



Knowsley All Age Carers Strategy

REFRESH 2024-2028

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Foreword

Knowsley Carers Strategy 2024-2028 builds on the success of Knowsley Carers Strategy 2020-2025. This document has been produced by drawing together the knowledge and views of Knowsley Council Services, Knowsley Carers Centre, as well as our many other partners, but most importantly carers from across the borough and beyond without whose participation the strategy would not have substance. Over the coming years it is vital that carers continue to stay involved to inform the roll out of the strategy, provide ongoing guidance and critique to keep the Carers Strategy 2024-2028 grounded in the lived experience of carers' lives. I look forward to being part of this strategy refresh as it reinforces carers still need this support.

Doreen Phoenix Chair of the Carers Partnership Board.

Doreen Phoenix
Chair of the Carers Partnership Board

Introduction

A carer is anyone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member, friend, or neighbour who, due to illness, disability, mental health needs, or addiction, could not manage without their help. Carers are a vital part of our communities and our health and care system.

Across the UK, it is estimated that there are millions of unpaid carers, with around one in ten people taking on a caring role at any given time. Health and social care services rely heavily on carers' willingness and ability to provide ongoing support.

In Knowsley, approximately 18,000 people identified as unpaid carers in the most recent Census data. However, we know this figure is likely to be an underestimate. Many people do not recognise themselves as carers, as caring often becomes part of everyday life. In addition, changes in recent years including the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic mean that more people are likely to be providing care than ever before.

The 2021 Census shows that 4.3% of Knowsley residents aged five and over reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care per week, a decrease from 6.4% in 2011, reflecting a national trend. However, Knowsley has a higher proportion of residents providing more intensive levels of care than many other areas. Around 2.9% of residents provide between 20 and 49 hours of care each week, and a further 4.3% provide 50 or more hours, one of the highest proportions in England.

While caring can be positive and rewarding, help people develop skills, resilience, and strong relationships, it can also have a significant impact on carers' lives. Caring responsibilities can affect access to employment and education, impact physical and mental health, and reduce opportunities for social connection and personal time.

It is therefore vital that carers are recognised and supported, both now and in the future, so they can maintain their own health, wellbeing, and aspirations alongside their caring role.

Building on Knowsley's previous Carers Strategy, this refreshed strategy sets out how partners across the borough will work together to improve outcomes for carers. It reflects what carers have told us matters most and outlines a clear vision, priorities, and actions for the coming years.

This strategy is for all carers in Knowsley, including young carers, working-age carers, and older carers, ensuring that support is inclusive, accessible, and responsive to the diverse needs of our communities.



About Carers

WHO ARE CARERS

Anyone can become a carer at any point in their life. It is estimated that up to 3 in 5 people will take on a caring role during their lifetime. Carers are diverse and differ in age, background, the number of hours they provide care, and the needs of the people they support. Recognising this diversity is essential to ensuring that support is inclusive and responsive.

YOUNG CARERS

Young carers are children and young people under the age of 18 who provide care for a family member.

The 2021 Census identified a significant number of young people across England and Wales with caring responsibilities, although this is likely to be an underestimate. Many young carers remain hidden, particularly where caring is seen as part of normal family life.

Young carers' experiences vary widely. While many provide lower levels of care, others take on substantial responsibilities that can have a significant impact on their lives. Evidence shows that caring can affect educational attainment, school attendance, and future opportunities, with some young carers at greater risk of not being in education, employment or training (NEET).

In Knowsley, a relatively small number of children and young people are formally identified as carers through Census data. However, it is recognised that the true number is likely to be higher, highlighting the need for continued efforts to identify and support young carers at an earlier stage.

WORKING CARERS

Working-age carers make up the largest proportion of the carer population.

Balancing employment with caring responsibilities can be challenging. Many carers reduce their working hours, change roles, or leave employment altogether due to the demands of caring. This can have a long-term impact on income, career progression, and financial security, including pensions.

Since the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a noticeable increase in the number of people combining paid work with caring responsibilities. This has highlighted the importance of flexible working arrangements, supportive employers, and access to timely information and support.

Carers who provide higher levels of care are more likely to experience financial hardship, and there is a strong link between intensive caring roles and

increased risk of poverty. Supporting carers to remain in, or return to, employment is therefore a key priority.

In Knowsley, the majority of carers are of working age, making this a particularly important group for targeted support.


OLDER CARERS

Older carers, typically aged 65 and over, are an increasingly important group as the population ages.

Many older carers are managing their own health conditions while also providing care, often at significant levels. Caring can impact their physical and mental wellbeing, and some older carers report delaying or cancelling their own medical treatment because of their caring responsibilities.

Nationally, a growing number of older people are providing unpaid care, including those aged 80 and over. This reflects wider demographic changes and increasing demand for care and support.

In Knowsley, a significant proportion of carers are aged 65 and above. Ensuring that older carers are supported to maintain their own health, independence, and quality of life is critical.


