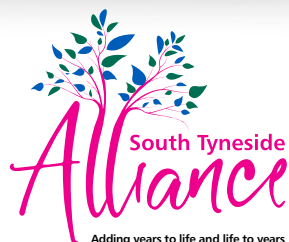


South Tyneside Carers Strategy 2022-2027



South Tyneside Council



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**THIS IS
SOUTH
TYNESIDE**

Contents

Foreword	3
Introduction – ‘Our Quiet Heroes’	4
What Do We Mean by ‘Carer’?	5
Day-to-Day Challenges	6
The Stark Reality	7
Impact of Covid-19	8
Our Legal Duties	9
Working Together	9
Strategic Priorities	10
Priority 1 - Recognise and Support Carers Throughout South Tyneside	11
Priority 2 - Support Young Carers to Achieve Their Potential	12
Priority 3 - Increase Access to Stable and Supportive Employment Opportunities	13
Priority 4 - Keep Carers Connected	14
Priority 5 - Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Carers	15
Accountability	15

Foreword

We are extremely proud and excited to publish the new South Tyneside Carers Strategy.

The strategy is aimed at everybody with caring responsibilities, across all ages, who provide **unpaid care** for people living within South Tyneside.

The strategy has been co-produced with South Tyneside Council, the NHS, our voluntary and community sectors and, **most importantly**, local people who have caring responsibilities. This was at the heart of its development and demonstrates our commitment to identifying and supporting carers across the whole borough.

Caring is a selfless role, where families and friends look after their loved ones or others that they feel a sense of responsibility for, but it should not be carried out at the expense of the carer’s own health and wellbeing.

However, we know that many carers do not access the support that they may need as they do not think of themselves as ‘carers’ or have not been identified by statutory organisations as such (known as ‘hidden carers’).

South Tyneside is a place with a rich and varied history, but with huge potential for future generations and filled with people passionate about the area. This community pride, sense of belonging and cultural diversity gives the borough and its people the compassion and resilience which carers demonstrate each day.

We need to do more to identify these quiet heroes in our neighbourhood and ensure they have the help and support to enable them to carry out their caring responsibilities but also flourish in whichever goals and ambitions they have for themselves.

Cllr Tracey Dixon
*Leader of South Tyneside Council
and Chair of South Tyneside Health
and Wellbeing Board*

Dr Matthew Walmsley
*Chair of South Tyneside Clinical
Commissioning Group and Vice-Chair
of South Tyneside Health and Wellbeing
Board Commissioning Group*



Cllr Tracey Dixon



Dr Mathew Walmsley

Our 'Quiet Heroes'

You are all heroes. Every single one of you performs a heroic role, day-in, day-out, without always acknowledging the significance of the care and support you provide. Just quietly doing what you do, out of love, compassion or even just a sense of duty.



Every carer in South Tyneside is providing invaluable support to family and friends, often doing so whilst dealing with their own pressures or difficulties. It's a delicate balancing act, performed on the highest of high wires, and one which we know can sometimes require support to keep you safe and prevent you from toppling over.

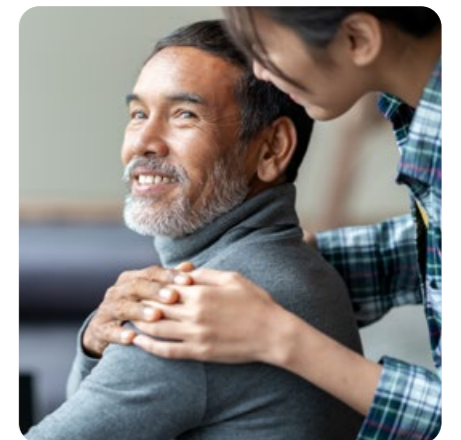
The purpose of this new Carers Strategy is not only to set out our long-term support priorities for carers, but to also celebrate your unwavering commitment during these unprecedented times. Without your heroic efforts, the health and social care system would simply become overwhelmed and unable to provide vital care and support to all those who need it.

