

# Kirklees Unpaid Carers Strategy: Unpaid-Carer Friendly Kirklees

If you're looking for help and advice about being an unpaid carer, please visit:

[www.carerscount.org.uk](http://www.carerscount.org.uk)

[www.carersdigital.org/](http://www.carersdigital.org/) (use code WESTYORKS)

[www.kirklees.gov.uk/carers](http://www.kirklees.gov.uk/carers)

If you're unable to access online information, please contact:

Carers Count

[info@carerscount.org.uk](mailto:info@carerscount.org.uk)

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# Introduction

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*We want to create an unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees where health, care, work, and play all work for unpaid carers. Where we raise awareness of caring across Kirklees and we identify and reach out to unpaid carers. Where unpaid carers can live independently and in better health.*

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Unpaid carers are everywhere, in all walks of life, all types of people, in all places. We're all affected by caring at some point in our lives; either being an unpaid carer ourselves, having a close friend or family member who is an unpaid carer, or needing unpaid carers to help us. Or all of these. The average person has a 50:50 chance of caring by age 50 - long before they reach retirement age - and is just as likely to care for a loved one as to be a homeowner in the UK. <sup>1</sup>

Current demands on unpaid carers are unsustainable. Evidence shows that many carers face a triple penalty in return for caring:

1. A deterioration in their own health - especially when caring is intense, demanding or lasts for long periods of time.
2. Financial strain - as the costs of caring mount and income and assets fall, with paid work abandoned or reduced, lowering earnings and pension contributions.
3. Isolation, loneliness, and a feeling of being cut off from the daily life that others take for granted. <sup>2</sup>

The Kirklees Unpaid Carers Strategy aims to make life for unpaid carers in Kirklees as good as it can be. Caring is difficult and hard and stressful and exhausting, as well as brilliant, and loving, and kind and giving purpose to people. Because anyone, anywhere can be an unpaid carer this strategy has to be very wide ranging and include social care, health, voluntary sector partners, employers, the public, and everyone.

The strategy proposes to introduce the concept of building an unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees focusing on cultural change throughout Kirklees as well as continuing to ensure that key health and social care duties are met. It's structured around a series of 'I Statements' created following discussions with unpaid carers.

## Co-production promise

Co-production is central to the Kirklees Unpaid Carers Strategy and the way we work with and design unpaid carer support across Kirklees. This strategy was co-produced i.e. unpaid carers were equals in creating what it says. It strives for all unpaid carers support to be co-produced in

line with Kirklees' Coming together as equals: A guide for Co-production and meaningful participation.

The term 'co-production' describes working in partnership by sharing power between people who draw on care and support, unpaid carers, families and citizens. (SCIE)

This means unpaid carers support is not about doing to unpaid carers or for unpaid carers but with unpaid carers. It means unpaid carers being involved in the design and delivery of activities, support, and services relevant to them.

It means:

- Seeing people as resourceful human beings with gifts and potential
- People, families and communities caring for and about each other
- Able to give support as well as receive support
- Facilitating opportunities for peer support
- Power is shared more equally

We're committed to working together at all levels:

- Individual – unpaid carers play an active role in sharing their own care and support
- Operational – unpaid carers play an active role in the design, delivery and review of services
- Strategic – unpaid carers play an active role in shaping strategy and direction using a co-production ethos and value base

## How this strategy was produced

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This strategy was created by individuals, peer groups, coffee mornings, and learning sessions with a lot of open-ended conversations. This included groups of unpaid carers, individual unpaid carers, social care assessors, and unpaid carer service providers across social care and health. It included 26 unpaid carer groups, over 200 unpaid carers, and having information online for unpaid carers to comment on. These conversations didn't happen in official buildings or at sessions set up solely for this purpose but happened wherever unpaid carers were.

The conversations had no pre-set agenda or direction. Instead of asking unpaid carers what they think about a specific issue, and therefore guiding the conversation and strategy towards that specific issue, unpaid carers had the space to speak about anything. People naturally spoke about the things which are important to them. Nine 'I Statements' were created from this and these form the focus for this strategy. It is these nine key statements that we need to focus on in order to promote the health and well-being of unpaid carers across Kirklees, and to reduce the health and financial inequalities that unpaid carers experience due to caring.

