

York Carers Strategy 2026-32

What about me?

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Foreword

“Until you take on the role of carer you can not possibly fully comprehend the magnitude of caring and its impact on your life.”

Caring is a part of life for many people in York. Around one in three of us will provide unpaid care at some point. This is often alongside work, education, family life, or managing our own health and wellbeing.

Carers play a vital role in supporting people and strengthening our communities. Yet their contribution can too often go unrecognised or unsupported.

This Carers Strategy sets out our shared commitment to improving the lives of unpaid carers in York. It is shaped by carers' experiences, local evidence, and partnership working. It sets out four focus areas where we will concentrate our efforts. Alongside this are clear arrangements for how we intend to oversee this strategy to ensure we monitor progress and act on what we learn.

We recognise that caring can be rewarding, but it can also be challenging, isolating, and financially and emotionally demanding. This strategy is about making York a place where carers are recognised, supported, and able to live well alongside caring. Our support aims to respect carers' individual identities, choices, and experiences.

By working together, with carers as equal partners, support in York will be more accessible, responsive, and inclusive.

Sharron Smith CEO York Carers Centre:

“I am proud to support this Carers Strategy, which recognises the vital role played by unpaid carers in our city. We know that things are incredibly hard for carers, and this strategy represents a step forward in ensuring that carers are not only recognised, but also properly supported, valued, and empowered across the city. I look forward to working together with other organisations, to turn these commitments into real change for carers in our area.”

Strategy overview

This strategy is for all unpaid carers who live in York (or are caring for someone who lives here) and those whose caring role has recently ended. It is also for the people they care for, their families and friends, and the people and organisations that support them.

While there are various organisations helping carers in York, we know there are gaps. Many carers do not know about or understand their rights or options. They can find it hard to get the help they need, at the right time.

As a partnership, we want to be there for carers whenever they need us. We want to offer flexible and consistent support that helps them cope. Not just at times of crisis, but throughout their caring roles. At the same time, we want carers to feel acknowledged, respected and valued for what they do.

The strategy sets out our shared vision for improving how we recognise carers of all ages and backgrounds and help them live well. It details the focus areas we will work on to achieve the vision and some key measures of success, to know if we are making progress.

We will create an action plan that includes the specific steps we need to take to deliver the strategy. It will evolve in response to any changing needs.

We have developed the strategy in partnership with local carers, former carers and organisations that support carers. It is based on what carers have told us they need locally, and the challenges we know carers are facing nationally. We hope that other organisations, employers, staff and residents will share our vision. Together we can help to create a city that supports, nurtures and celebrates carers.

“If right provisions were in place for people they care for without having to go to war to get it life wouldn't be this living hell it currently is.”

We know that for many carers, improved support for those they care for would make the biggest difference. Whilst we hope that our plans will make a positive difference to people being cared for; this strategy is dedicated to the support we provide for carers.

This strategy supports the council and its partners to meet their responsibilities under national legislation. This includes the Care Act 2014, and the Children and Families Act 2014. These laws recognise the important role of unpaid

carers and set out duties to identify, assess and support carers so they can maintain their wellbeing and live their lives alongside caring.

The strategy is linked to a wider collaborative approach across all sectors, including voluntary and community organisations, health, education and social care. It also aligns with other council and partnership strategies relating to health and care, children and young people, equality and inclusion, and community wellbeing. It is intended to complement rather than duplicate existing plans.

Our shared vision

Our shared vision describes what we want the strategy to achieve for carers in York. This is our vision:

In York, we care about the impact caring may have on you and the people you care for. We work in partnership with you and others to help you connect to consistent, flexible support that:

- recognises your diverse and unique needs
- prioritises your health and wellbeing
- helps you find a balance between caring and achieving your goals
- makes you feel valued, heard, and included

We need to be realistic about what we can achieve with our combined resources, and what we can control at a local level. But we are ambitious, and believe by working together more effectively and creatively, we can make a significant and positive difference to the lives of carers in York.

