



HARTLEPOOLCARERS STRATEGY

2026 - 2031



Hartlepool
Borough Council

Foreword

I am proud to introduce Hartlepool's Carer's Strategy which is a commitment to recognising, valuing and supporting the unpaid carers who make an extraordinary difference in our borough every day. Carers play a vital role in the health and wellbeing of our communities, often balancing their own lives with providing care and support to those who need it most.

This strategy reflects our shared ambition to ensure carers are not only acknowledged but empowered. It sets out practical steps to improve access to information, health and wellbeing support, opportunities for breaks from caring and pathways to education and employment. Most importantly, it has been shaped through co-production with carers themselves, ensuring their voices and experiences are at the heart of everything we do. Together, we will work across health, social care and community partners to deliver meaningful change. By implementing this strategy, we aim to create a culture where carers feel supported, respected and able to live fulfilling lives alongside their caring responsibilities.

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this strategy and to all carers for the invaluable role you play in our community.



Councillor Gary Allen

Chair of Adult Services and Public Health Committee
Chair of the Health and Wellbeing Board

Introduction

Unpaid carers in Hartlepool play a vital role in supporting family members, friends, and neighbours who could not manage without their help. Carers provide care out of love and commitment, but this often comes at a personal cost to their own health, wellbeing, finances and opportunities.

Hartlepool recognises the importance of supporting carers of all ages - young carers, parent carers, working-age carers, ex-carers and older carers, so they can continue to live full and meaningful lives alongside their caring responsibilities.

Whilst not downplaying the impact of caring on all ages, there is no doubt that there are some specific challenges for young carers and it is important that these are considered in the strategy.

Young carers have unique needs that must be recognised, supported and addressed in a coordinated and sustainable way. Young carers often take on significant responsibilities at home, which can impact their education, social development and emotional wellbeing. A clear strategy helps to raise awareness across services, improve access to tailored support and promote early identification and intervention. It also empowers young carers by giving them a voice in shaping the services that affect them, fostering resilience and helping them thrive both now and in the future.

This strategy has been shaped by the voices of carers in Hartlepool. It sets out our shared vision, values and priorities to ensure carers are recognised, valued and supported. Our aim is to ensure carers are not left isolated, unsupported or invisible. Instead, carers should feel recognised, connected and able to balance caring with other aspects of their lives. This strategy applies to carers of all ages and backgrounds and will be delivered through partnership working across health, social care, education, voluntary organisations and local communities.

Background

Carers play an essential role in Hartlepool, supporting family members, friends and neighbours who could not manage without their help. Their contribution underpins the health, wellbeing and independence of many local people. Recognising this, Hartlepool Borough Council and Hartlepool Carers has worked closely with carers to develop this Carers Strategy.

The strategy has been shaped by the experiences and priorities of carers themselves. Over recent months, a programme of engagement and co-production activities has been carried out to ensure that carers' voices are at the heart of local planning. This included:

- Carer surveys circulated through local networks, and community organisations to capture a wide range of views
- Focus groups and listening events where carers shared their day-to-day experiences, challenges and ideas for change
- Targeted conversations with young carers, working carers and carers from diverse backgrounds to ensure inclusion of seldom-heard voices
- Community workshops involving professionals from health, education and social care, enabling carers and practitioners to explore shared priorities and opportunities for joint working



Feedback from these activities highlighted several consistent messages. Carers told us they want:

- To be recognised and valued for the vital contribution they make
- Clear, accessible information and advice at the right time
- Support for their own wellbeing, including opportunities for respite and social connection
- Greater flexibility and understanding from employers, schools and services and:
- To be involved as equal partners in care planning and service development

This strategy reflects what carers in Hartlepool have told us matters most to them. It builds on the strengths of our local community and sets out a shared commitment to ensure that carers are supported, respected and empowered in their caring roles.



How this Strategy was developed

The Hartlepool Carers Strategy has been developed through a partnership approach led by Hartlepool Borough Council and Hartlepool Carers, with support from other local organisations. The process has been evidence-based, using local data, national policy guidance and carers lived experiences to shape shared priorities.

A Carers Strategy Working Group brought together representatives from across health, social care, education and the voluntary sector to review feedback and identify key themes. The result is a strategy that reflects both the unique needs of Hartlepool's carers and our collective ambition to make the borough a carer-friendly community.

Hartlepool Carers - Local Context

According to data, there are approximately 10,000 people in Hartlepool providing care to a family member, friend, or neighbour. Around:

- 1 in 10 residents identifies as an unpaid carer
- Over 1,600 carers provide 50 or more hours of care per week; and:
- A growing number of carers are also in employment, balancing work and caring responsibilities.

These figures highlight the scale and significance of caring within our community, and the need for coordinated support that recognises carers as equal partners in care. The Carers Strategy sets out how local organisations will work together to achieve this.

Vision

That carers in Hartlepool are recognised, respected and supported to live well, stay healthy and achieve their own goals, while continuing in their caring role if they choose.

Values

Our work will be guided by the following values:

- Recognition - valuing carers as experts by experience.
- Respect - listening to carers' voices and treating them with dignity.
- Inclusion - ensuring carers are part of their community and have equal opportunities.
- Support - providing timely, accessible and practical help.
- Partnership - working with carers, families, communities, employers and services.
- Compassion - responding with kindness and understanding.

This Carers Strategy has been co-produced with carers and organisations in Hartlepool. It sets out eight key priorities, each with underpinning ambitions that aim to achieve meaningful change.