What do we mean by 'Carer'?

The standard definition of a carer is "anyone who cares for a friend or family member who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support. The care they provide is unpaid".¹

However, we know that it can sometimes be difficult for you to view yourselves as carers, when you are fulfilling that role through love, compassion and loyalty. You understand the person you care for better than anybody else. You understand their physical and emotional needs, their interests, what they enjoy, and what causes them anxiety.

This level of insight and understanding is something which statutory services could never replicate, and which emphasises what an incredible role you all play. Unpaid carers are holding families together, keeping loved ones safe and enabling them to participate within the community, whilst at the same time making an enormous contribution to society.²



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

² Carers UK 'Why We're Here'

Day-to-Day Challenges

It is likely that every one of us will have caring responsibilities at some time in our lives with the challenges faced by carers taking many forms.

Many of you juggle your caring responsibilities with work, study and other family commitments. Some of you, particularly children and young people, are not known to be carers. You may not tell relatives, friends or health and care professionals about your responsibilities because of a fear of separation, guilt, pride or other reasons.

We know that each one of you is in a role unique to yourselves:

- You may be caring for a child, parent, friend, partner, neighbour or relative.
- You may provide physical or practical care and/or emotional support to somebody.

- The person you care for may need help because they are ill, have physical or mental health issues, or be drug or alcohol dependent.
- You may be a young carer who is approaching adulthood, or you may be caring for somebody who is.
- You may have been caring for a long time and experiencing 'burn-out', or you may be new to the role and feeling overwhelmed and anxious at the prospect.
- You may be a 'hidden carer' who does not recognise that what they do for a loved one makes them a carer and not be aware of support available. This is because you may see yourself first and foremost as a parent, sibling, child, partner or friend.
- You may be juggling your caring responsibilities alongside work, studies, and other family or community commitments.



The Stark Reality

Prior to developing this strategy, we worked with carers and people from a range of organisations to identify the level of need in South Tyneside and the type of services required.

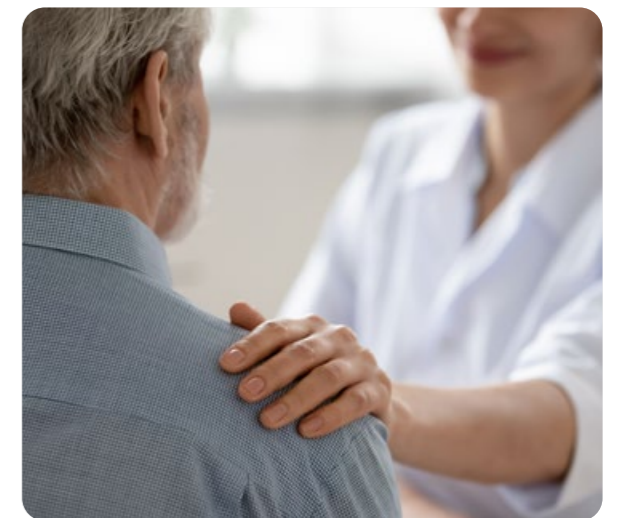
This was in the form of a Joint Strategic Needs and Assets Assessment³, which is a statutory document setting out local needs for specific types of services and the wider national picture. Some of the key headlines in that document are extremely stark in terms of the sheer scale of unpaid caring and some of the current and forecasted challenges.

The National Picture:

- Support provided by carers is valued at around £132 billion a year nationally.
- Young carers miss on average 48 days of school due to bullying because they care for someone. Alongside their caring responsibilities, this is a contributory factor in young carers being likely to have significantly lower educational attainment at GCSE level than their peers.⁴
- It is estimated that the number of people aged 65 years or over who are caring has grown to over 2 million - a 43% increase from 2011 to 2019.
- Disabilities amongst working age adults and increasing numbers of older people in the UK who require help with personal care are both forecast to double over the next 20 years.
- People are living longer due to better access to medical care, healthier lifestyles and fewer labour-intensive jobs, meaning they stay physically fit for longer.
- Many carers suffer from loneliness and isolation, require support to help them stay in work, and face their own health problems as a result of their caring role.
- Carers may have to give up paid employment, which affects their independence, wellbeing and their economic wellbeing. This may also have a substantial effect on their former employers' productivity and lead to high costs of recruitment and training.

