

## **2023-24 Impact Report**

### **What we have achieved**

2,090 adult carers accessed vital support  
697 young carers under 18 years old received our support  
£42,678 in financial aid was accessed with our help  
1,285 queries were responded to via our support line  
2,274 attendances at our adult and young carer activities

### **What we want to achieve**

The Carers' Centre supports carers at every stage of their journey, but to remain sustainable, accessible and relevant for future generations, we must work together. This means embracing new digital opportunities, reaching a greater number of communities, and creating diverse streams of income.

According to the 2021 census, over 19,600 people or 10% of our Bath and North East Somerset community — identified themselves as carers. Many more are providing support to family members, friends, or neighbours, often viewing it as simply "helping out." In fact, three in five of us will care for someone at some point in our lives, and it's likely we all know someone who is caring right now. Caring is truly everyone's responsibility.

Carers, both present and future, deserve to be recognised, valued, and supported by decision-makers, professionals, and those around them. We can't achieve this without the commitment of our dedicated supporters and volunteers.

### **Keeping carers well**

144 wellbeing activities offered  
893 attendances at wellbeing activities  
16,000 care time magazines circulated in our carer community  
93.5% of carers maintained or improved their own wellbeing  
87% of carers felt less lonely or isolated

Over 80% of carers said managing the impact of caring on their physical and mental wellbeing as their biggest challenge <sup>(1)</sup>.

Carers say being able to take a break from their caring duties is crucial. *"The café sessions run at The Carers' Centre are really enjoyable and it's through them we've met others in a similar position and become friends. The social interaction, and the short break it gives me, helps me to maintain my carer role. I come back feeling motivated."*

Along with the carer cafés, we offer a full program of free wellbeing activities, including creative writing, boccia, belly dancing, stained glass work, knitting and spa sessions. These activities provide a space where carers can, learn, relax and recharge with others who understand the challenge of their daily lives.

Because caring can be unpredictable, making it hard to make plans, we also provided a range of online wellbeing activities that can be accessed at any time. These include sleep tips with our wellbeing facilitator, breathing exercises for relaxation and advice on staying well in the winter

More than 500 carers have signed up for their personal online account where they can view and book activities. Soon they will be able to view and update their My Caring Role emergency plan information.

## Keeping carers in control

### What we have achieved

1,285 calls to our Support Line

474 referrals to partner organisations

71% of carers who used our Support Line reported feeling able to manage / cope better

255 My Caring Role emergency plans completed

Our Support Team has continued to provide compassionate support to carers, helping them navigate complex emotions and unfamiliar care systems. They also offered financial advice, and assistance with sourcing additional funding for a range of equipment, household bills and respite breaks. Over 600 referrals were made for things like specialist support for housing (5%), social care options (44%), debt advice (17%), carer health and advocacy support.

*"More and more of the support and care for elderly relatives is falling onto the families, and asking for support can be a scary thing. Many people are very confused about what they can do or where they can turn. The Carers' Centre has been a god send. I need this service to enable us to be able to care for my in-laws in their own home. Without this service would be looking for residential care for at least one of my in-laws, separating them after 60 years together."*

The Support Team has worked alongside carers to develop 255 individual "My Caring Role" plans which include support and emergency planning in case they are unable to continue caring. This helps ensure carers have a fulfilling and manageable life alongside their caring role.

Rising energy prices have placed significant strain on already tight household budgets, leaving many carers in fuel poverty and rising debt. Of the 202 grants we helped carers obtain, nearly 75% were for basic needs such as food, utility bills or essential household appliances.

*"The opportunity to apply for grants has been lifesaving and literally enabled us to carry on".*

Some carers in Bath and North East Somerset have reported that they have had to make difficult choices between healthy eating and keeping warm, which is taking a toll on their mental health.

## Keeping carers connected

### What we have achieved

183 carer café sessions

734 attendances at our free carer cafés and peer support groups

95% of carers who attended a café felt confident to talk about their caring role

93.5% of carers felt connected to their peers after attending carer cafés

99.5% of carers felt less lonely or isolated

Carer cafés provide a warm, welcoming, and safe space for carers to connect with old friends or meet new ones. They are often filled with laughter and sometimes tears. Cafés offer an environment where carers can truly be themselves, no matter how they are feeling, without needing to explain. The shared understanding of their caring roles fosters insight and peer support that comes from lived experience, making these connections unique and invaluable.

