

Introduction

Staffordshire County Council's vision is that Staffordshire is an ambitious, innovative and sustainable county, where everyone has the opportunity to prosper, be healthy and happy.

This joint Strategy is for adult carers of adults (of all ages), parent carers of children approaching adulthood and young carers aged under 18.

At some point in our lives, most of us will be a carer. For some people caring for one or more family members or friends could be a long term, full-time role whilst for others it may be a short term or occasional role.

Caring is vital and rewarding but for some people it will come at enormous personal cost. The Council and the NHS cannot solve all of the difficulties that carers experience, but we can try and make life a little easier by addressing some of the top priorities.

This Strategy has been co-produced by the Council and Integrated Care Board and other partners, adult and young carers and their families, the public, and health and social care professionals.

The Strategy recognises the extraordinary contribution made by carers and aims to ensure they can lead happier, healthier and more independent lives, in a society that values and supports them to maintain their caring role.

We would like to thank everyone involved in the production of the Strategy, and we look forward to working with you to achieve our outcomes.

Cllr Mike Wilcox

*Cabinet Member for Health and Care,
Staffordshire County Council*

Cllr Mark Sutton

Cabinet Member for Children and Young People

Dr Richard Harling MBE

*Director of Health and Care,
Staffordshire County Council*

Neelam Bhardwaja

*Director for Children and Families,
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Lynn Millar

*Portfolio Director - Improving Health
Population, Staffordshire and
Stoke-on-Trent Integrated Care Board*



Unpaid adult and young carers in Staffordshire

Caring responsibilities will affect most people. The caring relationship can be with anyone - a partner, parent, sibling, child, grandchild, neighbour, or friend and may change over time. Carers may support one person for a long period or several people at different times.

The 2021 Census reported that:



Nearly 10% (82,000) of Staffordshire residents aged over 5 provide some unpaid care each week.



66% of carers are aged over 50, and 58% of carers are women.



There are 1,610 young carers aged 5 - 17.

Caring for others is part of our responsibilities to one another as citizens and can be extremely rewarding. National estimates from Carers UK place the total value of the unpaid work of carers in Staffordshire in 2021 at £2.6bn per annum. However caring can have a significant personal and financial cost with carers more likely to experience health and financial inequalities:



Carers are twice as likely to suffer from poor health compared to the general population mainly due to lack of information and support, finance concerns, stress and social isolation¹.



The caring role limits carers' ability to undertake paid work; Carers UK¹ estimate that 1 in 6 carers stop working or reduce their hours due to their caring role⁴.



Carers also have more outgoings related to their caring role such as caring equipment or higher fuel costs.



1 in 3 young carers have a mental health issue¹.



Carers under retirement age providing over 20 hours care per week are more likely to be living in lower-income households, compared with non-carers or carers providing less hours.



38% of young carers we spoke to told us they struggle to balance their caring role with going to school.

1 Carers UK and Centre for Care: Valuing Carers 2021 England and Wales | 2 NHS Long Term Plan

3 Children's Society. Young Carer Facts. Facts About Young Carers | The Children's Society (childrensociety.org.uk)

4 Carers UK: Employers for Carers website: Employers for Carers | Carers UK

Carers Assessments

Assessment for all young carers and newly registered adult carers are undertaken by the First Contact Team in Staffordshire County Council. Assessments for ongoing adult carers are usually done by social care district teams.

The First Contact Team, who do the greatest proportion of single carer assessments, carry out a regular customer satisfaction survey; 76% of carers who were assessed by the Team told us that the assessment wholly met their needs, with comments that the assessment process was professional, informative and staff personable and empathetic.

In September 2023, 1514 adult carers and 411 young carers were registered with our carers

support service, **Staffordshire Together for Carers**. This equates to 2% of all adult carers and 25% of all young carers in Staffordshire.

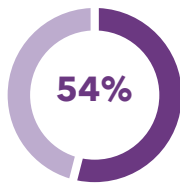
94% of Staffordshire's population describe themselves as from White British communities. Staffordshire Together for Carers data shows that 97% of new carers accessing the service in 2022/23 were from White British communities, which suggests an under representation of other population groups that requires further analysis.



