



Together with Carers

A Dorset vision

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11 million
carers in the UK.

Foreword

Caring is a tough life. Like myself, most carers have not been trained to be a carer or expected it. Many do not even recognise themselves as carers. In 2022, Carers UK found that over 50% of carers took a year or more to recognize their caring role, a third taking over three years.

Caring takes its toll – some just about cope, others can struggle with both physical and mental health, and financial problems. It can be a long and lonely journey. Many feel isolated, sad, and frustrated. It's tiring and it's relentless and, in some cases, may go on for years and involve several generations within one family.

It is therefore important to explore how health professionals and governing bodies can understand, support and work with carers directly to ensure their needs are met.

This vision reflects that journey in highlighting the things that need to be done to ensure the carer community can continue to play its part. It is a joint vision of a future where many of the current burdens and gaps are addressed.

The contribution that carers make to health and social care is staggering. There are thought to be nearly 11 million carers in the UK. During the pandemic it was estimated that carer support was valued at £540m per day (Carers UK). Carers contribute an equivalent of four million paid care workers to the social care system. Without us, the system would collapse.

Carers need to be valued and listened to, their personal needs and wellbeing need to be addressed with good support, accessible information and opportunities for taking that important break from the daily grind. For some, devoting time to care for someone important to them is rewarding, but it is vital that assistance is available to gain new proficiencies such as organisational, practical and resilience skills.

Things have improved since the 2016 'Valuing Carers in Dorset' strategic vision, but more needs to be done to understand, value and support this valuable community and unrecognised workforce. It's about changing mindsets and developing a culture where carers are listened to, respected, and seen as an integral part of the health and care system.

It is very encouraging that this vision has been co-produced by many organisations and disciplines and of course, carers. It is even more encouraging that the vision is receiving high level support to ensure that we can all deliver our objectives.

It's not going to be any easy road and we know that it is going to take time, but it is a journey that is vital.

Steve Duckett
Carer Chair
Pan Dorset Carers Steering Group



“The vision to me means that carers are valued and supported with their contributions to both the people they care for and to the community they both can access. This was one of the reasons I became involved with the carers vision.”

Carer member, Pan Dorset Carers Steering Group

We would like to extend our deepest appreciation to all carers in Dorset and, in particular, carer members, past and present, of the steering group who have been instrumental to the completion of this carers vision.

Our commitment

I warmly welcome the Dorset vision's commitment to carers, genuinely co-produced with carers themselves as strategic partners in change. As a society, we are living through challenging times.

As Carers UK's 2023 State of Caring reminds us, carers are under unprecedented pressures. But, as the 2024 All Party Parliamentary Group on Adult Social Care also reminds us in its new report on the future of social care, we have unique opportunities – and the vision – for all-important integration and innovation in health and social care and to draw upon the potential of communities, the voluntary sector and carers themselves in developing the roadmap to translate ambitions into practice.

The Archbishops' Commission on Reimagining Care challenged all of us to think more widely than 'services' and to ask how we can personalise the future of care and support. We have the architecture for great 21st century care in the Care Act 2014, the Health and Care Act 2022 and of course in the Carers Leave Act 2023.

Relationships and roles are changing but legislation alone cannot create the practical help and overarching wellbeing that carers so desperately need. Caring has become increasingly complex, often long-term and changes lives and communities.

“Caring has become increasingly complex, often long-term and changes lives and communities.”

I congratulate Dorset for having engaged carers themselves at every stage of the development of their vision – and action plan – for a Dorset carers vision. As a long-term carer myself, I feel excited by the sense of energy, creativity and mutual respect which runs throughout the proposals.

Challenged recently in Westminster to say how I would describe my personal marker for a good life as a carer, I reflected for a moment and said that I would opt for an ordinary life in often extraordinary circumstances.

I hope and believe that the Dorset vision and the actions to deliver it will make that ambition possible. It offers recognition, respect and responsibilities to carers themselves, and recognises and builds upon the new strategic relationships between carers, services, community and the voluntary sector, which are essential if we are to achieve the quiet revolution in collaborative care towards which we are all working.

Dame Philippa Russell DBE
Carers UK



I am really pleased to support the launch of the new Vision for Carers. In Dorset Council we have a strong commitment to support our young carers to fulfil their potential, working with them and their families to provide the right help at the right time and ensuring they are involved in the decisions which affect their lives. We already have good foundations in place to identify children and young people who have a caring role and the right partnerships to ensure the services around them work together.

This new strategic vision provides an opportunity to do even better. We know that young carers often miss out on spending time with friends that many take for granted so being able to provide them a break from care whilst accessing positive activities and spending time with other young carers is really beneficial.

