



AI as a Tool for Carers

*A Practical Guide for Professional and Family Carers
of people with physical, intellectual, or mental health disabilities*

♥ This guide provides knowledge about using AI tools where they genuinely help — and information about when not to use them. The person you care for always comes first. AI is a support tool, not a replacement for human presence, judgement, and compassion.

1. What AI Is and Is Not

Before using any AI tool in care, it is helpful to understand clearly what you are working with. AI tools such as Claude, ChatGPT, or Gemini are not intelligent in the human sense. They do not understand, feel, or think like people. They are natural language interfaces — systems trained on vast amounts of text that can respond to questions and instructions written in everyday human language.

Think of AI as an assistant who has read almost everything ever written about medicine, disability, care techniques, communication, and wellbeing — but has never met a real person, held someone's hand, or understood what it means to be frightened, in pain, or lonely.

🔑 **AI can give you information, ideas, drafts, and explanations.**

AI cannot know anything about you, your history, your feelings, or your needs.

The combination of AI knowledge and your human understanding creates real value.

The Carer's Advantage

You hold knowledge that no AI will ever have — because you know the person you care for. You know what they love, what calms or frightens them, and you track how their condition changes day to day. AI can support your work but cannot replace the relationship with your family member or client.

2. The First Question to Always Ask

Seymour Papert, a pioneer of educational technology at MIT, had a simple rule for using technology in his work: he only used it if it brought genuine added value. This is the right question — Papert's test — that carers should ask themselves.

? Before using AI for any care-related task, ask yourself: "Does it help me to better support the person I care for, or am I using it simply because it is convenient or because everyone else does?"

If the answer is yes and AI truly adds value — for example, it saves you time you can invest in direct care, helps you understand something better, or finds information you would not easily find on your own — then use it. When what is needed is your presence, your judgement, and your relationship with the person, AI has nothing to add.

3. Where AI Can Genuinely Help

3.1 Finding and Understanding Information

Care involves a constant need for information — about conditions, treatments, medications, rights, services, and techniques. AI is excellent at making complex information accessible.

Physical disabilities

- Ask AI to explain a new diagnosis or medical term in plain language
- Get an overview of assistive technology options for a specific physical need (e.g. mobility)
- Understand what a physiotherapy exercise involves before a session
- Research accessible locations, transport options, or adapted activities

Intellectual disabilities

- Ask AI to simplify an official letter into easy-read language
- Get ideas for explaining a routine change calmly and accessibly
- Research evidence-based approaches for a specific behavioural or communication challenge
- Find activities suited to a particular interest or cognitive level

Mental health conditions

- Ask AI to explain what a medication does and what its common side effects are
- Get an overview of a therapeutic approach
- Research crisis resources, support lines, or local services
- Understand what a mental health diagnosis means in everyday terms

! Always remember: AI information is general. It does not know the person's specific history, their current medications, or other circumstances. You must always verify health-related information with a qualified professional.

3.2 Communication Support

Communication is one of the most important and demanding aspects of care. AI can help in several ways.

- Writing letters — for example to doctors, social workers, or schools — on behalf of the person you care for
- Translating medical or legal documents into simple, understandable language
- Creating simple visual schedules or descriptions of daily routines
- Writing handover summaries for a new carer, hospital, or social worker
- Drafting complaints or advocacy letters when services have not been adequate
- Preparing questions for a medical appointment or care plan review

Example prompt

"My father has moderate dementia and is moving to a new day centre next week. Write me a summary of his daily routine, preferences, communication style, and things that comfort or distress him, which new staff can read quickly. I will fill in the specific details."

3.3 Planning and Organisation

The administrative and planning demands on carers — whether professional or family — can be enormous. AI is very helpful here because it can:

- Create daily, weekly, or monthly care schedules and adapt them as things change
- Write structured handover notes for shift changes or carer transitions
- Create templates for medication records or appointment tracking
- Prepare for care planning meetings — summarising key points or anticipating possible questions
- Research funding options, benefit entitlements, or support programmes
- Write a personal emergency plan describing what to do if the primary carer is unavailable


Example prompt

"I care for an adult son with cerebral palsy. Help me create a weekly schedule template that includes a morning routine, physiotherapy exercises, meals, social activities, and evening wind-down. The template should be flexible enough to adapt on difficult days. Format it as a simple table."