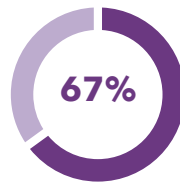
What adult and young carers told us

In total, 412 young and adult carers gave feedback to the strategy, including 306 adult carers who responded to our survey.

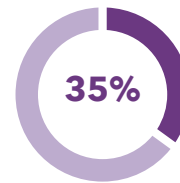
Of the carers that responded to each question:



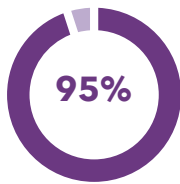
provide over 50 hours of care each week and many carers did not have a break from caring.



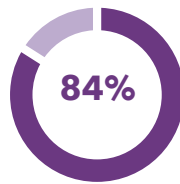
said they have not found it easy to find information, advice and guidance, and 59% said that information they had found had not been helpful.



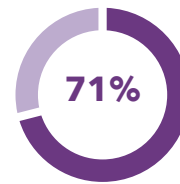
said they had not been involved or consulted as much as they wanted to be in discussions about the support or services provided to the person they care for.



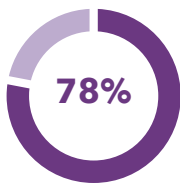
are not able to spend as much time as they want doing things they enjoy.



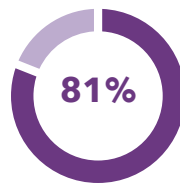
said they do not have as much social contact as they would like.



who felt respite was relevant to their situation said they would not know how to access it if they needed to.



said they do not have enough time to look after themselves.



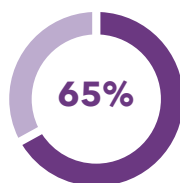
said they have not enough encouragement and support in their caring role.



Many were worried about what would happen when they can no longer care.



said caring had impacted negatively on their own health.



said caring has caused financial difficulties.



Many said that they were unaware of the carers assessment.

What adult and young carers told us

Adult carers said their top priorities to support them in their caring role are:

- › More timely support, including practical support, face to face and flexible peer support groups;
- › Reliable, accessible and timely information for example at the point of diagnosis or crisis;
- › More support from primary care, including signposting and timely information and advice;
- › More opportunities for a break from caring;
- › Simpler health and care systems including consistent workers, named contacts and being able to speak to someone;
- › To be recognised and valued, and for health and social care professionals to understand and have empathy for the carer's role;

Young carers and their families told us their top priorities are:

- › More support, including socialisation support, counselling and flexible peer support sessions;
- › Being identified as a young carer earlier and support given at an earlier stage;
- › More awareness of young carers in schools, communities, and health services;
- › More support in schools as a young carer and more practical support, such as exam help, free school meals, additional help;
- › More opportunities for a break from caring;
- › More funding and opportunities for young carers from local services including Staffordshire Together for Carers.



Priorities, outcomes and actions and how we will measure delivery

Based on our strategic objectives and engagement feedback, our priorities and outcomes for this Strategy will be:



PRIORITY A

Information, advice and guidance

OUTCOME

Adult and young carers have timely access to reliable, up to date information, advice and guidance and they know where to find this

Actions will include:

- › We will explore extending use of digital technology solutions to signpost carers to reliable and accessible sources of information and support, including practical support, whilst recognising that these do not work for everyone.
- › We will work with health and social care settings to improve the visibility and accessibility of information for carers.
- › Health and social care professionals will ensure that carers receive appropriate information at key points in the carer's journey such as at the cared for person's diagnosis and times of crisis and ensure that carers know where to get help and support.
- › Young carers will continue to be supported during times of crisis by Staffordshire Together for Carers and health and social care professionals.
- › Young carers will be supported to access information via Staffordshire Together for Carers and health and social care professionals.
- › We will ensure that carers can speak to someone if they need to.

- › We will continue to offer access to advice and support with financial management and welfare benefit entitlement.

For adult carers, we will measure delivery of this outcome through carer quality of life metrics from the biannual Survey of Adult Carers in England, and Staffordshire's own carers surveys to ensure that we hear from carers who are not in receipt of support, i.e.:

- › % of adult carers who have found it easy to access information and/or advice.
- › % of adult carers who are satisfied with the information and/or advice they have received.
- › Activity data from digital solutions such as websites and apps

For young carers we will measure this through the number of young carers assessments and numbers of young carers registered with Staffordshire Together for Carers.



