



**Carers Support Centre**

# Impact Report

2023/4

A Network Partner of  
**CARERS TRUST**



*If you care,  
we care.*

Carers Support Centre  
Bristol & South Gloucestershire

# From our CEO, Carl Tams



**As I take over the reins as CEO of Carers Support Centre Bristol and South Gloucestershire, it would not be an overstatement to say that caring is in crisis. Unpaid carers and young carers continue to feel the brunt of major national problems – in NHS and social care provision – and be disproportionately affected by the ongoing effects of the cost-of-living crisis.**

Social care has been in crisis for a while, but the crisis has never been as acute as it is now. Escalated by the pandemic, it is now very deep and growing. An ageing population and austerity policies mean that demand continues to increase whilst supply diminishes. To make matters worse, there is a huge shortage of care workers - the staff vacancy rate is the highest since records began. The picture in NHS provision is similarly bleak.

Without sufficient, affordable and good quality services, more and more unpaid carers have no choice but to keep on providing the bulk of the care at home, mostly on their own. According to the latest census 2021 there are at least 5.7 million unpaid adult carers in the UK who contribute £162 billion to the economy per year, which is equivalent to the cost of the NHS. Without unpaid carers, we would need to fund the NHS twice.

In terms of income to cover the costs of increasing prices, despite a rise during the year, Carer's Allowance is still a paltry sum both in comparison with other UK benefits and payments made to unpaid carers in many other countries in Europe.

And the picture for young carers is equally bleak. During the year, the first-ever parliamentary inquiry into young carers found that there were one million young carers in the UK and the time they spend caring can lead to them falling behind at school and damaging their life opportunities. Yet, despite mounting evidence showing the impact of their caring role, little has been done to improve support over the years.

**Carl Tams**  
Chief Executive

Thanks to the work of my predecessor, Tim Poole, and the staff, I am pleased to let you know that in tackling these challenges we continue to be here to support local carers and young carers, as we entered 2023/2024 having secured both the adult and young carer contracts in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.

We are delighted that this gives us the opportunity to continue working with unpaid carers of all ages in both Bristol and South Gloucestershire at this vital time. It extends a relationship which now stretches back over 25 years. We place that experience and our local knowledge at the disposal of local carers.

However, we are not kidding ourselves that the work ahead of us to help improve caring lives is anything other than challenging.

With the paucity of health and social services, and the cost-of-living crisis, overall carers are having to do more with less. One of the main results, seen in both national and local polls and in talking to carers and young carers, is the detrimental effects on their health and well-being, which often can have a negative effect on their ability to care for others.

Here at Carers Support Centre, we are still driven by one simple goal:

**"A better life for carers of all ages".**

I hope you find the following report on how we worked towards that goal during 2023/2024 informative and that you will consider supporting, or continue to support, our work, as together we tackle both the symptoms and the causes of the challenges of being an unpaid carer in Bristol and South Gloucestershire.



## Caring in numbers:

Source: Carers UK

Nationally

**3 out of 5 people** in the UK will become carers at some time in their lives

The most recent Census 2021 puts the estimated number of unpaid carers at **5 million** in England and Wales. This, together with ONS Census data for Scotland and Northern Ireland, suggests that the number of unpaid carers across the UK is **5.7 million**

Every day another **6,000** people take on a caring responsibility – that equates to over **2 million** people each year

**58%** of carers are women and **42%** are men



## Our vision

A better life for carers of all ages where they are recognised, valued and supported in their caring role and empowered to fulfil their own aspirations.

## Our mission

- We will support carers' emotional, physical and financial health and well-being, building their resilience and confidence.
- We will listen to and amplify carers' voices, enabling them to have a strong and independent influence on policy and services.
- We will support carers to be free from inappropriate levels of care and able to live a life of their own.
- We will raise awareness of carers and the issues they face, leading to communities and organisations where carers feel recognised, welcome and supported.

## Our values

**Co-producing** – We will be led by carers' needs, involving them in service planning and development and encouraging other organisations to do the same.

**Learning** – We will constantly review and refine our services, developing and sharing good practice.

**Collaborative and connected** – We will be collaborative in our approach to supporting carers, working closely with partner organisations and communities to provide holistic, sustainable support.

**Empowering** – We will be enabling in our approach to supporting carers, building resilience and confidence, empowering them to achieve their own goals.

**Valuing people** – We will treat staff, volunteers and those we work with, with respect and kindness, valuing diversity and the contribution they make.

### Caring in numbers:

Source: Carers UK

Over **1 million** people care for more than one person

Unpaid carers in England and Wales contribute a staggering **£445 million** to the economy every day – that's **£162 billion** per year

**5 million** people juggle care with work, however, the significant demands of caring mean that two in five carers are forced to give up work altogether

People providing high levels of care are twice as likely to be permanently sick or disabled

Carer's Allowance is the main carers' benefit and is **£81.90** for a minimum of **35 hours**, equivalent to **£2.34 per hour** – far short of the national minimum wage of **£11.44 per hour**

People providing high levels of care are twice as likely to be permanently sick or disabled

**625,000** people suffer mental and physical ill health as a direct consequence of the stress and physical demands of caring

Over **1.3 million** people provide over **50 hours** of care per week

“There’s no sick pay, no annual leave, no bank holidays, no minimum rest breaks between “shifts”. It’s constant, and all for less than £2 an hour!”