South Tyneside:

- Twice as many female carers in South Tyneside have received a Carers Assessment compared to male carers.
- The average age that carers in South Tyneside receive a statutory assessment is between 55-64 years.
- It is estimated that around 1 in 7 people in South Tyneside with caring responsibilities are currently in employment.⁵
- South Tyneside has around 1,500 young carers, which are likely to be juggling their caring role alongside education and other interests. This can make it hugely challenging for young carers to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers
- Relatively low numbers of people from culturally diverse backgrounds identify as carers or access support services.



³ <https://www.southtyneside.gov.uk/article/73438/Carers-JSNA> ⁴ <https://Carers.org/about-caring/about-young-Carers>
⁵ <https://www.ons.gov.uk/employmentandlabourmarket/peopleinwork/employmentandemployeetypes/methodologies/annualpopulationurveyapsqm>

Impact of Covid-19

Carers UK estimate that an additional 4.5m people have taken on caring responsibilities since the Covid-19 pandemic. Research in the early part of the pandemic showed that carers were providing an additional 10 hours of support per week on average.⁶

A North East-wide survey of carers carried out in April-May 2021 identified that almost two thirds of carers in South Tyneside have seen an increase in the number of hours of support they provide since Covid-19.

We know that the onset of the pandemic changed everything and intensified many challenges that you were already facing:

- You may have seen valuable day service provision for the person you care for being suspended, which meant you were unable to take a much-needed break from your role.
- You may have been unable to visit the person you care for if they were admitted to hospital, which added to your anxiety about whether you could provide the support they needed when they returned home.



- You may have been unable to access medical appointments due to your increased caring role, meaning your own health and wellbeing suffered.
- You may have been furloughed by your employer and receiving a reduced salary, meaning you have experienced additional financial challenges.
- You may have been unable to access some services which moved to online-only support, meaning you felt more isolated and unable to cope.

In a Carers Trust report⁷, 56% of young carers say their education has suffered, and 40% of young carers (aged 12-17) and 59% of young adult carers (aged 18-25) say their mental health has deteriorated.

Age UK recently reported⁸ that 27% of older people are unable to walk as far since the pandemic, with 25% living with more physical pain. This is likely to be placing additional pressures on you as a carer.

These findings illustrate the scale of the challenge now facing us. However, they emphasise the extraordinary strength, commitment and resilience of you all as you continue to carry out your caring role.

⁶ Caring Behind Closed Doors, Carers UK, April 2020
⁷ Impact of Covid-19 – One Year On, Age UK, July 2021
⁸ Impact of Covid-19 – One Year On, Age UK, July 2021

Our Legal Duties

Councils have certain legal duties in relation to supporting carers

- **Care Act 2014** – Places a requirement on local authorities to promote the wellbeing of individuals when carrying out their social care functions. It also entitles carers to an assessment of their own needs, where they appear to have needs, together with the provision of information and advice to help make the best choices about accessing support.
- **Children and Families Act 2014** - Makes it easier for young carers to have an assessment of their needs and introduced 'whole family' approaches to assessment and support.

In addition, the NHS Commitment to Carers sets out eight priorities for the NHS:

- Raising the profile of Carers
- Education, training and information
- Service development
- Person-centred, well-coordinated care
- Primary care
- Commissioning support
- Partnership links
- NHS England as an employer

The National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has also produced a guideline on Supporting Adult Carers⁹ which will underpin all our future work to improve support. We also have a duty to safeguard carers from any kind of abuse or neglect, in relation to your own needs or those of the person you care for. This includes making it straightforward to raise any kind of safeguarding concern, safe in the knowledge that we will be supportive and non-judgemental throughout.