4 million
carers in the UK provide 1-19 hours of unpaid care each week

1.4 million
carers in the UK provide 50+ hours of unpaid care a week

25%
Over the last 10 years, the number of carers providing 50+ hours of unpaid care has increased by 25%

National data suggests that a third of carers in Knowsley provide 50+ unpaid care a week



Carers who spent 50+ hours a week caring are twice as likely to report ill-health



A sandwich carer describes someone who has multiple caring responsibilities for people in different generations

Sandwich carers

Research suggests that there are around 1.3 million sandwich carers in the UK



24.3%

Recent insight suggests that almost a quarter of carers in Knowsley care for more than one person



The Office for National Statistics (ONS) found that sandwich carers are more likely to report mental ill-health, feel less satisfied with life, and struggle financially compared with the general population

Reflection on Knowsley's Carers Strategy 2020-2025



This strategy refresh builds on the strong foundations established through Knowsley's Carers Strategy 2020-2025. Over this period, partners across Knowsley have worked collaboratively to develop and deliver a range of initiatives shaped by carers' identified priorities.

A recent review of progress has highlighted the positive impact of this partnership approach, demonstrating several important successes and achievements. These have made a meaningful difference to the lives of carers across the borough.

Priority 1 – Carers want to be kept fully informed and involved in the assessment of the person they support and be treated as partners in the development of support plans including hospital discharge

You said	We did
Deliver 'Looking after' campaign to identify more carers across multiple types of outlets e.g. pharmacies, citizen advice and improve carers recognition of themselves as carers.	Developed a strengthened approach to identifying hidden carers through a range of methods and now monitor identification rates on a monthly basis. Knowsley Carers Centre, have embedded the simple but effective practice of asking individuals how long they have been caring. This has significantly improved the early identification, recognition, and support of carers, ensuring more people are connected to the help they need at the right time.
Increase rollout of Carers' Passports in hospital.	Carers' Passports have been developed and piloted across Aintree Hospital and Whiston and St Helens Hospital Trusts. They enable carers to clearly set out how they wish to be involved in the care and support planning of the person they care for, while outlining the support available to them, such as access to refreshments and parking concessions. The passport also provides a useful focal point for discussions between carers and hospital staff.
Work with hospitals and other health services on policies and implementation to ensure: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cared for is not discharged without carer being identified • Carer involved in treatment 	Carer awareness training is delivered by Knowsley Carers Centre to staff across health and social care, including GP practices, hospitals, and community teams. The training highlights the vital role carers play and promotes good practice in identifying carers and signposting them to appropriate support, ensuring they are recognised, valued, and involved in care planning and delivery.
Review the need for the Carers' Emergency Card.	The Carers' Emergency Card was reviewed to assess its effectiveness and ongoing relevance. Feedback confirmed that it remains an essential resource, providing carers with reassurance and peace of mind in the event of an emergency. Carers are encouraged to keep their details up to date to ensure the card remains effective.

599 Carers supported with a carer assessment

690 carers accessed support forums

Carer emergency cards reviewed and enhanced

Priority 2 – Carers want the opportunity for regular personalised breaks suited to their individual situation

You said	We did
Promote assistive technology and the Centre of Independent Living to maximise the independence of the carer and cared for.	Awareness of assistive technology has increased among carers, helping them to better support both themselves and the people they care for. Targeted promotion has contributed to this, with over 2,000 information leaflets distributed to carers by Knowsley Carers Centre in the past 12 months. Carers Centre staff actively promote assistive technology, offering demonstrations of available equipment and supporting carers to access it through referrals where appropriate. In addition, dedicated information sessions have been delivered to further raise awareness and understanding.
Improve carers self recognition of them needing a break from their caring role through: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Increasing uptake of caring with confidence course Improving information and guidance on respite options Implement local policy on a chance for a break 	Knowsley Carers Centre increased uptake of the Caring with Confidence course through targeted promotion, proactive outreach to identified carers, and direct referrals from health and social care professionals. Knowsley has strengthened information and guidance on respite by improving the quality and accessibility of information available to carers, working with Knowsley Carers Centre to provide clear advice, signposting, and tailored support so carers better understand and can access the range of respite options available to them. Knowsley has committed to progressing the development and implementation of a local “Chance for a Break” approach, recognising the importance of ensuring carers can access timely and meaningful respite opportunities. Work is ongoing with partners to embed this consistently across services.

975 Carers have accessed holistic therapies

513 Carers contacted for a reassessment

606 carers contacted with regards to carers breaks

Information sessions delivered to promote tech

Priority 3 – Carers want to have the opportunity to take part in normal family life, social events, work, leisure education and be part of their community

You said	We did
Improve signposting to good career advice, including linking in to proposed Supported Employment scheme for carers.	Knowsley Carers Centre works closely with Knowsley Works, referring carers to access coordinated employment advice and guidance to support them into or remain in work.
Work with schools to consistently identify and support young carers.	Two dedicated assessors are now in place, working alongside the Young Carers Team to carry out regular assessments. Young carers in Knowsley also have access to the Me Time programmes, coordinated by VIBE, providing opportunities for respite and wellbeing support.
Support business to value and support carers better so that carers can sustain their caring role.	Carers Centre have supported businesses by providing advice, training, and guidance on identifying and supporting carers in the workplace, including promoting flexible working and carer-friendly policies.
Support working carers and ensure they know their rights as a carer within employment, so they are able to maintain their job and sustain caring responsibilities.	Knowsley Carers Centre supports registered working carers by providing guidance on their rights in employment, including the right to request flexible working. They also signpost carers with more complex needs to specialist organisations for tailored employment advice.

