

# Support for Families and Carers

If someone you live with or are close to is struggling with OCD, this is likely to impact on you. As a carer, whether paid or unpaid, you are entitled to support, both as a carer and for your own wellbeing.

Watching a loved one struggle with something so distressing and debilitating is difficult in itself, and very often carers find themselves feeling powerless to help. On top of this, OCD is a condition that tends to become worse and more demanding over time if it goes untreated, meaning that the care needed from you might increase.

It's very common for family members to become involved in compulsions. This can feel like a double-edged sword because of the knowledge that helping with compulsions, providing reassurance, or doing things on the person's behalf are all unhelpful in the long run. While you might not think of yourself as a carer, you are entitled to support with your own needs around the unpaid work you do to support your loved one.

As a carer, you have a 'statutory' right to a carer's assessment. This means that your local authority legally must offer this. The assessment will look at your social, practical, and mental health needs, and at the end you and all professionals involved should receive a report about what support you should be offered. This could cover many areas of your life, including:

- Training and information around caring for your loved one
- Social support such as peer groups, befriending, or social prescribing
- Psychoeducation around taking care of yourself while caring for someone else
- Mental health support such as counselling or psychotherapy
- 'Replacement care' or other ways of supporting you to engage with work or education

The NICE guidelines for OCD and BDD include information about the impact on families and the support that should be offered to carers. Recently, NICE also published guidelines for supporting all adult carers, which give more information about how carer's assessments should be run and the level of knowledge that is expected of professionals supporting you. These guidelines emphasise the importance of identifying carers, encouraging them to engage with their own support, and treating them like a valued member of the patient's care team:

"1.1.11 Health and social care organisations should promote ways of working with carers that acknowledge them as expert partners in care and value their skills and knowledge about the person they care for. These approaches should be incorporated into formal policies and processes."

You can read the [guidelines for supporting adult carers](#) directly on the website of the National Institute of Health and Care Excellence

