

# Impact Report

2024–2025

Changing the story for unpaid carers in West Sussex



**Carers  
Support**  
West Sussex





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## Our Vision

Carers are at the heart of our strategy. Imagine a world where carers do not have to fight to be heard and recognised. A world where carers feel valued and supported for who they are and what they do.

**Our vision is to bring the day forward when unpaid carers are seen, heard, and included.**



## Purpose

To be there for unpaid carers when they are most in need, by offering information, guidance, and practical support. Serving as a gateway for carers to access specialist and peer support, and learning and wellbeing opportunities. Working closely with carers, communities, and partners throughout West Sussex and the South East of England, meeting carers where they are on their journey.

# Welcome from our CEO

## Have you ever looked after a family member or close friend?

For many people looking after someone is just what we do – as a wife, a daughter, a son, a husband, a friend, and we do not think of ourselves as a carer until things start to get tough. Perhaps you’re in that role right now. If you have ever experienced being an unpaid carer, then you already understand why the work we do at Carers Support West Sussex is so important. Caring changes everything: your routines, your finances, your relationships, your wellbeing, and often, your identity.

### Nicholas, new to caring, recently told us:

“Just the fact that there was someone there I could contact and talk to – it was a totally new experience for me.”

### Anne, one of the carers we’ve supported, shared:

“Knowing that Carers Support is here for me at this very worrying and difficult time for myself and family is very reassuring. I cannot thank each and every one of your team enough... thank you from the bottom of my heart.”

These words speak volumes. They reflect the deep emotional and physical toll that caring can take and they remind us of the vital difference that getting support can make to carers.



In 2021, the census estimated that there were more than 72,000 unpaid carers in West Sussex alone. We know that this is likely to be an underestimation and here at Carers Support, we have over 30,000 registered carers, with 340 new finding us each month. Nationally, every year over 4 million people take on a caring role and more than 4 million leave their caring roles, showing that caring is an ever evolving state. Caring will affect most of us at some time in our lives and it is vital that we make sure that unpaid carers are valued and supported.

I have been privileged to attend carer groups in West Sussex and have listened to the heartbreak, the humour, the exhaustion, and the passion carers have for their role. I have heard how challenging it is for carers to navigate the health and care system, how they sometimes feel invisible, how they struggle to manage the financial impact of caring and how they feel isolated. At these groups carers tell me how important it is for them to meet with fellow carers and hear from others the tips they have for managing the caring role.

Here at Carers Support, we make it our business to ensure that unpaid carers are recognised and valued for the huge contribution they make to our society. They are the, often hidden, system partner, without whom our health and care

structure would crumble. As we enter a time of huge changes within both the NHS and local government, it is vital that the part friend and family carers play is understood.

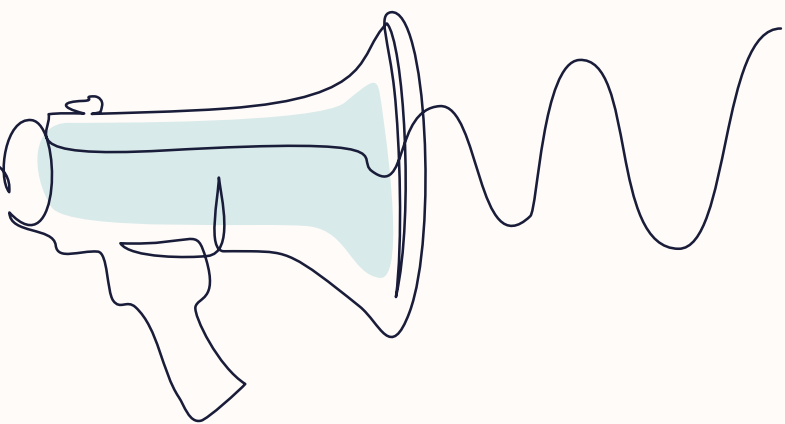
Through our work with local partners in West Sussex and with national partners such as Carers UK and the Carers Trust, we make sure that the voices of carers are heard, whether that is in primary care, hospitals, local communities, or feeding into government conversations around policy. We ask for carers to be not just recognised, but prioritised, not just supported but celebrated.

