

Carers Strategy 2022-2027

Our aims and priorities for local carers of all ages, to
help keep you well and living a fulfilled life

Foreword

We are proud to present our Carers Strategy for 2022-2027.

The strategy sets out our aims and priorities for local carers of all ages, to help keep them well and living a fulfilled life.

The strategy has been produced based on valuable feedback from local carers, and we have identified our key priorities based on the areas carers told us matter most to them.

We know that we have more to do in South Gloucestershire to improve the health and wellbeing of carers. This strategy will underpin our work for the next five years, and we will continue to work with carers and partners to create a multi-agency action plan to drive forward our priorities for carers.

We really value the significant role that carers play in our local communities and recognise the level of responsibility often felt by carers to care for their loved ones. However, we do not feel that this caring role should be at the detriment of carers' own health, employment opportunities and aspirations to live the life they choose.

We are committed to working with local carers and partners to create a positive change for carers, including.

- improving the way we identify the role of carers, particularly those hidden carers who do not identify themselves in this role.
- seeing carers as equal partners and recognising the valuable contribution that carers make to our communities.
- enhancing the information and advice we have available to carers to ensure that information is accessible to all carers as and when they need it, whilst recognising that carers often have limited time to navigate the health and social care system.
- creating more flexibility in our services which enable carers to take time away from their caring role, in a way that allows them to lead a fulfilling life, maintain their health and wellbeing and supports them to remain in, or return to employment if this is their wish.
- ensuring that all support that is offered to carers is tailored to their individual needs, and that carers of all ages, no matter who they care for, have access to information and support in their roles.

With partners, we will continue to build on the work we have started with carers to ensure that throughout the implementation of this strategy, carers continue to feel heard, and they have every opportunity to feedback on our progress.

Chris Sivers

Executive Director of People



Amanda Threlfall

Carer Advisory Partnership
Member and active Carers'
Representative



Cllr. Ben Stokes

Chair of SG Health and
Wellbeing Board and
Cabinet Member for Adults



Cllr. Samuel Bromley

Cabinet Member for Children
and Young People



Introduction

Thank you

This strategy would not be possible without the collaboration and dedication from carers, partners and stakeholders who have helped to gain feedback from as many carers as possible across South Gloucestershire.

We are extremely grateful to every single person that took time to attend face-to-face drop-in's, online events, contribute to a group discussion, called or emailed to give their comments, or completed our online consultation.

In this strategy we want to recognise the invaluable contributions that carers make every day to the lives of friends, family members, neighbours and members of their community, and create a strategy that reflects the needs of carers, and the support and services available in South Gloucestershire.

Your feedback has been invaluable to us understanding the priorities for carers in our area and have informed the actions that will guide the work we do for carers over the next 5 years.

Carer definition

The NHS defines a carer¹ as anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid.

We know that carers often have significant pressures to balance work, school/study, caring responsibilities, childcare and other commitments. Caring can look different for each person and includes but is not limited to;

- Children and young people supporting parents and siblings
- Adults supporting spouses, and family members with long term conditions
- Parents supporting children with a disability

There are an estimated 13.6 million² carers in the UK today. Many sacrifice their own mental and physical health, family life, education, and career³ to care for another person, saving the UK economy an estimated £132 Billion per year⁴.

In South Gloucestershire we know that:

¹ <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carers/>

² https://www.carersuk.org/images/CarersWeek2020/CW_2020_Research_Report_WEB.pdf

³ EqIAA – appendix 1

⁴ <https://www.carersuk.org/news-and-campaigns/press-releases/facts-and-figures#:~:text=Carers%20save%20the%20economy%20%C2%A3,of%20%C2%A319%2C336%20per%20carer>

- At the last 2011 Census there were 27,639 people who recognised themselves as a carer, of whom 5,384 spend more than 50 hours per week in their caring role.
- The proportion of older adults aged 50 and over who are caring is higher than the national average. In South Gloucestershire 524 Young Carers identified themselves in the 2011 census, which is likely to be a significant underestimate.
- The 2011 census showed there were 817 BAME carers registered in South Gloucestershire. That represents 2.96% of our caring population.
- 2021/22 mid-point data from our commissioned service, The Carers Support Centre, shows that 67% of carers accessing support are female.
- Despite 38.47% of carers being under 49 (census 2011), according to the 2021/22 mid-point monitoring data from The Carers Support Centre shows that only 13.72% of their service users were under 44.