Theresa Leavy
Executive Director of People – Children
Dorset Council

Dorset Council is proud to support this coproduced vision for Carers and are committed to helping Carers to care for their loved ones while having a life of their own. This strategic vision will be instrumental in helping us to achieve this.

Jonathan Price
Executive Director of People, Adults,
Health and Housing
Dorset Council

I am delighted to extend my wholehearted support for our new vision for carers across Dorset. This is a testament to our collective commitment to recognise, empower, and support the dedicated carers who play such a vital role in our community.

At BCP Council I am in a privileged position to make sure that we take on board the views of our young carers, and I am delighted that in the development of this vision that time has been taken to involve them and hear what they have to say. By working together, we can make a real difference and make sure that they receive the support, recognition, and respect they deserve so they can fulfil their potential.

Together, we want to build a community where carers feel valued, supported, and empowered to continue to provide the much-needed care for their loved ones. I am confident that with this vision can make significant strides in enhancing the lives of our carers and those they care for.

Cathi Hadley
Corporate Director, Children's
Services
BCP Council



At BCP Council we know the incredibly valuable contribution that carers make to our communities and we are committed to supporting their wellbeing. I am proud to endorse this new vision for Dorset and share the ambition of a culture where carers are listened to, respected, and seen as an integral part of the care system. I want to thank everyone involved in the Pan Dorset Carers Steering Group for their work to co-produce this vision and we look forward to working with them to make it a reality.

Jillian Kay
Corporate Director for Wellbeing
BCP Council

We are extremely grateful to all the unpaid carers who provide essential care and support to their loved ones in Dorset - their selfless commitment and dedication to the wellbeing of others makes such a difference.

We know that caring can have a significant impact on the carer's own health and wellbeing so it's important that we identify and seek to address the challenges faced by people of all ages who must balance their caring responsibilities with their education, work and life as a whole. As partners in this vision for carers, we pledge to play our part in the work needed to ensure that carers in Dorset have the recognition and support they need to continue with their important role.

David Freeman
Deputy Chief Executive Officer and
Chief Commissioning Officer
NHS Dorset

University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust (UHD) are honoured to have worked alongside carers and dedicated professionals who support carers in Dorset in this co-production of the new Vision for Carers.

As a Trust we recognise the vital role that carers play in the health and wellbeing of those they care for which is often at the detriment to themselves. We are committed to supporting carers in their caring role whilst ensuring they maintain their own health and wellbeing. We welcome and fully support this vision and pledge to continue to embrace and embed the new objectives into the services we deliver now and for the future.

Siobhan Harrington
Chief Executive Officer
University Hospitals Dorset NHS
Foundation Trust

Sarah Herbert
Chief Nursing Officer
University Hospitals Dorset NHS
Foundation Trust

I'm delighted to support the new Carers Vision for Dorset and am so pleased that the work has been undertaken to create this vision. Dorset County Hospital and Dorset Healthcare are committed to supporting all carers. We recognise how tough this role can be – emotionally, physically, financially – and we believe passionately that we need to provide support for carers as well as people accessing our services. We want carers to know that we hear their voices, value them, and are here to support them.

We also have many colleagues who have caring responsibilities alongside their roles with our trusts and we know this can be challenging, combining the demands of caring and work. This coproduced vision clearly outlines how, as a system, we can make Dorset a place where all carers are recognised and get the support they deserve and need. We are excited to work together with partners and carers as we bring this vision to life.

Matthew Bryant
Chief Executive Officer
Dorset HealthCare University NHS
Foundation Trust
Dorset County Hospital NHS
Foundation Trust

The Dorset General Practice Alliance is pleased to support this new vision for all carers in Dorset. General Practice has a huge role to play in supporting carers, both the early opportunity to provide support in their caring role, but also in helping carers look after their own health and wellbeing, which can inevitably be strained from their caring responsibilities. General Practice services are often the first port of call for carers, so it is vital this grass roots provision identifies the carer group of our patient population and provides them with the support they deserve and need.

This new vision sets out important objectives and landscape for what services should look like, and we are excited to continue to work together with partners across the Dorset Integrated Care System towards achieving a carer friendly Dorset.

Dr Forbes Watson
Chair
Dorset General Practice Alliance

Ian Gall
Patient and Participation Lead
Dorset General Practice Alliance

9.2%

of Dorset's population
are carers.

Introduction

Many of us who look after someone do not see ourselves as carers, but as husbands, wives, partners, children, friends or neighbours. Anyone can become a carer at any time, for either a short time or for a longer period. This can include children and young adults.

