



Building Carer Friendly Communities

A blueprint

*Business
and services*



Social care



Employment



Education



Health



Community

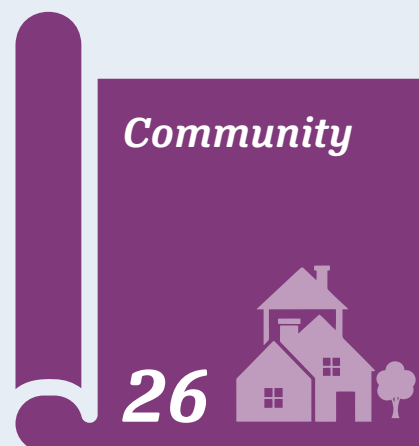
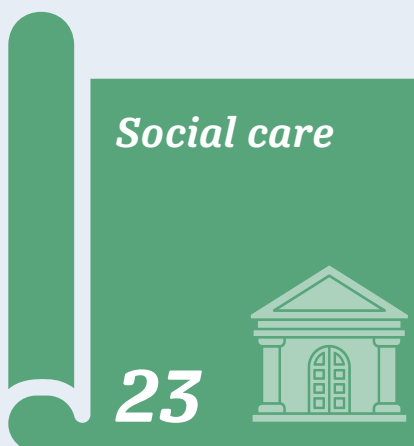
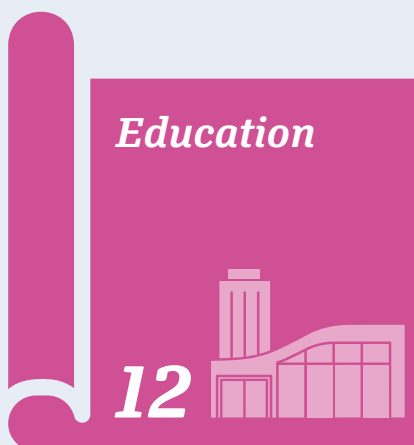


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Building Carer Friendly Communities

In 2026, Carers Week is made possible through Carers UK working together with six other major charities:

Age UK, Carers Trust, The Lewy Body Society, The ME Association, Motor Neurone Disease Association and Rethink Mental Illness.



Introduction

Carers Week takes place each year to recognise and celebrate the vital contribution of unpaid carers and to shine a light on the challenges they face.

Across the UK, millions of people provide unpaid care and support to family members, partners and friends. Their care sustains families, strengthens communities and supports our health and social care systems. Yet too often carers still feel unseen, unsupported or isolated.

The theme for Carers Week 2026 and 2027 is Building Carer Friendly Communities. Through this theme we want to highlight the difference communities can make when they recognise carers, understand their needs and take action to support them. When communities come together in this way, the impact can be life changing.

Carers Week first highlighted the importance of carer friendly communities in 2015–16. We are now building on that legacy by sharing ideas, practical guidance and examples from communities that have already taken steps to create positive change.

This blueprint sets out a shared vision for developing and strengthening carer friendly communities across the UK. It is an invitation to organisations, services, employers, community groups and individuals to work together so that caring is recognised, understood and supported everywhere.

The blueprint:

- provides guiding principles for building carer friendly communities, shaped by carers' lived experience
- identifies practical commitments and actions that partners across health, social care, education, employment, business, and the voluntary and community sectors can champion
- showcases examples of good practice from communities already working to improve carers' lives
- aims to turn the collective momentum of Carers Week into lasting cultural change.

Creating carer friendly communities is not the responsibility of one organisation or sector alone. It requires a collective commitment from employers, services, local leaders, community groups and members to recognise carers and respond to their needs. This blueprint invites communities across the UK to turn that commitment into action and build places where every carer can thrive.

Definition:

A carer is someone who provides unpaid care and support to a family member or friend who has a disability, illness, mental health condition, addiction, or who needs extra help as they grow older. It isn't someone who volunteers or is employed to provide support.

A blueprint for carer friendly communities

Why we need carer friendly communities

When carers are unsupported, the impact is felt across communities. Isolation increases, employment can be lost, health deteriorates and opportunities shrink.

Conversely, when carers are recognised and supported, communities are stronger overall. People are better connected, employers retain skilled staff, pupils and students are able to succeed in education, and health and social care systems function more effectively.

Supporting carers is therefore not only compassionate, but also practical. Preventative support costs less than crisis intervention. Flexible employment reduces staff turnover. Early identification helps prevent long-term hardship.

A carer friendly community is therefore a resilient community, which is why building such communities should be everyone's business: a shared commitment to supporting those who care for others every single day.

What makes a community carer friendly?

Carer friendly communities are places, spaces, services and community groups which make support part of everyday life, ensuring carers get the opportunities and help they need. They are communities where people:

- recognise unpaid carers and the vital role they play
- understand the realities and impact of caring
- take practical action to identify and support carers
- empower and support carers to live fulfilling lives.

Carer friendly communities can exist anywhere carers live, work, study, or spend time. Even small changes in these places can, and do, make a big difference to carers' daily lives.

A carer friendly community is one where:

- people feel able to identify themselves as carers
- support for carers is visible and easy to access
- employers understand and support employees' caring responsibilities
- schools and colleges actively support students with their caring responsibilities
- GP practices routinely ask about caring roles and offer support
- community organisations proactively reach out and recognise carers
- local businesses understand why flexibility matters.