The term “carer” can sometimes be adopted by care workers who are paid professionals who provide care. Other terms used can include family carer, unpaid carer, care giver, informal carer. For the purposes of this document, and any documents linked to it, we will be using “carer” as defined in the above paragraph.

What does the strategy mean?

The strategy sets out how the Council plans to deliver the ongoing commitment to improving the lives of carers of all ages. It should inform all other strategies to ensure that meeting the needs of carers is embedded in all services across the council and those it commissions externally. This strategy will be underpinned by a clear action plan of how we will work with partners to improve recognition and support to carers over the next 5 years.

We recognise that caring responsibilities look different to each carer. This is why our strategy is an all-age strategy to support carers of all ages in South Gloucestershire to get the support they need.

This strategy has been shaped by the voice and experience of carers and the organisations which support carers to ensure that the priorities for the future are based upon what is important.

We gathered information in a variety of ways including (but not limited to):

- Holding a range of face-to-face sessions across the community
- Attending events including Carers week
- Series of online surveys and public consultation aimed at carers of all ages, including an easy read version.
- Visiting existing community groups including online and in person carers support groups, 13up club, Young Carers Voice, school’s young carer groups.
- Leaflets in community spaces such as libraries, One Stop Shops and outpatient clinics
- Articles in newsletters and SGC resident’s emails
- Social media posts

The statistical feedback in our priorities is based on our consultation on our four key priorities:

- Recognition
- Information and advice
- Carers breaks
- Personalisation

What carers have told us

More needs to be done to recognise the huge demands placed upon carers

Haven't had a break in 20 years, but when I did get one it was quite difficult to access

Organisations work in isolation rather than together

The council website is dated, not very user friendly and not very helpful

Tailor the service to suit the needs of each individual and family

Our vision for our local carers

We believe that no carer should be at a disadvantage because they are providing support to somebody else. However, we understand that many carers face challenges with finances, physical and mental health, in work or education due to their caring role.

We want carers of all ages to be able to say:

I know where to access good quality information on what support is available to me as a carer

The support I receive in my caring role suits me as an individual

I am understood, listened to and respected by professionals

I am able to achieve my own goals and maintain employment/study

I can access support services in a timely way, as and when I need it.

I am in control of the support I can give as a carer, and I am able to live my life the way I want to.

I am able to take a break from my caring role to support my own mental and physical health.

I have the information and support I need to plan for the future.

Our strategic priorities

Recognition

We want carers to be able to say ‘ I am recognised, listened to and respected as an expert partner in care by professionals, schools, employers and my community’

Following our consultation we found:

- 76% of carers do not feel they get the support they need.
- 82% of carers feel we need to do more to highlight the role of carers in the work place and schools.
- 90 % of carers report that there needs to be more awareness of carers in the community and amongst professionals.
- 58% of carers do not feel listened to, understood or appreciated in their role.
- Carers told us their knowledge and expertise in looking after the person they care for is often overlooked by professionals.
- Carers of all ages report how professionals need to do better in recognising the role they provide and the impact this has on their own lives.
- Carers reported that more support is needed at the initial stage of becoming a carer.
- Young carers are under-represented and the appropriateness of their caring role is not always fully considered by professionals.
- When loved ones are admitted to hospital, carers report experiences of being excluded and unsupported during the hospital discharge process.

