

YOU SAID

WE DID

Carers Plan on a Page

Over the past two years, and with the invaluable input of local carers, we developed a two year Carers Plan on a Page to guide our shared priorities and actions. This plan is now due for renewal, and before we look ahead, we wanted to take the opportunity to reflect on progress to date. This update highlights the key achievements and positive changes delivered through the plan, showing how carers' feedback and involvement has helped improve and shape our services.



**Caring for
carers**

Durham
County Council



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“ What carers said... ”

What we have done...

Focus on early identification & carer recognition.

- ✓ By the end of September 2025, we had 28,555 carers registered on our database. Since this plan was first published, a further 6,711 carers have been identified and referred to Durham County Carers Support.
- ✓ Mobilise, our online and digital support partner, has also helped us reach more people by running social media campaigns that reached 5,000 carers in County Durham.
- ✓ In September 2023, Durham County Carers Support appointed a Partnership & Engagement Officer to work with organisations across the county. Their role is to raise awareness of hidden carers and make sure people know about the support available.
- ✓ Alzheimer's Society provided Dementia Advice and Support services specific to dementia carers.
- ✓ A Young Carers Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) has also been created and signed by Adult and Health Services, Children and Young People's Services, the Integrated Care Board and Education. This agreement commits all partners to identifying and supporting young carers and young adult carers (aged 16-24) and reinforces the principle that there should be 'No Wrong Door' when accessing support.

Work with GPs, Hospitals, Social Workers, Therapists, Social Prescribers, Education and the Voluntary & Community sector.



Durham County Carers Support has delivered more than 90 Carer Awareness sessions to a wide range of services and organisations. These sessions help staff recognise when they may be carers themselves and support them to identify carers they come across in their day to day roles. Some of the organisations we've worked with include:

- ✓ Multiple teams in Durham County Council
- ✓ NHS teams and GPs and Social Prescriber Link Workers
- ✓ Health Services including various NHS Teams, Mental Health Services, Darlington Memorial Hospital and University Hospital of North Durham.
- ✓ All Job Centres in Co Durham
- ✓ Alzheimer's Society
- ✓ Family Action
- ✓ Buddy Cups
- ✓ Daisy Chain
- ✓ Great Aycliffe Cancer Support
- ✓ YMCA
- ✓ Teesdale Hub and various Community Centres
- ✓ Livin, the Fire Service, His Majesty's Prison Service's, Durham University, and the Health and Wellbeing Carers Roadshow.

Durham County Carers Support has recently appointed a Hospital Discharge Partnership Coordinator. Their role is to work closely with the NHS, Social Care and other partners to make sure carers in County Durham are identified early and can get the support they need during the hospital discharge process.

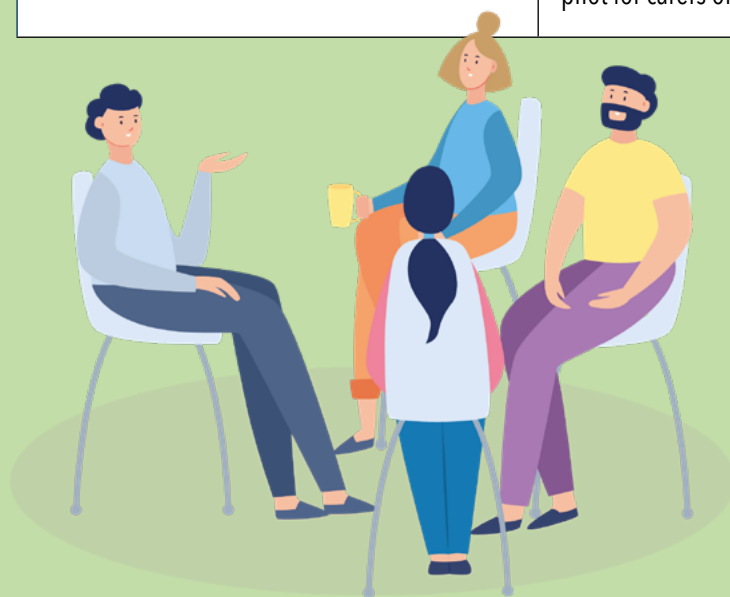
DCC and Durham County Carers Support have worked with NHS Digital leads to create a digital referral form on primary care systems to make it easier for GPs to refer carers for support.



