



Are you looking after someone?

What we are doing to
support carers in York
2019 - 2024





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Who has written this plan?

This plan has been written by the carers strategy group. This a group of people from health and social care organisations, including the council and healthcare professionals, charities, families and carers themselves.



Our Carers

Different kinds of carers

Carers come from all ages and backgrounds. These are some of the words used to describe different kinds of carers and what is meant by them.



Carer

Is someone who gives support to another adult, child or young person with an illness, substance misuse issue or disability who could not manage without that help.



Parent Carer

Is a parent (or guardian) of a disabled child or children up to 18 years of age.



Young Adult Carer

Is someone aged between 18 and 25 who is caring for another child, young person or adult.



Young Carer

Is a child or young person under the age of 18 who is caring for another family member, friend or neighbour who has an illness or disability.



Different kinds of care

There are different kinds of carers and different kinds of care. This might include:

| | |
|-------------------------------|--|
| Personal Care | Support with dressing, washing, and toileting |
| Domestic Care | Support with cooking, housework, and shopping |
| Physical Care | Support with moving, lifting and handling |
| Financial Care | Support with financial affairs |
| Health Care | Support with managing an illness or a condition, or helping someone to take their medicine |
| Offering Moral Support | Being a listening ear or simply providing company for someone who is feeling lonely |



Some facts about carers in York



There are around 19,000 adult carers in York. 11,000 of whom are female and about 8,000 are male. These figures do not include young carers so could be much higher.

The council recently carried out a survey of adult carers in the city. These are some of the things they told us:



46% of adult carers in York say that caring had caused financial difficulties for them.



94% of adult carers in York say that their health had been affected by their caring role.



46% of adult carers in York do not think they are able to look after themselves properly in terms of eating and sleeping well.



65% of adult carers in York do not have as much social contact with people as they would like.



40% are providing more than 100 hours unpaid care per week.



Our Voices

We recently asked our carers about their experiences. These are some of the things they said:

“ Finances and wellbeing are totally linked. You can't do things to help your wellbeing because you don't have the money, so your wellbeing goes down even more and it's harder to motivate yourself to do anything.

“ We don't always want benefits. We just want a roof over our heads and to be able to look after the people we care about.”

“ Caring for somebody can be very rewarding, but at times it's physically and emotionally exhausting. People struggle on alone.”

“ One of the most important things is to see yourself as a carer in the first place and to ask for help. It's ok to come forward. It's normal to be a carer.”

“ The voluntary sector have been fantastic. It is only the efforts of York Mind and York Carers Centre that have kept us from utter despair.”

“ My GP never said 'You are a carer, here is some support you can apply for.' It doesn't take a minute to hand out a leaflet with details about who to talk to.”

“ I have to shout to be heard. People think you're exaggerating. Sometimes it feels like there's no understanding. Services need to listen and not think that they know best.”

“ Caring is hard and extremely challenging but can take you on some of the most amazing journeys and experiences if you allow it to. It does not always have to be a negative.”

Our Experiences

These are some of the real life experiences of carers in York. Their names have been changed to protect their identities.

Sarah's Story

I live in a village just outside York with my husband and our eldest daughter, Jane, who first started to struggle with stress and anxiety over 10 years ago.

When she came home from university things got worse and worse until Jane was eventually diagnosed with severe mental illness. The last few years have had a huge impact on all the family. We have lived with uncertainty, guilt, violence, fear and constant worry.

Being a carer can be a very lonely place. We have been lucky enough to meet lots of other carers. Talking to them has made me realise the massive challenges that we all face, but it has also been a great help and comfort in times of crisis.

We may not be health or care 'professionals' but we do have the insight of a fellow traveller, someone who shares the journey with our loved ones and sees the full impact of their physical or mental illness on a daily basis.

So what is it that I want to see and do? I want a mental health system that is driven by compassion, communication and trust. I want carers to be listened to, really listened to. Carers spend half their time battling with services. Things are slowly getting better but there is still a long way to go.

Lisa and Mark's Story

We are parents to three boys, Harry, Jack and Mathew.

Our story begins with our first son, Harry. When he started school he found it impossible to cope with the noise of the playground and every day routine. He had outbursts of anger and his anxiety rose to the point that he struggled to leave our house. Harry was eventually diagnosed with sensory processing disorder and autism. (Our second son, Jack, has also been diagnosed with a form of autism and our youngest son, Mathew, is now being assessed for the condition).

Over time we came to realise that family life was not going to unfold in the way that we had expected it to. We also realised that mainstream education was not going to work for us as a family, and we decided to home educate all three of our children.

