

Herefordshire All-Age Carers Strategy 2024-2029



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Introduction

In Herefordshire, we acknowledge and value the essential role of unpaid carers in our community. Unpaid carers are individuals who provide care and support to family members, friends, or loved ones facing challenges due to illness, disability, or other complex needs.

It is important to note that unpaid carers can be of any age, ranging from children and adolescents caring for their family members to adults caring for aging parents or partners. Working in collaboration with partner agencies, community organisations and carers, Herefordshire Council has developed this strategy that focuses on six key priorities:

1. **Value and Recognition:** Unpaid carers in Herefordshire play a vital role, offering essential support to loved ones who are facing illness or disability. Their economic impact is significant, reducing healthcare costs by providing care and support that might otherwise need to be provided by health or social care. Beyond practical caregiving, they provide emotional support, contributing to a compassionate society. We should all recognise and value the commitment and selflessness of unpaid carers of all ages.
2. **Young Carers:** Our strategy is designed to identify and support young carers ensuring that they have access to the necessary resources, information, and, most importantly, opportunities to enjoy a childhood that aligns with their peers. We want to improve recognition and support to this group of carers who will often remain invisible to services that could offer support and opportunities.
3. **Technology-Enabled Care (TEC):** Embracing modern advancements, Herefordshire Council is committed to integrating technology-enabled care to aid carers in their roles. This includes providing access to digital tools and telehealth services that can facilitate communication, monitoring, and the management of the cared-for individuals' health and well-being, all while offering carers more flexibility and peace of mind.
4. **Carers Assessments and Support:** We are committed to making the process of accessing carers' assessments straightforward and stress-free. These assessments are crucial for tailoring support services to meet individual carers' needs.
5. **Information, Advice and Guidance:** Knowledge is power, and it is no different for carers. Herefordshire Council is committed to enhancing the quality and accessibility of information and resources available to carers. This involves ensuring information is clear and easily available from different sources, providing training opportunities, and fostering a network of peer support, enabling carers to navigate the complex landscape of caregiving with confidence.
6. **Staying Healthy:** Ensuring caregivers' well-being is important, as they will often put the needs of the cared for person ahead of their own. This strategy aims to help them maintain good health while balancing their caregiving and other life demands. For young caregivers, diverse experiences, education, and equal opportunities are crucial. Taking the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Boards' (HWICB) Commitment to Carers as a guiding principle, this strategy sets out to support carers to live full and healthy lives.

Aligned with the NHS commitment to carers' well-being¹, Herefordshire Council recognises the importance of supporting carers so they can sustain their caregiving roles without compromising their own health. We will work diligently to ensure that carers receive the recognition and support they deserve. Our strategy for unpaid carers reflects our practical commitment to equipping, informing, and supporting those who play a vital role in our community by caring for their loved

¹ NHS England Commitment to Carers - [NHS England » Commitment to carers](#)

ones. We believe that by supporting unpaid carers, we strengthen our community and celebrate their invaluable contributions to the well-being of those they care for.

Our vision, purpose and values

Vision

Our vision for unpaid carers in Herefordshire has been co-produced with residents, providers or support services and with adults and young people who have lived experience of unpaid caring roles.

'Herefordshire is a carer friendly county, where carers of all ages are recognised, valued, heard and enabled to live a healthy fulfilling family life'

Purpose

- Make Herefordshire a carer friendly county
- Encourage and support carers to maintain their health and wellbeing
- Enable the voices of unpaid carers to be heard and to have influence
- Ensure carers have access to information about their rights and choices
- Work with our partners to encourage and develop best practise in carer support.
- Promote awareness of carers & their value in society

Values

- Improvement – Strive to make a positive difference to our unpaid carers' lives
- Partnership – Working together to make change happen
- Inclusion – Services are available and accessible to the whole community
- Appreciation – Recognise and value the important role of unpaid carers across Herefordshire

Who is a carer

A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support (Carers UK)².

Unpaid carers play a pivotal role in our communities, contributing dedication and compassion to support their loved ones. It is crucial to recognise that the experience of caregiving is not a one-size-fits-all journey, but rather a nuanced and dynamic process shaped by the unique needs and circumstances of those involved.

For instance, parents providing care for a child with autism navigate a distinctive set of challenges, such as addressing sensory sensitivities and ensuring specialised educational support. In contrast, adult children assisting elderly parents contend with issues related to aging, mobility, and healthcare.

Furthermore, the landscape evolves again when considering caregivers supporting individuals with mental health conditions, introducing a different set of responsibilities and emotional strains.

² [Who are unpaid carers - Carers UK](#)

Additionally, young and young adult carers contribute significantly to the caregiving landscape, often balancing their education or career pursuits with the responsibilities of caring for family members. Acknowledging and understanding these divergent experiences is important in creating an inclusive and supportive environment that tailors assistance to the specific needs of each caregiving situation.



Many unpaid carers, despite their substantial contributions, often prefer not to identify themselves explicitly in that role. Instead, they see themselves simply as parents, children, friends, or siblings providing vital support to their loved ones. This choice underscores the wish to emphasise the personal and emotional connections they share with those they care for, avoiding the label of a caregiver. This perspective highlights the genuine and compassionate nature of their involvement, portraying caregiving not as a burden but as an integral part of the interconnected fabric of relationships within families and communities.

Understanding and recognising this choice does not mean they would not wish to receive guidance, support or information that can help them to maintain their care-giving role, and just as importantly ensure their own health and wellbeing. Rather, organisations and agencies should understand and support a person's choice, and always work to understand the individual emotional connections that exist in any unpaid care-giving role.

What we know

The 2021 Census³ data suggests that 16,580 people aged five and over were providing at least an hour of unpaid care a week across Herefordshire. This represents around 9% of the population; the same percentage as England and Wales. This suggests a decrease in the numbers of unpaid carers from the previous census in 2011, when 20,700 unpaid carers were identified, again in line with England and Wales. However, this is almost certainly an underestimate, partly attributable to the timing of 2021 Census coinciding with the Covid-19 pandemic when interaction between households was restricted. In particular, those unpaid carers who did not actually live with the cared for person had their caring activities disproportionately impacted by the pandemic.

In 2022, Carers UK estimated that nationally there are around 10.58 million unpaid carers across the UK: equivalent to one in five adults. Locally the 2023 Herefordshire Community Wellbeing Survey found that 21% (40,365) of Herefordshire adults were providing some level of unpaid care in 2023. These figures are much more in line with the Carers UK estimations.