This impact report is a testament to what we’ve achieved together. I want to thank our partners in the Voluntary Sector and in Health and Social Care, for standing with us. The generosity, collaboration, and commitment help us move forward. I’m deeply grateful to our staff and volunteers who give so much, and to the carers who place their trust in us every day.

Together, we are paving the way for the day when carers are truly **seen, heard, and included**.

Thank you for being part of that journey.

**Caroline Pope, CEO**



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# Carers Support making a difference

Carers Support West Sussex is a vital charity dedicated to enhancing the lives of unpaid carers across the county. In partnership with West Sussex County Council, we offer a comprehensive range of services, including a helpline, carer assessments, benefits' advice, and emotional support. With 96% of carers reporting feeling heard and supported, Carers Support West Sussex is instrumental in empowering carers and improving their well-being.

## 4,066 new carer registrations.

Throughout the year, carers support registered 4,066 new carers into the service. This meant that they could access the support, information and guidance offered to each and every carer, regardless of the stage of their caring journey.

*"You just offer great support, I wish I knew about you sooner."* Anna, carer

## 32,593 carers registered (31st March 2025).

Through our carer record system, Carers Support ensures that the right information is recorded about each individual case. This also helps us to send targeted communications with information for carers that is relevant and timely.

## We recorded 210,000 contacts with and on behalf of carers.

76,089 individual contacts were made with carers.

The number of contacts includes emails and phone calls made to carers.

## 64,017 unique visits to the Carers Support website.

Our website is a key resource tailored to meet the needs of a diverse audience. While it primarily serves as an information hub for carers, it also provides valuable guidance and support for our volunteers, staff, and professionals in health and social care settings, including those in primary care and hospitals.

## 9,788 social media followers.

Carers Support has maintained an active and growing presence across Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, and X (formerly Twitter). Over the past year, we've seen consistent growth in both followers and engagement, indicating that our content continues to resonate strongly with our target audience and supports our mission of reaching and raising awareness of the vital role carers play.

## Social Return on Investment

Working in partnership with WSCC to provide groups and activities for young carers across West Sussex. Social value measures the positive value an organisation creates for the economy, communities, and society. The social return on investment (SROI) for Carers Support is for every pound invested, £10.47 of value is generated. The SROI is a metric to capture the multifaceted impact of Carers Support into one numerical figure, i.e. how much social value Carers Support generates per pound invested into Carers Support.

## Carers Emergency Contact Card

The Carers Emergency Contact Card enables carers to create a carer contingency plan in advance, ensuring that the person they care for will receive the necessary support and assistance during an emergency or accident.

## 1,013 carers were sent a carer emergency card.



## Young carers

We have fundraised for and in partnership with West Sussex County Council, delivered 17 Positive Activity Days for Young Carers aged 8-12 which take place during the school holidays. We also run monthly My Future Groups for Young Adult Carers aged 16-21 in Crawley, Chichester and Worthing and this year took 11 Young Adult Carers to PGL Windmill Hill for a weekend residential.