In this vision, a carer is someone who provides unpaid care or support to a family member, partner or friend who could not manage without their help, due to their age, illness, disability, mental ill health and substance or alcohol misuse. This is not the same as someone who is paid or employed as a formal care worker.

A carer may help the person they care for by:

- helping them with personal care, such as washing and dressing
- completing household tasks such as housework, food shopping and picking up medication
- helping them to manage their finances
- providing company and emotional support
- taking someone to medical appointments or to leisure activities, such as an outing to a park.

There is increasing evidence that caring can have a significant impact on health and wellbeing, with over half of carers reporting their own long-term health conditions or disabilities. Many carers also find their caring responsibilities affect their ability to participate in education or employment, negatively impacting their financial health. Having a caring role can provide a significantly different experience of childhood for young carers, reducing their opportunity to play or spend time with their peers.

According to the 2021 census 9.2% of the overall Dorset population are carers. Currently around 1.6% of our population are known to carers services in Dorset. This means a huge number of people in Dorset providing care have not yet been identified.

The UK population is on average living much longer, with Dorset's population older than England's as a whole. Around 29% of Dorset residents are aged 65 and older, compared with 19% across England. We are also a growing population, increasing by approximately 3,000 people each year.

Our older population and current pressures on public services mean that reliance on support from carers continues to grow. Our health and social care systems rely heavily on carers. Without their carers, many people would not be able to live their lives as they do at present.



Pan Dorset Carers Steering Group

How this vision has been developed

We want all carers in Dorset to enjoy good physical and mental health, and to feel supported in their caring role. This vision provides the principles for how the NHS, social care, voluntary sector and carers will work together. It is a living document that will be reviewed regularly and updated as needed.

The following organisations have come together with carers to form the Pan Dorset Carers Steering Group. It is a formal group, chaired by a carer. It has responsibility for developing this strategic vision, as well as monitoring the progress we make towards achieving it.

The steering group reports directly to the Joint Commissioning Board which allocates and manages the Better Care Fund. This fund pays for most of the services provided by both health and social care for carers.



Steering group membership

- Carers
- Dorset Council and elected members
- Carer Support Dorset (Dorset Council Commissioned service)
- Bournemouth, Christchurch and Poole (BCP) Council and elected members
- BCP Carer Support
- NHS Dorset
- NHS England and NHS Improvement
- Dorset Parent Carer Council
- Parent Carers Foundation
- University Hospitals Dorset NHS Foundation Trust
- Dorset HealthCare University NHS Foundation Trust
- Dorset County Hospital NHS Foundation Trust
- Dorset GP Alliance



“It’s important to me and to my disabled brother that we are listened to and that I can improve my quality of life as a carer. This vision gives me more confidence that carers across Dorset have a voice and are considered by those involved in delivering the care services to us.”

Carer member, Pan Dorset Carers Steering Group

Carers in England
and Wales contribute

£445 million

to the economy every day.

The value of caring

Often the role of a carer is thrust upon the person, meaning carers can often feel like they are 'in over their head'. Carers in England and Wales contribute a staggering £445 million to the economy every day – that's £162 billion per year (Petrillo and Bennett, 2023). However, many carers are unaware they can apply for financial support.

Increases to social care funding have not kept pace with NHS funding. Often caring responsibilities have a significant impact on people's capacity to work, and many find themselves having to give up work or reduce their hours to provide increasing hours of care. Three out of four carers who remain in employment worry about continuing to juggle work and care.

5% of UK adults have given up work to provide care for an ill, disabled, or older relative or friend, and 4% said they had to reduce their working hours to care. This equates to 2.6 million people giving up work in order to care – a rise of 300,000 since 2013.

Carers UK found that almost two thirds of carers spend their own money on care, support services, or products for the person they care for. Due to the cost of living crisis, carers are facing unprecedented pressure on their finances, with a quarter of carers cutting back on essentials like food and heating. Carers are also more likely to live in poverty than those without caring responsibilities.

The Carers UK State of Caring 2023 Survey reports:

- 75% of carers receiving carer's allowance are struggling with cost of living pressures, while almost half (46%) are cutting back on essentials, including food and heating
- 45% say they were struggling to make ends meet, compared with 39% last year
- 72% are worried about the impact of caring responsibilities (eg petrol for hospital visits, heating, specific dietary requirements) on their finances
- 54% had cut back on seeing family and friends, compared with 43% in 2022 and 38% in 2021.