How we will oversee the strategy

This strategy is overseen through governance arrangements that ensure carers' voices are central and that progress is monitored.

A Carers Action Group will be led by carers within the city. It will support delivery, share lived experience and highlight what needs to improve.

A Carers Strategy Group will provide oversight of the strategy and address any barriers to delivery. The group is made up of carers and other partners from health, education, the council and the voluntary and community sector.

We will report progress on our action plans through existing health and care partnership arrangements and council governance processes. This includes reporting to the Executive Committee if needed.

Our approach: Dignity, respect and lived experience

“Until you take on the role of carer you can not possibly fully comprehend the magnitude of caring and its impact on your life.”

We are dedicated to treating carers and the people they care for with dignity, respect and kindness. We will focus on understanding people’s situations, strengths, and what matters most to them.

We know that caring can involve pride and purpose as well as stress, financial pressure, loss and trauma. Our approach aims to avoid assumptions and ensure carers feel seen, heard and supported.

We are committed to the York Poverty Truth Commission's guiding statement, “Nothing about us, without us, is for us” and their standards for organisations:

- We listen
- We are understanding
- We are respectful and friendly
- We are responsive, honest and care about getting you the right support

In York, we recognise that caring responsibilities can significantly affect people’s life chances. While caring is not a protected characteristic in national equality law; as a council, we treat caring as if it were in local decision-making and service delivery.

Listening to lived experience

“It is always a good idea to actively listen to the people on the front line of caring rather than people who 'think they know what carers want or need' but have no direct experience of how difficult it can be to get advice or assistance or just manage on a day to day basis.”

Carers’ voices are central to this strategy. Carers are experts in their own lives and in what the people they care for need. Through lived experience of caring, carers bring vital insight into what works, what doesn’t, and where support needs to change.

Hearing what carers have to say is an important part of promoting their rights, understanding their experience, and valuing the care they provide. Involving carers as equal partners is essential to achieving better outcomes for them and the people they support.

We recognise that carers' experiences are diverse and can be shaped by many factors, including age, health, culture, employment, education, and the needs of the person they care for.

This strategy has been guided by carers' lived experience through ongoing conversations. This includes working with carers through the Carers Action Group and Carers Strategy Group and a citywide consultation.

We know we need to do more to hear from carers to understand and support their specific and individual needs. It is important that we reach carers who may not be known to services or are less likely to seek support. This will help us address barriers to carers getting the right support and help to prevent carers being disadvantaged.

Who is a carer?

A carer is defined by Carers Trust as, “anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction.”

We recognise caring as something people do, not something that defines who they are, in line with the approach promoted by Carers Trust.

Carers' lives and roles are diverse. Caring can happen at any stage of life and often begins when people do not expect it. People may move in and out of caring roles over time, and their needs and circumstances can change. They may also have little or no choice in taking on caring duties.

Carers include adults, children from as young as 5 years old, young people, parents and kinship carers (who care for children whose parents are unable to). Some carers recognise themselves as carers, while others may not, particularly where caring is seen as part of family life.

The amount of time people spend caring can vary widely. As can the type of support they provide and who they care for, as shown in the diagram below.