676 carers received information advice and guidance on carer breaks and isolation

904 signposts to external activities

40 Carers referred to job centre and career advice

Priority 4 – Carers should not be financially disadvantaged because of their caring role.

You said	We did
Provide information, advice and support to maximise income e.g. awareness of discounts, how to reduce bills, ensure information, advice and support to maximise income to cater for specific circumstances of young adult carers, young carers and elderly carers.	Knowsley Carers Centre provides information, advice, and support to help maximise carers' income, including assistance with benefits and debt. A dedicated Welfare Benefits Advisor offers tailored guidance, helping carers to access unclaimed entitlements and improve their overall wellbeing. This support has also been extended to include young carers.
Support carers into employment and voluntary work and help them sustain these roles i.e. supported employment schemes, carers leave, support for interviews etc.	Knowsley Carers Centre support carers into employment and volunteering opportunities, helping them to build skills, confidence, and sustain their roles. They provide guidance on CV writing, applications, and interview skills, and signpost carers to specialist organisations for more tailored careers advice. Progress is monitored to ensure carers receive the right support at the right time.

1181 Carers accessed debt, welfare and benefit advice

£1,076,000 has been generated for income maximisation

784 attendances at the food and friendship hub at Knowsley Carers Centre

21 Carers helped with foodbank vouchers

Priority 5 – Carers should be supported to look after their own physical and mental health whilst enabling them to maintain their caring relationship where appropriate.

You said	We did
Improve carers accessibility to GP appointments.	The Supporting Carers: 10 Steps to Better Practice guide helps primary care staff understand the needs of carers and how best to support them. Carer awareness training reinforces the importance of offering flexible and accommodating appointment arrangements, ensuring GP practices can better respond to carers' circumstances and needs.
Increase carers own registration with GPs identifying them as carers, making sure the importance is understood by carers.	Carers have been encouraged to register with their GP through a range of channels, including the Knowsley Carers Centre newsletter, health awareness events, and direct engagement by Carers Centre staff. Through the Supporting Carers: 10 Steps to Better Practice guide and ongoing carer awareness training, primary care staff are encouraged to use appropriate coding to identify carers within their patient population. This enables practices to offer targeted support, such as flu vaccinations and health checks, while ensuring practitioners are aware of the potential impact of caring on health and wellbeing. In addition, Knowsley Carers Centre delivers carers' health awareness sessions twice a year, supporting carers to better manage and prioritise their own health.
Hold carers health awareness sessions e.g. impact of caring on carers' health and managing stress.	Knowsley Carers Centre has actively promoted health and wellbeing through targeted awareness campaigns, regular health information sessions, and community outreach activities. These initiatives have helped carers better understand the importance of maintaining their own health and have encouraged them to access preventative support and services.
Improve the number of carer friendly GP practices (10 steps to being carer friendly).	The Supporting Carers and the 10 Steps to Better Practice guide has been reviewed to strengthen its impact and increase the number of carer-friendly GP practices. Practices achieving accreditation are now required to complete an annual review to maintain their status, supported by ongoing carer awareness training to ensure standards are consistently met and improved.

You said	We did
Provide training to support carers in maintaining their own health and wellbeing while managing their caring role, including guidance on promoting independence by recognising when the cared-for person can do things for themselves.	Training delivered by Knowsley Carers Centre supports carers to maintain their own health and wellbeing while effectively managing their caring role, reducing the risk of impact on both them and the person they care for. It also helps carers recognise when to step in and when encouraging independence would be more beneficial. Carers support staff further reinforce this by providing ongoing information, advice, and guidance to help carers look after their health and manage their caring responsibilities.
Implement a GP carer registration system for young carers, alongside promoting and supporting their registration with GP practices.	Awareness young carers needs has been strengthened within primary care. Practices are now encouraged to proactively identify young carers and record them appropriately. Young carers can also use their Carer ID card to self-identify within GP practices, and GP surgeries support identification by sending text messages to patients to encourage carers to register with the Carers Centre.

690 attendances at peer to peer support groups

839 Carers received holistic therapies such as reiki and massages

136 Carers received counselling

17 Carers referred to physical activity sessions

Priority 6 – Carers support will be focused on preventing the deterioration in caring situations by ensuring services users receive the right support, at the right time and the right place.