A person has the right to not provide care if they don't want to. However, registering as a carer with a GP practice and local authority will enable them to receive support in their caring role. What is offered varies between practices, but it often includes free annual health checks, an annual flu jab and longer/joint appointments. Adult Social Care have a duty to provide a carer's assessment under the Care Act 2014, if a carer wants one. The Children Act 1989 states Children's Services have a duty to assess whether a young carer in their area needs support. The NHS Constitution states hospital's have a duty to involve carers at the point of discharge and Integrated Care Board's have a duty to consult and involve carers.



The steering group has identified a series of **objectives**

Vision and objectives

As a steering group, our main aim is to support carers in ways that most serve them. We are committed to creating a culture where carers are listened to, respected and seen as an integral part of the health and care system.

The steering group has identified a series of objectives based on things it feels it can influence, contribute to and change.

It acknowledges some areas of support to carers are out of its control, although still require improvement, such as (but not exclusive to):

- how the health and care system (health and social care, emergency services and the voluntary and community sector) works together to prevent carers being passed around and repeating their story
- carers allowance administered by the Government
- further support for carers at work.

National organisations, such as Carers UK, continue to lobby for further support, and movement is taking place. For example, working carers now have the legal right to five days of carers leave at work. The steering group will keep up to date on these matters and strive to support where they can.

The following objectives are based on legislation, policy, strategies, and carers feedback. They can be measured to ensure success.

We will:

- **ensure all carers are valued, visible, and heard**
- **provide all carers with choice and opportunities to take breaks from their caring role, as well as access to support in a crisis**
- **understand carers' personal needs and situations and treat everyone fairly**
- **support all carers to have a meaningful and fulfilling life, alongside and after caring**
- **provide information, advice, guidance, and practical resources to enable carers to carry out their caring role**
- **ensure carers' own physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing are supported**
- **be honest, consistent and work together to manage expectations.**

We will ensure all carers are valued, visible, and heard by:

- raising awareness of the value of carers and their needs
- recognising the carers as the expert on the person they care for, fully involving them in discussions and decisions around care planning from the outset (with consent from the cared-for person)
- recognising the carer's rights are of equal value to the person they care for, including a carer's right not to care
- providing a joined-up experience where carers only tell their story once
- identifying carers and encouraging and supporting carers to self-identify at the earliest opportunity
- encouraging the development of a 'carer-friendly' community throughout Dorset
- promoting a culture where all staff involved in delivering care 'think carer'.



We will understand carers' personal needs and situations and treat everyone fairly by:

- listening to and building trust with ethnically diverse communities that don't always get the help they need
- developing a culture in Dorset where equality and diversity are at the heart of everything we do
- delivering services locally where possible to reduce the need to travel
- ensuring services work together to make sure all carers have the same level of support, regardless of where they live.



We will provide all carers with choice and opportunities to take breaks from their caring role, as well as access to support in a crisis by:

- increasing opportunities for carers to take short breaks and respite
- encouraging the flexible use of direct payments to give carers more choice over how they take a break
- ensuring carers across Dorset have access to support in a crisis
- increasing the number of carers with a backup plan.



We will support all carers to have a meaningful and fulfilling life, alongside and after caring, by:



- talking to carers about what matters most to them
- helping carers access education and training so they can stay in or return to work
- working with employers in Dorset to develop an employment charter
- working with schools and businesses to improve carers' access to education and employment
- developing methods of financial support and opportunities to enable carers to continue employed work when they want to
- supporting carers before and during times of change
- recognising a carer as their own person and supporting them to maintain their own personality, identity and individuality
- providing information, support and advice about life after caring, including bereavement support.



We will ensure carers' own physical, emotional, and mental wellbeing are supported by:



- taking notice of the wellbeing of the carer as well as the cared-for person whenever we speak to them
- improving access to services offered by general practices
- improving access to counselling, mental health services and support
- ensuring carers have access to activities and advice that supports them to live healthier lives
- creating more opportunities for carers to use their own experiences to help and support each other
- helping carers to make use of the support already available, and working alongside carers to fill any gaps.



We will provide information, advice, guidance, and practical resources to enable carers to carry out their caring role by:



- making sure information is provided at the right time and in a way that can be understood
- developing a central source of information and advice, shared across all health and social care platforms
- providing carers with any guidance and training that they need
- sharing the Carers Assessment and Support Plan (including reviews) agreed outcomes in writing
- helping carers access any other support and advice they might need, including housing advice, advocacy, support with benefits and finances, transport and help around the home.



We will be honest, consistent and work together to manage expectations by:



- establishing a consistent approach to working with carers in supporting the cared-for person
- creating individualised care plans for the cared-for person and their carers which clearly articulate the needs of all parties and this be shared by all staff
- using the Our Dorset Carers Passport in all hospital settings
- supporting carers to work with organisations in an equal way, sharing influence, skills and experience to design, deliver and monitor services
- keeping in contact with carers via regular, reliable communications
- maintaining our Triangle of Care accreditation, recognising the role of the carer in mental health services.

