



Our Commitment to Carers 2024-27



Introduction

Unpaid carers play a huge role in society and make a massive contribution to health and social care and the wider community within Tower Hamlets. Estimates show that the care provided by friends and family members to ill, frail or disabled relatives in the UK is equivalent to £162 billion every year.

Tower Hamlets Together is a partnership of local health and social care organisations. Our ambition is to improve the health and wellbeing of people living in Tower Hamlets. We are committed to supporting those who care for our residents by providing information, advice and support to help them in their caring role. 'Our Commitment to Carers 2024-27' has been developed with unpaid carers alongside contributions from Tower Hamlets Together partners, and outlines what we plan to do over the next three years to help provide this support. The plan also provides details of some of our partnership's achievements over the last few years.

According to the 2021 census, more than one in 20 of our residents provide unpaid carer. We know that many unpaid carers may not identify as such, viewing their caring role as a responsibility or duty. Consequently, the actual number of adults providing unpaid care in Tower Hamlets is likely to be higher still, with many 'hidden carers' in the population.

The 2021 census also told us that the needs of unpaid carers have increased with more carers providing longer hours of care compared to the previous census. We also know that the Covid-19 pandemic magnified pre-existing issues and inequalities leading to increased demands on unpaid carers, adding to the challenges already faced when caring for loved ones. The effects of the pandemic are still being felt today.

The increased cost of living is also making lives harder for the population in general, including unpaid carers, meaning that access to accurate and timely advice and information around benefits is more important than ever before.

There will continue to be challenges over the next three years. 'Our Commitment to Carers 2024-2027' outlines how we will continue to work with and for unpaid carers to provide flexible services, information, advice and activities to help them to carry out their caring role and maintain a good level of health and wellbeing.



Identifying and recognising carers



Our goals

We said we would:

- Look at how and where we publish information for carers, including from community and health settings across the borough.
- Support Barts Health Trust as they refresh their carers policy in a collaborative approach with the London boroughs of Newham, Waltham Forest and Hackney.
- Publish guidance for health and social care staff on how to identify and support carers.
- Through the Carers Academy, provide borough-wide 'how to identify a carer' training sessions to professionals.
- Implement a self-assessment toolkit for teams to review how 'carer aware' they are and share good practices.

What we have done

- In 2023/24 Carers Centre Tower Hamlets (the Carers Centre) supported over 1,700 unpaid carers, including over 700 new carers accessing the service for the first time.
- Community settings such as Idea Stores and community centres were closed for large periods during the Covid-19 pandemic, and entry to health settings (such as GP surgeries and hospitals) was severely restricted. Services, including the Carers Centre, reacted by delivering many activities online and engaged with professionals to help them identify and continue to support carers.
- Held co-production sessions with unpaid carers on carer-specific information and advice content to be published on the Tower Hamlets Connect website (towerhamletsconnect.org).
- The Carers Centre delivered training sessions to Adult Social Care and health professionals, including in hospital settings, on how to identify a carer and provided details of the support they are able to provide.
- Tower Hamlets GP Care Group conducted a review of support for Tower Hamlets informal carers, which made several recommendations, many of which informed the future priorities outlined in this document.
- Launched the Continue to Care project which aims to increase the number of carers supporting patients in the Royal London Hospital and improving the experience of carers

by providing additional support and recognition. The Carers and Hospital Discharge toolkit was also rolled out at the hospital.

- East London Foundation Trust (ELFT) developed and launched their Carers, Friends and Families Strategy 2021-2026, which outlines their promise to carers of people using ELFT services including community health services, mental health and learning disability services.
- ELFT updated the assessment template used by District Nurses to ensure that unpaid carers are identified and included in care planning.