## Carers’ key issues

- **Breaks and respite** - Carers and young carers need and are demanding more regular breaks from caring.
  - **Intensification of caregiving** - Since Covid we have seen an intensification of care all over the country. This is particularly worrying because people who provide high levels of care are less likely to be able to juggle a job with caring and are more likely to become poor, ill and isolated.
  - **Poverty** - The latest Joseph Rowntree Foundation UK Poverty report (2024) found that nearly 1/3 of carers live in poverty.
  - **Health and Well-being** – Carers UK run the largest survey on carers in Europe, and the latest figures paint an increasingly bleak picture of the impact of caring on health and well-being. In summer 2023:
    - people providing high levels of care were twice as likely to be permanently sick or disabled.
    - a significant proportion of carers are not seeking support with health conditions due to the demands of their caring role.
- Young people with caring responsibilities have a higher prevalence of self-harm. Of children who do self-harm, young carers are twice as likely to attempt to take their own life than non-carers.
- **Employment** – Working-age carers are less likely to be employed than those without caring responsibilities. Many people cut back their working hours to care, while others feel they must leave their employment altogether. The London School of Economics estimated that the cost of carers leaving employment to the public purse is £1.3 billion a year (in loss of tax and Carer’s Allowance payments).
  - **Education** – Research shows that being a young carer has a knock-on effect on school attainment and attendance, with young carers missing 27 school days per year on average. Young adult carers are substantially (38%) less likely to achieve a university degree than their peers without a caring role.

## Our Services 2023/4

We tailor our services to tackle the identified key issues for carers. In 2023/4, our free services included:

<b>One-to-One support</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>Carer’s Assessment</b>	<b>9</b>
<b>CarersLine, our confidential telephone information and advice line</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Carers Emergency Card</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Carers Support Groups</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>Carers Time Team</b>	
Befriending and connection	<b>13</b>
Counselling	<b>13</b>
Walk and Talk	<b>16</b>
Carers Break Service	<b>16</b>
<b>Carers Liaison Service</b>	
Hospitals	<b>19</b>
GP practices	<b>19</b>
<b>Support for Young Carers</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Carers Voice</b>	<b>28</b>



### Caring in numbers:

Source: Carers Trust

Nationally

There are an estimated **1 million** young carers in the UK

**15,000** children, including **3,000** aged just five to nine, spend **50 hours** or more a week looking after family members because of illness, disability or addiction.

Locally

**33,973 adults** in Bristol looking after someone without being paid

**23,652 adults** in South Gloucestershire looking after someone without being paid

**13,959** local adult carers registered with us

In 2023 – 2024 we registered **1552 new adult carers**

Of the adult carers we provided one-to-one support to during the year:  
**73%** identified as female  
**27%** identified as male

**746** young carers are registered with us and are receiving support



During the year, we provided one-to-one support (online, phone and face-to-face) to **403 carers**

During 2023/24, we carried out **1,204 adult Carer's Assessments**

## Our Services

### One-to-one support

*Help to access support from our services and external organisations, to help maintain a caring role and a carer's wellbeing and quality of life.*

Our Carers Support Officers provide tailored one-to-one support to carers based on their individual needs. One-to-one work includes emotional support, practical advice, information on a range of caring subjects and signposting to further, often specialised, support.

- During the year, we provided one-to-one support (online, phone and face-to-face) to 403 carers

"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."

### Carer's Assessment

*Help with getting and completing a Carer's Assessment. A Carer's Assessment looks at how caring affects lives, whether support is needed to manage the caring role and the well-being of the carer.*

In Carer's Assessments, we have a conversation, or a series of conversations, which focus on the carer and their caring role. Carer's Assessments explore the individual caring situation, how caring impacts the carer and whether there is any support needed to help them continue to care going forward. We talk about the carer's health, how they're managing at home, whether they're able to make time for themselves, how they're feeling, and their financial situation.

- During 2023/24, we carried out 1,204 adult Carer's Assessments

"I have felt somewhat better these last few days and I know it's due to our conversation/assessment."

## Our Services

### CarersLine

*A confidential phone and email information and support service for carers to ask questions or talk about any concerns about their caring role.*

We make time for everyone who contacts us and understand the difficulties that carers face. We are here to listen to carers' concerns.