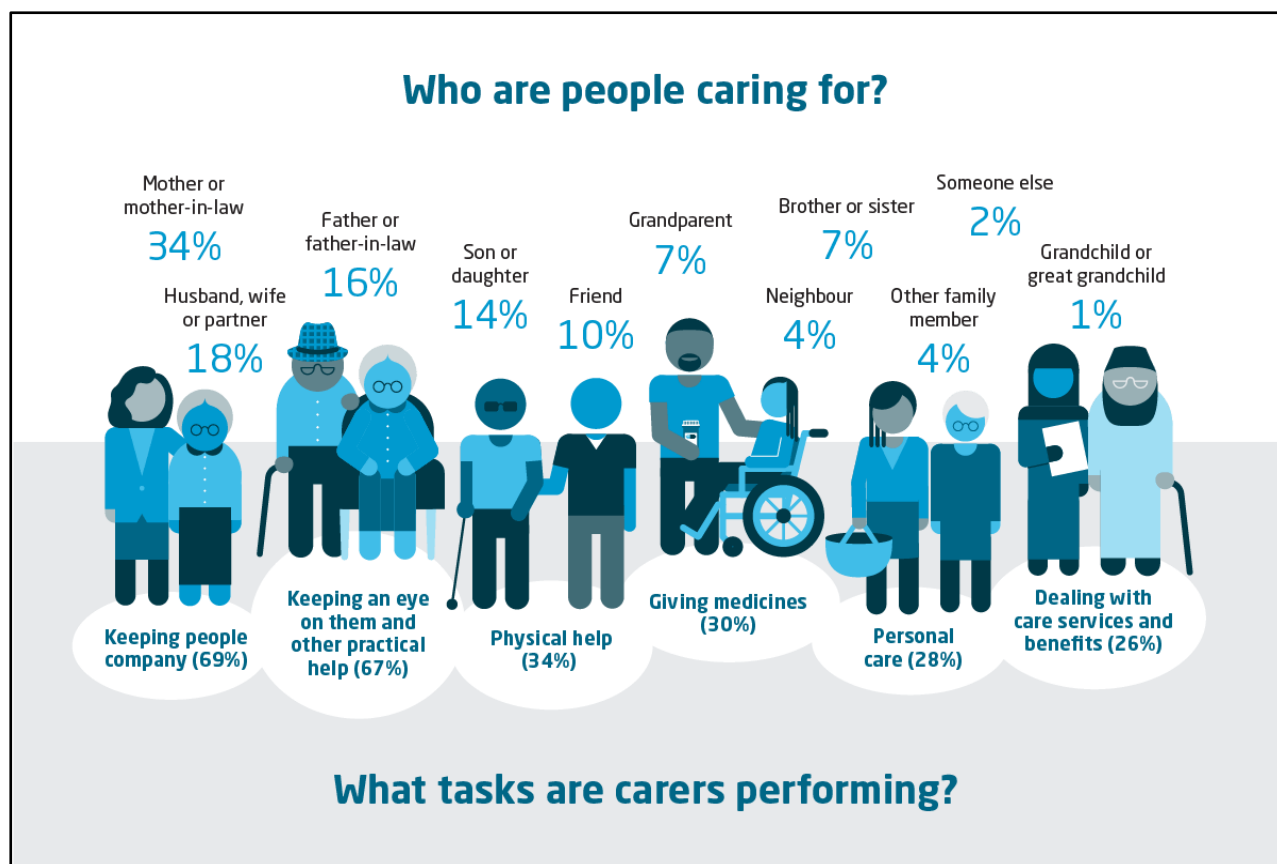


Diagram 1: Who are people caring for, and what tasks are carers performing? (Health Survey for England 2019)

Further information about different caring roles can be found on the [Carers Trust website](#)

What we know about carers in York

Unpaid carers make a significant contribution to life in York, supporting family members, friends and neighbours of all ages and backgrounds.

Carers in York include people who are:

- in paid work, education or training, or are retired
- managing their own health conditions or disabilities
- supporting end of life care
- caring for more than one person
- moving from children's to adult services
- from different communities, cultures and backgrounds

In York, thousands of people provide unpaid care, with many providing over 50 hours of care each week (Census 2021). However, only around one third of carers are known to services or receiving formal support.

Many carers remain hidden. They may not recognise themselves as carers or feel able or ready to seek help. Others do not need or want support or may not know where to find it.

Local and national evidence shows that caring can have a significant impact on people's lives. Common challenges include:

- pressure on physical and mental health
- financial strain and reduced income
- social isolation, loneliness and maintaining relationships
- difficulty balancing caring with work or education
- challenges navigating complex and disjointed services

These challenges are not experienced equally. Some carers face greater disadvantage due to factors such as age, disability, health and caring intensity.