Anna,  
carer who accessed our services

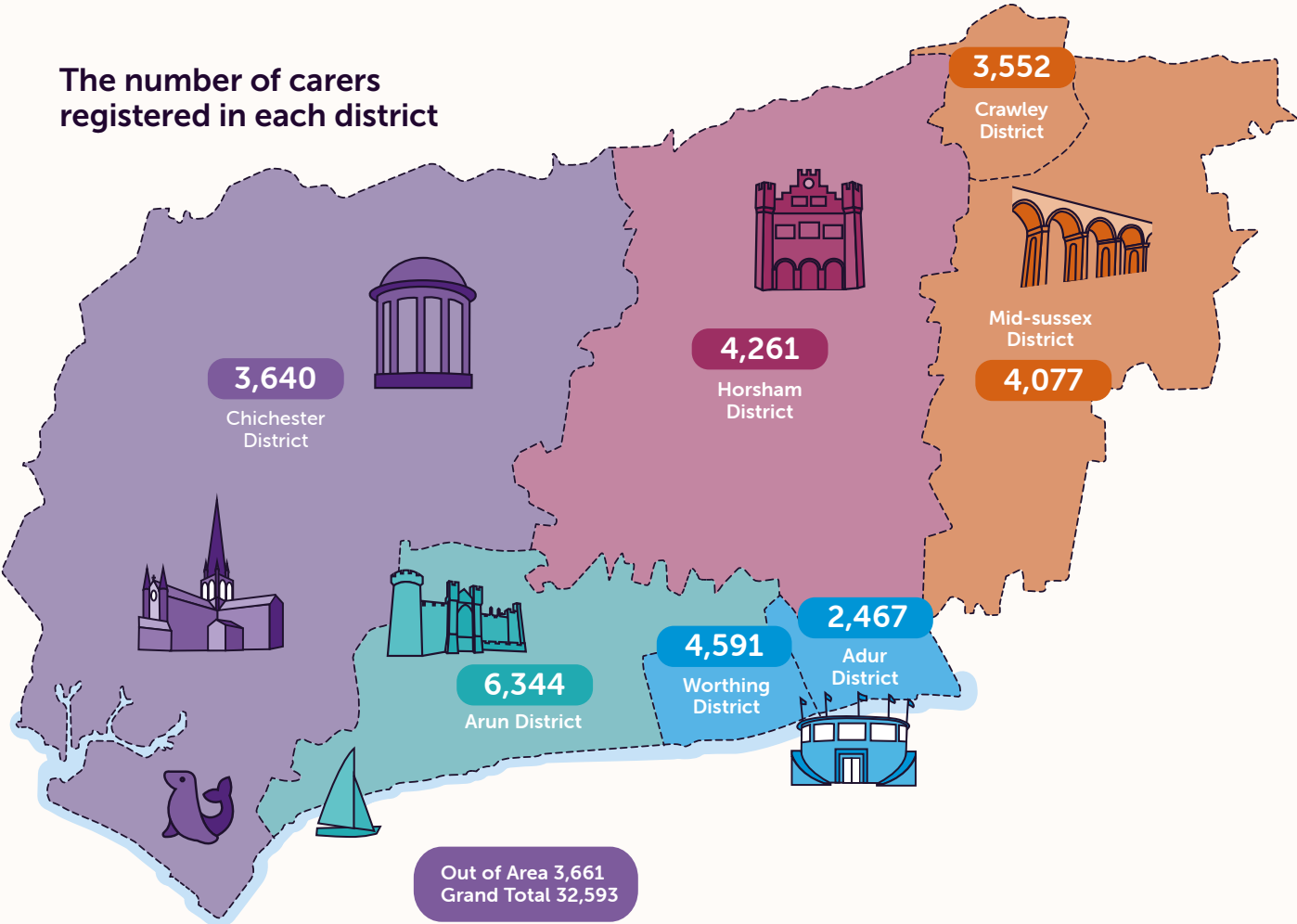
" Feel able to make a more informed decision about my father's care following speedy advice and support from your team. I feel less stressed and tearful and cannot thank you enough."





# Local help for carers

The number of carers registered in each district



Carers Support West Sussex is structured around the seven districts of the county, with teams working in a locality-based fashion. But what does 'locality based' mean? It is having a richer and deeper presence within each district of West Sussex, providing local solutions to family and friend carers. The aim of this community-centred approach is to stimulate local partnerships and to serve carers at a local level.