B

PRIORITY B

Identifying Carers

OUTCOME

Adult and young carers, are identified, or can self-identify, so they will know where to go for support, keeping them well for longer and helping them avoid crisis

Actions will include:

- › We will provide our own local online carer awareness training and make it mandatory for social care professionals and promote and encourage uptake by health professionals.
- › We will explore the best use of digital solutions to identify adult carers early and help them to self-identify.
- › We will help primary care surgeries, often the starting point for a carer's journey, to recognise carers and know where to signpost them for support in their communities.
- › We will work in partnership with schools to help them identify children and young people who care for a family member

to ensure they are acknowledged and supported and referred to the appropriate professionals.

- › We will work to identify barriers and improve equality of access for carers to ensure that underrepresented groups are supported.

We will measure delivery of this outcome through:

- › % of adult and young carer population on the carer register for Staffordshire
- › Number of identified carer champions in primary care surgeries and schools
- › Ethnicity data from the carers support provider



C

PRIORITY C

Physical and mental wellbeing

OUTCOME

Adult and young carers can access the support they need to maintain good physical and mental wellbeing

Actions will include:

- › We will help primary care surgeries to identify carers and offer or signpost them to appropriate support, including Carers Passports and vaccinations.
- › To prevent loneliness and isolation we will continue to develop a range of opportunities for carers to meet with other people, including other carers.
- › We will train school staff and other relevant agencies to be alert to issues affecting the wellbeing of young carers and to respond appropriately.
- › We will continue to offer counselling to carers based on their needs through Staffordshire Together for Carers.
- › We will provide employers with information on carers legislation, so that employers know how to take effective action to enable carers to balance their caring and employment responsibilities.

We will measure delivery of this outcome through:

- › % of adult carers who say in the Survey of Adult Carers in England and Staffordshire's own survey:
 - I'm able to spend my time as I want, doing things I value or enjoy.
 - I have as much control over my daily life as I want.
 - I look after myself.
 - I have no worries about my personal safety.
 - I have as much social contact as I want with the people I like.
 - I feel I have encouragement and support.
- › Young carer feedback.



D

PRIORITY D

A life outside of caring

OUTCOME

Adult and young carers have the opportunity to have a life outside of caring and maintain social relationships with family, friends and others

Actions will include

- › We will use digital means to increase awareness of online directories, such as **Staffordshire Connects**, and face-to-face information sources including our **community help points**, so carers can connect with social groups and events in their community.
- › We will co-produce with carers a range of affordable and personalised opportunities to enable carers with the greatest need to have a break from caring.
- › We will work with partners including the voluntary sector to ensure carers have access to suitable peer support opportunities. This will include carers groups where carers can go with the cared for person.
- › We will help underrepresented carers, such as those in rural areas, to be better socially connected and experience fewer feelings of isolation.
- › We will ensure that young carers have educational opportunities and can experience activities and flexible peer support sessions outside school hours, that support them to develop and sustain friendships with their peers and gives them time away from their caring responsibilities.
- › We will support young carers to access education, work and training, ensuring that the education and life chances of young carers are not compromised by their caring role.
- › We will ensure that Staffordshire Connects has up to date information on how to arrange and access respite care.

We will measure delivery of this outcome through:

- › Number of young carers' statutory assessments and number of young carers made known as a carer to their school.
- › Number of young carers supported to access or maintain employment.
- › Number of adult carers in receipt of short break opportunities.
- › Number of young carers in receipt of short break opportunities and peer group support
- › % of carers supported by Adult Social Care receiving support in full or in part via one-off direct payments.



E

PRIORITY E

Assessment and support

OUTCOME

Young and adult carers have a consistent offer to preventative, personalised and strength-based assessment and support

Actions will include:

- › We will ensure a consistent approach to carers assessments is adopted by Adult Social Care and that the whole workforce is equipped and has the knowledge to support carers.
 - › We will ensure the carer is able to make an informed decision about how their assessment is undertaken and whether this is face to face.
 - › We will continue to develop our carer offer to be focussed on prevention, reducing and delaying needs arising and avoiding crisis.
 - › Where an assessment identifies eligible needs, we will look to meet these with support from the carer's own network or local community including preventive, universal services.
 - › We will improve understanding with carers and professionals of our current carers self-directed support offer, called carers direct payments, and make sure they are accessible to everyone who is eligible.
- › We will work holistically with young carers through the assessment process looking at the wider impact of their caring role on their education, health and wellbeing and future aspirations and ensure they have access to ongoing, appropriate support such as peer support groups, one to one support or counselling.
 - › Improve our assessment pathways for parent carers whose child is preparing for adulthood and for young carers approaching adulthood.