³ [UK census data - Office for National Statistics \(ons.gov.uk\)](https://ons.gov.uk)

| | 2011 | | 2021 | |
|---|---------------|-----------------|---------------|-----------------|
| | Herefordshire | England & Wales | Herefordshire | England & Wales |
| Provides 19 or less hours unpaid care a week | 7.80% | 7.20% | 4.70% | 4.40% |
| Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week | 1.30% | 1.50% | 1.60% | 1.90% |
| Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week | 2.40% | 2.70% | 2.40% | 2.80% |

Source: 1 UK Census 2021

Estimating the number of young carers is extremely difficult. The 2021 census reported that there were around 120,000 young carers aged between 5 and 18 years. However, research, cited by Action for Children⁴ would suggest the actual number is close to 1 in 5 children and young people that have some form of caring responsibility. Many young carers belong to groups that are often unseen and marginalized, like children looking after family members dealing with mental illness or substance dependency, which are not always captured in official counts. Regrettably, social stigma can make it difficult for a young carer to be as open as they might wish to be for fear of discrimination, bullying or being rejected by their peers.

In Herefordshire, the 2021 Census identified about 360 young carers aged 5-17 and 560 young adult carers aged 18-24, totalling 920 young and young adult carers, making up 2% of the county's population aged 5-24. Nationally, a similar proportion is reported, with 357,000 young and young adult carers across England and Wales.

According to the 2023 school census, there were 39,000 'known' young carers in England, representing 0.5% of the pupil population.

Herefordshire's 'known' young carers make up 0.2% of the pupil population, with 40 out of 24,000 pupils, which is some way below the national average.

However, the 2021 Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Quality of Life Survey⁵ found that almost 1,500 pupils in Year 6 or above care for someone at home this equates to approximately 40% of those surveyed. Of these, about 2% of Year 6 pupils and 5% of secondary and further education pupils look after family members who are ill or have a physical disability.

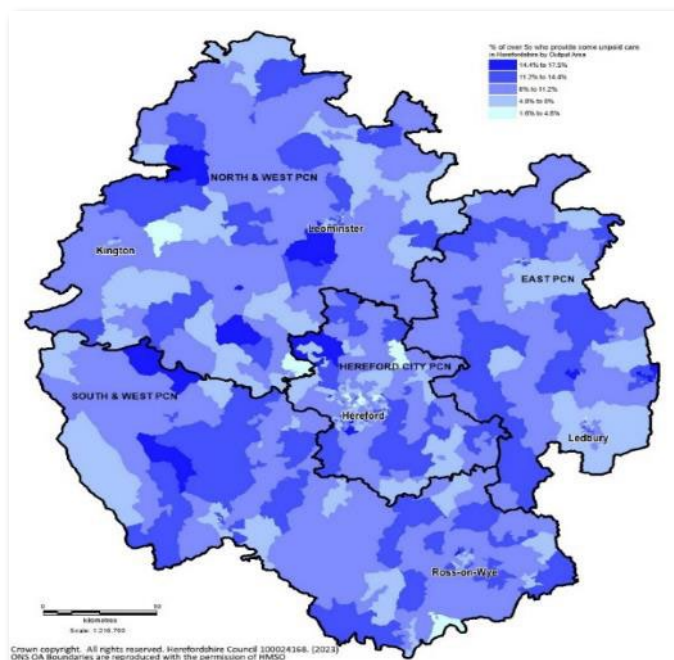
When comparing these sources, it is clear that the Census figure is likely a significant underestimate because it relies on household heads who may not always identify their young children as carers. The School Census data from 2023 also showed underreporting, as schools only reported pupils they already knew were carers. However, the Herefordshire's Children and Young People's Quality of Life Survey relies on self-reported caregiving, which may include looking after younger siblings or spending time with elderly grandparents.

The map below shows the numbers and locations of unpaid carers (adults and children and young people) across Herefordshire. The darker the shading, the greater the number of carers identified.

⁴ [Young carers: who are they and why do they need support? | Action For Children](#)

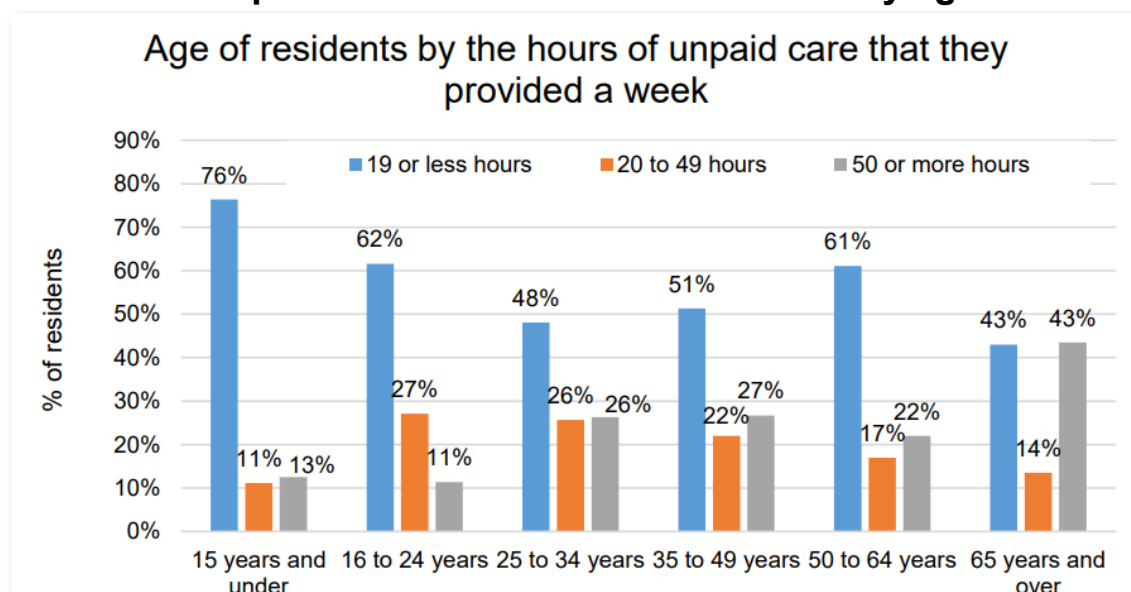
⁵ [Children and Young People's Quality of Life Survey - Understanding Herefordshire](#)

The data for this map is based on information taken from the 2021 census, but as noted above, there are many unpaid carers who have not recognised themselves as such, or choose not to share that information.