- 3,366 carers contacted CarersLine by phone or email

*"Just wanted to say how hugely helpful and constructive you were in our phone conversation. It was such a relief to be able to talk to someone who just seems to get it, whilst offering concrete advice and a lot of support and validation."*

### Carers Emergency Card

*If a carer has an accident or is taken seriously ill, carrying this card will ensure the person they care for will be kept safe.*

We promote the use of Carers Emergency Cards in Bristol and South Gloucestershire and receive and process applications on behalf of South Gloucestershire Council. Carers carry the card and then if there is an accident or emergency it can be used to alert a 24-hour emergency call centre that the person cared for will need help. Steps are then taken to ensure the safety of the person they care for.

- We issued 646 Carers Emergency Cards

### Carers Support Groups

*A safe, confidential space to meet with other carers face-to-face and online – to share information and provide peer support.*

We facilitate regular monthly support groups throughout Bristol and South Gloucestershire and online groups for those who can't leave the person they care for.

- We ran a total of eight separate groups during the year
- 94 carers came to those groups

*"I go to this group knowing that for a short time I don't have to worry about what I say that I won't be negatively judged, and that other people have the same emotions, struggles and fears as I do."*

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

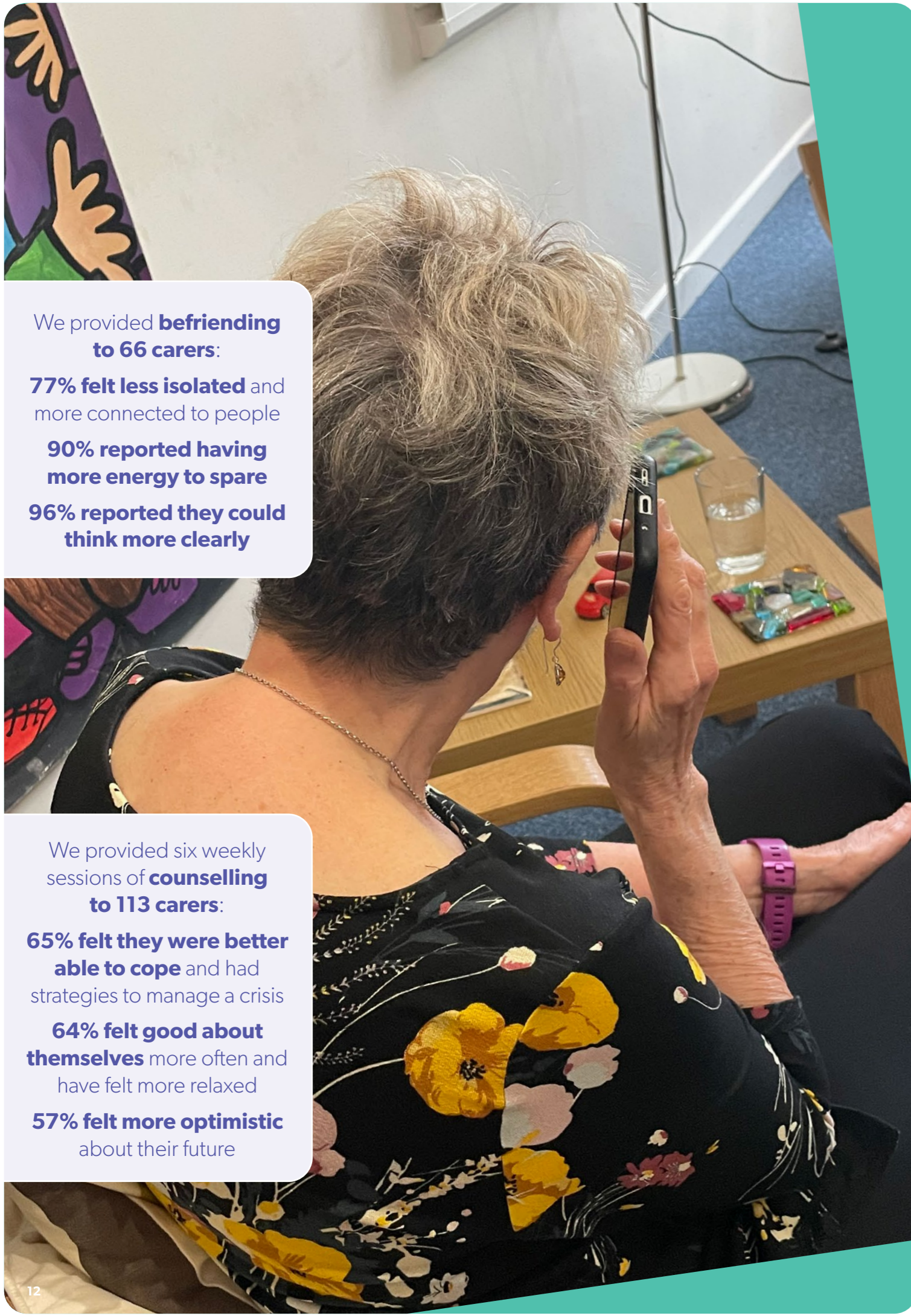


**3,366 carers contacted CarersLine**  
by phone or email

We ran a total of eight separate groups during the year

**94 carers came to those groups**

We issued **646 Carers Emergency Cards**



We provided **befriending to 66 carers:**

**77% felt less isolated** and more connected to people

**90% reported having more energy to spare**

**96% reported they could think more clearly**

We provided six weekly sessions of **counselling to 113 carers:**

**65% felt they were better able to cope** and had strategies to manage a crisis

**64% felt good about themselves** more often and have felt more relaxed

**57% felt more optimistic** about their future

## Our Services

### Carers Time Team

#### **Befriending and connection**

*We match carers with trained volunteers who provide conversation, companionship and emotional support, helping carers to cope with the sense of loneliness and isolation that many feel because of their caring role.*

