

# PLYMOUTH CITY-WIDE ALL-AGE UNPAID CARERS STRATEGY 2025 – 2027

Strategic Co-operative Commissioning



## I. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Plymouth City-wide All-age Unpaid Carers Strategy 2025 – 2027, brings together partners across the Plymouth health and social care system in a commitment that aims to ensure the City is a place where unpaid carers are recognised and valued for the incredible and hard work they do. Our vision is a community where carers are recognised and valued as essential partners in care, their contributions acknowledged, and their needs addressed. The strategy was co-created by Plymouth City Council, Livewell Southwest, University Hospitals Plymouth, St Luke's, and Improving Lives Plymouth in partnership with unpaid carers whose voice is at its heart and who were instrumental in helping to set the priorities.

The Plymouth City-wide All-age Carers Strategy is a public document that outlines a clear set of priorities and commitments for supporting unpaid carers across the city. This strategy addresses the needs of carers of all ages and backgrounds, ensuring that everyone who provides unpaid care has access to the support and resources they need. By detailing specific priorities, the strategy aims to create a more inclusive and caring environment for all individuals dedicated to supporting others. It reflects Plymouth's commitment to recognising and valuing the critical role that unpaid carers play in the community.

Six priorities are identified with related action plans created to ensure delivery, as follows:

### 1. Improved access to support services that work for carers (including young carers)

To enhance carers' access to a comprehensive range of support services, including occupational therapy and community-based resources, while improving service coordination, communication, and responsiveness.

Specific actions include Reduce general assessment waiting times; Increase responsiveness and maintain direct communication with carers

### 2. Enhanced financial support so carers have better access to support and information on financial matters and rights

To alleviate the financial burden on carers by helping them access available resources, grants, income support, and workplace flexibility.

Specific actions include Increase carers' access to financial support resources; Promote flexibility and understanding within employment settings

### 3. Improved health, safety and wellbeing of unpaid carers (emotional and psychological support)

To support carers' mental and emotional wellbeing through access to trusted support systems, counselling, peer support, tailored breaks, and safeguarding.

Specific actions include Develop trusted local support systems for carers; improve access to counselling and mental health support

### 4. Early identification and recognition of unpaid carers

To increase recognition of unpaid carers' contributions, create platforms for advocacy, and ensure their inclusion in decision-making processes.

Specific actions include Implement carer awareness programmes across Plymouth; include carers in decision-making processes

## **5. Improved information, advice and communication**

To ensure that carers have clear, accessible information on available resources, support services, and care pathways, tailored to diverse needs

Specific actions include Develop user friendly online platforms; create and distribute comprehensive, easy-to-understand caregiving guides

## **6. When your caring role changes – supporting carers during transitions**

To support carers through the emotional and practical changes of transitioning out of their caregiving role, providing guidance on rebuilding their lives and fostering social connections.

Specific actions include Provide emotional support and coping resources; encourage social connections and community engagement.

The full and detailed action plans against each priority contain timelines, action owners and outcome indicators.

By focusing on improved access to support services, enhanced financial assistance, effective communication amongst the other areas, we strive to alleviate the burdens faced by carers and foster an environment where they can thrive.

## **2. BACKGROUND**

The 2021 census identified 23,956 unpaid carers living in Plymouth, with 44 per cent providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care per week. More women than men are carers, with the highest number in the 50-59 age group. The 2024 school census also found 730 young carers across both primary and secondary schools.

3 in 5 people in the UK will become carers at some point in their lives due to advances in healthcare treatment, an ageing population, changes in patterns of illness, systemic problems in social care sector and the move towards increased community-based care; all this means that awareness and support for carers is vital. Although many people are willing and happy to undertake a caring role for loved-ones, data such as the annual GP survey reveal that carers are disadvantaged in comparison to the general population in terms of their health and wellbeing. Carers are also often disadvantaged in employment and financially. We know that carers are more likely to suffer depression, anxiety and stress and nearly two-thirds of carers have a long-standing health condition. The impact is often exacerbated by carers being unable to find the time for their own medical check-ups or treatment. Personal relationships can also suffer, and carers are more likely to be socially isolated, both at work and in their personal lives. The economic value of carers - Carers UK estimate that care provided by friends and family saves the state £132 billion each year in, the equivalent of another NHS.

With the average cost per week for a care home place being £600, and £800 for a nursing home place, carers help to ensure that the cared for person can remain living in their own home.

## **3. WHY HAVE A STRATEGY?**

Having a city-wide carers strategy is essential because it establishes a clear framework for addressing the needs of unpaid carers, who play a critical role in supporting the health and well-being of others. This strategy helps to:

**Recognise Contributions:** It acknowledges the invaluable work that unpaid carers do every day, often without formal recognition or compensation.

**Promote Inclusivity:** By covering carers of all ages and backgrounds, the strategy promotes inclusivity, ensuring that no group is overlooked or underserved.

Guide Decision-Making: It serves as a reference for policymakers, helping to ensure that decisions affecting carers are made with their best interests in mind and to ensure that we are meeting our statutory duties. Our main duties are as part of the Care Act 2014 and the Children's and Families Act.

#### **4. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISK**

Plymouth City Council invests annually £632,860 for the delivery of the commissioned adult carers service. It will invest approximately £115,200 for the in-house young carers service and £116,715 for the commissioned service from The Children's Society in 2025/26. Adult Social Care, that is delivered by Livewell Southwest, also supports some unpaid carers as part of its duties under the Care Act. Last financial year, £198,409 was also spent on respite services that allow carers to take well-earned break from caring duties. £63,725 against a Budget of £119,599 has been spent this year so far.

As mentioned above the economic value of carers bring is huge, - Carers UK estimate that care provided by friends and family saves the state £132 billion each year in, the equivalent of another NHS. The economic risk to the Council to deliver the Strategy is minimal because the investments listed here will be held within existing budget values. Priority 2, above, Enhanced Financial Support, does not mean the Council will provide additional funding but will provide access to guidance, support and information to ensure income maximisation for unpaid carers.

#### **5. NEXT STEPS**

The partners that wrote the strategy have created an action implementation plan that will deliver the priorities and associated objectives and outcomes. Deliverance is reported to the Plymouth Carers Strategic Partnership Board. A Researcher in Residence from the Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) will be supporting with the creation of a monitoring and evaluation framework that will provide evidence to determine the effectiveness and impact of the Strategy.