



Carers Support Centre

Impact Report 2021-22

*If you care,
we care.*

A Network Partner of
**CARERS
TRUST**

Carers Support Centre
Bristol & South Gloucestershire



From our Chief Executive, Tim Poole

At Carers Support Centre we have more than 12,000 local carers registered with us. We deliver our services with 40 (full time equivalent) members of staff supported by 106 volunteers who helped us during the year.

We provide support, services, information and advice to unpaid carers living in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.



We promote the rights and improve the quality of life of children and adult family carers. We do this by supplying high quality, impactful services which provide value for money.

In our assessments and support work, carers have talked to us about their main needs and areas of concern:

- feelings of loneliness and isolation
- needing to give up work or reduce their working hours to care
- being unable to attend or afford social activities and hobbies
- financial pressures and difficulties
- concerns about their own health
- the changing nature of the relationship with the person they care for

During the year, our work with carers to relieve these problems was hampered by the restrictions caused by the Covid pandemic. Having to provide our services remotely made life more difficult for all.

Many changes to systems and services necessitated by the response to the pandemic became permanent fixtures. This often made it more difficult for carers to access the services they needed. This was particularly the case for digitally disadvantaged carers.

Concerns reported by carers following the end of lockdown restrictions included:

- reduction or disappearance of some helpful services
- worries about return-to-work policies for carers looking after vulnerable people
- longer waiting lists for some services
- financial concerns made worse by the cost-of-living crisis
- lack of availability of short breaks and respite from caring
- lack of staff to fulfil agreed plans of action
- issues with hospital discharge for the cared for
- scarcity of community transport

There is an increased risk that if these factors continue, they can combine to put the caring situation under untenable strain or allow unsafe care practices to go unnoticed.

At Carers Support Centre our services for carers aim to address head-on both the ongoing issues and those particular to the pandemic. In this report, we look at those services, the number and nature of beneficiaries and, most importantly, the effect that they have on the quality of carers' lives.

Tim Poole

Our services

Many carers do not consider themselves to be a carer – they are just looking after someone who needs help and getting on with what needs to be done. In order to care safely and in good health, carers of all ages need information, support, respect and recognition.

Carers Support Centre Bristol and South Gloucestershire is an independent charity, and a network partner of Carers Trust.

All our services are free and include:

- Confidential telephone support line and online help
- One-to-one support and carers' groups
- Carers emergency card
- Activities for carers to take some time out
- Short breaks service
- Employment support
- Counselling, befriending and mentoring
- Training for carers and professionals
- Support for young carers

In 2021/2022 we registered **2,421** new carers, an increase of over **20%** on the previous year

Our website is a big resource for carers, and it received almost **110,000** unique visitors.

We keep in touch with carers through regular editions of Carers News, which we posted to **5,300** carers, and sent digitally to over **5,600**.

We sent out **36** targeted E-Bulletins to publicise specific services, such as workshops, events, developments to services and consultations.





Carers Assessments

Help with getting and completing an all-important assessment of carers' needs.

Carers Assessments are of vital importance. They enable us and the local councils, who provide services to carers, to get to know new carers and to have continued contact with them along their carer journey. From this understanding, despite the challenges, a lot can still be achieved in terms of good outcomes for carers and the person they care for.

We carried out **1,049** adult Carers Assessments, an increase of over **20%** on the previous year

