment status by phoning the Acas helpline on 0300 123 1100.



- It must be a genuine emergency.
- You will be allowed a 'reasonable' amount of time off. The amount of time will depend on the situation.
- Tell your employer as soon as possible how much time you might need so you can agree what is 'reasonable'. What is considered 'reasonable' will depend on the employer.
- There are no limits on the number of times you can take emergency leave but your employer might want to talk to you if they think this is affecting your work.
- Some employers offer paid emergency leave. You will need to check your contract or company policies to find out. You can read more at www.gov.uk/time-off-for-dependants/your-rights.



Carers leave

There is no legal right to 'carers leave'. You may have to use your holiday to take longer periods of time off to support the person you care for.

Some employers do offer paid carers leave for long-term caring. You might want to ask your manager about whether they can offer this.

Dealing with stress

Everyone experiences stress at work sometimes. Telling your employer about your caring role is likely to relieve some of your worries. If they know about the pressures you are under both at work and at home they are more likely to be able to help.

It is a good idea to tell your manager if you are having a particularly stressful time at home or you are finding something at work stressful.

Some larger workplaces have counselling services or offer training on how to deal with workplace stress. You should speak to your line manager or HR department (if you have one) about these if you think they would help.

Your manager should be able to help you to manage your workload. They will be able to help you decide what work is most important and what can wait.

You might want to tell a friend/friends at work that you are a young adult carer. It can be good to have

someone at work you can chat to when you are feeling stressed or worried about anything.

If you have already developed coping strategies for dealing with stress at home you could try applying them at work if it's appropriate. Everyone deals with stress differently – it is important you know what works for you.

Read tips on how to beat stress from the NHS at www.nhs.uk/conditions/stress-anxiety-depression/pages/reduce-stress.aspx.

If you feel you need extra support with managing your stress you should talk to your GP.

Contacting you at work

The policies on using your work phone and your mobile in the workplace will depend on the type of job you have and who you work for.

If you are not allowed to use your mobile phone at work, ask your employer for a contact number that the person you care for can use to phone you should they need to. Knowing they can reach you this way will mean you will not need to worry about keeping your mobile phone with you all the time. You could also ask your employer for regular breaks to check your mobile phone.

Explaining why you would like to use your mobile at work will be easier if you have told your employer about your caring role.



If you think you've been discriminated against as a carer

If you tell your employer you are a young adult carer most will be understanding and supportive. Unfortunately, some employers might not be and might even discriminate against you because you are a carer. They might start to give you less shifts or not give you a promotion because they think you can't handle it. However, situations like these are rare.

The Equality Act 2010 can protect carers from discrimination.

If you are looking after someone who is elderly or disabled you are protected from discrimination because of your 'association' with someone with what is called a 'protected characteristic'. This means, you cannot be treated differently just because you look after someone who is elderly or disabled.

If you think you are being discriminated against because you care for someone you should contact Citizens Advice. They will be able to give you advice about your particular situation. Find out more at www.citizensadvice.org.uk/.



Joining a trade union

You might like to think about joining a trade union. Unions help workers get together, stop people being treated differently and get a better deal from their employers.

- You have a legal right to join a union. It is illegal for an employer to disadvantage you in anyway because you are a member of a union.
- You have to pay a membership fee to join.
- Unions can offer free legal advice to their members if they think they are being treated unfairly at work.

Find out more and how to join a union by visiting the TUC website at www.tuc.org.uk.

The site also has lots of useful information about your rights at work.



Where to get support and information if you are a young adult carer

Young adult carer services in your area

Carers Trust Network Partners support young adult carers in many parts of the UK. This includes offering:

- Practical and emotional support such as breaks and counselling.
- Clubs, activities and holidays.

Some services will also be able to offer you employment advice or signpost you to other useful local organisations which could help.

To find a local Carers Trust service, call 0844 800 4361 or visit Carers.org.

If you can't find a carers service in your local area then you can search for a carers service online or get in touch with Carers Trust by emailing support@carers.org and we can search for you.

Online support for carers

You can get 24-hour support, every day of the year, from our online services for carers. Carers Trust online services are open to all carers, wherever you live in the UK and whatever your age.

Support from Babble for young carers under 18

Young carers aged under 18 can join Babble (babble.carers.org) to chat with other young carers, share experiences and get information or advice in a fun and safe environment.

Babble is run by a friendly team of qualified support workers who can answer your questions and offer help and advice via email or one-to-one webchats.

Ask our team a question via: youngcarers@carers.org

Support from Matter for young adult carers aged 16–25

If you're aged 16–25, visit Matter (matter.carers.org) to connect with other young adult carers in an online community where you'll be able to share your thoughts and experiences in a safe online space and find or give support.

Matter is run by a friendly team of qualified support workers who are on hand to provide confidential support, by messaging or email.

For email support contact matter@carers.org.

Support from Carers Space for carers aged 18 and over

Carers Space (Carers.org/carers-space) is an online community for carers aged 18 and over. Join the friendly and welcoming community to join a discussion, chat live, share your story or find and give support and advice.

Our friendly team of qualified support workers host chats and Q&As and provide support via posts and confidential email.

For email support contact support@carers.org



seven million
reasons to care

Carers Trust

32–36 Loman Street
London SE1 0EH

Tel: 0844 800 4361 (calls charged at local rate if calling from a landline, calls to this number from a mobile are charged upwards of 14p a minute)

Fax: 0844 800 4362

Email: info@carers.org

babble.carers.org

matter.carers.org

Carers.org

 www.facebook.com/CarersTrust

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Author: Rachel Harris

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Photo on pages 6, 10, 11, 13, 14, 17, 19, 20, 26 and 29 courtesy of Photofusion. All library photos posed by models.

Please note, identities and photos of carers have been changed in the interest of privacy.

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