A lot of carers have helped create this strategy, but there are still some groups of marginalised carers who haven't been reached to discuss this strategy with. This is recognised and we continue to endeavour to seek out the views and ideas of those groups and include them within this strategy.

## **Local and national strategies and policies**

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This strategy reflects concepts in the [Kirklees Vision for Adult Social Care](#).

We want every person in Kirklees who needs social care to be able to live the life that matters to them; with the people they value, in the places and communities they call home, and with an equal voice in co-ordinating their care.

The vision's themes are vital to unpaid carers in Kirklees: equity, social justice, respecting people's rights, partnerships, working together to achieve the best outcomes, and people as active and equal partners.

Beyond Kirklees, the concepts and the voice of unpaid carers in the below national strategies and policies also help guide Kirklees' unpaid-carers strategy and support:

[The Care Act 2014](#)

[The Children and Families Act 2014](#)

[The National Carers Action Plan 2018-2020](#)

[The NHS Long Term Plan 2019](#)

[The NHS Commitment to Carers \(2014\)](#)

[Carers UK research](#)

[The NICE Supporting Adult Carers Quality Standards 2021](#)

In each of these unpaid carers are recognised for their strengths and abilities, for what they can contribute to society, and they each recognise the vital role unpaid carers play across health and social care. This strategy builds on this foundation to identify, respect, and work in partnership with unpaid carers to create an unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees.

# Unpaid Carers in Kirklees

## Who are unpaid carers?

An unpaid carer provides **unpaid support** to someone who **can't cope without them** due to **long term illness or disability**; physical disability, mental ill health, autism spectrum condition, sensory impairment, substance misuse, long-term condition, learning disability, or illness / problems usually associated with getting older for example frailty or dementia.

There are many categories of unpaid carers. Alongside the unique challenges different unpaid carers face there are large areas of overlap in challenges, needs, and support for different categories of unpaid carers. As such, this strategy recognises different categories whilst considering all unpaid carer need without stratifying into sections for each category.

Caring is indiscriminate and almost anyone from anywhere at any stage of life can be an unpaid carer. This includes:

- Young Carers – aged up to 18
- Young Adult Carers – aged 16 to 25
- Adult Carers – aged 18 and over

## Parent Unpaid Carers:

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- Parents who care for their sick or disabled children
- Often life-long unpaid carers with impacts on their employment opportunities, affecting their financial stability

## Working Unpaid Carers:

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- Unpaid carers who work as well as providing care
- May experience higher levels of stress as they try to balance caring and working responsibilities

## Mutual / Co-dependent Unpaid Carers:

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- Couples / families where two or more people have care needs and provide care support for each other.
- Can have complex situations

## Distance Unpaid Carers:

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- Unpaid Carers who care for someone that lives some distance away
- Can be logistically difficult and spend a lot of time traveling

## Hidden Unpaid Carers:

- People who provide unpaid care but don't recognise them self as an unpaid carer and who social care and health professionals haven't recognised as an unpaid carer
- Often struggle on without knowing that help is available