One-to-one support

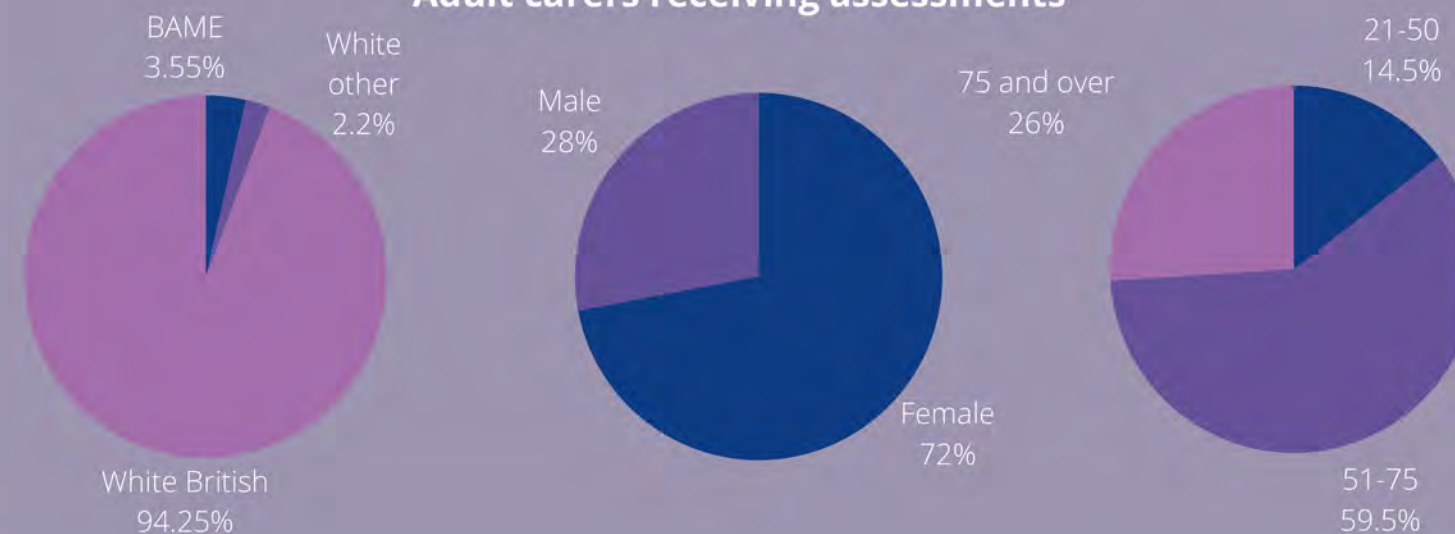
Based on Carers Assessments, our Carers Support Officers work with carers identifying and providing solutions for individual and family needs.

Carers Support Officers provide one-to-one support to individual carers. This includes emotional support, information, advice and advocacy. We work with the carer to explore the available options.

We provided one-to-one support (online, phone and face to face) to **1,991** carers offering information, support and advocacy

*“I have just heard that we're getting Attendance Allowance, £89.60 a week and it's backdated from October. If you were here. I'd give you **a huge hug**. Thank you for all your help.”*

Adult carers receiving assessments



*“I have felt somewhat better these last few days and I know it's due to our conversation/ assessment. I have accessed a private carer, she seems to be "Mary Poppins", very enthusiastic and experienced. Consequently, I'm feeling **lighter in my heart**, thank goodness.”*

*“The information that I received **helped me make decisions** regarding my future as a carer and that of my mother's treatment. You can never have enough advice and support in these circumstances.”*

John's Story

John was referred to us by his daughter. John's wife developed jaundice and was diagnosed with terminal bile duct cancer.

She was estimated to have four to six months to live. John felt emotionally overwhelmed by his wife's prognosis and was struggling to come to terms with the situation and his new caring role.

John was finding caring an emotional and physical strain, and he lost a lot of weight. John is visually impaired due to macular degeneration and has had to give up driving. This makes attending hospital appointments a challenge, as the couple live in a rural location.

John was initially reluctant to engage but agreed to an appointment for support to apply for Attendance Allowance under

special rules. Whilst completing the claim, it became clear that caring for his wife was having a significant impact on John's wellbeing.

John finally agreed to have a Carers Assessment. John found it useful to talk and the assessment made him appreciate the impact of caring for his wife, and the impact on his own wellbeing.

John has now accepted some support from neighbours, friends and family to help him to resume some of his interests and activities, to help improve his overall health.

John was provided with information about hospital and community transport options. John has also been linked in with our Hospital Liaison Worker, as his wife was due to start a course of treatment.

