

All-Age Carers Strategy

Progress Report -
what we've achieved
over the last 2 years



The All-Age Carers Strategy 2022-2026 sets out six co-produced commitments from the Council, informed by carers, to carers.

Working with carers and organisations supporting carers, those commitments have turned into actions that aim to improve the lives of carers of all ages.

Here we set the progress made against each commitment over the past 2 years.

1

Carer's Commitment

Carers can easily access the information, advice, guidance, and support when they need it and early into their caring role.

Specialist Information, Advice and Guidance

Between April 2023 – April 2024, over 5,500 carers have accessed Essex County Council's commissioned services and been provided with specialist, good quality information, advice, and guidance. There have been 350 facilitated peer support group sessions where carers have come together for mutual support. 100% of carers surveyed said that they had been listened to and their needs been responded to appropriately.

“ I am so grateful to have you by my side and for all your support. This will help me to find the strength to keep supporting my mum as well knowing you are behind me and supporting me. ”

Even more help than before

Having listened to what matters to carers, even more support is now available for carers through newly launched services, available since April 2024. This includes support to find practical solutions to address specific challenges, access to support for good health and emotional wellbeing and even more opportunities to engage with peers for support.

Since introducing even more support an additional 1,200 carers have been supported through these services.

“ You have got to know us so well in such a short time...you get it, you really get it, what it's like to be an unpaid Carer and the challenges that poses. ”

Essex Wellbeing Service

The Council's Essex Wellbeing Service is delivered by an alliance of specialist organisations whose aim it is to help residents be healthy, safe and well, and is now promoted as a central point of contact for unpaid carers. Residents can call for support with lifestyle issues such as smoking, social isolation, weight management or help with day-to-day needs. As part of their conversations with people accessing the services, staff work actively to find out if callers are unpaid carers and then ensure they are signposted to the help available. Since September 2023 the service has engaged with and supported over 500 carers.

High Quality Virtual Information, Advice and Guidance

Carers now have increased opportunity to engage with and access to good quality information, advice and support through our virtual carers offer, which features virtual cuppas, peer support groups, news and information, and direct pathways to specialist support services. This offer has been particularly impactful in identifying previously unknown carers especially men and working carers who hadn't really thought of themselves as such. Since January 2023 the social media posts have had over 65,000 views, and 4,600 carers engaged and/or been supported.

“ Just to be able to have a laugh with other people who are living really challenging lives and understanding where they're coming from... it's been a fabulous thing. ”

Website Improvements

Carers who visit the Council's website now access good quality information, advice and guidance following major improvements with its content and the links to other services. There has been a total of 4,100 visits to the main carers site since improvements were made during the summer of 2023. The most visited part of the carers site is for support with carers assessments (2000 visits), followed by parent carers of disabled children (1500 visits) and financial support for carers (1,300 visits).



2

Carer's Commitment

Develop professional practice and processes to improve identification and support to carers.

Think Carers Guide

More carers are being identified and supported by front line workers who have been using our 'Think Carers' guide, which encourages professionals to be curious, ask appropriate questions and if needed, signpost carers to relevant support. This guide was co-produced with stakeholders and whilst we await impact evidence, the initial feedback about the guide has been very positive.

Improved Assessment Process

Carers receiving Care Act Carers Assessment are now benefiting from improvements made, including simpler forms based on feedback from carers and clearer guidance for Social Care professionals working with carers. Evidence of impact will be collected over the following months as the revised process has just gone live.

Improved Access to Care Technology

Carers now have access to different types of care technology available and are using the latest digital and technology solutions to help support them in their caring roles. Types of equipment include smart home devices and medication management systems. Between January 2024 - March 2024, the Care Technology Service helped carers by supporting nearly 10,000 residents live more independently and helped 1,870 people who have fallen.



3

Carer's Commitment

Improve transitions for carers as they move through specific phases or life events in their caring role.

More Support with Young Carers and Transitions

The Youth Service provides information, advice and guidance, including one-to-one support, for young carers. 2,675 Young Carers have been supported by the Youth Service over the last year and they have trained over 100 social workers from Childrens and Adults social care in recognising young carers and the offer available through the Youth Service. As they have reached key transition stages, young carers have been supported by the Youth Service to plan for their futures and where necessary work with Adult Social Care for Care Act assessments.