You said	We did
All adult carers have access to preventative support, including information, advice, peer support, and signposting to community resources.	Knowsley Carers Centre provides a wide range of preventative services, including information, advice, peer and emotional support, counselling, training, wellbeing activities, and income maximisation, alongside effective signposting to community resources. Using a prevention-focused approach, staff identify higher-risk caring situations early and deliver targeted interventions to help stabilise arrangements and reduce the risk of breakdown.
Recruit carer champions within adult social care.	Although dedicated carer champions have not been identified, carer awareness training and information on available services have been delivered, and referral processes have been streamlined to improve access to support.
Access to carer assessors within hospital settings ensures that carer needs are identified and assessed appropriately, with timely involvement as part of the discharge planning process.	This action remains outstanding. We will continue to prioritise this area as part of the strategy refresh.

62 Carers originally presented to Knowsley Carers Centre as being at Carer Breakdown

54 Carers attending training sessions such as mental health skills and strengthening family relationships

79 Carers attended days out and social groups

645 attendances at health awareness events, Carer Health check events and help with registering for GP

Key policy drivers



- **Care Act 2014**
Continues to underpin carers' rights to assessment and support.
- **NHS Long Term Plan (2019)**
Commits to improving identification, involvement, and support for carers across the NHS.
- **Health and Care Act 2022**
Introduces Integrated Care Systems (ICSs), strengthening partnership working across health and care, including improved support for carers.
- **People at the Heart of Care: Adult Social Care Reform (2021)**
Sets out a long-term vision for adult social care, including recognising and supporting unpaid carers through personalised and preventative approaches.
- **Major Conditions Strategy (2023-ongoing)**
Focuses on prevention and integrated support for long-term conditions, recognising the critical role of carers in supporting health outcomes.
- **Carers UK State of Caring**
Provides up-to-date evidence on carers' experiences, including pressures on health, finances, and employment.
- **NHS England – Commitment to Carers**
Reinforces expectations on services to identify carers, involve them in care planning, and provide appropriate support

Local policy drivers

Carers in Knowsley are supported within a strong local policy and partnership framework, focused on improving health, wellbeing, and independence across the borough.

- **Knowsley Council Plan (2023-2027)**
Sets the vision for the borough, with a focus on tackling inequalities, improving wellbeing, and supporting residents to live independent, fulfilling lives, recognising the important role of carers.
- **Knowsley Health and Wellbeing Strategy**
Prioritises prevention, early intervention, and reducing health inequalities, with a clear focus on supporting carers to maintain their own health and wellbeing.
- **One Knowsley Partnership / Knowsley Better Together**
Promotes integrated working across health, social care, and the voluntary sector, ensuring more joined-up and person-centred support for carers and the people they care for.
- **Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care System (ICS) Strategy**
Sets system-wide priorities around population health, prevention, and reducing inequalities, recognising carers as key partners in care.
- **Knowsley Adult Social Care Vision and Strategy**
Emphasises strengths-based approaches, independence, and supporting carers to sustain their caring role while maintaining their own wellbeing.
- **Knowsley Children and Young People's Plan**
Highlights the importance of early identification and support for young carers to improve outcomes in education, health, and wellbeing.



How has this strategy been co-produced?

Carers are at the heart of this refreshed strategy, with their views playing a central role in shaping its priorities, actions, and outcomes. It is essential that carers feel valued, respected, and listened to, and are actively involved in designing the services that support them.

Feedback has been gathered from carers across Knowsley through a borough-wide survey, developed in partnership with Knowsley Carers Centre and delivered between August and October 2023. The survey was accessible both online and in paper format, and supported by a programme of consultation events, including five in-person sessions and one online session. In total, 166 responses were received.

This section provides an overview of the key findings.



Local strengths and assets

Knowsley benefits from a strong network of services, partnerships, and community assets that support carers:

- **Knowsley Carers Centre**
The main specialist service for carers, providing information, advice, assessments, wellbeing support, training, peer support, and income maximisation.
- **Knowsley Council (Adult Social Care & Children's Services)**
Provides statutory support, including carers' assessments, safeguarding, and support for young carers and families.
- **NHS Cheshire and Merseyside / Local NHS Providers**
Includes GP practices, community health services, and hospital trusts (e.g. Whiston, St Helens, Aintree), supporting carers through identification, health services, and discharge planning.
- **Primary Care Networks (PCNs) and GP Practices**
Identify and support carers locally, including health checks, vaccinations, and signposting to services.
- **VIBE UK**
Delivers *Me Time* activities and targeted support for young carers and young people.
- **Knowsley Works**
Provides employment, skills, and training support for carers who want to access or remain in work.
- **Citizens Advice**
Knowsley Offers independent advice on benefits, debt, housing, and financial issues affecting carers.
- **Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector (VCFS)**
Includes local community groups, charities, and social organisations supporting carers with wellbeing activities, peer support, and reducing isolation.
- **Age UK Knowsley / Older People's Services**
Supports older carers with advice, social activities, and practical help.
- **Mental Health Services (Mersey Care NHS Foundation Trust)**
Provides support for carers where mental health needs are present, including advice and carers' involvement in care.

Together, these organisations form a strong local network of support, working in partnership to ensure carers in Knowsley are recognised, supported, and able to maintain their wellbeing.