Our focus

- Improve awareness and support of young carers, and carers in employment and the challenges faced balancing study and employment with their caring role.
- Ensure all professionals that work with carers are aware of the support that is available to carers in their role, and how this can be accessed.
- Improve understanding of carers rights in all workplaces across South Gloucestershire, and the support available to enable more opportunities for carers to remain in paid employment.
- Improve the identification of young carers, and young adult carers and the support available to ensure that young people are able to achieve their goals.
- Work within communities to raise the awareness of carers and the challenges they face to improve self-identification ensuring that more people have access to the support available in their caring role.
- Improve how carers are identified, supported and involved in the hospital admission and discharge process of loved ones.

Our actions to improve recognition

- Work with partners and local employers to educate organisations about the role of carers, carers rights and how to best support carers to maintain paid employment whilst also caring for someone.
- Work with the voluntary sector to further develop community outreach work to improve community understanding of carers, and how they can access information, advice and support.
- Work with partners to review the current training delivered to professionals across health and social care, to ensure that the role of carers is highlighted, and professionals understand the importance of involving carers as an expert partner in the care of their loved one alongside the support available to carers in their roles.
- Working with primary healthcare to improve identification of carers in GP practices and the support provided by primary healthcare to access information, support and advice in their role as carer.
- Work with adults and children's services to develop resources that improve the knowledge and skills of practitioners to identify and reduce inappropriate levels of care being given by young carers/young adult carers.
- Work with acute hospitals to review how carers are identified and supported during the admission of a loved one, alongside how carers can be better involved and a key partner in discharge planning.

Information & advice

We want carers to be able to say ' I know where to access good quality information on what support is available to me as a carer, at a time that suits me, so that I can achieve my goals and live my life the way I choose'.

Following our consultation we found:

- 60% report not having access to good quality information about the full support available to them in their caring role.
- 66% of carers reported a preference of accessing information and advice online
- 28% of carers do not feel that information is available in a format that is accessible and meets their needs
- 64% of carers do not feel that there is good communication between services.
- 51% of carers do not feel that there is good enough information available on universal services, including employment/finance and benefit information.
- Carers told us that they have limited time to search for information, they need key information about being a carer in one place and to be accessible outside of working/school hours.

- 60% of carers report that they do not know who to contact for support in their caring role.
- Carers want more information and advice about planning for the future and planning in a crisis.

Our focus

- Review the information and advice available for carers to ensure that this is informative, accessible and consistent across the Council and all organisations that support carers.
- Ensure that there is clear information and advice for carers of all ages available outside of working hours.
- Improve the way professionals work with carers, understanding their rights, their valuable contribution and the support services available to them.
- Improve communication between organisations working with carers.
- Develop further resources for carers to help them plan for the future.

Our actions to improve information and advice

- Review and recommission support and information services for carers with an emphasis on organisations collaborating, with key sources of information and support available out of hours.
- Create clearer online information, advice and guidance for carers to access to understand what support is available, and how to access this.
- Review how frontline staff can be better equipped to identify, support and signpost carers to the correct information.
- Review and recommission support services that address the needs specific to those adult carers under retirement age who are in or want to return to paid employment.
- Review and recommission support services to ensure that there is improved identification of young carers and young adult carers. Work with adult and children's services as well as commissioned providers to ensure the wellbeing of young/young adult carers is not compromised as they transition to adulthood.
- Review the carers assessment process to identify where improvements can be made to ensure that this process enables carers to have the right support to plan for the future and access the correct financial support.
- Work with partners to review how information on financial support and benefits can be made available more widely to ensure that carers are not financially disadvantaged by their caring role.
- Work with health and social care partners and the voluntary sector to understand how information sharing can be improved for carers.

Carer breaks

We want carers to be able to say ' I am able to take a break away from my caring role to support my own mental and physical health and achieve my own goals.'

Following our consultation we found:

- 80% of carers report not being able to take a break from their caring role to support their own physical and mental health
- Carers told us that they need access to more breaks that are flexible, diverse to meet the needs of people they care for and delivered in the community or in their own homes.
- 83% of carers report having never had services to take a break from their caring role.
- Young carers told us that school is not a break, and that they also need access to more services to provide them with breaks suitable to their needs as young people.
- Carers report prolonged delays in accessing assessments, leaving carers feeling burnt out in their caring role.
- Carers report facing difficulties accessing replacement care which prevents them accessing breaks and using their direct payments to meet their own needs.