In 2023/24
£2.5 million
 was available for adult carers
 in specific Better Care Fund
 schemes in Dorset.

Funding

Adult carers services in Dorset are funded by the Better Care Fund. This programme is a collaboration between:

- The Department of Health and Social Care
- Department for Levelling Up, Housing and Communities
- NHS England
- The Local Government Association.

The Better Care Fund helps local integrated care systems to deliver health and social care in a way that supports person-centred care and better outcomes for people and carers. It means councils and their system partners have a pooled budget and a shared plan for spending.

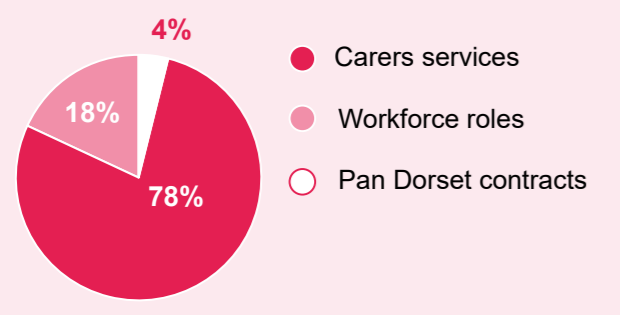
In 2023/24 £2.45 million was available for adult carers in specific Better Care Fund schemes in Dorset. This was broken down into £1.34 million for BCP Council and £1.11 million for Dorset Council.

The following graphs show how the funds were distributed in both Dorset and BCP council areas. BCP Council's carers service is delivered internally. Dorset Council's carers service is externally commissioned, and workforce roles include a specialist team which undertakes carers assessments. Both councils share three joint contracts, including a carers ID and discount card to promote equity of service across the Dorset county area.

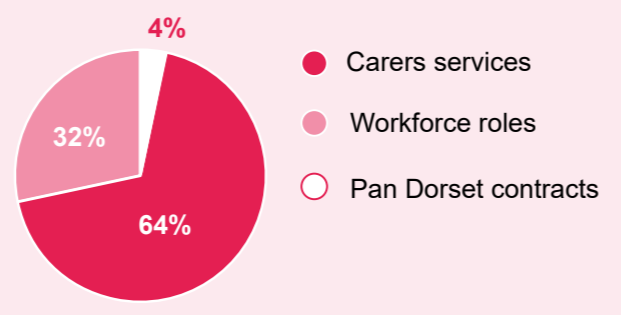
Councils have a duty to support vulnerable children and young people, including those who undertake a caring role. Specific support is available from councils for those that undertake a significant caring role and, through the Better Care Fund, some support is available to all young carers and young adult carers.

While the Better Care Fund is the biggest source of funding to support carers, it's important to remember other work, funded in all sorts of ways, is also happening in other areas of the integrated care system, including within the NHS and the voluntary sector.

BCP Council Better Care Fund expenditure summary 2023-2024



Dorset Council Better Care Fund expenditure summary 2023-2024



Get involved

Your voice matters

What happens next?

Our Dorset's vision for carers is an ambitious one that aims to change and improve a complex network of people, processes and pathways supporting carers. The quality of service delivered depends largely on the effectiveness of this network, and how well we all work together.

By giving people closest to the issues the time, permission, skills and support they need to solve them, we'll deliver long-lasting improvements for carers and their experience of accessing health and care services.

We have agreed an initial approach for making and monitoring improvements based around the following:

Consistent indicators: A set of data that provides an overview of performance across organisations and the whole vision. This data set won't be in-depth enough to tell the whole story, but will help identify areas of both high and low performance so they can be looked at more closely.

Focused planning: Working in phases through the life of the vision, we will identify areas of priority for improvement. Exploring the challenges and opportunities in these areas helps us look not just at what is happening, but also how and why. We will use this insight to develop a shared action plan aiming to make changes that make the biggest difference to carers.



“It's really important to highlight the progress that has been made since the pandemic and before that, because we are not starting from scratch”

Expert by Experience

There is no end date to this vision. The Pan Dorset Carers Steering Group will regularly review and make amendments as required throughout the lifetime of the document to ensure it reflects the needs of carers in Dorset.

In Dorset, the commissioners and providers of services for carers have been working together and with carers for some time through the steering group, as well as provider groups and carers voice groups.

If you would like to get involved, or find out more about the carers vision please visit:

ourdorset.org.uk/pdcsg





**Our
Dorset**

To find out more about the carers vision please visit:

ourdorset.org.uk/pdcsg