

Carers  
First

Our strategy

2021–24



# Together for 250,000 carers

Any of our lives can be turned upside down as a result of ill health, disability or frailty of a member of our family or a friend. Even before the pandemic, three in five of us could expect to become a carer at some point in our lives. During the pandemic this figure has increased; and the need for information, timely support and practical help for family carers has become even more crucial.

**At Carers First, we understand that caring can be hard, but believe getting the right help shouldn't be.** Obtaining relevant information and support can itself be a challenge, but with it, carers can thrive. We have seen this time and again with carers we have worked with over the last 30 years. Our key challenge over the next three years is to reach a greater number of carers, at the earliest opportunity and enhance our support to carers to make a positive, material difference in their lives.

Through our research, we have found that many people do not identify or recognise themselves as a carer, but as a daughter, son, mother, father, partner or friend, helping someone close to them. Many carers can struggle without support, for several years, before seeking help. Some slip invisibly between services without accessing or being offered support for themselves.

It is vital that our programmes of support are co-designed with carers, to make sure support is inclusive and accessible to all carers in different communities. We will focus on the needs of different groups of carers at each stage of their journey, and recognise the complexity and uniqueness of each caring role.

Over the following pages we have outlined how we will tackle these challenges and enhance our support to carers like Dan. You will read how we are developing innovative services and solutions including blending digital alongside telephone and face-to-face services. You will see our commitment to forge collaborations with a range of partners to achieve greater support and impact for carers. We can do more together than we can alone.

And you will read how we have identified five key objectives where we will demonstrate real, measurable progress over the next three years.

**Most importantly, you'll see how we need you to achieve this.** You can help us achieve something amazing.

**THANK YOU.**



**Alison Taylor**  
Chief Executive



**Peter Davis**  
Chair

# Dan

## Nicci

*“I was driving one day when the thought came into my mind that if I just drove into a wall, it would be all over. My caring role had taken over my life and I needed a way out. Fortunately, I reached out for help and Carers First gave me my life back.”*

Dan, 40 and his wife



Having someone dependent on him was something Dan learnt from a young age caring for his mum who has emotional instability personality disorder. This followed him to adulthood where he now cares for his wife and his stepson who has autism.

The biggest challenge Dan has faced caring is the feeling he had to do it all alone. He always thought of himself as being able to hold it together and his childhood experience had made him sensitive to looking after his mental health. However, being on call 24/7 and 'moving from one person's crisis to another' led him to that fateful day in the car.

Dan had never received a Carers Assessment despite caring since the age of five. Carers First has helped him secure a personal budget through a recent statutory Carers Assessment that will help cover additional costs of caring which has made him feel more in control.

Dan says, *“It has helped me realise I'm not alone in the difficulties I've faced and there is help available.”*

*“Talking to someone outside my situation made me realise how much my caring role was affecting my physical and mental health. I learnt that I could give myself permission to think of myself and I don't have to feel guilty.”*

Dan has now found more balance in his life and is thriving. He has time to see friends and has also enjoyed volunteering. Fittingly, he is training to be a Peer Facilitator to support other carers with mental health issues.

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***“Being on call 24/7 and moving from one person's crisis to another.”***

# Developing our strategy

It is important to us that our strategy was developed in an inclusive way, bringing together a broad and diverse group of views and opinions from carers, staff, trustees, funders and colleagues in social care, health and schools.

To inform our strategy we:

- Engaged with over **1,150 adult and young carers**
- Interviewed **25 key stakeholders**
- Consulted with **124 staff**
- Involved **all our Trustees**
- Completed an **Environmental/Literature Review**
- Conducted a **Market Analysis**.

The Carers First strategy builds upon our successful past and enable us to reach and support significantly more carers, deliver new services and programmes, forge new collaborations to increase our impact and to grow and diversify the funding base of the charity.

## Our Mission

Carers First provides support, for carers, with carers – so they can live their lives to the fullest

## Our Ambition

To enable carers to thrive in their role and achieve the balance in their lives, they wish to achieve

We will be unrelentingly focusing on **five objectives:**

- 1. Recognise** and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity
- 2. Enhance** our support to carers to make a material difference in their lives
- 3. Raise** the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations
- 4. Develop** a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team
- 5. Grow** our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations.

# Carers First

## How we will deliver our strategy

### Enablers

Developing a vibrant, supportive & inclusive culture to work, innovate & volunteer

Investing in the learning & development of our people

Developing our communications

Expanding our volunteer programme

Working in collaboration with other organisations

Delivering a diverse & sustainable funding base

Improving the efficiency of key systems & processes

Evaluating & gathering insight to improve support for carers

### Activities

Increasing our reach to more carers

Working in co-design with carers to develop our support & services

Developing the website as a key vehicle for the delivery of information & resources for carers

Providing personal high quality, support and services for carers, online, by phone and face to face in the community

Developing collaborative working with other organisations to address carers needs

Using data & insight to grow reach and impact

### Outcomes

More carers are recognised

Improved information and support provided at the earliest opportunity

Improved practical, financial & emotional wellbeing of carers

Carers will feel less isolated & more confident and resilient

Carers can influence local & national policy changes

### Strategic Objectives

Recognise & reach carers at the earliest opportunity

Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in their lives

Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers, in collaboration with other organisations

Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team

Grow financial sustainability & strengthen efficiency of operations

### Our Mission

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### Our Ambition

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# 1. Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity

Carers are the backbone of society making an invaluable contribution to the lives of the people they care for and the health and care system. There are an estimated **6.5 million unpaid carers in the UK** (2011 Census data), although following the coronavirus pandemic in 2020/21 this figure has increased substantially.