## Facts and figures about unpaid carers in Kirklees

- There are around 40,000 unpaid carers in Kirklees, that's just under 1 in 10 people.
- Caring is a normal but unpredictable part of life. The caring population is not static with 12,000 across Britain people becoming carers every day.<sup>3</sup> Others leave their caring role and need support, e.g. to re-enter the labour market. Most will not be able to predict the length of time they will care for, or whether they will become a carer at another point in their life.
- Unpaid carers live throughout Kirklees, in all areas, and are from all cultures, communities, and all walks of life.
- Anyone of any age can be an unpaid carer although the most likely people to be unpaid carers are females aged 55 to 64.
- Generally the older a person is the bigger their caring role gets, although there are still a lot of younger people with big caring roles, just fewer of them.
- The economic value of unpaid care in England and Wales is greater than ever before and is now estimated to be £162 billion - exceeding that of the entire NHS budget in England for health service spending.<sup>2</sup> Unpaid carers are an integral part of our health and care systems, which would simply collapse without their support.
- Since 2011 there has been an increase in the percentage of unpaid carers providing 50 or more hours of care per week.
- This shift is also noticeable amongst unpaid carers juggling employment and caring. Unpaid carers providing less than 20 hours per week of care has fallen from 76% in 2011 to 62% in 2021, 20-49 hours per week of unpaid carer increased from 12% in 2011 to 21% in 2021, 50 and over hours per week of care has increased from 12% in 2011 to 17% in 2021
- The Covid-19 pandemic and the cost-of-living crisis in following the years has also affected unpaid carers in multiple ways, and has been different for different people. Some unpaid carers don't have as much time to care or time for themselves due to needing to work more hours. Alternatively, due to cost of care, some unpaid carers are having to do more care tasks on top of their employment, or reduce the hours they can work. These different situations unpaid carers face show the added stress the pandemic and cost-of-living crisis had on unpaid carers, and in particular the most economically disadvantaged.
- Unpaid carers are more likely to have poorer health; especially pain and depression<sup>4</sup> with more than half of those who provide substantial care suffering physical ill health as a result of caring<sup>5</sup>
- Being a young unpaid carer can affect school attendance, educational achievement, and future life chances. Young unpaid carers are more than twice as likely to be bullied as young people who are not unpaid carers. Having a caring responsibility is recognised



nationally as one of the main characteristics of young people aged between 14 and 16 being bullied.<sup>6</sup>

- More than 70 per cent of those caring round the clock have suffered mental ill health at some time.<sup>5</sup> In Kirklees 7,200 unpaid carers provide more than 50 hours of care each week.

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## Your Rights

### Assessing needs

The Care Act 2014 sets out a number of duties which all local authorities have to do in relation to assessing people's care needs and their eligibility for publicly funded care. This includes people with disabilities and their unpaid carers.

Where it appears to a local authority that an adult (a person with a disability or their unpaid carer) may have needs for care and support, the authority must assess:

- (a) whether the adult does have needs for care and support, and
- (b) if the adult does, what those needs are.

### Which unpaid carers are eligible for an assessment?

All unpaid carers who care for someone who lives in Kirklees are eligible for a Carers Assessment from Kirklees Council and for support in their own right. If the person you care for doesn't live in Kirklees then it is the local authority where they live which must do the Carers Assessment.

### What is an assessment?

An assessment is not an assessment of the unpaid carer, it's an assessment of the situation and of what help and support people need.

This assessment can be a stand-alone unpaid carers assessment or can be part of the needs assessment of the person they care for done as a family.

### Support

A lot of unpaid carer support, for example information, advice, wellness courses, peer groups, and community-based support are available to all unpaid carers and you don't need an assessment. Any unpaid carer can go to [Carers Count](#) and get this help, no assessment required.

Some unpaid carers support, for example carers personal budgets and carers breaks, are only available to eligible unpaid carers as defined by the Care Act. Eligibility is set nationally and for more information on unpaid carer eligibility see [Quick guide to eligibility outcomes under the Care Act 2014 | SCIE](#). Where an unpaid carer is eligible, Kirklees Council will put services in to place to meet those eligible needs.

The Care Act also sets out that Local Authorities have duties to:

- Promote unpaid carer's wellbeing
- Prevent, reduce or delay unpaid carer needs
- Establish and maintain an information and advice service. This is distinct from the duty to meet eligible needs
- Undertake market shaping and commissioning

For more information the Local Government Association have produced: [The Care Act 2014 and unpaid carers: A handy summary](#)

## Carer's Leave

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Every working unpaid carer who is employed has a right to Carers Leave:

- Unpaid carers are entitled to up to one week's unpaid leave per year if providing or arranging care for someone with a long-term care need.
- This leave can be taken flexibly - in half or full days off - for planned and foreseen caring commitments.
- It is available from the first day of employment.
- It provides the same employment protections to employees as other forms of family-related leave, including protection from dismissal.

This is an employment right so not a request that can be denied, but it can be postponed if the employee not being in work would unduly disrupt the business. If it's postponed then it must be provided within 1 month.

For more information see [The Carer's Leave Act 2023 | Carers UK](#).