## Carers engaged with by district

Adur	676
Arun	1,746
Chichester	1,027
Crawley	933
Horsham	1,123
Mid Sussex	1,150
Worthing	1,306
Out of Area	448
Grand Total	8,409

# In the community

## Primary Care Project

**585 carers registered with Carers Support** as a result of a referral from a Primary Care Partner.

**54 GP surgeries given 1:1 support** to make improvements in carer identification and support.

**Of these ....**

**54** surgeries made Improvements.

**34** introduced a dedicated offer for carers.

**140** Primary Care Professionals completing the online Primary Care Awareness Training.

**45** individual GP surgeries attending Online Practice Community.

## Hospital setting

**1,220** carers were supported from hospital admissions through to discharge planning.

**357** carers in the 6 weeks following hospital discharge were supported in the Support at Home after Hospital Programme.

**82%** carers said I felt supported to manage my caring role during the hospital stay.

**82%** carers said I felt supported to be able to engage with NHS staff and discharge planning.



**Yvonne,**  
a carer who accessed support from the hospital team

“ Just being able to talk through my concerns with somebody and to be given good practical advice and be pointed in the right direction really helped. Everything can be very overwhelming, and it is hard to navigate and know what next steps to take when you are faced with a full-time caring role for a loved one (and in my case two loved ones) Carer’s Support have saved my sanity and are continuing to be supportive to me. I would have felt very alone without them. ”



# Raising awareness

## Working with partners

One aspect of supporting carers is linking them with organisations which will help their situation.

**2,528** referrals or signposting were made to other organisations and services.

**Working in partnership**, Carers Support actively worked with **242 organisations**, both locally and nationally.

**89%** carers said they were more able to seek support from other local services.

## National Carer Campaigns

Each year, two national campaigns, Carers Week and Carers Rights Day, aim to raise awareness of caring, highlight the challenges faced by unpaid carers, and recognise their invaluable contribution to families and communities.

**Carers Week** takes place annually in June. In 2024, 157 carers attended activities organised to celebrate the week.

**Carers Rights Day** focuses on raising awareness of carers' legal rights and the support available to them. During the week of Carers Rights Day 2024, 143 carers took part in groups or events designed to inform, empower, and connect.

## Carer groups

**497 groups/events/workshops** were hosted for carers.

**3,110 total attendances.**

**988 unique carers.**

**238 unique carers attended a specialist group** – e.g dementia, Mental Health.

**406 unique carers attended** one of our regular **monthly carer groups**.

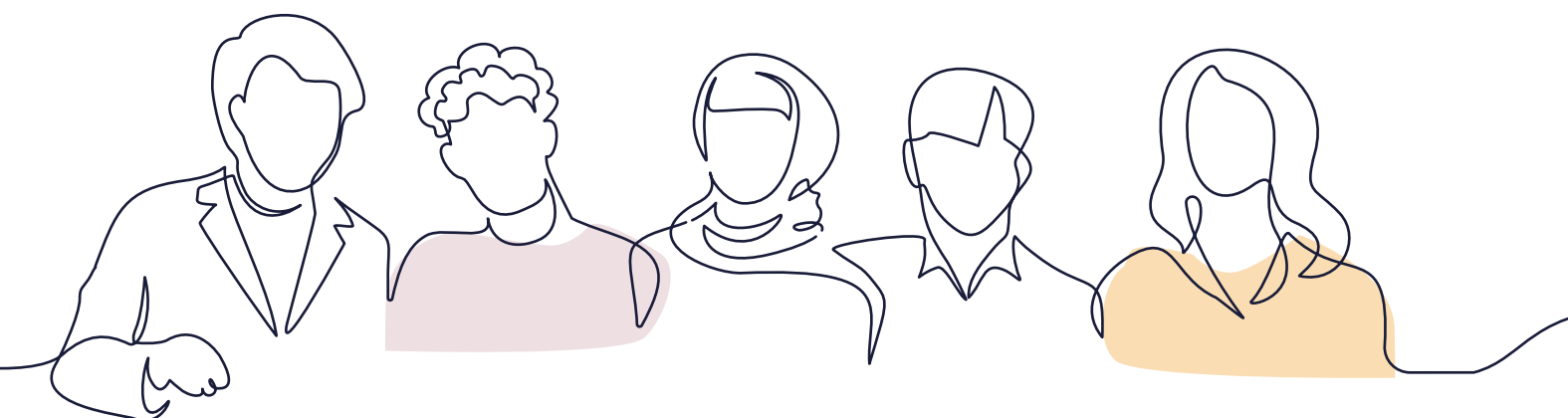
## Kirstin, carer who contacted Carers Support for information and advice