⁹ <https://www.nice.org.uk/guidance/ng150>

Working Together

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

We did this in a variety of ways:

- Holding focused discussions with carers in a range of locations to gather real life examples of your everyday challenges and what might help
- Providing opportunities for adult carers and young carers to share their views through a series of surveys
- Using our commissioned services to share their perspectives of the issues faced by carers
- Speaking with carers from culturally diverse communities to better understand their barriers to accessing support.
- Surveying employers to identify how flexible the average workplace is for carers.

“ **I recently arrived in the UK as a refugee and my wife struggles to walk. I also have mobility issues which make me tired. I don't know which services can help.** ”

“ **My husband suffers with Seasonal Affective Disorder (SAD) and I would benefit from training on how to identify triggers for his low mood.** ”



Strategic Priorities

The themes identified throughout our conversations with carers and the people you care for have directly produced our strategic priorities for the next five years.

We are absolutely committed to delivering against these priorities which are important to you:

- Recognise and support carers
- Support young carers to achieve their full potential
- Increase access to stable and supportive employment
- Keep carers connected
- Improve the health and wellbeing of carers

The remainder of this strategy sets out an overview of what we will do to improve the lives of everybody who has a caring role in South Tyneside.

Priority 1 Recognise and Support Carers

A key barrier to the provision of appropriate support to carers is that you are often not known as having a caring role.

The more we can identify carers and the role you play, the more we will be able to provide you with the advice, information or support that you may need.

You told us:

- 1 in 4 of you told us you hadn't been recognised by anyone as being a carer.
- Over half of you said that being aware of the support available to you or the person you care for would make a positive impact on your role.
- Less than 1 in 5 take part in activities which help your own health and wellbeing.
- The main reasons why you are unable to look after your own wellbeing include:
 - Unable to access support for the person
 - The person you care for being unwilling to accept help
 - Difficult to plan a break due to the care needs fluctuating
 - Decline in your own health



- Some of you told us that your insight and expertise in the health needs of the person you care for is often not recognised or disregarded.
- It would be helpful for support to be offered at the point that the people we care for are initially diagnosed.
- Parent carer assessments, entitlements and pathways to support are unclear.
- Some people from culturally diverse communities don't access support due to a stigma associated with disabilities, and their cultural and religious beliefs.
- Not enough paid carers are able to overcome language barriers and provide care in a culturally sensitive way.
- More male care workers would be helpful.

Strategic Actions

- Raise awareness and ensure carers are identified and recognised by all organisations and employers in South Tyneside
- Promote the value of carers across communities
- Ensure carers have access to information, advice and guidance which consistently supports them in their caring role
- Ensure workplaces are aware of carer rights and the support available to enable more opportunities for carers to remain in paid employment
- Implement a clear, service offer for carers in culturally diverse communities
- Develop a broader range of personalised and flexible support to enable carers to live the life they want to live

Priority 2

Support Young Carers to Achieve Their Full Potential

Young carers are at risk of not reaching their full potential due to their caring responsibilities.

The impact of COVID-19 has heightened this risk as more young carers have had their education adversely affected which could affect their employment opportunities.

You told us:

- You would like to secure a good job but it is difficult to find employment which fits around your caring role.
- You want to be physically and mentally healthy.
- You would like to be happy.
- More than half of you want to be able to take part in social activities.
- You would like somebody to talk to about your problems.
- You want understanding from your teacher or employer if you're late or need time off to carry out your caring role.

Strategic Actions

- ☑ Ensure all young carers and young adult carers are supported to achieve their goals alongside their caring responsibilities
- ☑ Develop a seamless pathway for all young and young adult carers as they progress to adulthood
- ☑ Produce solutions with employers and educators to ensure young carers and young adult carers have accessible opportunities



Priority 3

Increase Access to Stable and Supportive Employment

Many carers struggle to balance employment with their caring role, but not all feel able to disclose their role to their employer.