# Unpaid carers have told us...

## That our aims are:

- Messages and processes to be simple
- Unpaid carers know who to contact when needed
- Unpaid carers feel treated with dignity and respect
- Unpaid carers feel connected to others
- For everyone to recognise the caring role, especially so within health and social care
- Unpaid carers have choice and control over how support is provided
- Unpaid carers are encouraged and supported in their caring role
- Unpaid carers are involved in discussions with and about the person they care for
- Unpaid carers are able to look after their own health
- Unpaid carers are able to spend time doing things that they value
- Unpaid carers are supported to plan
- Unpaid carers trust care services
- Unpaid carers feel safe

## And that in an unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees unpaid carers can say (I Statements):

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*1. I can easily access help, support, assessments, and appointments*

*2. I have breaks from my caring role and some time to spend as I choose*

*3. I have good quality information and advice about my situation and my options*

*4. I am involved in discussions about me, about the person(s) I care for, and about designing help and support for us*

*5. I have a flexible, understanding workplace*

*6. I can prioritise and take care of my own health*

*7. I have someone to talk to*

*8. I am happy with care services that the person I care for and I use*

*9. I am understood, my environment is right for me, and I have my individual and cultural needs met*

Unpaid carers have told us these key messages via the many open conversations held to create this strategy as well as via surveys, including the Survey of Adult Carers in England (SACE) and surveys written and undertaken by Kirklees Council to help understand issues affecting unpaid carers. More detail on each I Statement is below.

# Our Vision: Delivering the best outcomes for unpaid carers in Kirklees

## Unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees

The survey information, conversations and I statements which form this strategy show that fundamental to unpaid carers' wellbeing is a culture throughout health, care, and wider society which positively helps unpaid carers. In other words, an unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees.

Individual health and care services have a huge impact on people's lives and need to be the right services for the right people, focusing on including unpaid carers and delivering the outcomes unpaid carers choose. We need to make sure that unpaid carers are equipped with the information and skills they need, good quality health and care services to support them and the people they care for, and unpaid carers don't face barriers to getting these nor to things in their non-caring life such as work and friendships.

An unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees includes good quality health and care services that include unpaid carers in everything they do but is also much more than this. It's the relationship which we all have with unpaid carers. The relationship which businesses have with their customers who are unpaid carers, and their staff who have caring duties. The relationship families and neighbours have with people close to them who are caring for someone else. The relationship that public services have with unpaid carers when managing and planning our cities, towns, neighbourhoods, and countryside. It's a positive culture that understands, thinks about, and cares about unpaid carers.

## Identification and independence

Public Services strive to help people towards self-sufficiency and to maximise people's independence and this strategy operates within this agenda. This is due in part to the fact that social care and health resources are stretched and becoming scarcer, and in part because this goes a long way to helping people to be as healthy as possible, which ultimately is what we're striving for.

1. Enable as much self-sufficiency for unpaid carers as possible, where unpaid carers and communities support themselves. This will be most people. We will help as many people as possible to achieve this.
2. Provide information, advice, and training to help all unpaid carers cope with and manage their caring role as best they can. We will help unpaid carers move towards self-sufficiency as much as possible
3. Where necessary, provide practical support to unpaid carers with complex caring roles to reduce the burden of caring. This will be the fewest people and will be available for those that need it the most.

A very important part of this is getting unpaid carers to identify themselves and seek help as early as possible. Generally speaking, the earlier an unpaid carer recognises them self as an unpaid carer and seeks help, the more independent they can be. Unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees aims to achieve this and to encourage everyone to do this as much as possible we need to make sure the process for identifying and supporting unpaid carers is as simple as possible.

## The unpaid carer I Statements in more detail: What we know, what we have, and what we will do

### 1. I can easily access help, support, assessments, and appointments

#### We know:

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Unpaid carers report struggling to access support and appointments due to waiting times, services not being sufficiently flexible around the unpaid carer's needs, the complexity of the health and care system, and services not co-ordinating with one another.

Unpaid carer identification matters as this is the first step towards targeted support to address unpaid carer needs and inequalities. However, there are many unpaid carers who are not identified by health care services. This arises as people often do not recognise themselves as carers, nor do health and care services identify carers in sufficient numbers.