Knowsley Carers Asset Map



Knowsley Carers

Previous evidence highlighted a high number of unpaid carers in Knowsley, many providing intensive levels of support, alongside impacts on health, wellbeing, and quality of life. While this remains consistent with current understanding, this strategy is informed by more recent data and direct engagement with carers.

Census 2021 data highlights the scale and intensity of unpaid caring within Knowsley, with many residents providing significant levels of care alongside other responsibilities.

16,500+
Unpaid carers

1 in 9
Residents are carers

10,000+
Provide 20+ hrs/week

6,000+
Provide 50+ hrs/week

Vision

Our vision is that people with caring responsibilities in Knowsley are recognised, valued, and supported in the vital role they play in caring for relatives, friends, and neighbours. Carers will have access to high-quality, timely information and support that is easy to access, well-publicised, and responsive to their needs, enabling them to maintain a quality of life comparable to those without caring responsibilities.

This refreshed strategy sets out the vision, priorities, and outcomes that carers in Knowsley have told us matter most to them. We recognise that achieving this cannot be delivered by individual organisations alone. We are committed to working together across partners and communities to deliver joined-up, person-centred support and achieve our shared ambitions.

To support this vision, we have identified a set of long-term outcomes that reflect our collective commitment to carers in the borough, alongside six key priorities that will guide our work. We recognise that these priorities are interconnected and that their impact will vary depending on individual circumstances, and we will take a flexible and inclusive approach to delivery.

Health & Wellbeing

Support carers to access opportunities, manage the impact of caring, and maintain breaks from their role to protect their health, wellbeing, and relationships

Leisure & Culture

Ensure carers can access meaningful leisure opportunities and pursue their aspirations, while having regular opportunities to take a break from their caring role

Need for a Break

Support carers to take regular breaks from their caring role helping them maintain their physical and mental wellbeing

Reducing Loneliness and Social Isolation

Support carers to stay connected to their communities, access peer support, and reduce loneliness and social isolation to improve their overall wellbeing

Maximising Income

Support carers to access financial advice, benefits, and employment opportunities, helping them maximise their income and maintain financial stability

Carers Assessments

Ensure carers are supported to access timely assessments that recognise their needs and help them achieve and maintain good mental health and wellbeing

PRIORITY ONE: Health and Wellbeing

Why is this important?

This priority focuses on supporting carers to recognise, maintain, and improve their own physical and mental health, while also considering the health and wellbeing of the person they care for. Ensuring carers are supported to look after their own needs is essential to sustaining their caring role and enabling them to continue supporting their loved ones.

Over recent years, a range of initiatives have been delivered across Knowsley to support carers' health and wellbeing. However, local insight continues to highlight that this remains a key priority. Feedback from carers indicates that many are experiencing challenges with both physical and mental health. A significant proportion report living with long-term health conditions, and evidence suggests that caring responsibilities can have a substantial impact on overall wellbeing.

Carers have told us that feeling valued, having access to timely support, and being able to take breaks are critical to maintaining their health. They have also highlighted the importance of balancing caring responsibilities with their own needs, having access to preventative support, and knowing where to turn during times of crisis. Young carers have identified the need for improved and more inclusive mental health support, particularly for those under 18.

Supporting the health and wellbeing of carers remains a key challenge and priority for Knowsley. Through this strategy, we will continue to work in partnership to strengthen support, improve access to services, and raise awareness of the importance of carers' wellbeing. We will build on a preventative, strengths-based approach, working closely with community and voluntary sector partners to ensure carers can access the support they need at the right time.

We also recognise that the impact of caring is different for everyone. Our approach will be inclusive and flexible, considering individual circumstances, including those carers who may already have their own health needs or disabilities.

Actions

- Strengthen support for carers within Primary Care by:
 - Promoting the Supporting Carers: 10 Steps to Better Practice framework, including ongoing engagement, accreditation, and annual review
 - Embedding carer awareness training as part of induction and continuous professional development
 - Ensuring carers are included within Primary Care Network social prescribing initiatives
- Continue to promote the identification and self-recognition of carers within GP practices.
- Work in partnership with local organisations to deliver health awareness and wellbeing sessions for carers.
- Support the engagement of health and social care staff in carer awareness training across all services.
- Identify and promote Carer Champions within social care teams.
- Encourage carer involvement in Patient Participation Groups to strengthen their voice in shaping services.
- Increase carer registration within GP practices and raise awareness of the benefits of identifying as a carer.
- Continue to roll out and promote Carers' Passports to improve identification and recognition within hospital settings.
- Strengthen mental health support for carers, including targeted support for young carers.
- Improve access to leisure and wellbeing opportunities, including concessions that support carers' physical and mental health.
- Explore opportunities to provide wellbeing check-ins and practical support through the Voluntary Hub and Knowsley Access Team

Outcomes

- Carers will experience improved physical and mental health and wellbeing.

How we will measure success

- A reduction in the number of carers reporting that their health has been negatively impacted by their caring role.
- An increase in carers' reported quality of life.
- An increase in the proportion of carers who find it easy to access information about support.
- Positive qualitative feedback from carers on their experiences of support.

PRIORITY TWO: Leisure and Culture

Why is this important?