- We provided befriending to 66 carers:
  - \* 77% felt less isolated and more connected to people
  - \* 90% reported having more energy to spare
  - \* 96% reported they could think more clearly

*"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."*



#### **Counselling**

*We provide professional counsellors to give carers a safe, independent and confidential space to talk about their concerns, feel listened to and respected and understood.*

Most carers accessing counselling are experiencing a change or crisis in their caring role or are recognising themselves as carers for the first time.

During 2023/2024:

- We provided six weekly sessions of counselling to 113 carers:
  - \* 65% felt they were better able to cope and had strategies to manage a crisis
  - \* 64% felt good about themselves more often and have felt more relaxed
  - \* 57% felt more optimistic about their future

*"I feel I am in a much better place now, the structured sessions with my counsellor really helped me to take time out each week for myself."*



## David's story

**David\* had been referred to both the counselling and befriending services for support as he had become very isolated in his caring role and was struggling to manage his partner's extreme emotions and anxiety.**

David felt that talking to a counsellor initially would help him cope better with his caring role. He was triaged at the referral stage, and it was decided that we would offer him counselling first and then to follow on with giving him support from a befriender to allow him time for his own mental health to stabilise.

David started his counselling sessions via Zoom as he had travelled to Cornwall to stay with his elderly dad whose health had deteriorated. It was a very stressful time for this carer as he felt torn between supporting his father and his wife. Prior to completing his counselling sessions David's wife passed away very suddenly.

David said having the counselling sessions at this difficult time really helped. David then started support from the befriending service soon after his counselling sessions ended. His main goal was being able to be open with someone who was objective. Also, to have some encouragement/focus with reconnecting with a creative outlet which was writing. David said that his befriender had been supportive and encouraging.

David had been feeling very exhausted and overwhelmed with everything to sort out and travelling back and forth to Cornwall to support his elderly father. David said that his befriender had encouraged him to take small steps and break things down into

manageable chunks. This approach had given David more focus and clarity. Without his help, David felt he couldn't have taken a single step. His befriender was a great listener and very patient, he had been very supportive and encouraged David to take care of himself.

David has now taken a step back from some things and this has really helped him. We made a referral to our Walk and Talk project, gave information about carers' support services in Cornwall for his father and details for the Cruse helpline should David wish to receive bereavement support in the future.

\* Not his real name



## Our Services

### Walk and Talk

*Our friendly support worker leads group walks, offering a listening ear and providing information to help in a caring role.*

Walk and Talk was developed with the triple aims of:

- improving carer physical and mental health
- decreasing carer isolation
- increasing carer knowledge about help available to support them in their caring role

Each group runs for six consecutive weeks with six people per group. The walks take place in a local green space and an experienced Carers Support Officer leads the walks and provides information and advice that signpost attendees to relevant support services in their local area.

- 38 new carers were identified through promotion and outreach
- We ran 16 six-weekly walks and two one-off taster sessions, attended by 130 people in total
  - \* 21% of walkers were male
  - \* 22% of walkers were from BAME communities
  - \* 13% carers 25-49 years old
  - \* 45% carers from 50-69 years old
  - \* 42% carers over 70 years old
  - \* 66% have increased their physical activity levels
  - \* 62% have reported an increased in their social connections and feeling less isolated

*“Yesterday I felt overwhelmed with caring responsibilities. Today I feel much more positive after going on the walk, enjoying nature and speaking with other carers.”*

### Carers Break Service

*In South Gloucestershire, a regular volunteer sitter keeps the looked-after person company so that the carer can take a break.*

This service for carers living in South Gloucestershire is provided by volunteers who are trained, supported and managed by us. It enables carers to take a two-to-three-hour break on a regular basis – usually weekly or fortnightly.

- 468 sits were undertaken with the cared-for person to give carers a break, totalling 989 hours
- The service had 17 volunteers at April 2024

*“The volunteer is absolutely wonderful; my husband has got on really well and she has lots of patience. It enables me to go to my club and I meet up with friends and have a good chat. This gives me something to talk to my husband about when I get home.”*



**38 new carers** were identified through promotion and outreach

**468 sits were undertaken** with the cared-for person to give carers a break, **totalling 989 hours**



We worked with **54 GP practices** across Bristol and South Gloucestershire  
GP practices **referred 941 carers** to us for support

**518 carers** were supported in hospital

“Thank you – I don’t think I have had such comprehensive advice since I became my sister’s carer in 2019.”