“It was amazing the difference that just having the conversation made. The wellbeing worker was very astute in terms of her questions and responses, and I absolutely felt understood. She was able to explain why I felt the way I did about certain things, such as not wanting to give up work.”

During the year we had **646 social media posts** and sent **73 information and newsletter emails** which included one monthly general e-newsletter sent to over **16,000 carers**. Additionally, we sent **seven monthly speciality emails** to carers of people with drug and alcohol misuse, autistic spectrum condition carers, learning disability, mental health issues, dementia, and young adult carers.

## Mike, carer who contacted Carers Support for information and advice

“Given me such a boost, having someone to off load to, who listened in a non-judgemental way and was able to offer assistance in many areas moving forward, also the prompt response of services she spoke of has been remarkable.”





# Carer Assessments

A Carer Assessment can be accessed for free, by any family or friend carer, caring for someone over the age of 18. The assessment is an opportunity to have a thorough discussion about a carer's needs.

## From overwhelmed to empowered: how a Carer Assessment changed Sue's life

Sue leads a hectic life, juggling multiple caring responsibilities alongside her work and volunteer commitments. Always generous with her time, she's constantly caring for others. However, Sue wanted to make changes so she could spend more quality time with her beloved husband, Ted. To make this possible, Sue decided to undergo a Carer Assessment. Reflecting on the experience, she shared: "It was incredible how much of a difference just having the conversation made... I feel less alone and now have a clearer understanding of the support available."

## Sue's decision to have an assessment

One of Sue's volunteering roles involved organising events for unpaid carers, which led to an unexpected conversation with one of the Carers Support Wellbeing Workers. This casual chat sparked a moment of reflection, where Sue realised just how much support she was providing on a daily basis; she concluded that the weight of her responsibilities had become unsustainable, and significant changes were needed.

## Sue felt understood

A convenient time was arranged for Sue's Carer Assessment (CA), and she spoke with a CA Assessor from the team. Reflecting on the experience, Sue shared: "That lady in the CA team was incredibly insightful with her questions and responses, and I really felt understood; she was able to explain why I felt the way I did about certain things, like not wanting to give up work, even though it would free up more time for me. I'd been feeling guilty about not wanting to retire, and she helped me understand why. Now, I've decided that I'll make my own decision about when to finish working, without letting others' opinions make me feel guilty. The CA Assessor truly understood all of my concerns and guilt; she also suggested Cruse, something I had considered but never acted on. Seeing it written down has motivated me to take action."



93% carers said the support provided as part of a Carer Assessment has helped me to feel more able to continue in my caring role.



## How the assessment helped Sue

After completing the Carer Assessment, Sue was pleasantly surprised by how much it helped; she reflected, "I couldn't have asked for a better service. It's made a huge difference in my life. I feel less alone and now know more about the support available to me. The idea of a weekend break is really exciting, and while it will be challenging, we're going to do it. It's something to look forward to, and I'm enjoying the process of planning it."

Following their discussion, the assessor took action to arrange the support Sue had agreed to, including:

- Requesting a one-off Direct Payment to help fund a weekend getaway for Sue and her husband, so they could enjoy some quality time together.