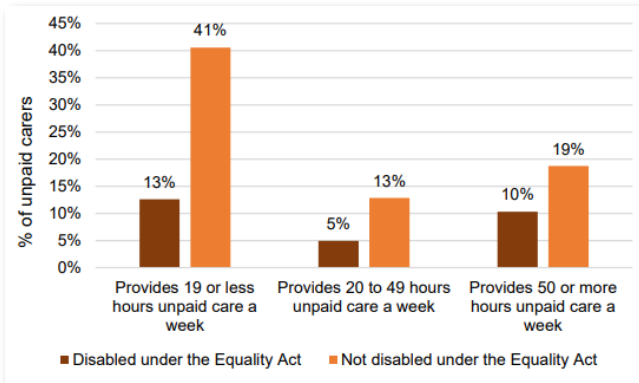


Source: 2 UK Census 2021

The table below provides detail of the number of unpaid carer hours provided each week broken down by age



Source: UK Census (Herefordshire) 2021



28% (4,615) of Herefordshire carers were disabled (as defined by the Equality Act 2010). Almost half (1,705) provide 50 or more hours of unpaid care a week.

Source: UK Census (Herefordshire) 2021

An NHS survey found that young and young adult carers have a higher prevalence of anxiety and depression (13% than non-carers (8%))

[Inquiry Into The Life Opportunities Of Young Carers And Young Adult Carers – November 2023](#)



40% of young carers and young adult carers said that caring ‘always’ or ‘usually’ affects how much time they can spend with their friends.⁷

[Inquiry Into The Life Opportunities Of Young Carers And Young Adult Carers – November 2023](#)

What you have told us

Between September 2023 and May 2024, several events and meetings were held with presentations given to a wide selection of groups and individuals who were either carers themselves, or represented and supported unpaid carers.

These events culminated in a workshop held in May 2024 with stakeholders, carers and parent-carers, where the key priorities of the draft strategy were shared and discussed and a vision

⁶ [Equality Act 2010: guidance - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](#)

⁷ [APPG on Young Carers and Young Adult Carers - Inquiry into life opportunities - Carers Trust](#)

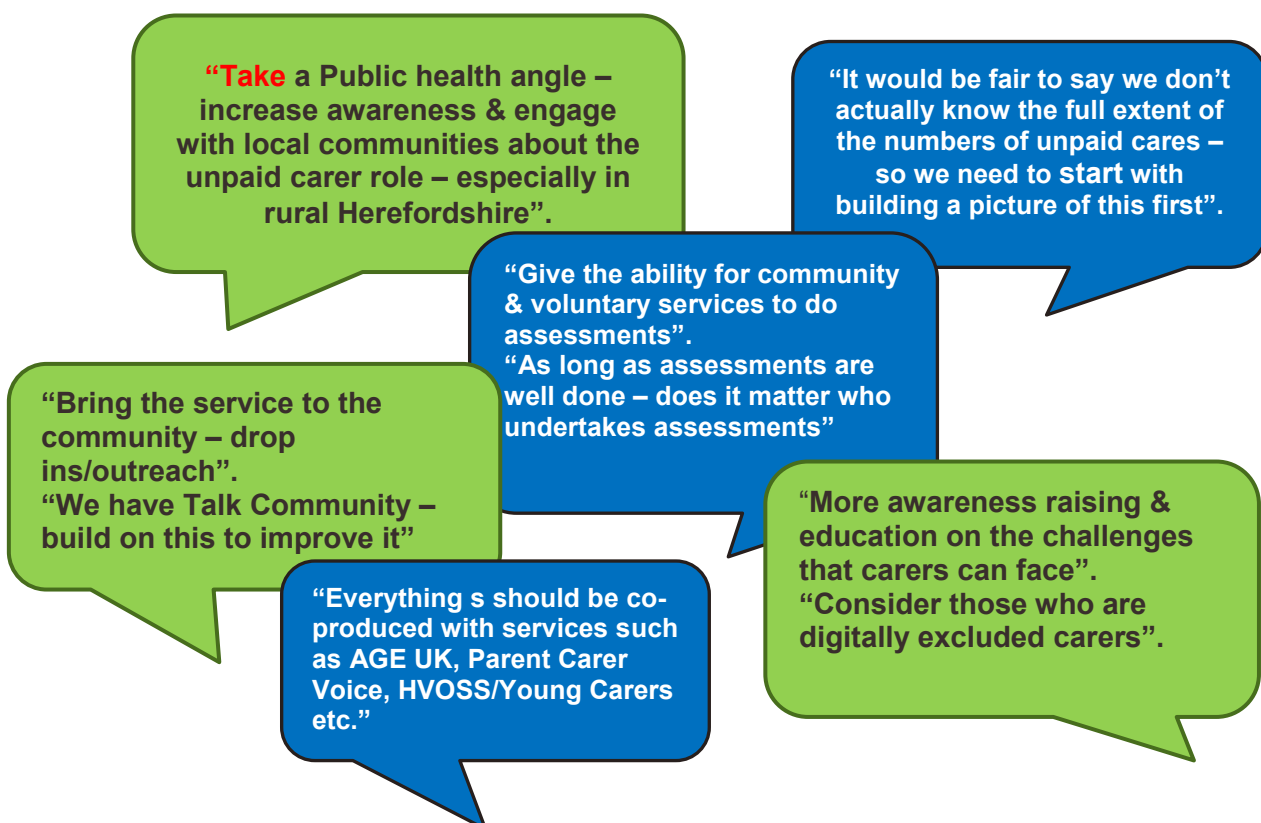
statement for unpaid carers in the county was co-produced. The feedback given at this event has been incorporated into the final version of this strategy. In addition to this event young carers were also able to shape the strategy through specific meetings with them at the young carers club, their thoughts, ideas and feedback have been used to develop our young carers' priority. Further detail on the feedback from young carers is included below.