## Our Services

### Carers Liaison Service

Information and support for carers in the hospital setting and in GP practices.

#### GP practices

*A dedicated team working with GP practices to help identify and support carers.*

Our GP Carer Liaison Workers work with GP practices across Bristol and South Gloucestershire providing information, guidance and support for carers.

This includes:

- helping to access services
- offering relevant emotional support and advice
- help to communicate carer’s needs or concerns or those of the person cared-for to health professionals
- looking at financial support/benefits
- advising about entitlement to a Carer’s Assessment and, where appropriate, help to complete and send an assessment to the local authority
- information about carer services and support in our local area
- Carers’ Surgeries.
- We worked with 54 GP practices across Bristol and South Gloucestershire
- GP practices referred 941 carers to us for support
- For our GP Award Scheme, we assessed 12 surgeries awarding six gold and six silver awards.

#### Hospitals

*We provide help, support and advice to carers from the point of admission to discharge as a carer and/or as a patient.*

Carers Support Centre has a team of Hospital Carer Liaison Workers who work at the Bristol Royal Infirmary and Southmead Hospital. We provide one-to-one support for carers while they or the person they care for are in hospital, including:

- talking carers through the hospital processes
- giving emotional support and advice
- helping carers communicate their needs or those of the person they care for to health professionals
- help to access the right care services
- attending best interest, care planning and discharge planning meetings with carers and acting as an advocate
- signposting to financial support and other information
- providing information about carer services in the local area.
- 518 carers were supported in hospital



*GP Carers Liaison Worker, Suzanne Ponsford, presents Montpellier Health Centre Patient Services Manager, Caroline Hawkins, with our Gold GP awards certificate. The awards programme is an opportunity for GP practices to work with Carers Support Centre to look at how carer and dementia friendly their GP surgery is. An audit of services and carer awareness is completed with practices showing their commitment. Following successful completion of this audit, an award in recognition of this good work can be made.*



“Thank you for meeting me and thank you again for listening. It was a pleasure to meet you too, and I wouldn't have had a clue about this helpful information if you hadn't told me.”

## A Hospital Carer Liaison Worker's story

**Mrs. G was referred via a call to CarersLine, in which she explained that her mother, who has a diagnosis of dementia, was in Bristol Royal Infirmary, having been admitted with suspected pneumonia (later confirmed as Covid).**

I called Mrs. G, who explained that there had been poor communication from and within the ward about her mum's condition, specifically that most nursing staff appeared unaware of her dementia diagnosis.

Mrs. G was concerned that her mum was in a side-room and felt she was not being supported with eating and drinking and not being provided with stimulation appropriate to her cognitive needs. Also, in her opinion, therapists weren't communicating in a dementia-sensitive way and were not showing compassion about her difficulties.

Mrs. G also shared concerns that she had not been included in any discussions about current treatment, or discharge planning, despite having explained on admission that she was an unpaid carer for mum.

I contacted the ward and spoke with the senior charge-nurse. He agreed to contact Mrs. G the same day to address her concerns, and to ask one of the doctors to call Mrs. G to discuss the treatment/discharge plans. I also contacted the community dementia support service to advise of the admission to hospital and to request a follow-up.

I explained to Mrs. G the different pathway routes and options and explained to her the Trust's Carers Charter, which I then emailed copies of to her. We also discussed how she could best be supported going forward.

We agreed that she would contact us again if any further concerns arose and that she would contact PALS (Patient Advice and Liaison Service) if choosing to formally share concerns around poor communication from and between ward staff.

# Our Services

## Young Carers

We work with young people to help 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 it. We provide individual and family support, activities, groups and outings.

- 746 young carers are registered with us and are receiving support
- 297 young carers were referred to us during the year
- We carried out 231 young carers assessments
- We delivered 213 one-to-one support sessions (online, phone and face-to-face) providing information, support and advocacy for young people

“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.”



## Young Carers in Schools

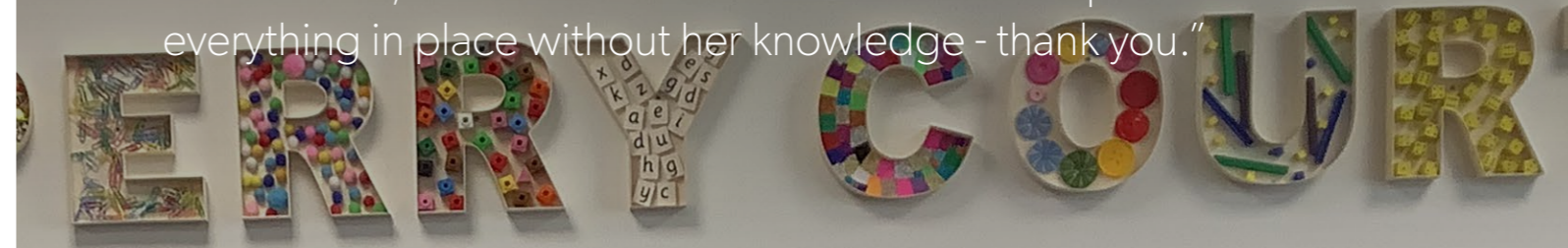
Increasing identification, improving outcomes and accredited awards for schools through the Young Carers in Schools (YCiS) programme, run in partnership with Carers Trust and The Children’s Society.