Our focus areas

We will concentrate our efforts on the four focus areas below to improve outcomes for carers. They are not listed in order of importance; they are all equally important.

1. Improve support for carers
2. Improve how we identify and recognise carers
3. Improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of carers
4. Improve joint working across health, education and social care

We will focus on early recognition, accessible support, joined up working and involving carers in decisions that affect them.

Our focus areas are guided by local and national data, lived experience and the **York Unpaid Carers Consultation**, which describes local carers' experiences, needs, and views.

We have included some key measures of success under each focus area to help us monitor our progress. These include statements that describe what good would look like from a carer's perspective, and key performance measures

for organisations. The carer statements were developed by local carers, some of which they chose or adapted from Think Local Act Personal's 'Making It Real' statements.

Focus Area 1: Improve support for carers

Carers have told us that timely, flexible support improves their ability to cope and to live well alongside caring. Many carers have trouble accessing the right help at the right time, especially during periods of change or crisis.

This focus area concentrates on improving carers' access to information, advice, assessments, and support options that reflect their individual needs and circumstances.

All carers are entitled to a carer's assessment. This is to find out what support they need, if they are able to continue caring, and if they are eligible to get help.

Not everyone wants to provide care, or it may not be the best thing for the person being cared for. Some people may need support to stop or reduce the amount of caring they do. It is important that carers do not feel obligated or feel any emotional pressure to take on this role if it is not in everyone's best interests. This can be talked about during a carer's assessment, so that any concerns can be understood and the right support can be put in place.

We are committed to:

- enabling carers to make informed choices about support at different stages of their caring role
- improving access to a range of support options, starting with flexible and person-centred carers' assessments and reviews
- improving access to clear and timely information and advice

What good would look like for carers

Enabling carers to make informed choices about support

- I can easily get information, advice and support that helps me think about and plan my priorities and know what to do when there is a crisis.

- When I tell services about my situation, they help me know where I can find appropriate information or support.
- I am supported to make decisions by people who see things from my point of view, with concern for what matters to me, my wellbeing and health.

Improving access to a range of support options, including flexible and person-centred carers' assessments and reviews

- I have the support I need from people who listen to me, and make me feel valued, noticed and cared for.
- I have help and advice about how to make the best of the time I have got, to be able to live a life outside my caring role.

Improving access to clear and timely information and advice

- I can access reliable information and advice that helps me provide care and tells me what I am entitled to in a way I understand.
- I know where to get support during periods of change and in emergencies to help me manage the demands of my changing caring role.

Key performance measures

- Percentage of carers finding information and advice easy to access
- Number of information and advice sessions or contacts with carers
- Number of carers' assessments and annual reviews completed
- A reduction in waiting times for assessments and reviews

Focus Area 2: Improve how we identify and recognise carers

Many carers are not recognised as carers, or do not recognise themselves as carers, especially when caring begins gradually or is seen as part of family life.

Whilst we understand that not everyone wants to be identified as a carer; early and sensitive recognition can help carers access support before they reach crisis point.

This focus area is about improving how we identify and recognise carers and support them to understand their caring roles.

We are committed to:

- supporting carers in all communities in York to recognise themselves as carers
- raising awareness of young and young adult carers in education so educators and young people recognise they are carers
- improving how we identify carers in health, care, employment, education, and wider community settings

Measures of success

What good would look like for carers

- I realise I am a carer and I understand what this means.
- I have my own identity; I am not only a carer.
- I am recognised, listened to and valued as a carer, and people understand my individual situation and needs.
- I am supported at first contact to understand my situation.
- I am acknowledged and understood by my teachers.

Key performance measures

- Number of schools and colleges in the Young Carers Network
- Number of carers identified through initial contact and referrals
- Number of awareness raising and outreach sessions provided

Focus Area 3: Improve the health, wellbeing and quality of life of carers

We know that effective support can help carers to provide quality care whilst balancing their own needs and goals. It can also help carers meet their physical and mental health needs and prevent long-term health problems.