During September and October 2023 a short survey of service providers supporting unpaid carers was also undertaken. Presentations have been delivered to a wide range of partnership boards including; The Autism Partnership Board, Dementia Partnership and Programme Boards and the Mental Health Advisory Group. Presentations were also shared and discussed at Transformation Tuesday, which is a multi-agency group across health and social care to share information and get feedback on new ideas and projects. Feedback received from all of these groups and the survey were taken back to the

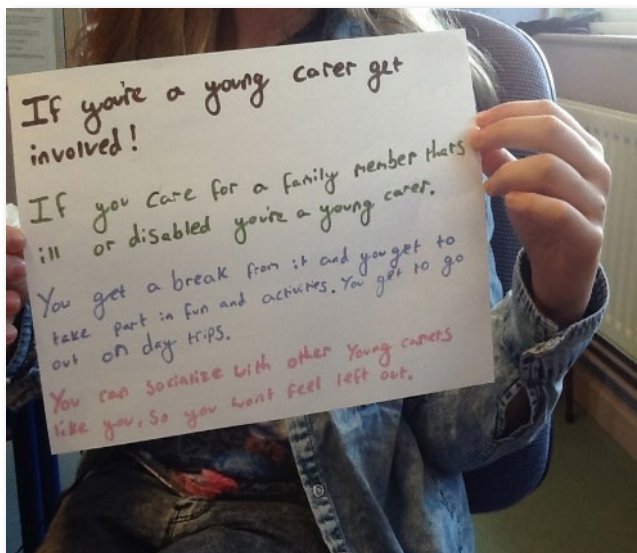
strategy working group and used to shape and develop the final strategy.

In October 2023, Herefordshire Healthwatch hosted a Community Partnership meeting; approximately 80 people attended representing both organisations and individuals. This provided the opportunity to split into facilitated groups and discuss the key areas that this new strategy should focus on. Some of the comments and feedback from the event were:



In November 2023, the Young Adult Carers Club (YACC) gave a presentation about their experiences as young adult carers.

Around 12 young carers were present, who each took it in turn to talk about different aspects of their caring role, both the positive and challenging aspects.



They read out statements about their feelings and experiences, but also read out comments from some of their peers who were unable to attend or felt unable to participate directly in the presentation.

All had suffered bullying as a direct result of their caring role, with most having had poor experiences of education, where teachers had either dismissed or played down the impact of their caring responsibilities.

Their described experiences were extremely powerful and moving, particularly when the young people, having dealt with enormous emotional stress, anxiety and bullying, then shared how at night, when they would go to bed, many of them would worry that the person

they helped to care for, be it a parent or sibling, might become unwell during the night, or worse. At times, some of the young carers would become tearful and upset when talking about their responsibilities and experiences they have had to deal with, but it was heartening to see how others in the group would quickly offer support and encouragement to each other. The following are some of the statements, emotions and feelings expressed by the young adult carers:

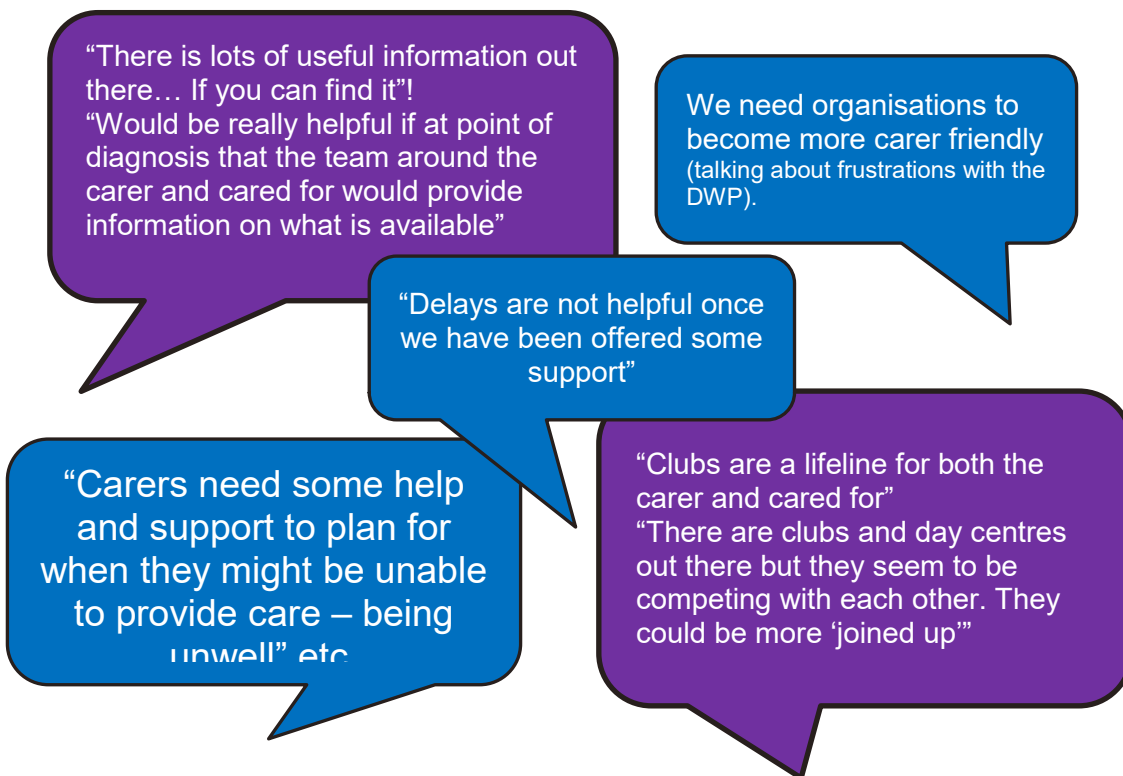
"I clean the house"
"I help 24/7 keeping my brothers calm"
"If you think of it, I probably do it"

"I feel powerless – I don't want to make things worse"
"I can never relax"
"Worried all the time. I got so used to it that it feels normal"
"It's scary. I worry so much about my

"Sometimes your mind is so full of worry you can't concentrate"
"I am being bullied at school. Almost every day. Horrible comments have been said about my mum. It makes me so angry"
"It was hard for me to fit in and hard for me at school"

"We need a safe space with others in similar situations to talk to, relax with and feel ok"

Throughout November and December there were a number of face to face meetings with carers and the organisations that support them. In particular, a number of conversations and discussions with unpaid carers of people diagnosed with dementia. These took place at 'meeting Centres' and a Memory Café in Leominster and Ross on Wye. We had some very interesting and thought provoking conversation, with carers identifying a number of issues that can cause frustration.