3.4 Emotional Support and Reflection for the Carer

Care is emotionally demanding. Burnout, isolation, and compassion fatigue are real risks — especially for family carers who may have no formal support. AI can play a quiet but meaningful role here.

- Use AI as a thinking framework for working through a difficult situation before making a decision
- Ask AI to help you articulate feelings or concerns that you struggle to put into words
- Research respite care options, carer support groups, or local services
- Request strategies for managing a recurring stressful situation
- Use AI to draft a message asking family members or services for help


 **AI is not a therapist. It can listen, help with reflection, and provide information — but it cannot offer the real human support of a counsellor, support group, or trusted person.**

If you are struggling with difficult feelings, please reach out to a real person: your GP, a carer support organisation, or someone you trust.

3.5 Learning and Skill Development

AI can act as a personal tutor for carers — available at any time, infinitely patient, and able to explain things at exactly the level you need.

- Ask AI to explain a new condition, syndrome, or diagnosis in plain language
- Learn communication techniques through Makaton, PECS, or intensive interaction
- Understand the principles of a behaviour support plan you need to implement
- Get a step-by-step explanation of a care technique — which you must always verify with a qualified educator
- Ask AI to test your understanding of what you are learning, or to provide a different explanation if the first was unclear

 AI can help you understand concepts and prepare for learning, but practical care skills must always be acquired and assessed by qualified professionals. For clinical or physical care techniques, never rely on AI guidance alone.

4. Practical Scenarios: When, How, and What to Watch For

The table below shows specific care situations, how AI can help, and important notes to keep in mind.

Situation	How AI can help	Important note
Person receives a new diagnosis	Ask AI to explain the condition, typical course, and daily implications in plain language	Always speak with a doctor — AI gives general information, not personal medical advice
Difficult behaviour or emotional crisis	Research de-escalation strategies; ask AI to help you understand what triggered the situation	In an active crisis, focus on the person — use AI for reflection afterwards, not during the crisis
Preparing for a care review meeting	Write a summary of current needs, progress, and concerns; prepare questions for professionals	Review and personalise everything AI writes — you know the full picture, AI does not
Person cannot understand an official letter	Ask AI to translate the letter into plain language or rewrite it as bullet points	Check that the simplified version is accurate before sharing
Carer feels overwhelmed or burnt out	Research support services; ask AI to help articulate feelings or draft a message asking for help	AI is not a substitute for real human support — please reach out to a trusted person


Person is prescribed a new medication	Ask AI to explain what the medication does, common side effects, and things to watch for	Never adjust medication based on AI advice — always consult a doctor or pharmacist
Planning a transition (new home, school, or service)	Research the new environment; write a transition plan; create a social story explaining the change	Transitions are emotionally sensitive — human relationship and preparation matter most
Writing a complaint about a service	Draft a formal, factual complaint based on the situation you describe	Review carefully — AI does not know all the details, and tone matters in formal communication
Learning a new care technique	Get a conceptual explanation of the technique and its purpose	Always complete practical training with a qualified professional before applying


4a. A Special Tool: Perplexity — an AI Search Engine

Alongside Claude, ChatGPT, Gemini, and Copilot (free at copilot.microsoft.com), there is another tool that is especially useful for carers: Perplexity (perplexity.ai). It is not a chatbot in the conventional sense — it is an AI search engine that cites real, current sources from the internet alongside every answer. While Claude or ChatGPT respond based on knowledge from their training up to a certain date, Perplexity searches the web in real time and shows you exactly where the information comes from. This is a key difference.

Perplexity is especially useful for carers when:

- You need contact details for local services, day centres, or counselling
- You want to check the latest changes to legislation or disability rights
- You need up-to-date information about a medication — side effects, interactions, guidelines
- You want to verify information you heard from a doctor or social services
- You are looking for recent research on a condition or therapeutic approach

 **Perplexity and Claude/ChatGPT are not alternatives — they complement each other. Use Perplexity when you need verifiable, current information with cited sources. Use Claude or ChatGPT when you need to write a letter, plan, explanation, complaint, or similar.**

 The same caution applies to Perplexity — a cited source does not necessarily mean the information is accurate or applicable to your specific situation. Always verify health and clinical information with a qualified professional.