We will measure delivery of this outcome through:

- › Reviewing audits of our strength-based practice carer assessments.
- › Carer feedback on their experience of assessment by First Contact Team and timeliness of assessments.
- › Number of young carers accessing support from Staffordshire Together for Carers.
- › Uptake of one-off direct payments.



F

PRIORITY F

Short and longer-term planning

OUTCOME

Adult and young carers have the opportunity to develop effective contingency and long-term plans for when they cannot provide care and we will respond promptly should crisis occur

Actions will include:

- › Help to develop contingency plans and plan for the future will be offered to all newly registered carers and following an assessment.
 - › We will work with young carers to develop a "What to do in an Emergency" plan.
 - › We will ensure carers know how to get help in the event of a crisis.
 - › We will ensure that eligible carers can access a break from caring.
- › We will ensure that professionals working with families take a whole family approach, can recognise a potential crisis or where a longer-term alternative plan for care may be required and help to put arrangements in place.

We will measure delivery of this outcome through:

- › Number of contingency and longer-term plans carried out by our carers support service.
- › Number of referrals due to carer breakdown.



G

PRIORITY G

Recognition and value

OUTCOME

Carers feel valued and respected as an expert partner in care

Actions will include:

- › We will increase the numbers of carers champions in primary care and schools.
- › We will support social care staff to recognise, positively engage and respect carers.
- › We will involve adult carers in assessments, care planning, decision making and reviews, and universally recognise and support them as 'Expert Partners in Care'.
- › We will run regular communications to identify, support and celebrate carers using opportunities including Carers Week, Carers Rights Day and the Dignity in Care Awards.
- › We will work with businesses to help build carer friendly communities and recognise and support carers.

- › We will promote the use of discount cards and schemes for carers.

We will measure delivery of this outcome through:

- › % of carers who have been involved or consulted as much as they want to be about support or services provided to the person they care for.
- › % of carers who have had encouragement and support in their caring role.
- › Nominations of unpaid carers for the Dignity in Care Awards.
- › Number of staff who have undertaken carers awareness training.



How we will monitor delivery

We will work with carers and other partners to co-produce a delivery plan that summarises the activities that will be undertaken during the lifetime of the strategy.



The expectation is that this will be a **living document** and **activities may change** over the lifetime of the strategy in response to **evolving need**.



The **Carers Partnership Board** is responsible for overseeing the implementation of the **All-Age Carers Strategy** and monitoring completion of the actions within the delivery plan.

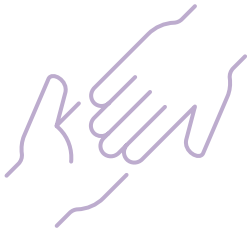


This Board will report on progress to the **Disability and Neurodiversity Partnership Board** and, annually, to the **Health and Wellbeing Board**.



Our approach

To achieve these outcomes, we will:



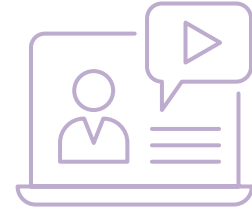
Help people to help themselves

by offering good and timely information about how to maintain their physical and mental wellbeing and where to go for support.



Encourage and enable our workforce

to be able to identify carers and understand the role of the carer, and how to access support if they are a carer themselves.



Embrace technologies

to help identify carers earlier, link them to information and support, and use technology to support the caring role.



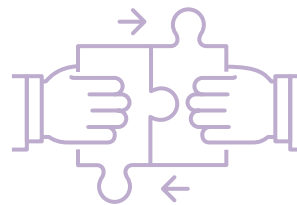
Co-produce support and services

working with individuals and communities.



Develop a carer friendly Staffordshire

by increasing awareness of carers and their needs within the wider community and employers.



Work with partners to build and use community capacity

to support carers.



Promote independence

by building on carers' own assets and networks and linking carers to their local community resources.