Priorities for the future

We will:

- Identify and support at least 3,000 unpaid carers annually through our Unpaid Carers Service, delivered by the Carers Centre, including at least 500 accessing services for the first time.
- Continue to make carers assessments available in the community and work with partners to deliver a minimum of 400 quality assessments annually that help support unpaid carers in their caring role. An online carers self-assessment form will be co-produced and published in 2025.
- Ensure that a wide range of information, advice and tools is available online. This will include the Virtual Carers Centre and carer-specific information and advice pages to be co-produced and published on towerhamletsconnect.org.
- Continue to deliver the priorities outlined in the ELFT Carers, Friends and Family strategy.
- Work with services accessed by carers, such as GPs and pharmacies, to make them 'carer aware' so that unpaid carers are identified, signposted and supported in a flexible way, without the requirement to keep repeating their story.
- Continue to have a dedicated support worker for unpaid carers, working across Royal London and Mile End hospitals, who will identify and provide support to unpaid carers of patients.
- Enhance the borough's Social Prescribing offer by ensuring that all unpaid carers attending GP appointments primarily around the person they care for are offered their own consultations. This will enable them to have an opportunity to express their own support needs and get the support they require.

Realising and releasing the potential of carers



Our goals

We said we would:

- In partnership with the Carers Centre, roll out the 'employers for carers' digital resource and encourage health and care partners to sign up so that employees who are carers can be identified, recognised and supported, and offered flexible working options.
- Review and refresh the Carers Academy training programme, including delivery of a course to help carers find or get back into employment.
- Through the Carers Centre, support carers who want to find apprenticeship/employment opportunities.

What we have done

- Achieved Active Carer Confident employer status for Tower Hamlets Council, becoming the first local authority to achieve this accreditation. The council was reaccredited in October 2023.
- In early 2021 the council conducted an all-staff carers survey to identify and support council staff who have caring responsibilities by providing information and advice and training sessions on the council's intranet. Our team also provided input to Barts Health Trust, as they developed their staff carers policy.
- The Carers Wellbeing Academy have worked with unpaid carers to develop and deliver a range of training courses on topics such as money management and computer skills to enhance the skills and confidence of carers, providing 58 learning opportunities attended by over 300 carers in 2023/24 alone.
- A 'life after caring' workshop has been developed to increase opportunities for carers after their caring responsibilities have ended.



Priorities for the future

We will:

- Through the Carers Centre, continue to deliver a programme of learning opportunities developed with and for unpaid carers, that aims to enhance their skills and confidence, and help them in their caring role. This will include the delivery of six condition-specific workshops annually, and quarterly training to prepare carers for when their caring role ends.
- With our partners, deliver an annual programme of events to mark Carers Week in June each year, with activities and opportunities that reflect the theme identified by Carers UK for that particular year.
- Run another all-staff survey for council employees in 2024 to help us identify those with caring responsibilities and consider how they can continue to be supported in the workplace.
- Continue to run the Carers Partnership Board to oversee the priorities identified in this plan, and work to increase the representation and input of unpaid carers.
- Use Carer Champions – nominated staff in Adult Social Care teams who champion the role and rights of unpaid carers – to share and learn from unpaid carers' experiences navigating the social care system, and to promote the involvement of unpaid carers in decisions and discussions around care and support for their loved ones. This is with a view to improving satisfaction with Adult Social Care from unpaid carers.

A life outside of caring

Our goals

We said we would:

- Adopt a trusted assessor/prescriber model in the community to increase the use of assistive technology.
- Promote choice and control for carers who are eligible for one off direct payments or ongoing direct payments through the use of a prepaid card.
- Publish a series of factsheets with useful and accessible information for carers.
- Review the carers' relief service and explore options for alternative services that provide flexible carers relief.