Our aim is to ensure carers are not left isolated, unsupported, or invisible. Instead, carers should feel recognised, connected and able to balance caring with other aspects of their lives. This strategy applied to carers of all ages and backgrounds and will be delivered through partnership working across health, social care, education, voluntary organisations and local communities.



Priority 1

Helping carers to be recognised and supported early

We want carers to be seen, heard and supported as soon as possible.

We will do this by:

- Raising awareness of what being a carer means.
- Delivering training in schools, communities, health settings and with emergency services so carers can be spotted and signposted to support.
- Encourage that every school to have a designated Young Carer Lead whose contact details are shared and who fully understands the support mechanisms available for young carers. This individual plays a key role and should be well-known within the school community.
- Including carers in care planning and support them throughout the caring journey, including at end-of-life.
- Supporting carers in employment through awareness of the Carers Leave Act.
- Partnering with charities and community groups to identify and support carers of all ages.

Priority 2

Carers having a family life and being part of their community

We want carers to be able to look after their family, enjoy time with friends and family, be part of their local community and do the things they like doing.

We will help carers do this by:

- Providing activities and support in community locations.
- Supporting young carers in maintaining a balanced life where they can care of their family while also enjoying friendships, participating in community activities, and pursuing their own interests and aspirations.
- Supporting carers to start their own groups.
- Improving access to transport so families can access activities.
- Promote “Carer Friendly Hartlepool.”
- Create more social opportunities for carers to connect.

Priority 3

Giving carers the right information, advice and support

We want carers to be able to easily find information, advice and support at the time they need it in a format that is accessible for them.

We will help carers do this by:

- Making sure that any organisations who come into contact with carers know where to direct carers to for information, advice and support.
- Ensuring young carers can easily access the right information, advice and support when they need it, in ways that are clear, age-appropriate and tailored to their individual circumstances.
- Providing information that is easy to access both online and in person, tailored to individual needs and preferences - including through social media and other adaptable formats.
- Sharing real-life experiences from carers.
- Offering in-person support to reduce isolation.
- Creating peer networks for learning and support.

Priority 4

Helping carers stay healthy and well

We want carers to live healthy lives and to reduce their levels of stress, anxiety and depression.

We will help carers do this by:

- Working with health services and charities to promote self-care.
- Providing wellbeing support, therapies and workshops.
- Recognising the impact caring has on health.
- Ensuring GPs know who their carers are.
- Supporting young carers in maintaining their physical and emotional wellbeing by reducing stress and promoting healthy lifestyles, ensuring they have access to the right support at the right time.
- Ensuring all health professionals are aware of who their young carers are and encourage professionals to make appropriate adjustments to meet their health and wellbeing needs, providing compassionate, accessible and responsive care.
- Offering community health checks and wellbeing sessions.

Priority 5

Helping carers have a life outside caring (work, education, volunteering)

We want carers to have a good life outside of their caring role. Carers should be recognised and supported. They should be able to work, study, or volunteer if they want to - without harming their own wellbeing or the care they give.

We will help carers do this by:

- Ensuring employers understand their responsibilities under the Carers Leave Act.
- Encouraging flexible working and hybrid options.
- Creating varied volunteering opportunities.
- Making sure schools and colleges have Carer Leads.
- Training job coaches to understand carers' needs.
- Supporting young carers to pursue education, training, volunteering and personal interests - ensuring their caring role does not limit their opportunities or wellbeing and that they are recognised and supported to achieve their goals.

Priority 6

Supporting ex-carers after their caring role ends

We want to make sure that people who used to care for someone get the help they need when their caring role ends.

We will help carers do this by:

- Providing local groups and peer support for ex-carers.
- Promoting services that support life after caring.
- Encouraging ex-carers to use their skills to support others.
- Working with community and faith groups to provide support.
- Ensuring young carers are supported when their caring role ends, helping them adjust, rebuild their confidence and access opportunities for personal growth, education and wellbeing.

Priority 7

Making sure carers' voices are heard in decisions

We want carers to be recognised as experts in their own lives and be involved in planning and decision making.

We will help carers do this by:

- Encouraging carers to become Carer Champions and join focus groups.
- Seeking carers opinions by offering surveys and flexible feedback methods.
- Taking focus groups into local venues.
- Ensuring groups are supportive, friendly and inclusive.
- Ensuring young carers are recognised as experts in their own lives and are actively involved in shaping the support, services and decisions that affect them.
- Providing clear information for carers leading groups.

Priority 8

Giving carers time away from caring responsibilities

We want to make sure that carers can take time away from their caring responsibilities whilst knowing that their cared for is being well looked after.

We will support carers to do this by:

- Helping carers maintain social networks, hobbies and interests.
- Coordinating services to give carers breaks.
- Providing peer groups, retreats and flexible respite opportunities.
- Offering subsidised activities to make breaks affordable.
- Providing activities in varied community settings.
- Ensuring young carers have regular opportunities to take time away from their caring responsibilities, knowing that the person they care for is safe and supported - so they can rest, recharge, and enjoy activities that matter to them.

How will we deliver our vision for Carers?

This strategy sets out our vision for carers living in Hartlepool. An action plan for the delivery of this strategy will be developed. A set of measures will be included in the plan to monitor progress and success, and these will be reported annually to the Health and Wellbeing Board. These measures will not just be numbers and outputs, they will also be measures of impact, so we know that we are making a difference and supporting carers, their families and cared for.