Providing carers in Knowsley with opportunities to access and participate in leisure, culture, and a range of activities is consistently identified as a key priority. Feedback from carers highlights the importance of being able to take time out, relax, and engage in activities they enjoy, both independently and with others. These opportunities play a vital role in supporting health and wellbeing, reducing loneliness and social isolation, and helping to sustain caring roles over the longer term.

However, carers face several barriers to participation, including affordability, limited time, the availability of alternative care, and, for some, feelings of guilt about taking a break. Carers have told us that opportunities to engage in leisure and cultural activities should be accessible not only for themselves but also for the people they care for.

Building on previous achievements, programmes such as Me Time, delivered by VIBE, continue to provide valuable support for young carers, offering opportunities to take part in enjoyable activities, develop skills, and improve confidence and wellbeing.

We recognise the importance of partners working together to increase access to meaningful breaks and leisure opportunities. Through this strategy, we will focus on reducing the barriers carers face particularly around cost, time, and access to alternative care – so that more carers can engage in activities that support their wellbeing and quality of life.

Actions

- Continue to deliver the Me Time programme for young carers in Knowsley, supporting wellbeing and access to activities.
- Promote affordable access to local leisure and cultural opportunities, including the development of a borough-wide leisure and culture offer.
- Explore opportunities to expand the use of carer discounts to improve access to leisure facilities and activities across Knowsley.
- Improve the availability and accessibility of information on local leisure and cultural activities, ensuring it is clear, timely, and widely promoted.
- Work with partners to address barriers to participation, including affordability, transport, and access to alternative care, so carers can engage in activities independently.

Outcomes

- Carers will have increased access to leisure and cultural opportunities.
- Carers will be supported to take regular breaks from their caring role.
- Young carers will report improved emotional health and wellbeing through participation in the Me Time programme.

How we will measure success

- An increase in the number of carers able to spend time doing activities they enjoy.
- An improvement in carers' reported quality of life.
- An increase in the number of carers accessing leisure and cultural services.
- Positive feedback from carers on their ability to access information and opportunities.



PRIORITY THREE: Carers Assessments

Why is this important?

Carers' assessments, introduced through the Care Act 2014, are a vital tool for identifying carers' needs, strengths, and aspirations. They play a key role in ensuring that appropriate support is in place to help carers maintain their wellbeing and sustain their caring role.

However, feedback from carers in Knowsley highlights that experiences of the assessment process can be mixed. Long waiting times, lack of awareness, and the complexity of the current process have been identified as barriers. Carers have told us they would welcome a more holistic, person-centred approach that recognises their individual circumstances and is easier to access and understand.

Since 2023, work has been undertaken to improve the timeliness of assessments, and progress has been made. We will continue to build on this, strengthening the assessment process to ensure it is more responsive, streamlined, and accessible for carers.

As a partnership, we are committed to further developing the carers' assessment process so that it is easier to navigate and better understood. We will raise awareness of the support available, ensuring carers are identified early and can access help before their needs escalate or caring arrangements reach crisis point.

Carers have also told us they may feel anxious about the future, particularly in relation to long-term planning for the people they care for. Through this strategy, we will ensure that carers' assessments support these conversations, helping carers to plan ahead with confidence.

Actions

- Improve the timeliness of carers' assessments to ensure carers receive support when they need it.
- Strengthen awareness of carers' rights to an assessment, helping more carers to recognise their entitlement and access support earlier.
- Simplify and streamline the assessment process to make it easier to access, understand, and navigate.
- Promote a more holistic, person-centred approach to assessments, recognising carers' individual needs, strengths, and aspirations.
- Ensure carers' assessments consider the wider impact of caring, including physical and mental health, employment, and social wellbeing.
- Support earlier identification of carers across services to enable preventative support and reduce the likelihood of crisis.
- Improve communication with carers throughout the assessment process so they feel informed, valued, and supported.
- Embed future planning within carers' assessments, supporting carers to plan for changes in their caring role and the needs of the person they care for.
- Work with partners to ensure assessments lead to meaningful, timely support that makes a difference to carers' lives.

Outcomes

- Carers will be identified earlier and supported to access timely assessments.
- Carers will experience a more streamlined, accessible, and person-centred assessment process.
- Carers will feel better informed, listened to, and supported throughout the assessment process.
- Carers' needs, strengths, and aspirations will be fully recognised, with appropriate support put in place.
- Carers will be supported to plan for the future with greater confidence.

PRIORITY FOUR: Maximising Income

Why is this important?

Caring responsibilities can have a significant impact on people's ability to enter, remain in, or progress within employment, with direct consequences for financial wellbeing. National evidence suggests that many carers are forced to reduce their working hours or leave employment altogether due to the demands of caring. Local insight reflects this picture in Knowsley, with carers reporting barriers to sustaining employment and managing financially alongside their caring role.

Supporting carers to remain in or return to work, where possible, is therefore an important priority. Access to flexible employment, understanding employers, and practical support can make a significant difference, particularly for working-age carers and young carers planning their future pathways.

