Don’t do it alone
It might feel like you’re the only one dealing with this but actually the experience of looking after a family member, partner or friend is very common. One in every eight adults in the UK is a carer. It’s something that will happen to most people at some point in their lives.

At the start caring can be bewildering, confusing and demanding. No one is super human and all carers need some support and back-up, either from time to time or ongoing. One of the most important things to remember is that you must consider your own health and wellbeing and also the impact that this might have on your caring role.

Family and friends
Many carers turn to family and friends for support and to help get a break from caring. In lots of cases this works out well and caring is shared. However if you find that family and friends are not helping as much as you’d like then our advice is not to hide the extent of your caring role.

Many carers don’t want people to think they aren’t coping so they gloss over how hard it really is. Your family and friends simply may not realise the level of care you are providing and the impact it’s having. They may find it hard to ask you or don’t want you to think they are interfering.

Support beyond your family and friends
Sometimes it is helpful to get support beyond family and friends. These are some of the services which can support you and overleaf there are details of some local agencies.

- Your GP or someone in your local GP surgery. Many surgeries have a Carers’ Liaison Officer and a notice board with local carer’s information
- If the person you care for has professional help such as a Community Psychiatric Nurse, Social Worker, Consultant etc, ask them how they can help you to carry on caring. It not only helps you but helps them as well.
- Southend-on-Sea Borough Council can provide information and support for carers. Have a look at our website or ring the Adult Community Services Access Team on 01702 215008.
- Many charities have national and local offices which can really help carers, especially around specific conditions such as dementia, mental health etc.

Advocacy & Counselling
Advocacy is when a person helps you to be heard. An advocate is trained to support you to make your views and choices known. They can act as your voice. We have listed some local advocacy agencies overleaf, most of which provide services to people with a specific condition or disability but may be able to help carers.

Counselling is a type of talking therapy or psychological therapy. It involves talking to a counsellor about your problems. Counsellors are trained to listen sympathetically and can help you deal with any negative thoughts and feelings. If your GP or another healthcare professional refers you to a qualified counsellor, you will receive counselling through the NHS free of charge. However, talking therapies such as counselling are not always available on the NHS, and you may need to have private treatment. A private 50-minute session can cost £40-100. Southend Carers Forum provide specific carers counselling services

www.nhs.uk/conditions/Counselling/Pages/Introduction.aspx
Local Agencies offering support to carers

**Alzheimers Society (Southend & District)**
Provide support and befriending services to help partners and families cope with the demands of caring for someone with any form of dementia. This service is financially supported by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to help carers carry on caring.
Tel: 01702 345156  www.alzheimers.org.uk

**BATIAS Independent Advocacy Service**
A range of different types of advocates for people with Learning Disabilities and those with a physical and/or sensory impairment and their carers.
Tel: 01702 528021.  www.batias.com

**Carers Breakthrough**
A range of support for carers of those experiencing mental health problems, including one-to-one listening service, therapeutic counselling, an OCD group and relaxation classes. This service is financially supported by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to help carers carry on caring.
Tel: 01702 213134  www.trustlinks.webs.com/breakthrough.htm

**Southend Carers Forum**
Provide help, support and advice to Carers with a range of support groups a helpline, counselling, form filling service and drop-in centre. This service is financially supported by Southend-on-Sea Borough Council to help carers carry on caring.
Tel: 01702 393933  www.southendcarers.co.uk

**Southend Mencap Advocacy Service**
Open to anyone with a learning disability aged 15 years or over:
Tel: 01702 334514  Email: southendmencap.advocacy@hotmail.co.uk

**South East Essex Advocacy for Older People**
Advocates on behalf of older people aged 60 and over who experience financial and/or social difficulties in their lives and needs someone to work on their behalf to enable them to access services and benefits to which they are entitled.
Tel: 01702 340566  www.seeafop.org

**Together for Mental Wellbeing**
Provide advocacy services for those experiencing mental health problems or those with Asperger Syndrome.
Tel: 01702 349191  www.together-uk.org

**National Carers Support & Information**
Carers Direct  Carers UK  Carers Trust
Telephone: 0300 123 1053  Telephone: 0808 808 7777  Telephone: 0844 800 4361

There is a range of Carers Fact Sheets you may find helpful including:
Carers Assessments  Carers Respite Services  Carers and Physical Wellbeing
Carers and Employment  Carers and the Internet

These, and more, are available on our website
http://www.southend.gov.uk/downloads/download/306/services_for_carers
or ring 01702 215008 ext 4619 and ask for a copy to be sent to you or talk to any of the local carers agencies and ask them to download a copy for you.