Easy access to the right support, networks, benefits and the opportunity for breaks are key to carers maintaining their independence, identity and social connections.

There is growing recognition nationally and locally of the link between caring, loneliness and serious mental health risk. Addressing loneliness and supporting carers' mental wellbeing is therefore a shared priority for this strategy and for the city.

This focus area recognises the importance of preventing harm before crisis point by ensuring carers are supported to stay connected and access help early. We will also focus on helping carers to manage at work and in education and to maximise their finances.

We are committed to:

- improving opportunities for carer breaks and supporting carers to take them
- supporting carers to access healthcare, including mental health support
- reducing isolation and loneliness
- helping carers (and their families) understand and access entitlements and benefits that support financial wellbeing
- supporting carers to be able to work or study alongside caring

Measures of success

What good would look like for carers
Improving opportunities for carer breaks and support to take them
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can get support for the person I care for so I can get a break.• I am offered respite that is appropriate and provided by skilled and experienced people.• I can get a break that works for my family.
Supporting carers to access healthcare, including mental health support
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I can access support to attend healthcare appointments that accommodates and understands my caring role.• I know crisis situations will be responded to by services quickly, safely and with empathy.
Reducing isolation and loneliness

- I have the opportunity to take part in activities and join groups, including peer support.
- I have a life outside of caring and I am able to remain connected to the people who matter to me.
- I have access to non-judgemental, trusted support when I am struggling to cope with the demands of continuing to provide care.

Helping carers (and their families) understand and access entitlements and benefits that support financial wellbeing

- I can access clear information and advice about any financial support and benefits available to me as a carer and my family.

Supporting carers to be able to work or study alongside caring

- I have teachers or employers that actually understand my situation and act on my needs.
- I am supported to balance my caring responsibilities with my education, paid work or volunteering that takes account of my health and wellbeing.

Key performance measures

- Percentage of carers who have as much social contact as they want
- Reduction in how often carers say they feel lonely
- Reduction in the number of carers having to give up work to care
- Increase in carers that feel supported by their employer
- Percentage of carers who say that caring has caused financial difficulty
- Better recording of carers breaks to allow us to monitor availability and uptake

Focus Area 4: Improve joint working

Carers often interact with multiple services and organisations. When services are not joined up, carers may be frequently asked to repeat their story, navigate complex processes, or fill gaps between services.

This focus area is about improving how organisations work together so that carers experience support that is coordinated, consistent, and responsive.

We are committed to:

- improving how people working in health, education and social care recognise carers and work together to support their changing needs.
- involving carers appropriately in discussions and decisions, valuing their expertise
- improving communication and coordination across services

Measures of success

What good would look like for carers
Improving how people working in health, education and social care recognise carers and work together to support their changing needs
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• I am supported by people who see me as an individual with particular needs, strengths, abilities and aspirations.• I feel I am valued and treated with respect and dignity.• I am involved in decisions that affect me and the person I care for, and I feel listened to and valued for my contribution.
Improving communication and coordination across services
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The people that support me and the person I care for communicate well with each other to make things work as well as possible.

Key performance measures
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Evidence of multi-agency carer improvement plans• Evidence of joint working with Education
Key performance measures – Carer voice
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Percentage of carers feeling involved in decisions• Evidence of active carer voice groups and carer representation on strategic boards

- Partners evidencing service change based on lived experience
- Annual “You Said, We Did” report

Taking the strategy forward

This strategy sets out a shared direction for improving outcomes for unpaid carers in York.

Delivery will be supported by an action plan that includes specific actions, timescales, and responsibilities across partners. We will review and update the action plan regularly to reflect progress, learning, and changing needs. This will build on what is already working well and address areas that need to improve. It will be linked to other plans partners are working on to support carers.

Delivery of this strategy will include evaluation and service improvement, guided by carers’ lived experience. This will include reviewing how we identify, assess and support carers, how commissioned services operate, and how carers and staff experience the processes they encounter.

