

To: GP practices

NHS England  
Wellington House  
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SE1 8UG

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Dear colleague,

## **Identifying and Supporting Unpaid Carers**

Unpaid carers make a huge difference to the lives of our patients. They frequently step in to reduce the burden on health and care services. If a carer becomes unwell, the needs of a cared for person often turns into an emergency presenting to primary and secondary care.

We would like to take this opportunity to share with you some guidance, produced by primary care practitioners, to support unpaid carers.

It is believed that up to 11 million people in England currently have unpaid carer responsibilities. We know that Primary Care plays a critical role in supporting unpaid carers; they can be signposted to relevant forms of support (such as Carers UK or contingency arrangements if unable to provide care) and they can also have their own health needs met.

To better identify our unpaid carers, it can be helpful for the carer status to be recorded in their GP record and we recognise that GP teams already do this in line with CQC guidance and good holistic practice. While producing this guidance, we have identified that many SNOMED CT codes for flagging someone as an unpaid carer exist. This variation can make it challenging to determine who has support or contingency plans in place when needed in a crisis.

To address this, a group of primary care practitioners have come together to produce [guidance](#) which includes setting out a recommended cluster of SNOMED CT codes for

identifying unpaid carers, of all ages. By using the recommended codes consistently across practices, a patient's caring status can be recorded.

To further improve ease of identification, a new SNOMED CT code has been created to signal that a carer has a contingency plan in place for when they cannot care for a period of time. This can now also be included in the Summary Care Record allowing health and care professionals across the system to quickly identify this information should it be needed.

NHS Digital will be collecting baseline information on the number of unpaid carers through a new indicator in the Core GP Contract GPES extract. We continue to seek and enable a greater understanding and opportunity to improve carers' experiences and outcomes in the future. Thank you for all your practice teams do to support carers.

Please find enclosed guidance, and some promotional material for your practice.

Yours sincerely



**Dr Neil Churchill, OBE**  
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