At one of these meetings a carer shared with us some extracts from a diary he kept, detailing the progression of his wife’s dementia and the challenges, both emotional and practical, that he faced as their 60 year relationship changed from husband and wife to carer and cared-for. Nonetheless, despite the change in circumstances the diary extracts also highlight the love and fondness that persists.

Diary entry July 2022

To bed, finally, and unhappy sleep. Do I want a week's respite? — No, not really. Do I need a week's respite? — Yes I do. This 'double life' with our home full of her phantoms, the home she is denying more and more is no life. Those who know say, 'Change the subject.' Or 'just go along with it.' Really, is that what the 'behavioural manual' says? Just like that for nearly eight hours of emotional mayhem? I can't say more but this is driving our relationship to the point of self-destruction. And that's criminal after over 60 years together. Will tomorrow be better?

Diary entry September 2023

Alzheimer's is the most dreadful, crippling, cruel disease. But I bask in the warmth of Judy's love and the radiance of her wonderful, ageless smile...
...I know how lucky I am, and if roles were reversed I know Judy would feel the same, and do the same, for me. I love her so, the lovely girl who became my beautiful wife and life's companion. And I

Local Context

Prevention and a strengths based approach

Unpaid carers, both young and adult, play a crucial role in our society, providing essential support to their loved ones. Their contribution is invaluable. To support unpaid carers of all ages, we focus on two key principles: prevention and strengths-based approaches.

Prevention is about providing timely support to carers to prevent, reduce, or delay the need for formal care. This includes offering information, advice, and early intervention services to help carers manage their caring role while maintaining their own health and wellbeing.



3: Prevention in social care - SCIE

For a prevention approach to be effective and impactful, a coordinated effort is essential between Herefordshire Council, health providers, voluntary groups, and the community itself, as depicted in Figure 1 below (Ref: Prevention in social care - SCIE). Using a collaborative approach, we can foster a culture in which all professionals recognise the potential opportunities for preventative support. This could involve initial contact through the Council's Advice and Referral Team (ART), GP appointments, or other engagements with professionals and support services.

Strengths-based approaches focus on the unique strengths and capabilities of the individual. Every carer has inherent strengths that can be used to enhance their resilience and independence. Instead of concentrating on what individual can't do, we focus on what they can do and the resources available to them in their community.

Young carers, face a unique set of challenges. Balancing caring responsibilities with education and personal development can be difficult. Our aim to ensure that young carers are recognized, heard, and supported. In line with the Care Act and Children and Families Act, a holistic family approach should be taken when assessing needs. This involves understanding the needs of the entire family unit. It is about ensuring that the needs of all family members, including the person receiving care as well as the young carer, are taken into account, emphasizing the importance of considering everyone involved.

Adult carers often face their own health and wellbeing challenges. It is important that as agencies, organisations and communities we identify and develop ways of providing support that build upon individual strengths, while promoting independence and enhancing quality of life.

This strategy sets out a series of key priorities and expectations. Fundamentally, we aim to foster connections between carers, local groups, and services, creating a network of support, enabling carers to access the resources and support they need.

Our strategy also aligns closely with the NHS Commitment to Carers, which has been adopted locally by Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board ([NHS England » Commitment to carers](#))

By focusing on the strengths of carers and their communities, and by providing preventative support, we aim to enhance the resilience of carers, promote their wellbeing, and ensure that they can continue their caring role sustainably.

Available Support

The following information highlights some of the groups and organisations across Herefordshire that provide support, guidance and or advice to unpaid carers. We know there are many small groups that have been formed that may not have a wide recognition, but nonetheless provide an important service for those that attend. As we move forward, we want to develop a better understanding of these smaller independent groups and create a network of carers support organisations, so that carers can more easily find support that meets their individual needs, and reflects their caring responsibilities. This will include the development of peer support group, as we know that sharing experiences, practical advice and information with other carers can provide social and emotional support and reduce isolation.



Herefordshire Carer Links: Herefordshire Council's commissioned Carer Support Service, provides information, guidance and support to unpaid carers of all ages. The service provides information and advice on various topics, including local services, support groups, and benefits. Carer Advisors assist with care planning, decision-making, and contingency planning. They also guide carers on accessing grants and benefits like Carer's Allowance and Blue Badges.

Carer Links is developing the Virtual Carers Centre (VCC), an online platform providing advice, resources, and assistance with assessments, grants, and appointments. The service offers emotional support, including one-to-one sessions and connections to local support groups.

Carer Advisors help carers express their needs, represent them at meetings, and provide resources on healthy living and preventive services. Outreach programs target carers who may not self-identify, especially young carers and those caring for someone with a hidden disability. Regular community drop-ins and Carers Forums provide a comprehensive support system.

By offering these preventative services, Carer Links aims to empower carers, reduce stress, and promote health and resilience, preventing the need for more intensive care services in the future.



Young and Young Adult Carer CIC: Young Carer clubs take place in different locations in the county, once a fortnight during term times. These groups enable Young Carers to meet others experiencing similar situations to their own and make new friends. Members can access advice and information from experienced staff. Members can also benefit from one to one support and take part in a variety of activities, games and workshops. Having these opportunities to meet helps reduce social isolation, increase confidence and social skills, as well as providing a much-needed break from

their caring role. It is important to have the opportunity to simply be a child for a few hours, have fun and relax. All of which helps Young Carers to build resilience and achieve their aspirations. Also available is confidential advice and support for Young Adult carers, aged 16 to 24. There are regular meetings so that people in similar situations can have a break from their caring responsibilities, find help and support, have fun and make new friends.

In addition to the groups, the YYAC CIC also offers advice, information, one-to-one support and liaison with teachers, social care teams and other professionals, when Young Carers need help to be heard.