Carers report that accessing a range of health and care services is a difficult juggling act, especially where those services have inflexible appointments or are not located near the carer or person they care for.

#### We have:

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- A consistent message across health and care that Carers Count is the first port-of-call for unpaid carers, with Carers Count maintaining good visibility across the system.
- A simple referral system to Carers Count that can be used by any unpaid carer or any professional who identifies a carer.
- Partnerships across health and care including the council, the ICB, primary health care, hospital trusts, social care providers, and the VCS looking at how we can improve our support to carers.
- A range of online digital information and advice accessible anywhere.

- A Carers Charter created across Kirklees Council, Calderdale Council, and CHFT.

## We will:

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- Continue to work in partnership across Kirklees using the Carers Strategy Group, the Carers Consortium, and other partnership working opportunities.
- Use this strategy and the concept of unpaid-carer friendly Kirklees to encourage partners think about and improve access to services for unpaid carers.
- Invest in modern online options for carers to access information, advice, and carer self-assessments for those who choose this whilst maintaining face-to-face assessment support.
- Work as partners to co-ordinate services around the family.
- Monitor no. of carers assessments and reviews undertaken, and waiting times for these

## How we will know we're achieving:

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- Carers reporting they can access services in ways and at times that suit them
- Monitor no's of carers accessing services to identify gaps in provision
- Have a range of partners from across Kirklees including public services, employers, VCS, and unpaid carers engaging with this strategy, the Carers Strategy Group, and specific areas of work such as support for working carers.

## **2. I have breaks from my caring role and some time to spend as I choose**

### We know:

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Getting a break from their unpaid caring role can be very important to enable unpaid carers to manage their own physical and emotional health as well as feel they have a life outside their caring role. Unpaid caring responsibilities can have a significant impact on both physical and emotional wellbeing. Without getting a break, unpaid carers can experience anxiety, stress, and carer breakdown, and will often neglect their own health needs as they focus on the person they care for.

Often getting a break from the unpaid caring role can be difficult and there are waiting lists for carers break services.

## We have:

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- Preventative approaches which support carers to maintain relationships (as part of the caring role and outside of the caring role) and to maintain activities and hobbies outside of their caring role, helping unpaid carers maintain a sense of self.
- Respite provision and carer break provision to enable carers to step away from their caring responsibilities for a short time.

## We will:

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- Continue to invest in the above preventive, respite, and carer break provision.
- Work to reduce waiting times to access carer break services.

## How we will know we're achieving:

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- We will have preventative, respite, and carer break services in place.
- We will not have long waiting times for preventative, respite, and carer break services.
- Carers reporting they can get a break from their caring role.

## **3. I have good quality information and advice about my situation and my options**

### We know:

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How and where unpaid carers access information and the language we use is key to early identification and empowerment for unpaid carers.

Having specific resources for unpaid carers that unpaid carers know are for them and that they can turn to when needed is important.

Often a good place for unpaid carers to receive information and advice is at frontline health and care services where an unpaid carer can have the information given to them at the time they need it. However, this isn't always provided and when it is provided this can have drawbacks in that carers report feeling overwhelmed at such times and can struggle with information overload, especially when the information is regarding longer-term support whereas the carer is focused on dealing with a crisis now.



## We have:

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- Invested in Carers Count as the first port-of-call for carers when they need information and advice. Any carer can contact them about any issue and Carers Count will help the carer work through it.
- Invested in online resources for carers including locally built and updated resources as well as a partnership with Carers UK to access a wide range of national online unpaid carer support and information.
- Many partners who identify, recognise, and provide information to carers when they use frontline services. Carers Count provide support to any organisation to do this.
- Identification of unpaid carers during hospital discharge processes and where needed we will contact carers a few days after a hospital discharge to check they are OK and provide information and advice once the carer has had a little 'breathing space' following a hospital admission.
- Carers recognised within social care assessments and have key information provided, for example about support and finances.