- Schools who received a Young Carers in Schools award were asked about the impact of the programme (Coram, 2019).
- 94% of schools said staff were more likely to know what to do if they identified a young carer
  - 94% had a better understanding of the support required for young carers
  - 73% of schools reported young carers’ classroom engagement had improved
  - 63% reported improvements in young carers’ achievements
  - 83% of young carers demonstrated an increase in confidence
  - 85% of young carers demonstrated increased well-being.

In Bristol and South Gloucestershire:

- 124 local schools have registered as YCiS schools and as part of the Bristol and South Gloucestershire Young Carers School Leads Network:
  - \* 80 in Bristol
  - \* 44 in South Gloucestershire
- 21 schools or colleges have achieved the Young Carers in Schools Award in the lifetime of the project
  - \* 16 in Bristol
  - \* 5 in South Gloucestershire
- 130 schools or colleges have signed up to the Young Carers in Schools Award in the lifetime of the project
  - \* 82 in Bristol
  - \* 48 in South Gloucestershire
- 149 young carers were referred to our service from schools

“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.”



**746 young carers** are registered with us and are receiving support

Source: Young Carers Alliance, 2023

There are **one or two carers** in every class in every year group in every school

Source: My Time, 2022

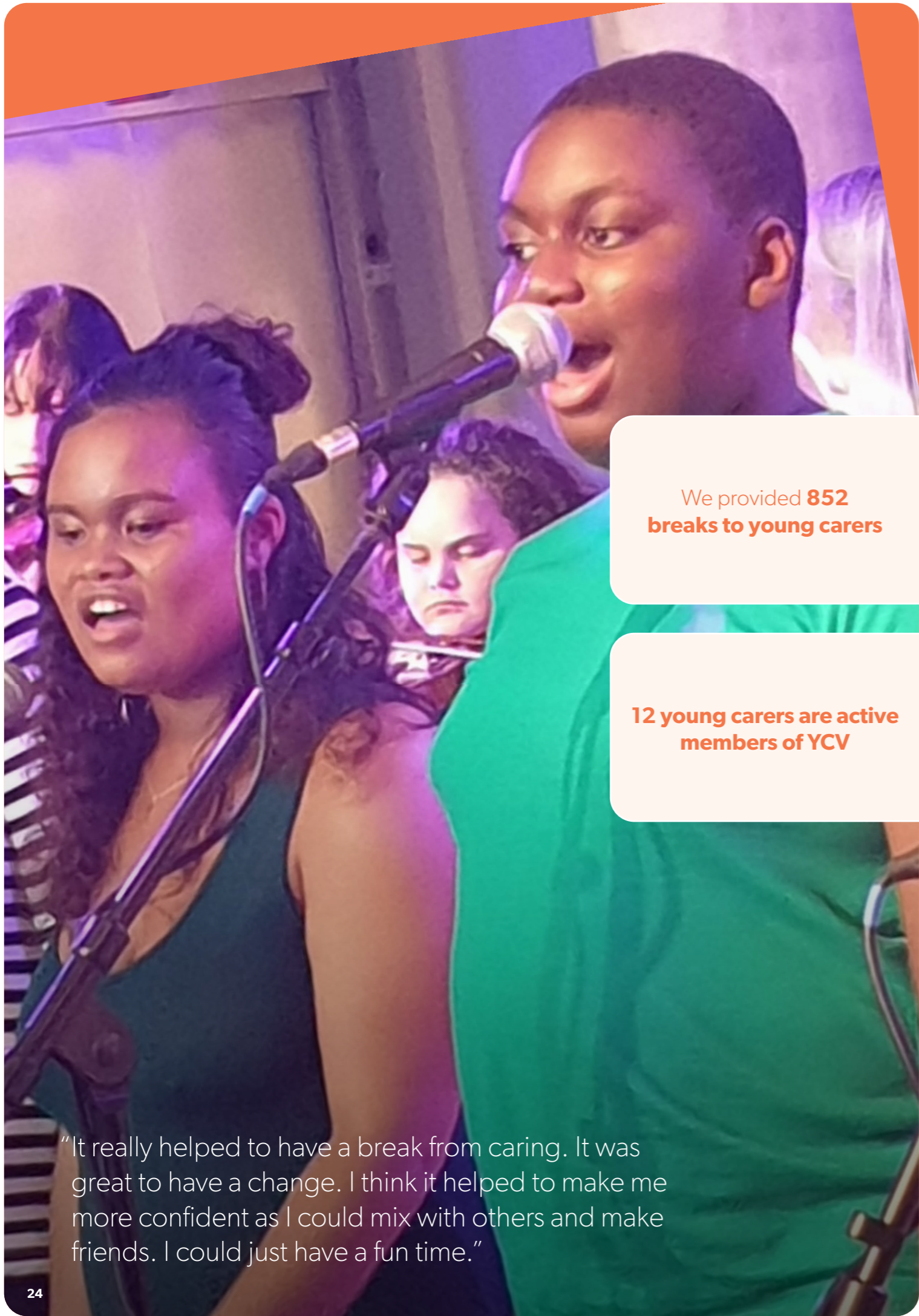
Young carers have **double the rate** of persistent absence compared to their peers, averaging **27 days missed** per academic year