CarersLine

Our confidential telephone information and advice line for carers.

Carers Support Centre is available to answer any questions or listen to any concerns. We make time for everyone who contacts us. Our conversations help us to understand the difficulties that carers face.

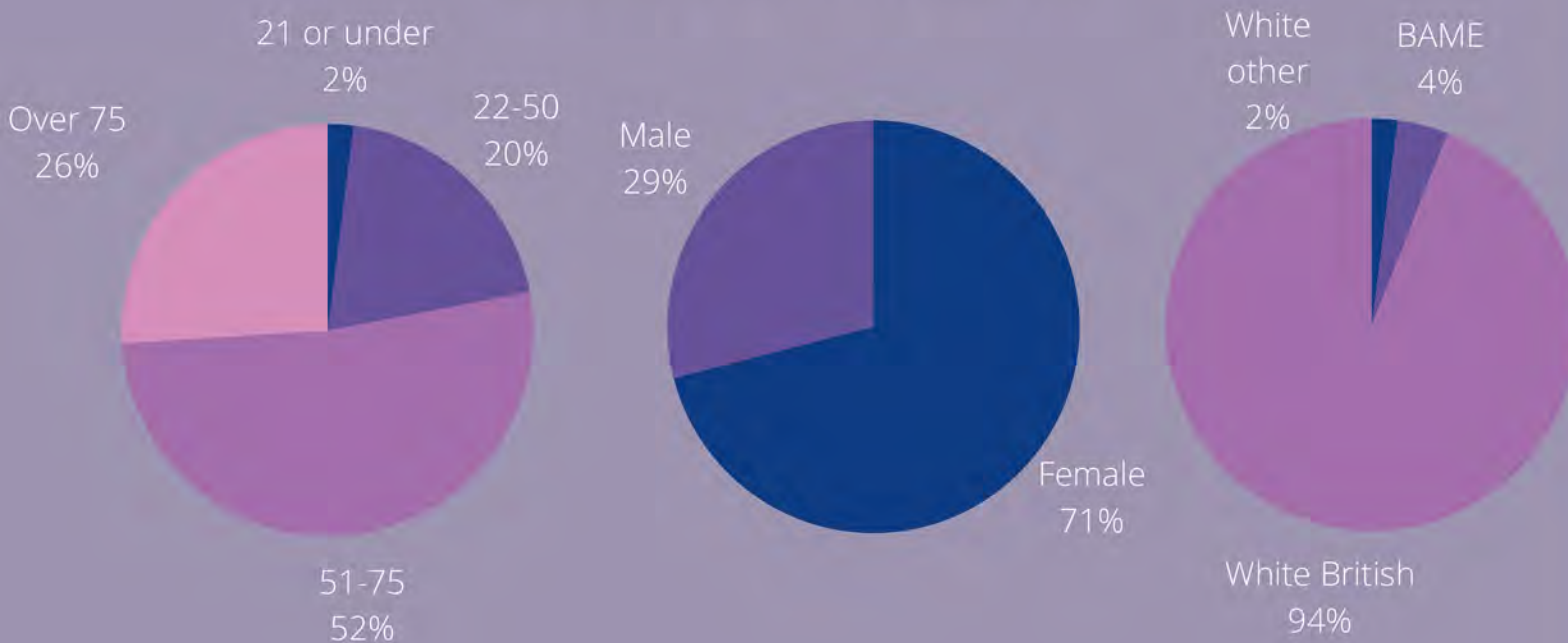
CarersLine took **4,703** calls from carers

“Knowing that there is support and advice out there and how to access it brings a lot of comfort.”

“This is such a fantastic service that any carer needs to know about and have the help.”



Carers who contacted CarersLine



“I feel confident there is always someone to support and advise.”

“You have made me feel more confident in myself.”

“I feel like there is a safety blanket when I cannot cope.”

Carers Emergency Card

Ensuring continuity of support should an adult carer have an accident or be taken seriously ill.

