

PLYMOUTH CITY-WIDE ALL-AGE UNPAID CARERS STRATEGY IMPLEMENTATION 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 their incredible hard work.

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 NHS Trust, St Luke's, Time 4 U Partnership (in-house Community Youth Team and The Children's Society), NHS Devon ICB 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 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.

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 2025 school census also found 846 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. DEVELOPING THE STRATEGY

Key to the development of the carers strategy was input from key stakeholders and carers with lived experience. A Task and Finish subgroup within the Carers Strategic Partnership Board (CSPB) was formed to lead the project. This group was responsible for guiding the strategy's development, ensuring that a wide range of perspectives were considered.

Other carer strategies at local and regional levels were reviewed to understand best practice for developing and promoting the Plymouth strategy. National and local statutory frameworks were also considered to align with broader guidelines. Feedback was collected through surveys which included:

- Our own survey collecting insights from unpaid carers in Plymouth
- Reviewing the findings from the statutory bi-annual Survey of Adult Carers England
- Reviewing findings from the Plymouth Healthwatch Carers Survey

Following reviews of the survey results and setting priorities, a carers engagement group was formed to discuss the findings and refine the strategy. Once the draft was complete, carers were asked to review and suggested final changes. Young carers provided feedback through their existing group sessions. This collaborative approach ensured the strategy reflected the shared vision of all involved, leading to the development of the strategic action plan.

4. PRIORITIES, OBJECTIVES AND DELIVERY

There is a detailed action plan to support the implementation of the strategy. Six priorities are identified with related objectives and 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 objectives 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 objectives 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 objectives include - develop trusted local support systems for carers; improve access to counselling and mental health support; access to respite services for carers.

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 objectives 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 objectives 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 objectives include - provide emotional support and coping resources; encourage social connections and community engagement.

Through the focus of 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.

To ensure the delivery of the 6 identified priorities listed above, action plans and timelines have been created that have a named lead to oversee the delivery. Each priority area has a series of objectives with detailed actions and outcome measures identified to measure impact and progress. Each lead is responsible for ensuring delivery of the objectives for their priority area; they may not be assigned to the action, but they need to oversee to ensure delivery or identify blockages. Outcome measures have also been identified to enable assurance to be provided on the delivery of the plan.

5. FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS AND RISK

Plymouth City Council invests £632,860 annually for the delivery of the commissioned adult carers service. Additionally, it invests 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, delivered by Livewell Southwest, also supports some unpaid carers as part of its duties under the Care Act. Over the last financial year, £198,409 was also spent on respite services that allow carers to take well-earned break from caring duties.

6. NEXT STEPS

The strategic action plan will support the delivery of the priorities and associated objectives. As part of the governance process, progress is reported to the Plymouth CSPB. Furthermore, a Researcher in Residence from the Health Determinants Research Collaborative (HDRC) will be supporting the

monitoring and evaluation process which will provide evidence to determine the effectiveness and impact of the Strategy.

The HASC is asked to note the progress against delivery of the implementation plan to date and to endorse the collaborative partnership approach to supporting our carers.