 What carers said... 	What we have done...
<p>Develop communications, marketing and carer focused campaigns.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Some carers in County Durham have helped us create seven short videos, sharing their own caring stories. These videos are being used in our campaigns to help other people recognise themselves as adult and parent carers and to feel confident in reaching out for support. ✓ Mobilise has also run targeted social media campaigns across the North East, with messages designed for different groups of carers including parent carers, male carers, those supporting older relatives, and people caring for someone with a learning disability or long term condition. ✓ Durham County Carers Support have ran social campaigns aimed at reaching male carers, parent carers and highlighting the support available to carers in County Durham. ✓ Durham County Council has produced 'Do You Care?' postcards for frontline health and social care staff to hand out when they meet carers. These postcards explain the support available through Durham County Carers Support and Family Action, helping carers get connected more easily. ✓ DCC has developed a range of dementia webpages that will help people living with dementia and their carers to access information and support.
<p>Talk to carers to understand barriers in identifying as a carer and seeking support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Carers told us they wanted to be able to get support online and outside normal working hours. In response, we've developed and launched a new Virtual Carers Centre. Through the Durham County Carers Support website, carers can now access caring guides, book appointments with a support worker, arrange counselling sessions and apply for a carer break – all at a time that suits them.
<p>Provide an opportunity for a carers assessment.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Since the Plan on a Page was introduced almost 4,000 carer assessments have been completed by Durham County Carers Support.
<p>Provide information, advice and guidance on help available and consider individual communication needs to overcome barriers to carers accessing support.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We have updated and redesigned the Durham Carers Infopoint webpages to make information easier to find and use. www.durhamcarers.info ✓ New carer support pages have also been added to the Durham County Council website, giving carers more ways to access help and guidance. ✓ To make our online information more accessible, we have added Recite Me software to the Durham County Carers Support website. This helps make the site more inclusive and user friendly for people with disabilities, those who are visually impaired, or anyone who prefers information in another language. ✓ Durham County Carers Support provides information in a range of formats that works best for individuals including face to face, telephone, written and digital options.
<p>Identify more young adult carers aged 16-24 and deliver bespoke support through key times of transition.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ We secured funding for Family Action to run a dedicated support service for young adult carers over the past two years. Through this, young adult carers have been helped into employment, further education, training and other support opportunities. ✓ A young adult carer assessment, toolkit and passport has also been created to make it easier for young adult carers to get the right help when they need it. ✓ We've built strong links with local colleges, universities and employment support services, including Durham Enable and Durham Works, to raise awareness of young carers and make sure support is available. ✓ Young adult carers can also access help and guidance through Durham County Carers Support.



“ What carers asked for... ”	What we have done...
<p>Provide opportunities in the community where carers can come together and benefit from peer support.</p>	<p>Durham County Carers Support has been running regular in-person and online groups across the county, offering both professional support and the chance for carers to connect with each other.</p> <p>Alzheimer’s Society also provide dementia friendly activities and groups, including Singing for the Brain sessions and Dementia Friendly Cafés in different locations.</p> <p>As part of our ‘Keeping in Touch’ project, Durham County Carers Support volunteers have made 783 calls to carers who have not been in contact with their service for some time. Many of these calls have been made to older carers or those who may be feeling isolated, helping them stay connected and supported.</p>
<p>Provide a carer discount card scheme.</p>	<p>Since the Carers Plan on a Page was introduced, 8,740 carer discount cards have been issued to carers in County Durham with 180 businesses supporting the scheme.</p>
<p>Provide opportunities for carers to participate in training and learning.</p>	<p>Alongside the ‘be well and healthy’ training already mentioned, we have also offered carers sessions on the following training courses:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Power of Attorney, Wills and Trusts ✓ First Aid ✓ Training and workshops on loan sharks and scam awareness. <p>Carer Breaks funding has also been used to support carers with the cost of training courses and even driving lessons.</p> <p>Durham County Carers Support and Family Action have built strong links with local colleges, universities and employment support services, including Job Centres, Durham Enable and Durham Works, to help carers access training, further education and employment opportunities.</p> <p>Alzheimer’s Society ran a Carer Information and Support Programme (CriSP) pilot for carers of people living with dementia.</p>





“ What carers asked for... ”

Support carers in the workplace. Encourage greater awareness with local businesses and help them achieve Carer Friendly Employer status.

Provide 'Dementia Friends' sessions to employers to increase awareness and understand how their organisation can be dementia inclusive and encourage dementia friendly policies and support in the workplace.



What we have done...