Dementia Meeting Centres and Memory Cafes:

A Meeting Centre is a local resource, operating out of ordinary community buildings that offer on-going warm and friendly expert support to people and carers affected by dementia. Meeting Centres are evidence based and seek to support people in adjusting to living with the symptoms and changes that dementia brings. An important aspect of the Meeting centre model is that carers also have the opportunity to meet and share experiences of adjusting to becoming a carer for a loved one developing dementia. Centres are currently located in Leominster, Hereford and Ross on Wye, but looking to expand their network



Memory Cafes, also known as Dementia Cafes are set up and run by local interest groups within the community, supported by volunteers. Memory cafes provide individuals living with dementia a safe, relaxed and friendly place to connect with others, take part in activities and provide an important support networks for carers. The network is developing with cafes operating in Ross on Wye, Leominster and Ewyas Harold



Early Help Support for Young Carers and their families

(Herefordshire Council) – The Early Help Service complete all Young Carers Assessments for Children and Young People identified as Young Carer's within Herefordshire, up to the age of 18. These assessments consider the child's caring

responsibilities within their family unit and what needs they may have as a result of these responsibilities. A Family Support Worker will complete this assessment and support the child and their family with the aim of signposting to appropriate support and advice, providing any targeted support as identified within the assessment, bring together a multi-agency team around the family to have regular Team around the Family meetings and aim to improve the outcomes for the Young Carer and their family.



Talk Community has an important role in Herefordshire, developing connections within the community. Its primary objective is to link individuals with appropriate services, groups, community hubs, events, and information, all designed to contribute to peoples overall well-being.

Many of the Talk Community Hubs in partnership with other groups and organisations provide services and support to unpaid carers. For example Hereford Age UK have been running a series of 'roadshows' providing information, support and guidance to unpaid carers about accessing benefits, and how to 'navigate' the care system, something we know can be confusing or unclear, especially for people who suddenly find themselves in a caring role.

In the Bromyard area, Talk Community in partnership with Herefordshire CarerLinks will be running a drop in every 4th Tuesday from the Bromyard Centre, providing carers locally with information, advice and a listening ear. Additionally and in partnership with the 'Our Community

'Can' project' from Active Herefordshire and Worcestershire, they will be running activity sessions that run alongside the care drop-ins, so that cared for people can engage in some safe and meaningful activity with trained providers if their carer needs some time to chat alone with a carer advisor. This new provision will be monitored with the potential to extend this to other areas of the county.



Herefordshire Recovery Service, part of the national charity Turning Point, provides support and advice to people around their use of alcohol and drugs

As part of that provision, the Family & Carers Service offers support to people who may be struggling to cope with the drug or alcohol use of someone close to them. They provide a combination of one-to-one support and group work to explore the 5-Step Method to family support.

The focus of the service is on the needs of family and carers themselves. The programme supports family and carers to feel better informed about the situation they are in, feel more confident in responding to the situation, and explore what help is available.

The service is free and confidential, and is offered without the need for the person using drugs or alcohol to be engaged in treatment.

[Herefordshire Recovery Service | Turning Point \(turning-point.co.uk\)](https://turning-point.co.uk)



Carers of Herefordshire (CoH) is a charity that supports Carers within Herefordshire in various ways.

CoH organises and runs 23 groups a month in different locations, including Leominster, Ledbury and the Golden Valley. The groups are led by volunteers, offering carers a chance to engage in activities like gardening, or arts and crafts. The groups also provide an opportunity to help carers create a social network of support, reducing isolation and improving mental wellbeing.

CoH also works collaboratively with other organisations including the commissioned service CarerLinks, complementing it by offering Carers respite from their caring role.

The Charity has recently started a new Parent Carer Group that will support parents looking after younger children and those who transition then into adulthood. Also commencing in 2024 will be the 'Carer Carer4Group to help with the transition of the cared for accessing respite and residential care. www.carersofherefordshire.org



Across Herefordshire, GP surgeries are emphasising their commitment to recognising and assisting unpaid carers. This commitment goes beyond medical care to include practical initiatives like health checks, social prescribing, and

facilitating connections to resources, acknowledging and assisting the invaluable role of unpaid carers. In this way, healthcare professionals act as advocates for carers, ensuring they get the recognition and assistance they need.

In addition to offering health checks and social prescribing support, general practice surgeries across Herefordshire are also undertaking work to develop a culture that is proactive in supporting carers. For example, each of the Primary Care Networks (PCN) has an identified 'Carers Lead', responsible for raising the profile of unpaid carers and developing a carer-friendly and supportive culture across practices.

Priorities

Value and Recognition

Across Herefordshire, unpaid carers play a significant, role in providing essential support to individuals facing challenges such as illness or disability. Caregivers quietly dedicate their time and effort to offering vital support to family members, friends, and neighbours.

The economic impact of unpaid caregiving is noteworthy, as carers contribute substantially to reducing healthcare costs by providing essential, often round-the-clock, care to their loved ones. According to research undertaken by Carers UK, unpaid care in England and Wales is valued at £445 million per day.

Beyond the practical aspects of caregiving, unpaid carers serve as emotional support for those in their care, contributing to the fabric of a compassionate and supportive society. However, unpaid carers face challenges, including financial strain and limited access to resources. Addressing these challenges is important to create a more sustainable and supportive environment for unpaid carers. For example, organisations and businesses could become 'carer-friendly', implementing supportive policies and processes within workplaces that can help create a more understanding and accommodating environment for staff with care giving responsibilities. Understanding and appreciating the amount of time and care that individuals provide others as unpaid carers should be a priority across all parts of society, but especially by health and social care providers.

Not only do carers give their time and commitment to family members and friends, who themselves would struggle to cope without such help, this often takes place quietly and in the background. It is important therefore that unpaid carers feel recognised and valued, and that should they themselves need some help or support, it is available for them.

Key objectives

- ✓ We will work with our partner organisations to establish a Herefordshire place based Carer's Partnership Board to enable unpaid carers to have a voice and be properly represented. This will run complimentary to the Integrated Care System (ICS) Carers Reference Group that spans both Herefordshire and Worcestershire.
- ✓ Like our partners in primary care, the council will identify a dedicated 'Carers Lead' to guide and advise staff
- ✓ The council will take further steps to becoming a 'carer friendly' organisation and encourage other businesses and organisations to support staff who are carers
- ✓ We will work closely with our Integrated Care System (ICS) partners to ensure the voice of Herefordshire carers is heard through the ICS Carers Reference Group

Young Carers

Young carers are a vital, yet often invisible, part of our society. They are children and young people who take on significant caring responsibilities for a family member with a disability, illness, mental health condition, or substance use issues. These children and young people provide

essential care and support, which can range from household chores to emotional care. Recognising and supporting young carers is crucial for several reasons:



The role of young carers is demanding, and recognising and supporting them is of paramount importance.