Monitoring progress and learning

We will monitor our progress through agreed measures of success and regular reporting. We will also include specific measures within our action plan. We will review and refine these measures over time as data quality improves and learning emerges. They will be used to understand progress rather than to set rigid targets.

What we learn will inform ongoing improvement. This could be from:

- feedback from carers
- service reviews and inspections
- changes in local or national context
- learning through delivering the strategy

We will review the strategy annually to ensure it remains relevant, responsive, and focused on what matters most to carers. The action plan will be reviewed at the Carers Strategy Group every three months.

How carers’ voices will shape wider decisions

Caring and the needs of carers will be considered across the council and its partners and not treated as a separate issue.

Members of the Carers Strategy Group also sit on wider corporate and partnership groups, including those focused on:

- workforce and training
- inclusion and equalities
- evidence, data and learning
- digital and service improvement

This means carers' voices can help shape wider decisions, and issues affecting carers can be raised and addressed through the right forums. In turn, learning and progress from those groups will be shared back with carers, helping to ensure support continues to improve across services.

Further information and support

This strategy is supported by a range of local and national organisations, evidence and sources of support. The most up-to-date information is available on the City of York Council website and partner sites.

Support for carers in York

- **York Carers Centre** – free support, carers' assessments, information, advice, activities and Emergency Card scheme. For unpaid carers of all ages in York.

Website: <https://yorkcarerscentre.co.uk>

Phone: **01904 715490**

- **City of York Council**

Carer information and advice – information on carers' assessments, support services and activities.

Website: <http://www.york.gov.uk/carers-1>

Adult Social Care Carer Specialist Team – information, advice and carers' assessments:

Email: adult.socialsupport@york.gov.uk

Phone: **01904 555111**

Multi-Agency Safeguarding Hub (MASH) – ask for a parent carer needs assessment or speak to the team about young carers who may need support.

Email: mash@york.gov.uk

Phone: **01904 551900**

- **Parent Carer Forum York** – signposting, training, peer support and representing parent carer voice to health, education and social care. For parents and carers of children and young people (aged 0-25) with additional needs or disabilities.

Website: <https://www.parentcarerforumyork.org>

Email: connect@pcfYork.co.uk

Local evidence

- **York Unpaid Carers Consultation Report 2025** – detailed findings that inform this strategy and set out the experiences and needs of York carers.
<https://www.york.gov.uk/CarerSurvey>
- **York Carer Breaks Survey 2023**
<https://data.yorkopendata.org/dataset/carers-breaks-consultation-2023>

National information and guidance

- **Carers Trust** – UK charity providing information, support and resources for unpaid carers.
Website: <https://carers.org>
- **Carers UK** – national support, advice and campaigning organisation for carers, including digital resources.
Website: <https://www.carersuk.org>

This strategy has been developed in partnership and with commitment from the following organisations, and with carers as equal partners.

- Carers and former carers
- City of York Council
- York Carers Centre
- York & Scarborough Teaching Hospitals NHS Foundation Trust
- Parent Carer Forum York

- Dementia Forward
- Alzheimer's Society
- Age UK
- Humber & North Yorkshire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys Foundation Trust (TEWV)
- Healthwatch York

We value their contribution and dedication to improving carer support in York.

The quotes used in this strategy are from local carers who responded to a 2025 survey (unless we have stated otherwise).

Alternative formats

To ask for reasonable adjustments or this document in an alternative language or format such as large print, braille, audio, Easy Read or BSL you can:



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Call us: **01904 551550** and customer services will pass your request onto the Access Team.



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Select 'Switchboard' from the menu.



We can also translate into the following languages:



我們也用您們的語言提供這個信息 (Cantonese)

এই তথ্য আপনার নিজের ভাষায় দেয়া যেতে পারে। (Bengali)

Ta informacja może być dostarczona w twoim własnym języku. (Polish)

Bu bilgiyi kendi dilinizde almanız mümkündür. (Turkish)

یہ معلومات آپ کی اپنی زبان (بولی) میں بھی مہیا کی جاسکتی ہیں۔ (Urdu)