- Sending Sue the Carers' Emergency Contact Card (CECC) form to complete and return as part of her contingency plan.
- Providing contact details for Cruse bereavement counselling.
- Sharing additional resources on Carers Support, contingency and emergency planning, Autism Service Directory, and Aspens Services.

As Sue mentioned, the Carer Assessment made a remarkable difference in her life. She expressed her gratitude, saying, "Thank you for listening."

**1,192 Statutory Carer Assessments were conducted by the Carer Assessment team from April 2024-March 2025.**

# Making positive change

## Local opportunities to connect

It's important to us that our services are accessible and not everyone wants to speak on the phone or use digital resources.

Carers can come along to one of our regular Carer Hubs situated in community venues across the county. They provide a welcoming space where carers can talk in-person with our friendly wellbeing workers about any aspect of their caring role. Whether there are questions about available support, needing a well-deserved break, or concerns about finances, we're here to help.

Some of our carer hubs offer bookable appointments, while others welcome carers to drop in during opening hours for a friendly chat.

## Carer coaching

We have begun a programme of one-to-one and group coaching for carers.

**Eight five-week coaching groups** have been run.

**Five were face to face** and three online.

Attended by **47 carers**.

**80 carers have had a 1-1 assessment** for coaching with 52 carers starting 1-1 coaching this year.

Coaching is about carers having some designated time to explore ways to achieve a goal. This could be about putting in place some boundaries, looking after your own health better, learning a new skill or maybe revisiting one enjoyed in the past.

## Carer coaching feedback

- **80%** have an increased sense of self-worth.
- **65%** feel more confident.
- **75%** feel more hopeful about the future.



## Learning and wellbeing events

A programme of learning and wellbeing events were hosted to compliment the carer groups, such as legal workshops, first aid, cookery sessions, coaching, writing for wellbeing, carer walks and craft events.

**21 Learning workshops were delivered.**

**110 Wellbeing activities were provided.**

**89%** carers who attended a group/event/workshop said that it improved their health and wellbeing.

**89%** carers who attended a group/event/workshop said it helped them feel less isolated.

### Sarah, carer

“ I found it a real benefit as it made me think about ME and my life not just my role as a carer. Meeting others in the same situation removed the feeling of isolation and that was invaluable. Would highly recommend. So friendly and a clear mission to help me as an individual. ”