Safeguarding Well-being: The well-being of young carers can be at risk due to the physical and emotional strain of their caregiving duties. They often juggle these responsibilities alongside their own personal growth and development, which can lead to exhaustion and burnout.

Nurturing Education: The responsibilities young carers

shoulder can interfere with their education. Attendance and academic performance can suffer, potentially limiting their future opportunities. Without proper recognition and support, these young individuals may face educational disadvantages.

Impact on Mental Health: The stress and isolation that can accompany caregiving put young carers at risk of developing mental health issues. These challenges can lead to anxiety, depression, and feelings of isolation, making it crucial to address their emotional well-being.

Challenges in Identifying Young Carers

Identifying young carers is challenging due to the often hidden nature of their responsibilities. Many young carers do not openly discuss their caregiving roles, which can go unnoticed, as they tend to put their family's well-being ahead of their own need for help or recognition. The stigma and fear of judgment associated with caregiving can prevent them from seeking support, leading to potential isolation from their peers. Additionally, a general lack of awareness among healthcare providers, educators, and community members about the signs and needs of young carers can lead to missed opportunities for providing necessary early intervention and support.

The Carers Trust's 'No Wrong Doors for Young Carers'⁸ initiative seeks to address these challenges by fostering a collaborative approach across services, ensuring that young carers are identified, supported, and that no opportunities for assistance are missed.

⁸ Carers Trust – 'No Wrong Doors For Young Carers': ["No Wrong Doors" for Young Carers - Carers Trust](#)

Key objectives

- ✓ Raise awareness of young carers across schools and educational establishments
- ✓ Encourage schools to identify a young carer champion to work with and support young carers
- ✓ Adult's and Children's social care service in partnership with the Integrated Care Board should work towards full implementation of the 'No Wrong Doors for Young Carers' Memorandum of Understanding.
- ✓ Work with voluntary organisations to develop ways of supporting young and young adult carers so they can experience time away from their caring responsibilities
- ✓ Ensure that young and young adult carers are offered an assessment
- ✓ Support the availability of young carer groups and peer support networks

Carers Assessments and support

Local authorities have a crucial responsibility to conduct assessments for unpaid carers, as outlined in the Care Act 2014⁹. This legal framework recognises that unpaid carers, often family members or friends, play a pivotal role in providing essential care and support to those in need. Similarly, the Children and Families Act 2014¹⁰ gives young carers and parent carers in England a right to an assessment of their own needs. Crucially it is expected that the Care Act and the Children and Families Act should work together to make sure the needs of the whole family are met and inappropriate or excessive caring by young carers is prevented or reduced. Carrying out assessments for unpaid carers is a proactive step towards recognising their dedication and addressing their unique needs.

These assessments serve multiple important purposes:

Recognition and Acknowledgment: An assessment formally acknowledges the invaluable contribution of unpaid carers. It validates their role and dedication, giving them the recognition they deserve.

Understanding Needs: Assessments help us to gain a deeper understanding of the challenges faced by carers. They provide insight into the physical, emotional, and practical demands of caregiving, allowing Herefordshire Council to tailor support accordingly.

Tailored Support: Armed with the results of the assessment we can offer personalised support that meets the specific needs of each carer. This may include respite care, training, counselling, or access to community resources.

Preventing Burnout: Carers often face the risk of burnout due to the physical and emotional toll of caregiving. Identifying this risk early through assessments allows us to intervene and provide relief, reducing stress and preventing exhaustion.

⁹ [Care Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

¹⁰ [Children and Families Act 2014 \(legislation.gov.uk\)](https://www.legislation.gov.uk)

Maintaining Independence: Assessments also consider the impact of caregiving on the carer's own life and well-being. This helps to ensure that carers can continue to lead fulfilling lives alongside their caregiving responsibilities.

Key objectives

- ✓ Review current carer assessment process and consider other alternative options for undertaking this responsibility
- ✓ Ensure that all those that request a carers assessment receive one in a timely way
- ✓ Work with partners to support the creation of carer peer support networks.
- ✓ Ensure that carers can access information about their rights and access to assessments and that the information is clear and consistent.
- ✓ We will work with our carer support provider (Herefordshire CarerLinks) and other carer focussed groups and organisations to new and innovative ways to provide support

Technology-Enabled Care (TEC) for Unpaid Carer Support

In Herefordshire, we are already providing some preventative technologies that are identifying increased risks and preventing incidents such as falls before they occur. We are currently working with a number of providers and piloting different types of technology enabled with the intention of making these services available to our residents throughout 2024 and beyond. Technology-Enabled Care (TEC) is changing the caregiving landscape, particularly in the context of providing invaluable support for unpaid carers. The following is an indication of how TEC can and will improve lives for the cared-for and the care-giver;

Predictive Technologies: TEC leverages predictive technologies to monitor the well-being of the cared-for person. Wearable devices collect data on behavioural patterns, which is then analysed using artificial intelligence and machine learning algorithms. This proactive approach enables the identification of changes in routines or health conditions, triggering alerts and insights for unpaid carers.

Real-Time Alerts and Insights: The TEC platform sends real-time alerts to unpaid carers when significant changes are detected. This immediate notification system empowers carers to respond promptly to emerging situations, providing timely support and care as needed. Whether it's a deviation from daily routines or a health-related concern, unpaid carers can stay informed and take proactive measures.



Accessible Platforms for Unpaid Carers: Unpaid carers have easy access to TEC platforms through user-friendly mobile applications. These apps serve as a centralised hub, offering a comprehensive overview of the cared-for person's well-being. Carers can check daily activities, receive notifications, and access relevant health data—all from the convenience of their smartphones.

Peace of Mind and Well-Being Management: TEC does not just provide support for the cared-for person; it also promotes the well-being of unpaid carers. By offering real-time insights and alerts, TEC contributes to the peace of mind of carers, allowing them to navigate their daily lives with greater confidence. This technology-driven support system helps carers strike a balance between caring for their loved ones and addressing their own well-being needs.

Customised Care Plans and Assistance: TEC allows for the creation of customised care plans based on the individual needs and conditions of the cared-for person. Unpaid carers can receive guidance and suggestions through TEC platforms, ensuring that the care provided is tailored to the specific requirements of their loved ones.

