

#CarerConversations Carers Week 2018 Toolkit

About the Carers Information Service

The Carers Information Service provides information, advice and support to unpaid carers in Croydon. The Carers Information Service runs the Carers Support Centre in Croydon town centre, the one stop shop for carers in Croydon. We are part of The Whitgift Foundation and supported by Croydon Council. Visit www.carersinfo.org.uk for more information.

About Carers Week

Carers Week is an annual campaign to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges carers face and recognise the contribution they make to families and communities throughout the UK.

The campaign is brought to life by thousands of individuals and organisations who come together to organise activities and events throughout the UK, drawing attention to just how important caring is: www.carersweek.org/about-us.

*Please note that the #CarerConversations campaign is organised by the Carers Information Service and not the national Carers Week campaign. We encourage individuals and organisations to take part in **Carers Week 11 - 17 June 2018** to support the UK's 6.5million carers: www.carersweek.org.*

Carers Week 2018 at the Carers Support Centre

There's lots on for Croydon carers at the Carers Support Centre throughout Carers Week, including a health and wellbeing day, international buffet, pub quiz, mini massage, information marketplaces and much more. Please note that some events require pre-booking. Visit www.carersinfo.org.uk/whats-on/carers-week-2018 and download our flyer for more information.

Who is a carer?

A carer looks after a friend, family member or neighbour who needs extra support due to illness, disability or old age. This includes both adults and children. Children and young people who provide care are called young carers.

The media often uses the word carer to describe paid care workers. Whilst carers may or may not receive welfare benefits, such as Carer's Allowance, they aren't paid. Unlike a care worker, a carer does not have the same rights and entitlements as an employee.

Why #CarerConversations?

You may have heard in the news about Britain's 'loneliness epidemic', with nine million people in the UK often or always feeling lonely.

You may associate loneliness with older people - but that's not always the case. Carers UK found that eight in ten unpaid carers have felt lonely or isolated because of their caring role: www.carersuk.org/for-professionals/policy/policy-library/alone-caring

Why does loneliness matter?

Many of us occasionally feel lonely. But the effects of persistent loneliness can be devastating. Research shows that lacking meaningful social connections is as damaging to our health as smoking 15 cigarettes a day (Holt-Lunstad, 2015).

Tackling carer loneliness with #CarerConversations

We want to see communities reaching out to carers. The simple offer of a listening ear to a friend or relative, showing understanding as a professional or being a carer friendly employer can make a world of difference.

According to Carers UK research, 52% of carers felt more understanding about caring and disability from society would help them feel less lonely. A little understanding and empathy can go a long way.

Show your support this Carers Week 11 - 17 June 2018

We all have a part to play in helping Croydon carers feel more connected. To get involved, [download our #CarerConversations pledge card](#) or our [hope for the future card if you are a carer](#). You can find them on our website: www.carersinfo.org.uk/whats-on/carers-week-2018. Write your planned action or hope for the future, then send it to amydeakin@carersinfo.org.uk. You can also tweet to us with the hashtag #CarerConversations or add your pledge to our Carers Week Wall at the Carers Support Centre.

One simple action can help us spread the word and make a difference to Croydon's 33,000 unpaid carers. Here are some pledge ideas you could try:

For everyone

- I will spread the word about Carers Week.
- I will hold a Carers Week event at my workplace, school or community group.
- I will try to be more carer and disability aware.

For friends and family

- I will start a conversation about caring with people I know.
- I will call a carer I haven't spoken to in a while to see how they are.
- I will offer carers practical help if they need it.

For professionals

- I will ask my clients if they have a caring role.
- I will offer carers support and understanding.
- I will tell Croydon carers about the Carers Support Centre.

For employers

- I will offer staff flexible working options.
- I will support our workplace to be more carer friendly.

Why not help inspire others by taking a selfie of yourself with your pledge? Before you send us your photo, please [read and sign our photo permissions form](#), then send us a copy with your photo as an attachment to amydeakin@carersinfo.org.uk.

Please be aware that will share your photo on our website, Twitter, Facebook and other publicity. So make sure you are happy with your photo being in the public domain before taking part!

Start your #CarerConversations

But I don't know any carers!

According to Carers UK, 51% of the British public say they don't know a carer - yet one in ten of us have a caring role. It's highly likely that you know at least one person with a caring role - even if they don't call themselves a carer. They may see their caring role as 'doing what anyone else would do'. But being a carer doesn't stop you from being a partner, relative or friend.