If a carer has an accident/emergency or is taken seriously ill, then the card can be used to alert a 24-hour emergency call centre that the person they care for needs help.

We issued **744** Carers Emergency Cards

“Thanks once again for an outstanding level of support and the much-needed peace of mind your service provides.”

“You hope you'll never need to use it but it's like having a life jacket.”

“Having a card like that means I know someone can get to him if I should have an accident.”

Carers support groups

Safe, confidential spaces to meet with other carers and provide peer support.

Monthly sessions give space for carers to share experiences in a group setting, sometimes guided by a theme or visiting speaker. The number of meetings during the year was greatly affected by the pandemic.

“These have given me a sense of achievement and promote my physical and mental wellbeing. It has also been good to meet carers as well as speakers sharing experiences, information and coping techniques.”



Wellbeing Service

Giving carers regular telephone support and guidance through befriending, mentoring and counselling.

We provided counselling to **99** carers

We provided befriending or mentoring to **77** carers

89% of carers who had counselling reported an overall improvement in their wellbeing

*“It’s great to have someone outside the family to talk to. I feel **I can be more honest** with Alan than I can with my friends and family. The phone calls are a joyous and pleasant 30 minutes. I look forward to them all week.”*

*“Spending time with other people in the same boat has really helped me **feel less alone.**”*

*“CSC have literally been a life saver for unpaid carers during the pandemic, and to me feels like the only organisation **that has been there** to provide help and support.”*

Debbie's Story

Debbie cares for her 83-year-old mother, Pauline, who has both physical and mental health needs.

Debbie’s relationship with her mother has often been difficult. As a young woman she left home at 17, “I couldn’t wait to get away” she says, and into adulthood the relationship continued to be strained.

Then, 12 years ago, the last of the relatives who were looking after Pauline died and Debbie was left with the caring responsibilities, which she sometimes calls, “my life sentence”.

When she is with her mother and helping her, the stress levels can increase. She says that her mother, “can be a difficult person to help”, often wanting things done in her own way, even if it’s detrimental to her health. Take, for instance, Pauline’s refusal to wear her hearing aids. If only she would use the aids communication between the two could be so much better.

It’s on the emotional side of caring that we have been able to help Debbie most.

Debbie was first referred to us by hospital staff after her mother had a fall at the start of Covid. Debbie says her relationship with us has enabled her to meet others in the same position as herself, other people who have the same, sometimes uncomfortable, thoughts about being a carer.

Our Wellbeing Team created opportunities for Debbie to talk, share and be in the company of other carers, easing the sense of isolation in which many carers feel trapped. A Carers Assessment is a good place to start uncovering a carer’s needs, and Debbie’s



suggested that our befriending service could be beneficial.

Debbie spent, “a lovely six months” talking with a fellow carer who had a similar story. Sometimes the conversations led them to tell each other things that they’d never admitted to anyone else. “It’s good to talk”, says Debbie, “and getting things out in the open can help to relieve the pressure.”

Debbie also took advantage of our counselling service. Six one-to-one sessions with a trained professional helped not only to look at some of the more uncomfortable truths of being a carer, but provided practical ideas and resources for dealing with the inevitable difficulties that arise between carer and those they care for.

And now Debbie has become a befriender herself, passing on her knowledge, experience and friendship in turn. One of her favourite relationships is with a 90-year-old gentleman who looks after his wife at their home. Debbie says they don’t often talk about caring, ‘it makes him happy to talk about his life, and I like to listen’, a reminder that caring isn’t the only thing that defines who carers are.

Carers Support Centre has given Debbie an “empowering, non-judgmental” space where she can express her true feelings about being a carer.



West of England Works Project

Employment and skills support for unpaid carers.

West of England Works aims to support young people and adults who face multiple and complex barriers to securing sustainable employment and training.

Carers Support Centre supports carers and former carers 16+ to feel more confident and better prepared in seeking training and employment opportunities. Carers/former carers receive one-to-one tailored support that identifies their needs, creating a supportive action plan that fits around their caring responsibilities.