## We will:

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- Create and maintain high quality self-serve online support for unpaid carers and encourage unpaid carers to access this as it suits them.
- Skill-up and enable unpaid carers who are digitally excluded to get online.
- Be clear about what we do and what unpaid carers can do for themselves.
- Be clear about how long it takes to access different support options.
- Prioritise unpaid carer support face to face and over the phone for those who need it most.
- Work to make the multiple contact points across partners unpaid-carer friendly.
- Ask carers where they feel they need more information and advice and the best places we can provide this.

## How we will know we're achieving:

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- Carers reporting they have the information they need and know what they need to do and where to turn for help, and this was provided in a timely manner and in an appropriate way.

## 4. I am involved in discussions about me, about the person(s) I care for, and about designing help and support for us

### *We know:*

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Being seen, heard, and included in discussions about care and support is very important to unpaid carers. Unpaid carers are experts by experience and their expertise is needed to design effective and appropriate support. Unpaid carers must be seen as equal partners in the provision of health and care support to the people the care for.

Many carers do not know how to get involved or get their voice heard in service or strategic discussions.

### *We have:*

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- A Co-produced Kirklees Unpaid Carers Strategy.
- Carers Strategy Group which has key role in influencing the design and delivery of services and in demonstrating the effectiveness and implementation of this strategy.
- Unpaid carer peer networks throughout Kirklees where carers can see they are not alone and have a joint voice when needed.
- The Kirklees Co-production Board where citizens have a key influencing role in the development of Kirklees Council support.
- The Kirklees Learning Disability Carer Voice group, Kirklees Involvement Network, PCAN, and the Kirklees Neurodiversity Partnership.
- Training for social care assessors to explain the importance of identifying carers, including carers in the assessment process, and ensuring that carer voice is clearly identifiable in the assessment documentation and support plans.
- Messages to all partners that carers are experts by experience and equal partners in the deliver of services to the people they care for.
- A Carers Charter created across Kirklees Council, Calderdale Council, and CHFT.

### *We will:*

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- Use partnership forums such as Carers Strategy Group to deliver messages to partners about the importance of recognising and including unpaid carers.
- Use partnership forums such as Carers Strategy Group to help carers influence the design and delivery of services.
- Deliver training to social care assessors to explain the importance of unpaid carer input into social care support.

- Ensure carers know how they can get involved service design and delivery via online information, newsletters, and information and advice provision.
- Use Carers Strategy Group to monitor and oversee how well unpaid carers are involved and recognised and treated as partners in health and care provision.

### *How we will know we're achieving:*

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- Feedback from unpaid carers in forums such as Carers Strategy Group and carer peer support networks.
- Feedback from partners regarding the initiatives they are undertaking to ensure this happens.
- Ability to see the carers input within social care assessment documentation and support plans.

## **5. I have a flexible, understanding workplace**

### *We know:*

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Nationally, every day 600 unpaid carers give up paid work to care. In Kirklees this is nearly 1,500 people a year or 28 people each week who leave their jobs to care. This impacts on unpaid carers finances and their sense of self.

1 in 6 people who work in Kirklees are caring for a loved one. <sup>4</sup>

Being a carer can have a negative impact on people's physical and mental health, and working carers can experience higher levels of stress as they try to balance caring and working responsibilities. Many others will pass up on promotions, extra responsibilities, or reduce their working hours because their lives are so full outside work that they feel they can't take on more in work, even if they are the best person for the job.

The negative impact of caring whilst working is felt disproportionately by women who tend to be the main carers within households, and in particular women aged 45 to 64.

The best interventions (as reported by carers) are:

1. Supportive line manager/understanding employer 89%
2. Flexible working offered 88%
3. Paid care leave of between 5-10 days per year 80%
4. Long term unpaid leave 75%
5. Link to good information and advice 69%
6. Peer support network 65% <sup>7</sup>

This illustrates the importance of good organisational culture and support for managers to be good managers.

### *We have:*

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- Dedicated resources within Carers Count to engage employers across Kirklees to raise awareness of unpaid carers and support employers to understand how they can best support their working unpaid carers.
- Membership of Employers for Carers with umbrella benefits for all health, care, and SMEs across Kirklees.
- Care support services provided to the people working carers care for, allowing them to maintain with work, education, training, or volunteering.
- Information and Advice for unpaid carers about finances, benefits, and getting into work.