Carers have also told us that access to clear financial information, including benefits, allowances, and entitlements, is essential. Many carers are unsure what support is available or how to access it. Improving access to advice, guidance, and income maximisation support can help reduce financial pressure and improve overall wellbeing.

Through this strategy, we will work in partnership to strengthen financial support for carers, ensuring they can access timely, clear, and personalised advice. We will also work with local employers and partners to promote carer-friendly workplaces, helping more carers to sustain employment and achieve greater financial stability.

Actions

- Strengthen the provision of tailored information, advice, and support to help carers maximise their income, including benefits, discounts, and managing household costs.
- Review and improve access to local discounts, identifying and addressing any barriers carers face in accessing these offers.
- Expand opportunities for peer-led support and workshops to increase awareness of financial guidance and maximise income.
- Explore options for emergency financial support, including flexible approaches such as payment breaks where appropriate.
- Work with local employers to promote carer-friendly workplaces, including flexible working and supportive policies.
- Encourage employers to provide flexible job opportunities and promote initiatives such as the Knowsley Works Flexible Job Hub.
- Improve access to employment, skills, and financial advice services, including support to return to work, remain in employment, or explore self-employment opportunities.

Outcomes

- Carers will have improved awareness of financial support, benefits, and advice available.
- More carers will be supported to enter, remain in, or return to employment.
- Carers will experience improved financial wellbeing and stability.

How we will measure success

- A reduction in the number of carers reporting financial hardship as a result of their caring role.
- An increase in the number of carers who feel confident accessing financial support and advice.
- An increase in the proportion of carers who find it easy to access information about financial support.
- An increase in the number of carers in employment.
- Positive feedback from carers on the financial support and advice they receive.

PRIORITY FIVE: Need for a Break

Why is this important?

Access to respite is essential in supporting carers to take a break from their caring role, while ensuring the person they care for is safe and well supported. Having the opportunity to step away from caring responsibilities enables carers to rest, manage their own health and wellbeing, and sustain their role over the longer term.

A range of respite options are available, from short breaks at home to temporary residential care. However, feedback from carers in Knowsley highlights that access to respite can be challenging. Carers have told us that they would benefit from greater availability of high-quality, flexible respite options that meet a wide range of needs, including opportunities to take meaningful breaks both independently and alongside the person they care for.

Carers have also identified a number of barriers to accessing respite, including complexity of the system, limited awareness of available options, affordability, and concerns about leaving the person they care for. These challenges can prevent carers from taking the breaks they need, impacting both their wellbeing and their ability to continue caring.

In response, we recognise the importance of working together across partners to improve access to respite and short breaks. Through this strategy, we will focus on increasing the availability of flexible and accessible respite options, simplifying the system so it is easier to navigate, and ensuring carers are supported to take breaks that meet their individual circumstances.

We will also continue to build on existing provision, including the development of co-produced short breaks for children and young people, ensuring that families have access to appropriate, high-quality support. Our approach will prioritise choice, flexibility, and inclusion, ensuring respite provision meets the diverse needs of carers across Knowsley.

Actions

- Improve the availability and transparency of information on respite and short breaks to support carers in planning and accessing provision.
- Embed proactive planning for breaks and respite within carers' assessments, ensuring carers can plan ahead throughout the year.
- Engage carers in reviewing and shaping local respite and short breaks services to ensure they meet a diverse range of needs.
- Promote the use of assistive technology and services such as the Centre for Independent Living to support independence for both carers and those they care for.
- Continue to develop and embed a co-produced short breaks offer for children and young people with disabilities, ensuring it is inclusive, flexible, and responsive.
- Strengthen support for families during key transitions, including between children's and adult services, to ensure continuity of respite provision.
- Improve booking systems and processes to reduce waiting times, prevent backlogs, and enable carers to plan breaks in advance.

Outcomes

- More carers will be able to access timely and appropriate respite and short breaks.
- Carers will be supported to take regular, meaningful breaks from their caring role.
- Families of children and young people with disabilities will have improved access to flexible short breaks.
- Reduced reliance on crisis or urgent support through earlier access to planned respite.

How we will measure success

- An increase in the number of carers accessing respite and short breaks services.
- A reduction in waiting times for respite provision.
- Increased uptake of short breaks for children and young people.
- Improved carer-reported quality of life.
- Positive feedback from carers and families on the accessibility, quality, and flexibility of respite services.

PRIORITY SIX: Loneliness and Social Isolation

Why is this important?

Loneliness and social isolation are widely recognised both nationally and locally as significant challenges, particularly for carers. Caring responsibilities can limit opportunities to maintain relationships, engage in social activities, and stay connected to the community.

Carers in Knowsley have told us that feelings of loneliness and isolation remain a key concern. Many experience barriers such as limited time, financial constraints, and difficulties arranging alternative care, making it harder to take part in social or community activities. The impact of caring can also make it more difficult to maintain friendships and access support networks.

Carers emphasise the value of connecting with others who understand their experiences, alongside opportunities to engage in meaningful activities and take a break from their caring role. Access to peer support, community groups, and digital connections can play an important role in reducing isolation and improving wellbeing.