30 participants started on the project during the year

Of the **25** participants who exited the project during the year:

- 3** participants into training/education
- 5** participants into employment
- 14** participants moved into job search from economically inactive

“ Thank you again for all you have done to help me on my journey, I've **grown immensely in confidence**, and having you tell me every time we meet that I am capable of doing things has given me such a boost. ”

“ **I feel great** about having a job, I can look forward to the future. ”

The project is part of the Building Better Opportunities programme and has received funding from the National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund.

Carers Break Service

Regular volunteer sitters in South Gloucestershire to give the carer a break.

This service benefits the carer, the cared-for person and the volunteers who do the sitting. For many carers who use this service, this is the only chance they get to take a break from their caring responsibilities, giving them an important opportunity to recharge their batteries. Opportunities for breaks during the year were limited by Covid restrictions.

222 sits were undertaken with the cared for person to give carers a break, equating to **451** hours

“ Sitter was a **very good match**, similar background – a break for me and company for the person I care for. ”

“ An invaluable service. I **feel more relaxed** when I'm out, knowing that there is company for my husband. ”

“ My husband is **much brighter** when we chat about the afternoon and what he's been doing with the sitter. ”





Training and workshops

Addressing the needs of carers through quality, professional training.

We provide courses to help carers manage on a day-to-day basis, particularly through our core programmes, Caring with Confidence, and Understanding and Caring for Dementia.

Due to the pandemic, much of our training was, very successfully, delivered online including:

Caring with Confidence; Caring and Understanding Dementia; Stress Management; Introduction to Mindfulness; Good Sleep; First Aid; Building Resilience; Nutrition and Dementia; and Introduction to Healthy Eating

We independently conducted targeted email outreach, which significantly increased the number of BAME carers attending our courses and workshops.

*“I attended the Caring with Confidence course provided by the Carers Support Centre in January. **Brilliantly facilitated** by Gill, who navigates the path between keeping on track with the course, but letting attendees raise issues. It gives a host of information for anyone new to caring and will help them understand what they can/should apply for, but most importantly to use CarersLine and they will help people find their way around the system.”*

Carers Liaison Service

Support for carers through GP practices and in hospital.

Hospital support

Information and support for the carer when the cared for person is in hospital, including help with discharge planning.

GP support

A dedicated team that works with GP practices to help identify and support carers.

Despite working off site for most of the year due to the pandemic, our hospital team referrals have increased by **4%** this year

We have continued working with **65** GP practices across Bristol and South Gloucestershire

As a result of our development work and close working relationships with GP practices, they have referred **814** carers to us for support

We updated and relaunched our GP Award Scheme during Carers Week (June 2022), carrying out **11** assessments and awarding **4** Gold, **6** Silver and **1** Bronze awards

109 young carers have been registered with their GP practice as a carer

*“The GP suggested I joined a local support group to help me. Therefore, I contacted the Carers Support Centre. They have provided **lots of helpful training courses/workshops**, carers support meetings, and peer group meetings.”*

Bernice's Story

Bernice joined our five week Caring with Confidence course. She told us she was at a low point at the time and remembers crying at the first session, "because the burden of caring seemed so great."

Bernice credits the course for making her realise, "how important it was to get myself into a good position." One of her chosen tasks on the course was to, "do one thing for myself" and, so, Bernice started to swim regularly.

The course also gave her the confidence to approach the North Bristol Advice Centre, who she'd heard about on the course, and they

helped her start an appeal process for Universal Credit. Although the appeal was refused, Bernice decided to carry on and "go it alone". She has just heard that at a hearing the additional payment for her brother with learning disabilities has been approved.

As a result of the course, Bernice says, 'my confidence has grown, and I am leading weekly support sessions for refugees which includes working within the local community.'

Bernice concludes, "a massive 'thank you' for this very valuable resource."



Young Carers Service

Provides help and support to children under 18, their families and professionals working with young carers.

We work with young people in helping them to feel positive about being a young carer, feel less isolated, reduce inappropriate care, enable them to plan for their future and seek support when they need. We do this through individual and family support, activities, groups and outings.