Even before the pandemic, it was estimated that **carers save around £132 billion per year of state funding** – the cost of a second NHS. However, many people do not identify themselves as a carer and therefore do not seek specialist support or have it made available to them early in their journey as a carer. Caring often creeps up on people in their role as daughter, son, mother, father, partner or friend. They see caring as helping someone close to them.

## Here's how we'll do it

We will substantially increase the number of carers we reach. 88% of carers use the internet as a source of information. We will create a new website and online resources to offer information, support and resources aligned to a carer's circumstances and needs. Our website will be a key vehicle for carers to get authoritative, tailored information and support, at the time they need it.

We will develop a new communications team delivering campaigns to help more people to recognise themselves as a carer and access support.

We recognise that support needs to be offered much earlier in people's caring journey, and at multiple points of contact, across health, social care, housing, employment, essential services and community provision. We will develop stronger referral pathways with partners including health, social care and community organisations to help reach carers earlier.

We will create a platform for carers to create communities of support and opportunities to shape and influence policy changes at a local and national level.

## By 2024 we will have

- Reached **250,000 carers online** to provide access to information, support and resources
- Increased the number of carers registered with us by **75%**
- Increased the number of carers receiving support by **90%**
- Supported more carers to **share their voices** to influence change.



**Denise**  
**Jamal**

*“Accessing support for myself early helped me manage better in my caring role. My friends from the group were a lifeline and a great comfort to me as I went through such difficult times with Jamal. They were always there at the end of the phone or to meet for a coffee when I needed it.”*

**Denise, 56**, cares for her son Jamal with mental health challenges

## 2. Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in their lives

No two caring relationships are the same. It's important to recognise the complexity and uniqueness of caring roles, whilst also understanding common experiences that help to connect carers together through mutual peer support.

Many carers have a **deep love and desire to care for the person they look after** and find the experience **rewarding and fulfilling**; however, many carers can also find that experience, at times, physically exhausting, emotionally draining and financially challenging. They find it difficult to create a balance in their lives and many do not get appropriate support early enough.

However, with the right information and support in place carers can achieve the balance in their lives, they wish to achieve and live their lives to the fullest.

### Here's how we'll do it

We will provide best practice information and support services for adult and young carers, online, by phone and face-to-face. We will work in co-design with carers, staff and volunteers to ensure our support is inclusive and accessible to all carers in different communities.

We will provide a new coherent service offer for different groups of carers, at each stage of their carer journey, recognising the individuality of each caring role. Our service offer for Adult Carers looking after someone with: Dementia, Mental Health, Learning Disability and/or Autism, Physical Disability, Sensory Conditions, Drug/Alcohol Addiction or who are frail and elderly and our service offer for Young Carers. We will also explore extending our hours of service beyond 9 to 5, where there is a need.

We will build upon and develop new programmes of support around wellbeing/ mental health, building resilience, financial management, maximising incomes and practical support on managing health conditions. We will evaluate outcomes and impact to inform our future service developments – ensuring scalability and sustainability of new programmes.

We will also provide social and peer-to-peer support with carers, to create opportunities for carers to achieve the balance in their lives they wish to achieve.

We will use the power of technology to connect more carers with each other and their communities while supporting those who are digitally excluded.

### By 2024 we will have

- **Co-designed** all service developments and programmes with carers
- Secured external **quality standard** for our information, advice and guidance services
- Increased the number of carers who feel more **confident and informed**
- Increased the number of carers who feel there has been an **improvement in their lives as a result of our support.**



**Debbie**

**Margaret**

*“As a carer, I found so often you're not listened too. It was such a relief to know there are people willing to listen and know what it's like to be a carer. The support group gave me the strength to carry on. I could talk freely about my frustrations with people who understood and wouldn't judge me. I thought if they can keep going, so can I!”*

**Debbie, 53**, cared for her mum with Parkinsons Disease

### 3. Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations

We know that as a charity there is low awareness of who we are and what we do. Many carers said their route into Carers First was 'by chance'. Building a stronger brand and communicating our impact will be key to increasing the support we can give to carers.

We also recognise that collaboration is key to widen our reach, tackle issues and provide appropriate and timely support for carers.

#### Here's how we'll do it

We will refresh our brand and position Carers First as 'more local' and 'more national'.