In response to feedback from carers, some of our in-person cafés have evolved into smaller peer support groups, providing different environments to suit various needs across Bath and North East Somerset. Additionally, we have developed a number of Bereavement Help Points in partnership with Dorothy House and We Hear You (WHY), to support carers as they navigate the end of their caring role and work towards building a new chapter in their lives.

Our dementia cafés remain especially popular, with demand continuing to rise throughout the year. These cafés offer a dedicated space where carers can bring along the person they care for, who will participate in their own supported activities. Meanwhile, the carers can relax, enjoy a cup of tea, and chat with others in a supportive environment.

*"Caring for a loved one with dementia is a very lonely frightening experience. There is little or no governmental support. Unlike other terminal illnesses such as cancer there is no recognition or support for either the person with the disease or the carer. One of the few places where I can get support is The Carers' Centre."*

Alongside this, we host mental health peer support groups in collaboration with KS2 and Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership (AWP).

## Being here for young carers

### What we have achieved

697 young carers accessed support

134 different young carer activities were run

352 young carers attended wellbeing support groups

94% of young carers reported feeling less lonely or isolated after attending an activity

83% of young carers who attended an activity made a connection with another young carer

*"This provides VITAL support for our children who would struggle without The Carers' Centre. They find their role extremely tiring and find it hard to make friends at school because of this. The young carers activities and wellbeing sessions provide support that the children cannot access anywhere else. It is a lifeline for them. Without it, they would be severely isolated and could develop significant mental health problems themselves."*

Young carers often go unnoticed until their caring role starts to significantly affect their education. Spring 2023 was the first time the school census required schools to report the number of young carers among their students. Bath and North East Somerset schools identified 136<sub>1</sub> young carers, compared to 859 known to The Carers' Centre.

This year we focussed on giving young carers a voice and raising awareness in schools, in addition to providing three family events, 51 activities and 80 wellbeing support groups

Young carers co-produced and delivered our annual school's workshop for teaching and support staff. Our Young Carers Council met with local and national decision makers including Wera Hobhouse MP and Leader of the Liberal Democrat Party Ed Davies to talk about their caring role - identifying carer recognition and support in school settings as important. They also contributed towards the All-Party Parliamentary Group (APPG) inquiry into the profound impact of inadequate support on the education, well-being, and future prospects of young carers.

Supporting schools to recognise and support young carers remains a priority in the year ahead.

1. <http://www.carers.org/schoolcensus>

## Creating a carer friendly community

### What we have achieved

665 e-news delivered to professionals supporting carers

37,050 combined social media reach

25 Carers' Voice and Young Carers Council meetings

26 external consultations where carers could have their say

Caring is a journey that can develop gradually or overnight, often changing in pace and form, whether caring for someone at home, independently, or in residential care. The caring role can be rewarding, challenging, confusing and complex. It also creates issues around balancing relationships, cultural expectations, employment, finances, and personal wellbeing.

*"My wife was initially diagnosed with Parkinson's, it has recently been revised recently to dementia. It's a very serious situation, and she is slowly getting worse. I'm doing everything in the house. Washing, cleaning, helping her get dressed and undressed etc. No one prepares you for this period of your life. It's like a wave sweeping over you, and you can't see and breathe."*

Carers tend to view support through the needs of the person they care for, but it's vital that professionals and the community recognise carers as individuals with their own needs and rights under the Care Act 2014.

Our digital services continue to grow, offering 24/7 access to information, with a self-referral service for carers and professionals. We also provide carer awareness training, co-developed with adult and young carers, for health professionals, teaching staff and social work students delivered in person and digitally.

Our collaboration with the Riviam referral system for post-hospital care transitions continues to expand to include community partner referrals, ensuring carers get support when they need it most.

We continue to work closely with partners in the wider health care system including [Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board \(BSW ICB\)](#), [Community Wellbeing Hub \(CWH\)](#) and the NHS.

Building a carer-friendly, community in Bath and North East Somerset remains a top priority.