Source: My Time, 2022

Young carers are **twice** as likely to leave primary school below age-related expectations

Source: Carers Trust, 2022

At least a **third** of young carers said their caring role resulted in them either ‘always’ or ‘usually’ feeling ‘worried’, ‘lonely’ or ‘stressed’



We provided **852 breaks to young carers**

**12 young carers are active members of YCV**

“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.”

## Our Services

### Respite activities

We offer a wide range of trips and activities each year to give young carers a break.

- We provided 852 breaks to young carers

### Young Carers perform at the Bath Forum

In Summer 2022, we partnered with Bath Philharmonia for a five-day music project for 20 young carers. This culminated in a performance in at Bristol Beacon and three pieces produced by the young carers.

Following the success of this project, two of these young carers were selected to join a group of young carers in the South West. This group took part in an online workshop to create a piece which was performed by the Bath Philharmonia at the prestigious Bath Forum.

The song was well received by the audience of over 1,000 with some moved to tears by the emotional power of the piece. Both young carers were grateful for the opportunity to perform at such a renowned venue and build friendships with other young carers along the way.

### Young Carers Voice

Young Carers Voice (YCV) was set up to enable young carers to be seen, heard and recognised. YCV is a group of young carers who meet monthly and act as representatives for young carers. They work hard to bring about change and make sure that local authorities include the needs of young carers and their families in service and policy development.

- 12 young carers are active members of YCV

### Young Carers Voice working with local hospitals

In the run-up to Young Carers Action Day (YCAD) 2024, we worked with North Bristol Trust (NBT) at Southmead Hospital to improve the identification and support of young carers. As part of that work, on YCAD, NBT announced their commitment to the new National Young Carers Covenant from the Carers Trust.

We arranged for five inspiring young carers from YCV to visit Southmead Hospital supported by Carers Support Centre. At the visit, the young carers undertook the 15-step challenge in three wards. The 15-step challenge is a valuable tool for patients and carers to feedback about how the experience of hospital could be improved.

From the 15-step challenge, some of the positive feedback from our young carers included:

- staff being welcoming
- welcome posters being displayed in different languages
- wards feeling clean and warm.

Some areas for improvement identified included:

- not having any reference to or information on display about young carers
- the experience of staff who were not aware of who a young carer could be.

NBT is already improving things for young carers, enacting some of the easier changes that are needed. The changes that require more planning and work will be tracked in an action plan monitored in the NBT Carers Strategy Group. As part of the work, NBT is committed to regularly updating the young carers, inviting them back to check and challenge the change.

We hope this partnership with NBT can make a real difference in young carers' experience of NBT.





## Helping Laila back into school

**Laila\* is a 14-year-old young carer who is living with her mother, her 10-year-old brother and her 6-year-old sister. Laila helps to care for her younger sister who has severe, non-verbal autism, epilepsy, hypermobility, learning difficulties and developmental delay; and her mum who suffers with fibromyalgia and mental ill-health.**

When our support worker met the family, they were living in a one-bedroom flat that did not meet their needs and were waiting to get more appropriate accommodation through the council. Laila was also not attending school as she was struggling with the family housing situation and supporting her sister and mum.

Laila had become very isolated, she was not socialising or spending any time at all away from home. As a result, she was missing out on education and becoming more anxious due to her isolation. Laila wanted to get support to help her return to school.

Our support worker was able to support the housing application and raise other concerns. The housing situation deteriorated, and the family had to go into emergency accommodation before they were placed into a permanent home in the summer and the situation significantly improved. There was enough space for Laila

and her brother to have their own rooms. This has significantly reduced the impact of caring on Laila, providing her the space she needed to manage the balance of caring responsibilities.

Our support worker also contacted the school to discuss Laila's difficulties in school; the support she needed and the process for Laila returning. As Laila had not been in school for six months she would need to reapply for a place.