Ongoing Monitoring for Proactive Care: The ongoing monitoring feature of TEC ensures that unpaid carers are continuously informed about the well-being of the cared-for person. This proactive care approach enables carers to intervene early, preventing potential health issues or addressing emerging challenges before they escalate.

In summary, Technology-Enabled Care offers opportunities of much greater support and peace of mind for unpaid carers, providing them with the tools and insights needed to offer personalised, timely, and effective support to their loved ones while also enabling them to manage their own well-being.

Key objectives

- ✓ Identify and make available a range of technology enabled care systems to meet different care and support needs
- ✓ Recognise that across a large rural county there may be challenges in providing TEC in some areas
- ✓ We will continue to work with carers and the cared-for to identify the best TEC solutions
- ✓ We will work with our partners in health and the ICB to identify ways of reducing delays to discharge from hospital

Information, Advice and Guidance

The demands of caregiving can at times be overwhelming, so being able to access appropriate information and advice is essential for their well-being and effectiveness in their roles.

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidelines emphasise the importance of providing unpaid carers with access to relevant information and advice.¹¹ This guidance recognises that carers require support tailored to their specific needs and circumstances. By equipping carers with knowledge about the conditions they are managing, available support services, and self-care strategies, they can better navigate their caregiving responsibilities.

Access to information and advice empowers carers to make informed decisions about the care they provide. Understanding medical conditions, treatment options, and potential side effects enables carers to advocate effectively for their loved ones' needs within healthcare settings. Moreover, knowing where to access support services, financial assistance, and respite care options can alleviate the burden on carers and prevent burnout.

For young carers, in particular, access to information and advice is crucial for balancing caregiving responsibilities with education, social activities, and personal development. National organisations such as Carers Trust provide resources and support tailored to the unique needs of young carers, including online forums, peer support groups, and educational materials¹². However, we need to ensure that information and advice for young and young adult carers is available locally and in places and formats that our young carers can access easily. Research by the Kings Fund¹³ identified that; "Access to good health and social care for their loved one is a vital issue affecting quality of life for many carers, and so the wider social care context is critical. Carers said they often had to learn about how the 'system' worked in order to be able to navigate it successfully".

¹¹ National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) guidance on supporting unpaid carers: <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng150>

¹² Carers Trust resources for young carers: <https://carers.org/getting-support-if-you-are-a-young-carer-or-young-adult-carer/getting-support-if-you-are-a-young-carer-or-young-adult-carer>

¹³ The Kings Fund, Caring in a complex world: <https://www.kingsfund.org.uk/insight-and-analysis/reports/unpaid-carers-caring-complex-world>

Information and advice play a vital role in promoting the well-being of unpaid carers of all ages and is an essential component of support for unpaid carers, enabling them to fulfil their roles effectively while maintaining their own well-being. By ensuring that carers have access to relevant and timely information, we can empower them to make informed decisions, access support services, and prioritise their own health and happiness.

Key objectives

- ✓ Ensure that caregivers have easy access to accurate and relevant information, and wherever possible, tailored to their specific needs and circumstances.
- ✓ Equip caregivers with knowledge about medical conditions, treatment options, and available support services to enable informed decision-making and effective advocacy.
- ✓ Provide information on self-care strategies, financial assistance, and respite care options to alleviate stress and prevent burnout.
- ✓ Offer resources specifically designed for young carers, such as online forums, peer support groups, and educational materials, to help them balance caregiving with personal development.
- ✓ Support caregivers on navigating the health and social care systems to improve their loved ones' quality of life and their own well-being.

Staying Healthy

Ensuring the health and overall well-being of our caregivers is crucial for sustained effectiveness. Our aim is to help them maintain good health while balancing their caregiving responsibilities with other life demands, such as work or family obligations. This focus is linked closely to our recently published joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy.¹⁴ This sets out how the Council and its local partners plan to address the health and wellbeing needs of its population. Broken down into two



¹⁴ [Herefordshire Joint Local Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2023 - 2033](#)

main themes, the strategy focusses on 'having the best start in life' and 'good mental wellbeing throughout life'.

For young caregivers, their health significantly shapes their life paths, highlighting the need for a childhood marked by diverse experiences, including the basic right to education and equal opportunities compared to their peers.

Carers may be involved in situations where they or the cared-for person might be at risk of abuse or neglect, and where a safeguarding response may be required. Assessments of both the carer and the cared for should include consideration of the wellbeing of both people. The needs assessment is an important opportunity to explore each person's circumstances and to consider if there is information or support which could be offered to prevent harm to health or wellbeing¹⁵.

To achieve these goals, we are committed to building practical collaborations with caregivers, health and social care providers, communities, and employers. Through these partnerships, our objective is to establish robust support systems that empower caregivers to uphold both their physical and mental well-being.

This approach ensures caregivers can continue their crucial roles with resilience and commitment, contributing to the well-being of those under their care while also enhancing their own professional and personal experiences.

These collective efforts are geared toward creating a more sustainable and supportive environment for caregivers, promoting a healthier and more balanced expectation of the caregiving role.

Key objectives

- ✓ Carers should anticipate experiencing good health and quality of life.
- ✓ Encourage carers to establish a connection with their Primary Care Surgery to facilitate timely and appropriate support when needed.
- ✓ Ensure swift and effective support for carers in the event of a crisis.
- ✓ Implement reasonable adjustments to NHS and Council services, allowing carers to access services at times convenient for both their own needs and those of the individuals they care for.
- ✓ Encourage employers to take simple yet effective actions to help carers balance their caregiving and employment responsibilities.
- ✓ Raise awareness about when a safeguarding response may be necessary to ensure the safety and wellbeing of both the carer and the cared-for person.

¹⁵ [Carers and safeguarding: a briefing for people who work with carers | Local Government Association](#)

Putting It Into Action

A newly established Carers Partnership Board will play a pivotal role in advancing the Carers Strategy. This board will collaboratively develop an action plan that outlines specific steps to achieve the strategy's key objectives. The six objectives encompass various aspects of support for unpaid carers, including recognition, access to resources, and well-being. The board will oversee the implementation of this action plan, ensuring that it aligns with the strategy's vision. Additionally, regular progress reviews will be conducted to assess the effectiveness of the initiatives and make any necessary adjustments. By actively involving stakeholders and monitoring progress, the Carers Partnership Board will provide a voice for unpaid carers to influence decisions that will affect them, and the people for whom they care.

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