Our focus

- Develop the specific support services available to young carers and adult carers to enable the provision of appropriate breaks, both in and away from the home
- Enhance the range of services that will provide carers with a break by providing support at home or in the community.
- Improve access to replacement care to enable carers to have a break from their caring role.
- Ensure young people are not delivering inappropriate levels of care and are supported to have time away from any caring responsibilities and education to achieve their goals.

Our actions to improve carer breaks

- Work with partners to improve timeliness of carer's assessments that support carers when they need it, reducing the risk of carer breakdowns.
- Review how carers' direct payments operate to ensure all eligible carers have equal access and to improve flexibility in their use.
- Work with commissioners to develop more flexible services in the community for people to access, which enable carers to have a break from their role.
- Work with partners and commissioners to explore how we improve the access carers currently have to replacement care.
- Work with adults and children's services to improve understanding of what is appropriate care for young carers/young adult carers.

Personalisation

We want carers to be able to say 'I receive the support I need, when I need it, that suits me as an individual in my caring role'

Following our consultation we found:

- 25% of carers who have accessed a carer's assessment have not found them helpful, and 48% of carers report not having accessed a carer's assessment. Feedback also indicated that often carers felt this was a tick box and does not provide the support they need.
- Carers that currently access services are not representative of our population, particularly those carers from BME communities, and young carers.
- Carers of all ages want to be asked if they are happy to continue in their caring role, and for professionals not to assume that they are.
- Parent carers report there is a lack of support in South Gloucestershire to meet their needs.
- Carers report that their own physical and mental health is impacted due to barriers in accessing flexible and timely GP appointments, resulting in them putting their own needs last.
- Carers report difficulties in accessing support due to most support services/groups being delivered within working hours.

Our focus

- Develop further information, guidance, and support that is targeted to specific groups of carers, including but not exclusively young carers, young adult carers and parent carers
- Work with partners, voluntary sector and communities to improve identification and support of carers in BME and LGBTQ+ communities.
- Improve the quality of the assessment process for carers to ensure that this is a meaningful process which enables carers to achieve their own outcomes.
- Work with primary care to improve how carers can be supported to access to healthcare.

Our actions to improve personalisation

- Adapt the carer's assessment documentation and process to ensure that all carers are asked if they wish to continue in their caring role.
- Work with partners, young carers/young adult carers and parent carers to develop better quality information to support them in their caring role.
- Review and re-commission the contract for carer's assessments, ensuring that the focus of this is to create more meaningful interaction from the assessment process, identifying outcomes for carers and tailoring support to meet their needs.

- Review and re-commission the contract for carers support with a renewed focus on partnership working with other organisations to improve identification and support of carers from BME communities.
- Develop approaches with GPs so carers can be better supported in a more flexible and timely way to maintain their own health needs.
- Review and re-commission the support groups available for carers, ensuring that the offer is dynamic and flexible to meet the needs of a diverse group of people. This includes ensuring that support is available in person in hard to reach locations, online, and outside of school/working hours.

What happens next?

In order to implement this strategy over the next five years we will work with carers, partners and stakeholders to form a strategy implementation group. This group will review the action plan, push forward the priorities, agree how and when the actions set out in this document will be delivered, and coordinate the work.

We will involve carers, carers groups and forums in projects that come from the action plan so that their ideas and input are included, and we make the right improvements in ways that carers want us to. This will include young carers/young adult carers and carers in different circumstances, as needed for particular projects.

The strategy will be overseen by the Carers Advisory Partnership (CAP) group. CAP includes a number of active and engaged carer representatives, as well as representatives from a range of partners. They will monitor the work being done by the implementation group and give their feedback and views.

The strategy and action plan are approved by South Gloucestershire Health and Wellbeing Board. Strategy progress reports will be given to the Board and they will check and challenge these. The strategy implementation group is accountable to the Board.