Once the family had moved into the permanent home, Laila then felt able to engage with one-to-one support. These sessions helped Laila explore what she felt her barriers to education had been, and how she felt she might be able to change things on returning to school. With support Laila wrote a school plan, which she called 'Measures which may help me to manage y10'.

Laila also wrote a school statement, where she reflected on the negative impact of being out of education for so long. She recognised the impact on her mental health and the barriers of not attending school may present to her in the future. Laila also articulated that she needed to take responsibility to engage willingly with school.

Laila's statement was sent following the application to return to school. In October, Laila heard that the application had been successful. When we told Laila that her application had been successful and she could return to her school, she was overjoyed. She told us she couldn't believe it, and she was so excited.

\* Not her real name

# Our Services

## Carers Voice

*Support for carers to get their voices heard, so they can influence health and social care provision and the services of Carers Support Centre.*

## Carers Voice and policy lobbying

As well as our role as advocates for carers, we enable carers to be heard by local policy makers to influence the development of services.

We do this by:

- keeping up with the latest research, and national and local policy changes on social care
- organising large and small events to inform carers about these new developments and discuss the issues they experience in their everyday lives
- supporting a group of carers to attend local partnership meetings with local council and NHS bodies to report these issues and suggest changes to local services.

## Some Carers Voice success stories

*Bristol City Council proposed 'Fair and Affordable Care Policy' scrapped.*

Bristol City Council, struggling to balance the budget like most local authorities, proposed a new Fair and Affordable Care Policy to enable them to take best value into account when deciding how to meet an individual's care needs.

We wrote a response to the consultation expressing our deep concern about the potential impact this proposed policy could have on carers' well-being and choices. We were especially concerned about the impact on those who cannot afford to pay for care, those caring 35+ hours a week, those who live in social housing, and those who would prefer to care for their loved ones at home.

The council listened to Carers Voice and to disability campaigners, dropped the policy and set up a working group with carers and disabled people representation to find a better solution.

## South Gloucestershire Carers Strategy 2022-2027

Carer representatives and carers co-produced this strategy, outlining what really matters to local carers, and the kind of support they most want and need. This co-production took place over a year, where carer representatives worked with the Council and other partners to hear the voices of many carers living and/or caring in South Gloucestershire.

Since then, we have been working within the Carers Strategy Implementation Group to develop a five-year action plan, to make sure that the strategy turns into real tangible changes, and we will continue to do so for the foreseeable future.

## News for carers

*We provide the latest news for carers through our website, regular eNewsletters and our three times a year printed publication, Carers News.*

- 105,108 unique visitors to our website
- Three editions of Carers News were printed, each edition was sent to an average of 5461 carers by post, and 6140 by email
- 12 monthly eNewsletters to carers with separate editions for Bristol and South Gloucestershire to an average of 6213 recipients.



**105,108 unique visitors**  
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we received support from **67 volunteers**

volunteers contributed **2182 hours** to help support carers

## Thank you to...

### **Our volunteers**

*Our volunteers are an invaluable asset to Carers Support Centre, selflessly dedicating their time, energy, and skills to help others without expecting anything in return.*

Like unpaid carers, the work of volunteers can often go unrecognised, but their impact is immeasurable, and we certainly wouldn't be able to do our work so well without the support of volunteers:

- we received support from 67 volunteers
- volunteers contributed 2182 hours to help support carers
- 21% of volunteers are carers or former carers

*"I really enjoy volunteering with the Carers Support Centre charity. I find the role very rewarding and it also allows me to learn new skills."*

### **Our funders**

*Our work is funded by Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council, Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Integrated Care Board, St Monica Trust, The Henry Smith Charity and The National Lottery Community Fund.*

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

The 29th May 1961 Charitable Trust, ALF Revenue Fund and Quartet Community Foundation, Asda Foundation, The Bernays Trust, Bristol Breakfast Rotary Club, Bristol Brunel Lions Club, Bristol Charities, Bristol City Council – Youth and Play, Bristol Water – Together for Good, Carers Trust, Chatterton Lodge, The Clifford Charity Oxford, Co-op Local Community Fund, Denman Charitable Trust, The D'Oyly Carte Charitable Trust, The Fulmer Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, Hays Travel Foundation, Henry Nicholas, The Honourable Company of Gloucestershire Charitable Trust, John James Bristol Foundation, Nisbet Trust, R S Brownless Charitable Trust, Skipton Building Society Charitable Foundation, The Society of Merchant Venturers, St James's Place Charitable Foundation, The St Stephen and St James Trust, the 7stars Foundation, The Thompson Charitable Trust, Thornbury Rotary Club, The Van Neste Foundation, William Hancock Trust Fund

Pictures on pages 1, 4 and 7 courtesy of Invisible Army [www.invisiblearmy.org](http://www.invisiblearmy.org)





# Thank you for reading

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

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**[www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk](http://www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk)**

A Network Partner of  
**CARERS  
TRUST**



**If you care,  
we care.**

**Carers Support Centre**  
Bristol & South Gloucestershire

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