What we have done

- Introduced an additional tier/level to the carers assessment process that provides support to carers who do not meet the Care Act 2014 eligibility threshold for social care services to receive a one-off direct payment up to £250 to help support them in their caring role.
- Renewed the subscription to Carers UK's digital platform which allowed unpaid carers access to a wide variety of digital resources including free factsheets.
- Restarted overnight and day retreats following the pandemic, with the number of overnight retreats being increased in 2022 and 2023 after recognising that carers needed additional support. 57 carers benefited from overnight retreats in 2023/24, with over 350 attendances at day retreats.
- A respite service was put in place to provide support to those being cared for, which enabled those who otherwise would not be able to attend retreats to participate.



Priorities for the future

We will:

- Provide IT and technology training for unpaid carers to boost digital inclusion, with details of training opportunities included on the towerhamletsconnect.org events calendar and Carers Centre website, ensuring easy access to upcoming opportunities for unpaid carers.
- Work to better understand the barriers that prevent people from accessing online services, and the solutions to overcome these. Continue to offer offline information and advice solutions for those who cannot access digital services.
- Through the Carers Centre, deliver four training sessions annually to help prepare unpaid carers for a life after their caring role has ended.
- In partnership with the Carers Centre and the London Buddhist Centre, provide overnight retreats in East Anglia for 60 unpaid carers annually with an additional 12 day retreats in London Buddhist Centre's Tower Hamlets venue.
- Co-produce with unpaid carers a respite policy that is innovative and can flexibly accommodate the varying needs of carers, to support and encourage them to take a break from their caring role.

Improving the health and wellbeing of carers



Our goals

We said we would

- Extend training to GP practices and link the Carers Centre into GP networks to raise the profile of carers.
- Through the Carers Academy, recruited carer volunteers who will obtain a mentor qualification.
- Facilitate a range of peer support groups including condition specific groups - so unpaid carers can come together and share their experiences, in particular supporting new carers as they start what is often a complex journey.
- Provide training and access to online forums so that unpaid carers can access and get support online via Carers UK digital resources.
- Promote the uptake of health checks for unpaid carers aged 40-74 years old and work closely with practice managers and healthcare assistants.

What we have done

- The Carers Centre attended a GP network meeting and delivered a session to healthcare assistants on how to identify and support carers, and outlined the services provided by the Carers Centre.
- The Carers Centre facilitated eight separate peer support groups in 2023/24.
- Published information, including on the Carers Centre's website, about how to create an account with Carers UK, which provides access to a range of useful online information for carers.
- Signposted over 90 carers annually to NHS health checks for over 40's.
- Introduced an emergency carers service with a simplified referral process, to provide respite to unpaid carers, primarily not known to Adult Social Care, who are facing, or at risk of facing, a crisis situation.
- Piloted a range of health and wellbeing activities in partnership with the Carers Centre in response to feedback we have heard from unpaid carers that they are exhausted, socially isolated, and close to burning out as a result of the pandemic.



- Delivered a pilot project that engaged and learnt from unpaid carers that accessed online or digital support rather than traditional services, such as those provided by the Carers Centre. The findings from this study informed the service specification for the Unpaid Carers Centre.



Priorities for the future

We will:

- Through the Carers Centre's Wellbeing Academy, develop and deliver a flexible range of health and wellbeing activities that aim to meet the needs of unpaid carers; details of which will be published on the towerhamletsconnect.org events calendar. This will include the delivery of 12 annual classes on how positive health activities improve wellbeing.
- Launch the Virtual Carers Centre in summer 2024, which will provide access to a range of information and support services online as well as the opportunity to book onto activities delivered by the Carers Centre.
- Deliver an increasing number of activities in a hybrid format, allowing unpaid carers the flexibility to attend in-person or to participate from home.
- Facilitate a minimum of six peer support groups annually - including young adult carers and for those caring for someone with a learning disability - to enable unpaid carers to engage with those experiencing similar circumstances. These will include groups that meet in person and those delivered through the Virtual Carers Centre.
- Train five carers annually to become Wellbeing Champions who will support other unpaid carers to engage in activities, connect, and learn a new skill.