- ✓ Durham County Carers Support has been chosen to lead a research project exploring what helps carers get into work or stay in employment, as well as the challenges they face in the workplace.
- ✓ Durham County Carers Support has also delivered 81 carer awareness sessions with a wide range of organisations to help them better understand and support carers in both the workplace and education.
- ✓ Across County Durham, 22 organisations have either achieved or are working towards becoming recognised as 'Carer Friendly Employers'.
- ✓ In addition, there are currently 35,832 Dementia Friends in County Durham and organisations that have Dementia Friends staff include Durham County Council, Job Centres, Joining the Dots, some GP surgeries, Healthwatch, Bishop Auckland Hospital Clinical Specialist Services, Cornforth Partnership, Time Together Teesdale Befriending Volunteers, Pioneering Care Partnership, Home Group, New College Durham and Sisters of Support. This shows their commitment to supporting people and their carers affected by dementia.
- ✓ Durham County Council continues to fund access to the Carers UK 'Employers for Carers' resources, which provide practical help and advice for both carers and employers. These resources are free to any carer, business or organisation in County Durham to use.
- ✓ The Council has also been recognised for its commitment to supporting carers by achieving both the Carer Friendly Employer status and the Dementia Friendly Employer award.
- ✓ Durham County Council continues to run a Staff Network for Carers, offering peer support to employees who also have caring responsibilities. The group meets every month and has benefitted from specialist input from Durham County Carers Support, as well as talks from guest speakers. The Council also promotes a range of carer friendly policies such as flexible working and carers or dependent leave, to help staff balance work and caring.
- ✓ We have also delivered several 'Carer Aware' sessions for DCC Managers, focusing on how to recognise carers in the workplace and how the Council can better support them.

Provide digital support, equipment and training to allow carers to access online services and stay connected.

- ✓ In December 2024, Durham County Council made funding available so carers could access helpful technology to support safety and peace of mind at home. Carers have been able to use a range of devices like Alexa's for medication or routine reminders, sensor lights to reduce the risk of falls and security equipment that lets carers to check in from a distance. Because the scheme has been so successful, it has now been funded for another 12 months. So far, 91% of carers have told us that this technology has made a real difference in helping them feel safer, stay connected with friends and family, reduce isolation, and manage appointments more easily. Due to the success of this project, further funding has been made available to Alzheimer's Society to provide technology to people providing care to someone with dementia.
- ✓ Carers can also learn essential digital skills with Barclays Digital Wings free digital learning resources that can help carers at home or in the workplace.



“ What carers asked for... ”

What we have done...

Provide opportunities for carers to share feedback on our services. Make suggestions on how we can improve.

Include and listen to carers during the care planning process and discussions about the person you care for.

Surveys

In February 2024, Durham County Carers Support issued a satisfaction survey, and more than 700 carers took part. We then held 3 'afternoon tea' sessions, where over 120 carers joined us to tell us more about the results and share their experiences in more detail.

Carers also gave their ideas about what they wanted to see in the new 24/7 Virtual Carers Centre, which is now live.

The next survey will be released in February 2026 and will include new questions about carer health and wellbeing.

Adult Social Care Strategy

Durham County Council asked people to share their views on the Adult Social Care Strategy through a survey. Many carers took part and shared their experiences, and their feedback will help shape future work. Following the survey, Adult Social Care staff met with carers to co produce guidance that will support social workers when carrying out carers' assessments.

Hospital Discharge

Carers told us that the hospital discharge process can be confusing and that they don't always feel included. Over the past 2 years, we have supported more than 400 carers with personalised, hands-on help throughout the whole discharge journey – before, during and after the person they care for leaves hospital. Our team makes sure the carer's voice is heard and taken into account in any care planning, whilst also encouraging hospital staff to use a 'Think Carer' approach.

Training for Carers

Carers were asked what training would be most helpful for them, and the training programme offer has been planned using their feedback.

Events

At Carers Rights Day and Carers Week events, carers shared their views and feedback. This will help inform a review of carer services planned for summer 2027.

Durham Carers Infopoint

We have added a 'Talk to Us' section on the website to allow carers to send us feedback on their experiences and thoughts on our carer support services.

Provide and raise awareness of advocacy services for you as a carer.

Information on advocacy services for carers has been added to the Durham Carers Infopoint and Durham County Carers Support webpages.

FUTURE FOCUS

We know how important it is for carers to have a clear say in shaping future priorities.

To make sure our work continues to reflect what matters most, we will be asking carers whether they feel the current priorities should remain as they are or whether they would like to see any changes in focus.

We also plan to look more closely at several key areas, including strengthening our focus on carer health and wellbeing, improving how we engage with carers so their voices are consistently heard and acted on, and finding better ways to reach specific groups of carers identified in the Plan on a Page.

This will help us ensure that our next steps stay aligned with carers' experiences, expectations, and evolving needs.

A revised plan will be published once we have completed this engagement.