5. How to Get the Best from AI: Practical Tips

The quality of what AI gives you depends almost entirely on the quality of what you ask. Here are the principles most important for carers.

1 Give context when the task involves the person

The more relevant detail you provide, the more useful the response. Include the person's age, diagnosis, communication level, current situation, and exactly what you need. AI knows nothing about the person you care for.

2 Be specific about what you need

"Help me with communication" is too vague. "Write a brief description of a change to the morning routine in easy-read language for a person with moderate intellectual disabilities who communicates verbally" will give you something genuinely useful.

3 Always review and personalise the response

AI's response is a starting point, not a finished product. You must always read it, check its accuracy, add personal details the AI could not know, and adjust the tone. Your knowledge of the person is irreplaceable.

4 Use dialogue — do not stop at the first response

If the first response is not right, say so. Ask AI to simplify, shorten, change the tone, or try a different approach. Conversation is the tool.

5 Never rely on AI for clinical decisions

All information about medications, medical procedures, clinical risk, or physical care techniques must be verified by a qualified professional. AI can help you prepare and understand — but cannot replace medical or clinical expertise.

6 Protect privacy — share only what is necessary

Do not enter the full name, address, or identifying details of the person you care for into an AI tool. Use descriptions such as "45-year-old man with Down syndrome" instead of personal data. If you are a professional carer, check your organisation's data protection policy.

6. When Not to Use AI

Papert's test applies here too. There are situations in which AI has nothing meaningful to offer — and engaging with it may draw you away from what actually matters.

 **Do not use AI in an active crisis or emergency — act, call for help, be present.**

Do not use AI as a substitute for conversation with the person you care for.

Do not use AI for clinical or safeguarding decisions.

Do not use AI when the task requires your unique knowledge of the person — no AI can replace that.

Do not use AI when what is needed is your human presence and compassion.

There is a deeper risk too. Care is fundamentally relational. Tools cannot provide or replace the quality of a relationship built on trust, attentiveness, and empathy. AI must never take time away from genuine human contact with the person you care for.

7. Ethical Considerations

Using AI in care raises important ethical questions that every carer should consider.

Dignity and Autonomy

The person you care for has the right to know when AI is being used in connection with their care. If the person has the capacity to make decisions and if it is appropriate, discuss this openly. Their preferences matter.

Privacy and Data

Be careful about what information you enter into AI tools. Avoid providing unnecessary personal data — AI tools store and process what you enter. Do not input sensitive personal or medical information beyond what is strictly necessary to get useful help. Professional carers must act in accordance with their organisation's data protection policy.

Accuracy and Accountability

You are responsible for the care decisions you make — not the AI tool. If you act on AI information that turns out to be inaccurate, the responsibility is yours. This does not mean avoiding AI — it means using it thoughtfully. Verify what matters and always maintain your own professional and personal judgement.

Equity

Not everyone can access AI tools or use them easily. Be aware that AI must not create a system where some people benefit from AI-supported care while others do not. AI is an addition to good care, not a shortcut within it.

Summary: The Carer's AI Compass

✓	Ask first	Does this help me provide better support? Apply Papert's test every time.
✓	Use AI for:	Information, communication, planning, learning, reflection — things where knowledge and writing add real value.
✓	Always review	AI gives you a starting point. Your knowledge of the person, professional judgement, and human relationship complete it.

✓	Protect the person	Guard privacy. Do not share personal data unnecessarily. Verify clinical information with professionals.
✓	Know the limits	AI cannot know the person you care for. It does not feel, judge, or care. Be human in a crisis, a tender moment, or when making important decisions.

♥ Finding support as a carer: If you are a family carer who feels isolated or overwhelmed, please contact a carer support organisation. Many offer free advice, support, and respite services. Your wellbeing is not separate from the quality of care you provide — it is its foundation.

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This document was created through a conversation with the Claude AI tool (Anthropic).

An example of how dialogue with AI can produce structured, useful content — with human idea, direction, and judgement.