Young carers/Transitions: providing seamless care between children and adults services



Our goals

We said we would:

- Produce information for parents of disabled children, setting out what they can expect from adult social care and what to do if their child is ineligible for support from adult services.
- Consult key stakeholders including schools, parents, carers and young people.
- Hold an event in August 2019 to re-launch the young carers service.
- Design a new, dynamic, inclusive and engaging programme with and for young carers including one-to-one and group work.

What we have done

- The Young People Service has set up two services, which have supported 106 young carers: Junior Young Carers - for young people aged 8 to 12; Senior Young Carers – for young people aged 13 plus. These are delivered weekly from Haileybury Youth Centre and include hot food and access to a wide range of sports and leisure activities including boxing and mindfulness coaching sessions for Junior Young Carers and a digital arts workshop for Senior Young Carers.
- Delivered a summer programme providing activities for young carers including pond dipping, cooking and t-shirt dying at Spitalfields farm, cinema trips, sports day and an end of programme party attended by over 60 young people and families.
- During the Christmas 2021 period, the Young People Service worked with a national charity to provide food parcels which were distributed by parent volunteers to 30 of our caring families in the borough. Over 30 families were supported with Tesco food vouchers and weekend breaks away with the family holiday association.



Priorities for the future

We will:

- Establish a steering group involving relevant stakeholders to explore partnership working and maximise opportunities for young carers.
- Explore options to develop the current offer at Haileybury and possibly have similar provision in other areas across the borough. Increase awareness in primary and secondary schools and get schools more active in identifying young carers.
- Develop stronger links with children's social care so that young carers can be identified earlier, with assessments recorded on Mosaic, the councils social care casework management system. Explore adopting the revised 'No Wrong Doors for Young Carers' memorandum of understanding developed by Carers Trust.
- Run a communications campaign for young carers acting as champions to dispel myths and remove stigma.

Frequently asked questions

Who is an unpaid carer?

An unpaid carer is anyone who provides regular unpaid care to one or more people who cannot manage without their help. This could be due to age, physical or mental illness, addiction or disability. You could care for someone for one hour a week or more than fifty hours, and you don't have to live with them.

Can I get help as an unpaid carer?

Yes. Many unpaid carers can manage without help but we know that many will need support in their caring role. We can help with this. In fact, the 2014 Care Act means we have a legal duty to help carers who need support.

What does the law say?

The Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014 strengthens the right of unpaid carers to see what support and help you need, or could need in the future, in your caring role. This is called a carer's assessment/young carer's assessment.

Information on a carer's assessment can be found here:

www.towerhamletsconnect.org/information-and-advice/caring-for-someone/supporting-carers/carers-s-assessment

What help/support is available?

A range of help is available; it depends on what you need. The Carers Centre is a dedicated service for carers of someone who lives in Tower Hamlets. They provide free information, advice and support so you can look after your own health and wellbeing.

Free digital support is also available from Carers UK. Please create an account at carersdigital.org/login and use the access code **DPCN9487**.

I want to talk to someone.

We recommend you contact the Carers Centre in the first instance on **0207 790 1765**. Carers UK provide a telephone helpline on **0808 808 7777**.

I need urgent advice and support:

Please contact the Carers Centre who are open from 9.30am – 5pm, Monday to Friday. If you need urgent support outside of these hours, including bank holidays and weekends, please contact Adult Social Care out of hours duty on **020 7364 4079**.

I need benefits advice.

Please contact the Carers Centre to speak to their benefits advisor. Further information is available on ccth.org.uk/benefits

Contact us

Carers Centre Tower Hamlets
21 Brayford Square, London, E1 0SG

Opening hours: Monday - Friday – 9.30am – 5pm

enquiries@ccth.org.uk

ccth.org.uk

For adult carers services please contact: **Jamie Bird**, Integrated Commissioning, email: jamie.bird@towerhamlets.gov.uk

For young carers services please email: young.carers@towerhamlets.gov.uk