I suddenly became a full time carer whilst Mark juggled (and struggled) to combine caring with work. At first we both felt angry, frustrated and envious of others. These feelings definitely did not go away overnight. We felt so isolated. People came to our home to try and help. Sometimes I would keep them talking for as long as possible just to have some company!

A turning point came when somebody said to me that once you can accept, things will get better. The same person also told me I was strong. I eventually took this on board and our lives changed for the better.

My husband and I now look at our lives and feel they are so much richer as a result of our caring role. We would not change our lifestyle and the way we live with our children despite it being very challenging. Time out for me or my partner might be the weekly shop but we feel privileged to spend so much time with our children and are constantly learning so much from them, and from being carers.

Josh's Story

I care for my mum who's got lots of physical health problems, including arthritis, costochondritis and diabetes.

She's got really limited mobility. We've just had a stair lift and wet room installed and we always have to take the wheelchair when we go out.

I think it's mostly because of this that she's got really depressed and is suicidal sometimes. Watching her struggle is so hard.

I know I don't have the life of a typical 22 year old lad, but I just try to get on with it. Being a young adult carer can be stressful, lonely and exhausting and the constant pressure and unpredictability of it all has really affected my mental health.

Meeting other people in similar situations has made me feel less alone and the trips and activities I go on with York Carers Centre make a massive difference. It might not seem like much, but it's my chance to get out and do things that I wouldn't be able to otherwise.

I think there needs to be support available for younger carers like me – we might not always take it up, but it's so important to know it's there when we need it.

Our Vision

Our vision is to create a carer friendly city. One where all carers in York will be able to say the following things:

- **I know who to turn to for help**
- **I can cope**
- **I can live a life of my own**
- **My voice is heard - my views make a difference**

We need to make sure that our plan makes a difference to carer's lives. A detailed action plan has been drawn up to make sure that these things happen.

The action plan is not included here. It is a working document which will be updated and changed as the work progresses, but this is available for anyone to see on request.

The next page tells you about some of the main things we will do to improve the lives of carers in York over the next five years.

Full details about where you can get help and advice can be found on the back page of this document

Our Plan on a Page

What works well?

York Carers Centre is the first point of contact for carers in York. They are welcoming, friendly and supportive. The carers centre offers services for carers of all ages and all backgrounds. If someone else is in a better position to help you York Carers Centre will tell you who they are, and who to speak to.

What could be better?

Not all carers in the city know about the York Carers Centre or the other places they can turn to for help and support.

Carers would find it easier to get the help needed if local services such as health, education and social care for children and adults, all worked together.

Lots of carers are struggling to look after their loved ones, especially people caring for a loved one with dementia, mental health, drug or alcohol issues.

Many carers feel that they can't live a life of their own, make friends or socialise. They feel as if they have no choice other than to provide care.

Carers have told us they are sometimes ignored by professionals. Their voices are not listened to and their views are not acted on.

Carers have told us that there aren't enough opportunities to take a break.

Where do we go from here?

We need to reach out to the many hidden carers in York and plug them into the excellent support that already exists.

We need to give carers the confidence to come forward and ask for help – and for that help to be provided at the right time and in the right place. Any gaps in support need to be filled.

We need to give carers the confidence to tell professionals what they think, in the knowledge that their views, thoughts and ideas will be taken seriously and genuinely make a difference.

Making these changes will not be easy, but over the next five years we are determined to make York one of the best places in the country to live if you are a carer.

Our Resources

There are lots of services in York that can support carers and their loved ones. The best place to find out about all these different services is through York Carers Centre who have an up-to-date list of people who can help you.

Below is a brief summary of the contact details you will need as a starting point:

York Carers Centre

www.yorkcarerscentre.co.uk

York Carers Centre is the first point of contact for carers in York. The centre has an advice line **(01904) 715490** that is open Mon- Fri, 9.30 to 4.30 pm, and on Wednesday evenings 5 - 8 pm. enquiries@yorkcarerscentre.co.uk

City of York Council - Talking Points

www.york.gov.uk/TalkingPoints

Talking Points allow adults who either have difficulties themselves or who are caring for somebody else to have a conversation with a social worker in a relaxed community setting.

(01904) 555111.

Live Well York

www.livewellyork.co.uk

Live Well York is a website for all adults and families in York. You can use this website to find helpful information and advice, discover hundreds of local groups and activities and find out what events are happening across York – including activities for carers.

Yor-OK

www.yor-ok.org.uk

Yor-OK is a website for everyone who works with and for children, young people and families, including unpaid carers.



Vale of York

Clinical Commissioning Group



York Teaching Hospital

NHS Foundation Trust



Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys

NHS Foundation Trust



CITY OF
YORK
COUNCIL