We will develop effective collaboration and partnerships with complementary organisations in health, social care, disability, schools and employers and with commercial organisations, such as essential services, care/respite providers, supermarkets and housing associations, to achieve greater support and impact for carers.

We will raise the profile of the impact of our work on the lives of carers.

#### By 2024 we will have

- Forged strong collaborations and partnerships with a network of statutory, charity and commercial organisations to **support more carers**
- **Increased the number of carers we support through collaborative working by 50%**
- **Evidenced the impact of our work in regular reports.**



**Anglian Water**

**Carers First**

*“Here at Anglian Water, we pride ourselves on going the extra mile for our employees and customers. We are delighted to be working in partnership with Carers First to make sure we can help our customers get the support they need.”*

**Bethanie Kennedy**, Partnership Manager, Anglian Water



## 4. Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team

We know how highly the carers we support value our staff and volunteers. We want to make sure Carers First is a great place to work and volunteer. We will make sure carers are represented across the charity from trustees, staff and volunteers and we will promote our Carer Friendly working practices.

Our thriving community of volunteers help us to support carers, but we need more volunteers, in more roles to enrich the support we can offer.

### Here's how we'll do it

We will continue to embed a positive and supportive work culture at Carers First. This will include a new set of values for the charity and Wellbeing Charter, created with our staff/volunteer team. We will also invest in learning and development to establish a supported, performing and connected team.

We will expand our volunteer programme to substantially increase the number of volunteers, their roles and peer support programmes.

### By 2024 we will have

- **90%** of staff who feel there is a **positive, inclusive and supportive work culture**
- **92%** of staff who feel **proud to work for Carers First**
- **300%** increase in our **number of volunteers**
- **90%** of volunteers who feel **supported and valued in their roles**
- Secured **Investors in Volunteering accreditation**.

**Carla**

**Toby**



*“Carers First has made me feel valued and recognised for what I do and through volunteering, I feel like I am doing something to help others. It has given me a reason to get back out there, to believe in myself.”*

**Carla**, cares for her son who has autism

# 5. Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations

Over 90% of our income currently comes from statutory contracts. It is essential we grow and diversify our income to be responsive to local carers needs and become financially sustainable over the longer term.

As a growing and innovating charity, we also want to ensure that we have fit for purpose systems and processes in place, so our staff and volunteer team can thrive in their roles and focus on delivering much needed support for carers.

Good governance is key for any charity and we want to ensure that we are promoting best practice in accordance with the Charity Governance Code.

## Here's how we'll do it

We have developed an ambitious three-year Income Generation Plan to deliver our new strategy. The plan sets out our ambition to quadruple our voluntary income and diversify our funding base – growing our income from Trusts and Foundations, building individual giving, community fundraising, corporate partnerships and legacies and maintaining and securing new statutory contracts.

We are reviewing and developing our key systems and processes, our office requirements and how we run the charity.

## By 2024 we will have

- **Quadrupled** our voluntary income and **diversified** our income base
- **90%** of staff/volunteers who agree that they have the **tools and resources they need**
- **Reduced office costs and increased operational efficiencies**
- **Demonstrated best practice** in relation to charity governance.



## Children in Need

### Carers First Young Carers Project

*“BBC Children in Need is committed to improving the lives of those children and young people who need it most by supporting projects like Carers First Young Carers Project, which work locally to make real and lasting changes to young lives.”*

**Sophie Charles**, BBC Children in Need, Southern Regional Officer

# Five ways you can help

We are well placed to build on our successful past and reach and support significantly more carers – **but we need your help.**

Together we can enable carers to thrive in their role and achieve the balance in their lives, they wish to achieve.

Here's how you can help make a life-changing difference:

1

## Partner with us

We simply cannot do this alone, and we want to work with like-minded individuals and organisations. If you share our passion and commitment to support carers, we would love to work with you.

2

## Donate & Fundraise

By giving a one-off or regular donation (such as £5 a month) you can play a vital role in helping us be there for carers, with carers, whenever they need us. You can also fundraise. Whatever you take on, whether you run, walk, jump, quiz or bake off, we would love you to be part of our fundraising community.

3

## Spread the word

We rely on word of mouth and people (and partners) talking about Carers First and the great support that we provide. The more we talk about carers, the greater chance we have of reaching those who are hidden. A single share of our social media content dramatically increases our reach, so please remember to re-tweet, share and like our posts.

4

## Share your story

By talking about your experience as a carer, you can help us tell powerful stories that raise awareness of the needs of carers, help more people identify themselves as carers and help carers to feel less alone.

5

## Volunteer

We are looking for volunteers to enrich our work with carers; support them to access online support; and community supporters; fundraisers; communicators and researchers. If you have a few hours to give a week, or would like to support specific short-term projects, we would love to hear from you.

## Say hello

Visit us at  
[carersfirst.org.uk](https://carersfirst.org.uk)

Email  
[partners@carersfirst.org.uk](mailto:partners@carersfirst.org.uk)

Facebook

Twitter

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