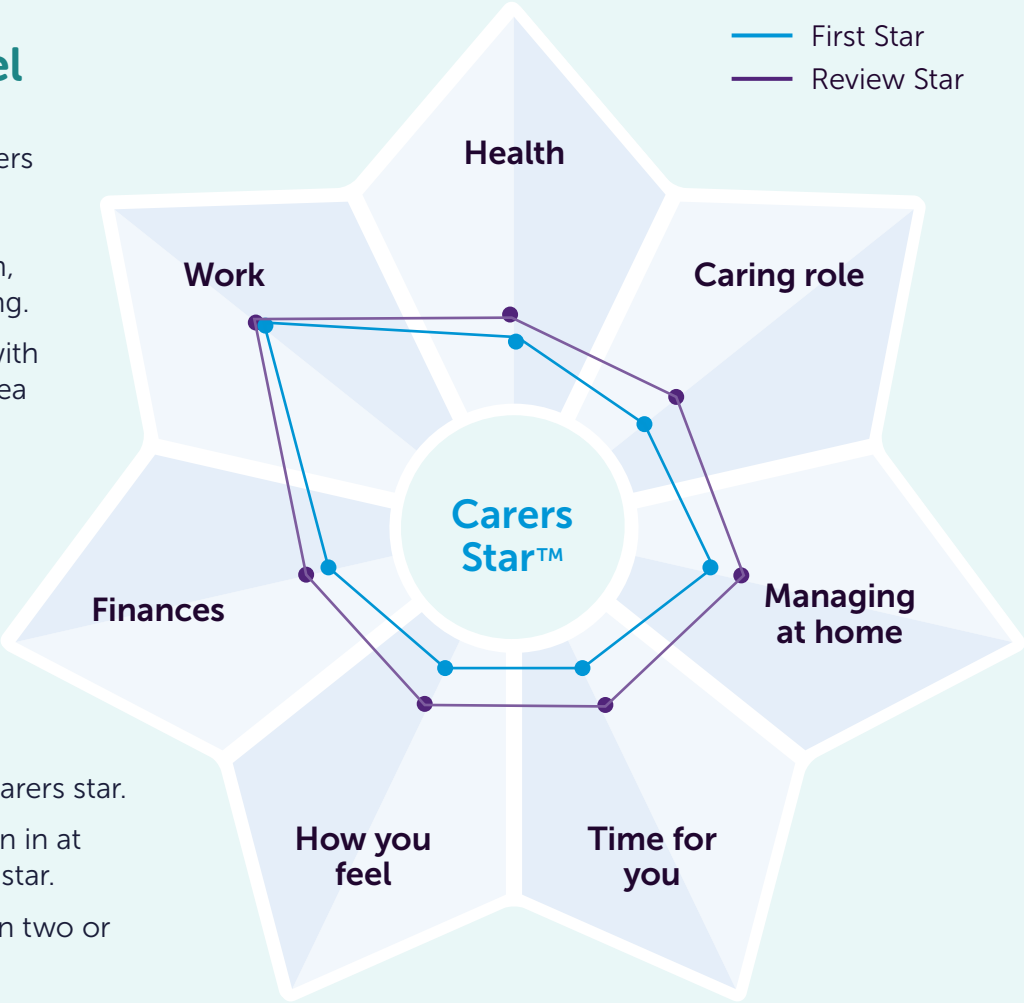


## Carers star model

The Carers Star™ is a framework which helps carers to explore how their caring role might be impacting on certain areas, such as health, work, or how they are feeling.

A personal plan is created with the carer to focus on the area they want to improve.

[www.outcomesstar.org.uk](http://www.outcomesstar.org.uk)



**1,579** completed a full carers star.

**80% saw an improvement** in in at least one area of the carers star.

**63% saw an improvement** in two or more areas.





# Grants, funding and equipment

**723 carers** received grants, funding or equipment.

## Financial support for carers

£648,481 was awarded to carers.

## Funding breakdown

- Equipment **£5,484**.
- Direct payments **£53,456**.
- Carer Health and Wellbeing grants **£124,539**.
- Household Support Fund **£465,000**.



## Benefits' advice service

**840 carers** were supported in **23,020 minutes** of advice and information and achieved additional annual income of £1,415,332 for carers.

**96% said I feel more informed** about the financial support I may be able to access.

**90% said they feel better** able to manage the cost of caring.

### Carol, carer

"I always feel 'listened to' and they always think of ways that may improve my situation. They arranged for a nurse to visit to assess my own health which is being impacted by the stress of my carer role. They provided financial support so that I can continue to attend an art class once a week to give me 'me time' away from my caring role which is so helpful."

## As a carer, what would you do with an extra £22,000 per year?

According to Carers UK State of Caring Survey 2024, 61% of carers are worried about living costs and their financial future, with over a third feeling uncertain about their ability to manage financially. 44% of working-age adults who are caring for 35 hours or more a week are in poverty. (Joseph Rowntree Foundation, UK Poverty 2022). Caring comes with additional costs which are often overlooked.

## How do carers not know what they are entitled to?

How? You may ask could a carer be missing out on potentially such an enormous amount of financial assistance. At times, the reason is simply a lack of understanding about the complex benefits' system – as it can be tricky to navigate. Sometimes, the reasons can come from mis-informed assumptions, such as the theory that because some carers have savings, they believe they would not be entitled to financial assistance.

This was the case with the couple who gained a yearly benefit entitlement of over £22,000 a year. Patrick and Samantha were living in South Africa for many years, when they decided

to return to live in the UK. In 2014, they bought a park home and used their savings to live on. Living in another country meant minimal payments into UK National Insurance over the years, resulting in low State Pensions of £60 a week in total.