284 young carers were referred to the service

We carried out **288** young carers assessments

We delivered **388** one-to-one support sessions (online, phone and face to face) providing support and advocacy to young carers

502 young carers are registered with us and receiving support

*“The support has made such a difference. Kierah now feels part of something that is rewarding. It gives her a break from caring and she meets others in similar situations; so she knows **she’s not alone.**”*



Nicole's Story

Nicole* is 13 years old. She cares for her father, who is bipolar, and her two younger brothers, one with autism spectrum disorder and learning needs, the other Down's Syndrome.

Due to her caring role, Nicole experienced mental health challenges, low self-esteem, worry, tiredness, stress, anxiety, and experiences low mood. She struggles with social situations and has concerns around her body image. She had self-harmed and experiences suicidal thoughts, having once planned suicide.

We started to address Nicole's issues through a series of five one-to-one sessions. One of Nicole's key issues was that she felt she didn't have a space to express her worries and concerns. The main aim of the sessions was to start to provide that space. The sessions helped Nicole learn about strategies to manage difficult feelings which could lead to self-harm and suicidal thoughts. In this work, we built upon her use of the CalmHarm app. During our sessions we were able to celebrate with Nicole one hundred days without self-harm.

Nicole reflected during the sessions that she struggled with all her different priorities (school, family, caring role, self-care, social). She found little time to spend on social and self-care and recognised that having time for herself would help her to feel better about herself and manage the other priorities. She explored what was stopping her and worked on ways to find more time for herself. She started devoting one evening a week to an activity or meeting up with friends and aimed to set aside time for self-care techniques, to which we introduced Nicole. Following our

sessions, Nicole agreed that she had, "learnt how to balance her caring role with other things in her life." Nicole decided she also wanted to be referred to Youth Moves Mentoring giving her someone to talk to for a further 12 weeks and supporting her to work on further changes she wants to make in her life.

School life has also improved. We worked together to find how school could additionally support her. We advocated for her, so that school were more aware of her mental health and put more support in place including the continuation of sessions with a counsellor which were about to end. As a result of our advocacy, Nicole said, "school is much better for me now and I feel able to speak to Learning Support in a more open way." Overall, Nicole felt, "school now heard my problems or worries and helped me to solve them." and that she "was getting the best out of her education."

The one-to-one sessions are the start of our relationship and work with Nicole. Importantly, she knows that she can contact us if things get really difficult and she wants someone to talk with. Nicole now feels, "able to speak to support workers about how things are going in my life."

By the end of our sessions, Nicole felt a sense of achievement and that her most positive outcome was that "caring was at a manageable level."

* Not her real name



Young Carers Respite Activities

We provide a varied respite programme of day trips, residentials, groups, physical and creative activities.

All our activities are free to young carers, including transport and admissions. Activities not only give young carers some fun and a break from caring, they increase resilience and confidence, create lasting friendships and peer support.

We provided **686** breaks enjoyed by **212** young carers

We ran 'caring with confidence' programmes to help young carers understand their rights, learn about self-care and make friends. **81%** reported that they felt more confident.

Young Carers in Schools

Run in partnership with Carers Trust and The Children's Society, the Young Carers in Schools (YCiS) programme aims to increase identification of young carers, improve outcomes and provides awards for participating schools.

Starting with a baseline review of what a school is already doing for young carers, with the help of a dedicated development officer the programme helps schools in supplying better support for young carers.

104 local schools have registered as YCiS schools and as part of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire young carers school leads network:

66 in Bristol (46% of all schools in Bristol)

38 in South Gloucestershire (36% of all schools in South Gloucestershire)

14 schools have achieved a YCiS Bronze Award

1 school has received a YCiS Silver Award

The number of referrals of young carers (**117**) from schools to our service is **49%** more than previous year

92% of schools identified more young carers

82% improved the support they gave to young carers in school

“They have been so helpful, I feel really confident to get my group started and work towards bronze.”