Through this strategy, we will work in partnership to reduce loneliness and social isolation by strengthening access to flexible and inclusive support. This will include improving opportunities for social connection, promoting peer support, and ensuring carers are aware of, and able to access, the support available to them.

Actions

- Increase opportunities for carers to connect through peer support groups, community activities, and social networks.
- Improve access to local activities and groups by promoting clear, up-to-date information across a range of channels.
- Work with community, voluntary, and faith organisations to expand inclusive and accessible opportunities for carers.
- Promote digital inclusion by supporting carers to access online platforms, virtual groups, and resources to stay connected.
- Strengthen targeted support for carers who are most at risk of isolation, including those with higher caring responsibilities or limited support networks.
- Develop and promote initiatives that bring carers together with others who share similar experiences.
- Ensure carers are routinely identified and signposted to social and wellbeing opportunities through health and social care services.
- Work with partners to reduce practical barriers to participation, including transport, cost, and access to alternative care.

Outcomes

- Carers will feel less isolated and more connected to their communities.
- Carers will have increased opportunities to build and maintain meaningful relationships and peer support networks.
- More carers will be able to access social, community, and digital activities that support their wellbeing.

How we will measure success

- A reduction in the number of carers reporting loneliness or social isolation.
- An increase in the number of carers accessing community activities, peer support, and social opportunities.
- An improvement in carers' reported wellbeing and quality of life.
- Positive feedback from carers on their ability to stay connected and access support.

Together, these priorities provide a framework for delivering coordinated, preventative, and person-centred support that enables carers in Knowsley to live healthy, fulfilling lives alongside their caring role.



How we will deliver this Strategy

This strategy will be overseen and delivered through the Knowsley Carers Partnership, bringing together carers, residents, and partners from across the borough to drive forward our shared ambitions. Partners include:

- Knowsley Metropolitan Borough Council
- NHS Cheshire and Merseyside (including local health services)
- Knowsley Carers Centre
- Healthwatch Knowsley
- Carers Trust
- VIBE
- Voluntary, Community and Faith Sector partners

This partnership approach reflects our commitment to working collaboratively to deliver coordinated, person-centred support for carers.

Progress will be regularly monitored through the Knowsley Carers Partnership governance arrangements to ensure delivery remains on track and aligned with wider health and wellbeing priorities across the borough.

A detailed action plan will support the delivery of this strategy, setting out clear responsibilities, timescales, and measures of success. Progress will be reviewed and communicated to carers and partners on a regular basis, including through engagement activity and updates from Knowsley Carers Centre.

We are committed to ongoing engagement with carers and stakeholders to ensure this strategy remains responsive to changing needs and continues to reflect the lived experiences of carers in Knowsley.

If you are a carer, or support someone who is, you can access information, advice, and support by contacting Knowsley Carers Centre, where a range of services are available to meet your needs.



Gaps and opportunities

While this strategy builds on strong foundations and reflects significant progress in supporting carers in Knowsley, there are a number of areas where further development will strengthen our approach and improve outcomes.

Key Areas for Development

- **Equality and Inclusion**
Further work is required to ensure support is fully inclusive and accessible, particularly for carers from underrepresented groups and those who may face additional barriers to accessing services.
- **Early Identification of Carers**
Although progress has been made, there is a continued need to identify carers earlier, particularly those who do not recognise themselves as carers, to enable timely and preventative support.
- **Young Carers and Transitions**
Enhanced support is needed for young carers, particularly during key transition points into adulthood, education, and employment.
- **Digital Inclusion**
Opportunities exist to strengthen digital access and confidence, enabling carers to benefit from online information, support, and social connection.
- **Crisis and Contingency Planning**
Further development is required to ensure carers are supported with plans in place for emergencies or changes in their caring circumstances.
- **Workforce Awareness and Training**
Continued investment in workforce development is needed to ensure carers are consistently recognised and supported across all services.
- **System Integration and Partnership**
Working There is an opportunity to strengthen alignment with wider health and care system priorities, including place-based and integrated working across the borough.
- **Measuring Impact and Continuous Improvement**
Ongoing focus is needed to ensure data, feedback, and outcomes are used effectively to shape and improve services over time.



Closing statement

Carers are at the heart of our communities and play a vital role in supporting the health, wellbeing, and independence of those they care for. This refreshed strategy recognises both the essential contribution carers make and the challenges they face in balancing their caring responsibilities with their own needs and aspirations.

Through our six priorities, we are committed to building on the strong foundations already in place and continuing to improve support for carers across Knowsley. By working together with carers, partners, communities, and services we will deliver more coordinated, accessible, and responsive support that makes a meaningful difference to carers' lives.

We know that there is more to do, and this strategy reflects our ambition to go further. We will continue to listen to carers, learn from their experiences, and respond to their changing needs. Our approach will remain rooted in partnership, prevention, and a shared commitment to ensuring carers are recognised, valued, and supported.

Together, we will work towards a Knowsley where carers can maintain their health and wellbeing, access the support they need at the right time, and live fulfilling lives alongside their caring role.