Currently, over 155 "Young Carers in Schools Accreditation Awards" have been awarded to Essex schools, who have demonstrated good practice to support the needs of young carers. A key feature of that accreditation is supporting young carers through transitions.

Increased Counselling Support

Carers have told us they would like support for when they are no longer in caring roles, or if recently bereaved. 180 carers were supported through the previous counselling service, resulting in improved emotional and psychological wellbeing. 96% of these carers said this support has been impactful.

“ I was able to open up about the challenges and downsides of my caring responsibilities with my counsellor and felt relieved that I was able to open up about my discomfort with my caring role in a non-judgmental environment but that I was given the space to do so. ”



4

Carer's Commitment

Carers will have increased opportunity to access good quality support, including short breaks, to maintain their own wellbeing and those they care for.

Enhanced wellbeing grants offer

Over 1,100 carers have been supported with time out from their caring role by receiving a small grant and 100% of the 810 carers surveyed said that this had a positive impact on their wellbeing. Carers continue to benefit from an enhanced grants offer which reached 73 carers in the first 6 weeks of launching and is planned to reach more carers than ever before with a more flexible offer.

“ The grant was a real ‘lifeline’ and came when I desperately needed a break. Until you are in this situation you can’t appreciate the detrimental effect it has on your health. To be able to have a grant was amazing and I felt choked that I was deemed worthy of one. You lose your sense of self - so to be able to get away and ‘reset’ was so beneficial to me. Thank you. ”

Increased local community support

Carers are now able to access more local community groups for support and social activities, made possible by the Councils Carers Community Fund, which has funded over 75 local projects and initiatives. An example is Voluntary Action Epping Forest, which began supporting carers in May 2024, by providing vital assistance to those caring for individuals with disabilities with benefit applications and signposting essential support services.

“ We can now give vital help to carers. ”

Increased financial support

When the cost-of-living crisis hit, the last government introduced the Department for Work and Pensions Household Support Fund. The fund was to support households who need help with fuel bills, food and other essentials. With the help of carers organisations in Essex, 8,334 carers benefited from financial support.

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Carer's Commitment

Carers' needs and rights will be understood and recognised across Essex communities.

Comms and engagement campaigns

Many more carers are now more aware of their rights and the support available to them, made possible by large-scale, awareness raising communications campaigns such as press releases, social media films and promotional materials. For example, content posted on social media relating to carers rights day in November 2023 resulted in 60,000 impressions, 4,100 video views and 1,100 engagements.

Improved partnership working

Wider organisations are now better informed about work happening across the system to integrate solutions through the All-Age Carers Partnership Board, which meets regularly and brings together Commissioners, Social Care, Health, and the Voluntary Sector around a shared commitment to make change for carers in Essex.

6

Carer's Commitment

Carers will be the experts that influence, shape and be involved in the decisions that are intended to improve their support and wellbeing.

More carers views listened to

Carers have been developing their services by engaging in consultations and surveys, focus groups, interviews, and workshops, which have resulted in the co-production of the six commitments and a range of other developments including the new services for carers.

Carers are now able to share their lived experiences with an independent, countywide engagement team of people employed by Healthwatch

specifically to listen to carers views and feed them back to decision makers and encourage them to become involved in the decisions that impact their lives. 950 carers have been engaged with since the new involvement team started their work.

The Council has worked with carers representative organisations to commission some research that maps carers' journeys so more can be understood about carers' lived experiences and what more needs to change and/or improve to support them at the right time, in the right place.

“ I felt listened to and I mattered. ”

This information is issued by:
Essex County Council
Adult Social Care and Children and Families

Contact us:
Essex.Carers@essex.gov.uk
www.essex.gov.uk/carers
0345 743 0430

Adult Social Care and Children and Families
Essex County Council
County Hall
Chelmsford CM1 1QH

 [Essex_CC](https://twitter.com/Essex_CC)
 facebook.com/essexcountycouncil

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