“Thank you so much for your ongoing support, it certainly is making a difference to our young people. Vicki's support is invaluable, and we wouldn't have been able to put everything in place without her knowledge - thank you.”



“Everyone there was really kind and I was allowed to create whatever I wanted. It was really nice to have a break from my responsibilities.” Kelsi, 11



“Making the pigs in blankets was fun. I have learned how to cook a roast dinner with friends.” Jack, 10



“It really helped to have a break from caring. It was great to have a change. I think it helped to make me more confident as I could mix with others and make friends. I could just have a fun time.” Lily, 15



“I had so much fun and I could just be me... without having to do jobs for Chloe or help look after her or help my mum and I could play and have friends.” Casie, 12

Carers engagement and involvement

Getting carers voices heard.

We help give carers a voice. As well as our role as advocates for carers, we facilitate the involvement of carers in influencing the service provision of bodies like the local councils and the NHS. We are also committed to participation by carers in the development of services we provide to them.

Carer reps

During the year, carers made their voices heard to influence decision making on issues including:

- The transition out of the pandemic
- The inaccessibility of short breaks
- Increased flexibility on carers payments
- The difficulty in finding personal assistants
- Earlier and inappropriate discharge from hospital
- Transport as a barrier to carers and services users taking up employment, education opportunities and accessing self-help groups and services

*“ I wanted to become a Rep as I think carers are not listened to in the local and national community and I feel **this needs to change.** ”*

Young Carers Voice

We support young carers to get their voices heard and influence change.

17 young carers are active members of Young Carers Voice. Over the year they:

- Revised their Young Carers Charter for local organisations to use to improve their services
- Ensured the Carer Friendly Hospital Award includes standards for recognising and valuing young carers
- Contributed to online induction training for new staff at UBHW
- Co-produced transition guidelines to improve support when young carers move to secondary school and to sixth form
- Planned Young Carers Action Day, celebrating young carers and linking them into support services
- Gained representation on the Bristol Youth Council

Thank you

We couldn't have done it alone.

We received support from **106** volunteers

Volunteers contributed **1,121** hours to help support carers

53% of volunteers are carers or former carers

100% of volunteers would recommend volunteering for us

Our funders

Our work is funded by Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board, The National Lottery Community Fund and the European Social Fund.

In addition, we want to thank all the trusts and community funders who have supported us in the last year. They include:

Alpkit Foundation, Bristol Brunel Lions Club, Bristol Breakfast Rotary Club, Bristol Charities, Bristol City Council Youth Sector Support Fund, Bristol Community Health, Bristol Masonic Benevolent Institution, Carers Trust, Clifton Down Probus Club, Co-op Local Community Fund, D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, George Bairstow Charitable Trust, Henry Nicholas Associates, John James Foundation, In Memoriam Of William Hancock Fund, Leonard Laity Stoate Charitable Trust, Royal Edward Lodge, South Gloucestershire Council - Area Wide Grant and Holiday Activities and Food Programme, Susanna Peake Charitable Trust, The Clifford Charity Oxford, The Fulmer Charitable Trust, The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust, The Nisbet Trust, The Thompson Charitable Trust, The West of England Sport Trust, Thornbury Rotary Club, Warburtons Families Matter.

Thank you also to those who gave us individual donations.



Thank you for reading

If you have any questions or would like to know more about our work please get in touch.

CarersLine: 0117 965 2200

Email: carersline@carerssupportcentre.org.uk

Admin enquiries: 0117 939 2562

Email: info@carerssupportcentre.org.uk

www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk

Charity Number 1063226 | Company Number 3377199

Registered address: The Vassall Centre, Gill Ave, Bristol BS16 2QQ



**Bristol, North Somerset
and South Gloucestershire**
Integrated Care Board



Carers Support Centre
Bristol & South Gloucestershire



Thank you to Invisible Army for granting permission to use their images throughout this report. Our thanks also go to the local carers who collaborated with them. You can find out more about their work at: www.invisiblearmy.org