If a carer is forced to give up employment to care for somebody it can have a devastating impact from an economic, social and wellbeing perspective. Employers can help carers to remain in employment and overcome any, real or perceived, stigma by offering flexible and supportive working arrangements. This benefits employers by improving staff retention and satisfaction and creating a more diverse workforce.

You told us:

- More than two thirds of you who are working carers receive no support from your employer.
- Mental health and emotional support needs are common.
- You are often signposted to external support such as, counselling, benefits advice and housing.
- You are often unable to compete with more experienced job applicants, as time out of the workplace has affected your skills and competencies.
- You would like to see carers recognised and supported in more employer HR policies.
- The main type of support which exists is flexible working options, although this is not always present.

Employers told us:

- More than a third told us they hadn't previously considered carer issues.
- Most said they would signpost working carers to, either, counselling or the respective organisation's occupational health service.

Strategic Actions

- ☑ Reskill carers returning to work to ensure they are given the best opportunity to successfully re-integrate into employment
- ☑ Support employers to enhance the current offer for working carers which promotes a culture of work/life balance and academic/career progression
- ☑ Increase awareness and take-up of government financial support for carers



Priority 4 Keep Carers Connected

Digital technology played a huge part in keeping communities connected during the Covid-19 pandemic.

However, we understand that not everybody has the means or skills to communicate in this way.

As more organisations introduce online services, we need to explore ways to enable more carers to be able to confidently connect to digital services and support within everyday life, such as banking, healthcare, shopping, or advice and support. This will also require us to strike the right balance between delivering in-person, 'face-to-face' services, and those accessed via digital communication.

In addition, there is huge potential for assistive technology to make the lives of carers a little easier.

You told us:

- Lack of digital skills is a barrier to finding work and accessing support.
- You find it difficult to stay up to date with information.
- Online shopping or banking could save valuable time.
- Costs to access the internet are a barrier.
- You are anxious about learning new technology.
- You have concerns about digital use causing further isolation.
- You are not always aware of the potential of assistive technology.
- More than half of you want to be able to take part in social activities.
- You would like somebody to talk to about your problems.

Strategic Actions

- ☑ Maximise opportunities for carers to help develop skills in accessing digital services and information
- ☑ Explore broader opportunities for digital solutions and assistive technology to promote greater independence for carers

Priority 5 Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Carers

Carers often overlook their own needs because of their role which can affect their health and wellbeing.

We need to ensure carers are able to take a break from their responsibilities and have opportunities to pursue their own interests.

You told us:

- It is difficult to plan a break because care needs can fluctuate on a regular basis.
- Your own health is declining.
- You have little time for a break and the person you care for won't accept help.
- Emotional support would enable you and the people you care for to accept help.
- Short break activities are important.
- You would benefit from somebody being able to care for your loved ones at home while you have a break.

Improve the Health and Wellbeing of Carers

- ☑ Ensure carers have access to mental health support
- ☑ Develop a neighbourhood-focused support offer for carers
- ☑ Ensure carers are aware of the value of having a break from caring and the options available to them

Accountability

We are committed to ensuring that this strategy is **more than just words** on a page – we want and expect carers to hold us to account in relation to our stated priorities.

Development of a detailed **delivery plan** will be co-produced via the South Tyneside Carers Strategy Group with carer representatives, the Council, NHS, and voluntary and community sector organisations.

We will provide regular monitoring and update reports into the local **Health and Wellbeing Board**, which is the partnership in South Tyneside designed to lead and oversee our aim to help people live longer and healthier lives.

In addition, the Council's People Select Committee will receive monitoring reports on progress which will provide an opportunity for elected members and the public to **scrutinise and challenge** implementation of this strategy.



South Tyneside Council

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