Tips for your #CarerConversation: friends and family

Start a carer conversation with a carer you know. It could be a friend, a family member or even a colleague. Start by simply taking the time to ask how they are - and show interest in the answer! Carers are often highly invested in the wellbeing of the person they care for, so you might like to ask after them too.

Be aware that some people are very private about their caring role and may not want to discuss it. Try not to force the issue; they may open up to you in future when they feel ready.

You may wonder how you can help carers in your social circles. Carers often receive general offers of help from well-meaning friends and family without any follow-up, which can actually increase feelings of isolation. Try to offer something concrete, such as helping with errands or keeping an eye on the cared for person for an hour to give the carer a break.

Only offer to do what you are capable of. Even small things like phoning to check in on someone, taking them out for a coffee or simply listening without judgement can make a difference.

If the person is struggling and needs more support, you may like to point them towards their local carer organisation for help or advice. If they care for someone in Croydon, they can drop in for information, advice and support Monday to Friday, 10am - 4pm. To find local help in other boroughs, Carers UK has a search tool: www.carersuk.org/help-and-advice/get-support/local-support

Tips for your #CarerConversation: professionals

If you are a professional, it's important to be carer friendly when providing your service. For example, do you ask service users if they have a caring role? Do you show carers flexibility and understanding? Can you direct people towards sources of help if they need it?

The Carers Week website has lots of advice to help your service become more carer friendly: www.carersweek.org. If you are a GP in Croydon, the Carers Information Service has specific GP resources on carer support: www.carersinfo.org.uk/useful-information/gps.

Tips for your #CarerConversation: employers

If you are an employer, around one in nine of your employees will be carers (Carers UK). This a substantial part of your workforce and it makes good business sense to create a carer friendly work culture.

According to Carers UK, around a third (32%) of carers have felt isolated at work because of their caring role. Being open as an employer about caring and offering flexible working options can make a major difference to carers, reducing stress and feelings of isolation.

Employers for Carers (part of Carers UK) supports employers to invest in the carers in their organisations, offering resources, advice and networking: www.employersforcarers.org.

Tips for your #CarerConversation: young carers

There are 700,000 children and young people caring for a family member with an illness or disability in the UK (Carers Trust). Young carers often feel lonely and isolated, and may struggle with stress, anxiety or low self-esteem. It's therefore essential that young carers are identified quickly and given the support they need.

In Croydon, the Young Carers Service (part of Off the Record) provides activities, emotional support, educational support, family support, social events and counselling for young carers aged 7 - 25 years. To contact the service, call 020 8649 9339 (option 2) or email youngcarers@talkofftherecord.org.

Other ways to help

Help us spread the word by talking to people you know about Carers Week, posting about **#CarerConversations** and **#CarersWeek** on your social media channels, and encouraging organisations you are involved with to do more to connect with carers.

Example social media posts

Twitter

Did you know #Croydon has 33,000 #carers looking after a friend, relative or neighbours with an illness or disability? Let's have more **#CarerConversations** <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk> **#CarersWeek**

Eight in ten #carers feel lonely because of caring. Let's change that. <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk>
#CarerConversations #CarersWeek

Three in five people will become a carer at some point in our lives. I'm tackling #carer loneliness in #Croydon by talking to friends and family about caring. <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk> **#CarerConversations #CarersWeek**

I'm tackling #carer loneliness in #Croydon by spreading the word about **#CarersWeek**. <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk>
#CarerConversations

I'm tackling #carer loneliness in #Croydon by holding an event for **#CarersWeek** <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk>
#CarerConversations

Facebook

Over 33,000 people in Croydon care for a friend, relative or neighbour due to illness, disability or old age. If you care for someone in Croydon, the Carers Support Centre is here for you. <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk>
#CarerConversations

Three in five people will become a carer but few of us talk about it. I'm tackling carer loneliness by talking to friends and family about caring **#CarerConversations**. <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk>

Did you know that 51% of the British public say they don't know a carer, yet one in ten of us have a caring role? Find out who is a carer and how you can help this Carers Week. <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk>
#CarerConversations

The Carers Support Centre is the one stop shop for carers in Croydon. Find out how they help Croydon's 33,000 unpaid carers. <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk> **#CarerConversations**

Eight in ten carers have felt lonely because of their caring role. I'm encouraging my friends to start **#CarerConversations** with carers around them - who will you talk to today? <http://bit.ly/2JFYnTk>
#CarersWeek

More information

For more information about Carers Week at the Carers Support Centre and **#CarerConversations**, call Amy Deakin, Communications Officer, on 020 8649 6288 or email amydeakin@carersinfo.org.uk.