### *We will:*

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- Work with employers across Kirklees to increase the use of flexible working arrangements for unpaid carers in line with the above feedback and good practice from Employers for Carers.
- Monitor the number of employers who engage with unpaid carer awareness raising activities and who offer flexible arrangements for unpaid carers, aiming to increase this number year-on-year.

### *How we will know we're achieving:*

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- Feedback from unpaid working carers about changes in their workplaces.
- Monitoring shows increasing numbers of employers which engage with the working unpaid carer programme and offer flexible working arrangements.

## **6. I can prioritise and take care of my own health**

### *We know:*

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Unpaid carers prioritise the health and wellbeing of the person they care for. This is an important and rewarding part of being an unpaid carer. However, unpaid caring responsibilities can have a significant impact on an unpaid carers time and energy leading to people neglecting their own health. Often unpaid carers do not realise this is happening or do not understand the longer-term impacts this has. This is exacerbated by the move towards more community-based health and social care services as this puts an increasing burden on carers, even though this is what many carers and the people they care for want and choose.

## *We have:*

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- Partners recognising unpaid carers and explaining the importance of prioritising the unpaid carers' own health.
- Recognition of unpaid carers' needs within social care assessments, with support put into place to help the carer focus on them self.
- Simple signposting and referrals to Carers Count to support carers with their health and wellbeing.
- Recognition of the impact of caring and dedicated wellbeing sessions focusing on unpaid caring as part of Kirklees' holistic wellness service.
- GP practices across Kirklees have unpaid-carers champions, registers, and contact unpaid carers with targeted recommendations such as flu vaccinations for unpaid carers.
- Resilience is discussed and support provided as part of carers information services and carers assessments.

## *We will:*

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- Broaden partnership working and ensure messages about the importance of unpaid carers prioritising their own health are widely provided with more wellbeing services (e.g. smoking cessation, home safety checks, housing support, etc.) asking "are you caring for someone" within their questions.
- Continue to invest in services which prioritise the health of unpaid carers.

## *How we will know we're achieving:*

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- No. of referrals received from GP practices to Carers Count.
- Carers attending resilience training sessions
- Carers report they are taking care of their own health.
- Feedback from a wide range of partners that they are encouraging carers to prioritise their own health.

## **7. I have someone to talk to**

### *We know:*

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Unpaid carers report feeling lonely and can struggle to maintain active social lives.

Unpaid carers can lose social contact as their caring journey progresses. Over time unpaid carers can gradually drop out of social events and stop regularly keeping up with friends. As

this is gradual and the unpaid carer is focused on the wellbeing of the person they care for this can go unnoticed until it's too late. Sometimes unpaid carers are aware this is happening but feel powerless to stop it.

### *We have:*

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- Unpaid carer peer groups throughout Kirklees, where people can meet and talk to others in similar situations and see that they are not alone.
- Messages from partners, including as part of social care assessments, that carers need to recognise they can lose social contact over time and to encourage unpaid carers to maintain their social networks.
- Information and advice service for carers, including drop-in sessions.
- Social care packages identify unpaid carer needs and provide services to enable unpaid carers to have time to themselves, work, and socialise.

### *We will:*

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- Maintain investment in unpaid carer peer networks across Kirklees.
- Listen to carers and respond with new peer support groups as needed.
- Continue to identify unpaid carer needs as part of care assessments, encouraging carers to have time to themselves.

### *How we will know we're achieving:*

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- Fewer carers report being socially isolated or lonely.
- Carers report they feel able to participate in work, education, volunteering and / or social activities outside of their caring role.

## **8. I am happy with care services that the person I care for and I use**

### *We know:*

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Unpaid carers have clearly stated that sustainability and continuity of support for both them and the person they care for is vital to unpaid carers' long-term wellbeing. As well as this, unpaid carers need to be able to trust that the person they care for will be well looked after by when in the care of health and care services and the unpaid carer is not with them. Unpaid carers need to know where to turn if they are not happy with a service and can report feeling powerless when dealing with large statutory organisations.