Patrick developed a high level of disability, requiring day and night care, which meant Samantha needed more support. The couple assumed that due to having savings, they had no entitlement to benefit other than the pension. By the time they decided to speak with one of our Benefits' Advisors, their savings had dropped to below the level considered for means tested benefits.

One of our benefits advisors delved into the calculations and due to Patrick and Samantha's circumstances, it was found they were entitled to the higher rate Attendance Allowance, Carer's Allowance and Pension Credit. They were also permitted free NHS prescriptions, TV Licence and Winter Fuel Payment.

While this uplift in income was quite an exceptional case, there are countless examples where financial benefit has been found, and carers have seen an increase in their income.

Where carers are entitled to receive further benefits, the average additional income following advice was £5,200.





# Volunteering

We have had a total of 52 volunteers support our services in 2024/25 gifting an incredible 1,064 hours. Roles include support with carer groups, digital champions and Check in and Chat. Read how the Check in and Chat service helped Mandy so much, it was a large reason in her decision to volunteer with us.

## Paying it forward: Mandy's journey from carer to volunteer

As with most volunteers, there is often a heartfelt motivation to 'give something back' to the local community by generously giving their time. Here at Carers Support, we welcome volunteers from all areas of the community and all levels of expertise and skills. To make sure we are serving our carers well, the main skills we look for are the ability to listen and have empathy. As you will read in this story, empathy is a skill Mandy brought in abundance to the Volunteering Team.

## Mandy's caring role

Six years ago, Mandy became a full-time carer for her mum who was diagnosed with vascular dementia and Alzheimer's. The implications were life changing in every way.

"I would describe it as the worst and best experience I have had. It has turned my life upside down and inside out. I have suffered mentally, emotionally, physically and financially and have learnt so many invaluable lessons along the way with the support of Carers Support and other carers which has been the silver lining in what felt like a hopeless and helpless situation."

## Paying the kindness forward

Mandy started volunteering with Carers Support around two years ago after she recovered from severe burn out.

"I was supported hugely by Carers Support at a time when I felt overwhelmed, desperate, lost and alone."

One phone call to Carers Support led Mandy to a very different place. She was sign posted to relevant links who could help her. Mandy received weekly phone calls from a Carers Support Volunteer, from the Check in and Chat service. Mandy received financial advice from the Benefits' Service, which resulted in receiving Carer's Allowance and Attendance Allowance for her Mum which relieved some of the pressure and stress. Mandy was offered 1-1 carer coaching, which turned things around with her declining mental health. Mandy's experience was so profound that she made the decision she was going to "pay my experience forward by becoming a volunteer once I had recovered."

## What volunteering for Carers Support means to Mandy

Mandy is passionate about volunteering for Carers Support having been on the receiving end of all the support. Mandy said, "I get a great deal of comfort from being around, listening and talking to carers. I didn't imagine it would be a two-way exchange, but it definitely is. To make a positive difference to someone makes me feel I am contributing in a small way to people like me who are supporting and caring for our loved ones. Carers Support is an invaluable charity offering a wealth of support and information. I would and do recommend volunteering for Carers Support."

**Becky,**  
a carer who contacted Carers  
Support for information and advice

"It's one of the few places that I feel other people REALLY understand what I have to deal with day to day. They have provided help and support to me when I had none before. They have been able to suggest where I might access more help and I know that I can always ring their helpline and be listened to and understood."



**8,322 minutes** of telephone befriending supported 43 carers. Support provided by the Check in and Chat volunteers.











## How to keep in touch

Visit [www.carerssupport.org.uk](http://www.carerssupport.org.uk)  
Email [info@carerssupport.org.uk](mailto:info@carerssupport.org.uk)  
Call **0300 028 8888**

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Follow our social media channels to stay up to date with wellbeing information and groups:

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