## *We have:*

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- An established and respected infrastructure of unpaid carer support services, including information and advice, mental health support, advocacy, dementia support services, health and care assessments, respite, day opportunities, young unpaid carers support, peer networks, and support with employment, finances, relationships, and wellbeing.
- Routes for complaints and compliments.
- Safeguarding pathways.
- Various forums where carers can have their voice heard.
- Advocacy services.
- Self-advocacy, confidence building, and ‘speaking up for yourself’ training.

## *We will:*

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- Partners will listen to carers views on services via feedback, forums, informal discussions, complaints, and compliments and act where needed.
- Continue to invest in and prioritise support for unpaid carers.

## *How we will know we’re achieving:*

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- Carers report they trust the services they and the person they care for use.
- Carers report they feel confident they can have positive conversations about things they feel unhappy about and can effect change when needed.

## **9. I am understood, my environment is right for me, and I have my individual and cultural needs met**

### **We know:**

Unpaid carers in Kirklees are diverse and come from a rich range of cultures, backgrounds, ages, genders, and communities. This includes the armed forces, White, Black, Asian, and ethnic minorities, LGBTQ+ communities, and unpaid carers with different beliefs and disabilities.

Different unpaid carers from different backgrounds need to be reached and engaged in different ways. One-size-fits-all inevitably excludes some people.

Females are the most likely people to provide care, especially aged 55 to 64. On average females take on caring responsibilities over a decade earlier than other people. This impacts their wellbeing, finances, and sense of self.

Many carers feel excluded by the digital world, sharing concerns about cost, privacy, scams, and a lack of skills or interest.

A unpaid carers environment – their home, the street they live on, the shops, towns, and workplaces they use – need to enable them to provide the unpaid care they provide, and this isn't always the case. This includes adaptations, transport, and the socio-economic environment.

### *We have:*

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- Diversity monitoring so we know who uses our unpaid carer services and can make sure that all unpaid carers can receive information and advice relevant to them, have equal opportunities to access services, and that barriers are identified and addressed so no one is excluded or disadvantaged.
- A range of support, including wellbeing sessions and pamper days, provided directly as a result of carers saying this is how they would like to engage with services.
- Unpaid carer peer support groups which reach out to specific communities, for example South Asian women.
- A range of non-digital support for unpaid carers who do not want to access services digitally.
- Town centre regeneration projects that focus on meaningful provision accessible by everyone, recognising that not everyone is cognitively aware or non-disabled.
- A corporate design guide for regeneration across Kirklees.
- Kirklees planning teams working in partnership with people who understand disabilities.

### *We will:*

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- Continue to monitor the diversity of unpaid carers who use services. Where we identify that any community is not accessing services equally we will work with that community to understand why and how this can be addressed.
- Listen to carers and provide support in a manner which suits them.
- Provide digital skills sessions for carers who want to get online but don't feel they have the confidence or skills.
- Engage more partners with messages about using person-centred strength-based approaches to the design of assets and people's environment.

### *How we will know we're achieving:*

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- Diversity monitoring will show that unpaid carers from all Kirklees' diverse communities access carers support.



- Unpaid carers report they feel support provided is welcoming and is relevant to them and their individual needs.

## Thank you!

To everyone who has been involved in creating this strategy, from simple conversations up to detailed strategic discussions, it's all appreciated.

And thank you to all Kirklees' hard-working unpaid carers. We know you do a great job, and we think you're great too. Health and care simply couldn't cope without you.

We hope that this strategy meets the needs of carers in Kirklees, however you might feel that there are areas which you want to comment on. We welcome your comments.

If you do wish to comment please email [lyndon.peasley@kirklees.gov.uk](mailto:lyndon.peasley@kirklees.gov.uk) or post comments to Carers Strategy Manager, Kirklees Council, PO Box 1720, Huddersfield, HD1 9EL.

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- 3 Petrillo, M., Bennett, M.R., and Pryce, G. (2022) [Cycles of caring: transitions in and out of unpaid care](#)
- 4 Current Living in Kirklees (CLIK) Survey
- 5 [NHS Commitment to Carers](#)
- 6 Kirklees 2014 School Survey
- 7 [Carers UK](#)