Imagine what our communities could look like if we achieve our ambition...

- People across services, workplaces and communities would routinely ask, “Do you look after someone?”
- People would feel more confident identifying as a carer earlier, knowing that support is available.
- Employers would proactively support carers to balance work and caring responsibilities, enabling people to remain in and thrive at work.
- Education providers would recognise and support young carers and student carers of all ages to succeed in learning.
- Information, advice and support would be simple to access, culturally appropriate and responsive to the different experiences of carers.
- Carers would have a meaningful voice in shaping services, policies and community responses that affect their lives.
- Carers would feel recognised, valued and supported in their communities.

Our five guiding principles

This blueprint is grounded in five guiding principles, informed by carers lived experience:



1. Visibility

Carers must be seen, recognised and identified. Early identification changes outcomes if carers get the right support.



2. Voice

Carers must have a central role in helping to shape services, policies and community responses.



3. Flexibility

Caring is often unpredictable. Systems must adapt, where possible, to meet carers' needs, not the other way around.



4. Equity

Not all carers experience caring in the same way and specific groups of carers often encounter additional barriers which must be accounted for and acted upon.



5. Partnership

Building a carer friendly community is everyone's responsibility and requires collaboration across services, organisations and communities.

How to use this blueprint

This blueprint is designed to support communities across the UK to take meaningful steps towards becoming more carer friendly.

1

Start with carers' voices

The first step should always be to listen to carers and understand what matters most to them locally. This might involve:

- thinking about carers as a fundamental priority, not an optional extra
- creating opportunities for carers to share their experiences
- engaging with local carers' organisations, services and networks
- involving carers in shaping local strategies, policies and services
- developing a clear understanding of the challenges carers are facing locally.

2

Use the guiding principles

The blueprint's principles can help organisations and communities reflect on how carers are currently recognised and supported, and where improvements may be needed. Communities may wish to use them to:

- review current policies, services and support for carers
- identify gaps in recognition or support
- shape new initiatives or strengthen existing approaches.

3

Adapt the commitments to your community

The suggested commitments in this blueprint translate the guiding principles into practical action. Communities may choose to prioritise different areas depending on local needs; for example, improving early identification, supporting working carers, or addressing financial hardship.

4

Learn from existing good practice

Many organisations and communities are already taking positive steps to support carers. This blueprint includes examples of good practice and links to additional resources to help inspire action and provide practical ideas.

5

Work in partnership

Building a carer friendly community requires collaboration. Success depends on partnership working across health services, social care, local authorities, employers, education providers, voluntary organisations, businesses and community groups.

Creating change in your community

The experiences, needs and priorities of carers vary depending on local services, geography, demographics and culture. For this reason, the blueprint is not intended as a one-size-fits-all model. Instead, it should be used as a framework for action that can be adapted and shaped by carers and communities in your area.

It can be used across an entire local area or to support change within specific sectors such as health, social care, education, business and services, employment or the wider community.

A carer friendly community is built through collective effort. Everyone has a role to play in recognising, valuing and supporting carers:

- **Local leaders and politicians (including MPs, MSPs, MSs, MLAs, Councillors, NHS Board Members) should champion carers' needs and advocate for policies that improve carers' lives.**
- **Statutory services should provide strategic leadership and ensure carers are embedded within local planning and decision-making.**
- **Health and social care services should identify carers early, raise staff awareness, take a whole-family approach and connect carers with appropriate support.**
- **Employers and businesses (across all sectors and sizes) should create flexible, supportive workplaces where paid work and caring can co-exist, recognise carers as employees and customers, and make everyday tasks easier through flexible or priority access.**
- **Schools, colleges and universities should proactively identify and support young and young adult carers, so their education, wellbeing and future opportunities are not compromised.**
- **Voluntary, community, faith and sports organisations can provide trusted spaces, peer support and culturally responsive services that help carers feel connected and valued.**
- **Neighbourhoods and residents can strengthen communities through simple, practical actions: checking in, listening and offering help.**

Together, by using this blueprint, we can build carer friendly communities and make a real and lasting difference to the lives of carers – everywhere.

A blueprint for **Business and services**

What does it mean?

Local businesses and services play an important role in building carer friendly communities by making everyday places more understanding, flexible, and accessible for people with caring responsibilities. Through staff awareness, flexible service delivery, inclusive policies, and visible support for carers, they can reduce practical barriers and create welcoming environments where carers feel recognised and respected.



How to build a carer friendly community:

Business and services

Why is it important?

By working in partnership with local organisations and services which support carers, businesses and services can help to raise awareness, strengthen local networks, and contribute to communities where carers can participate fully in daily life.

How?

Local businesses and services can take practical actions that make a real difference to carers' daily lives and help build more carer friendly communities. Businesses and services should:

- **Offer flexible and accessible services** – provide online options, flexible appointment times, easy cancellations or rebooking, and multiple ways to access services.
- **Create welcoming environments** – offer seating, quiet spaces, accessible toilets, and clear signage to make spaces easier for carers and the people they support.
- **Introduce carer friendly policies** – consider priority service, fast-track queues, or quiet hours, and make these policies visible.
- **Reduce financial barriers** – offer concessions, discounts, or loyalty schemes for carers where possible.
- **Train staff in carer awareness** – help employees understand what caring is, how it affects people, and how to respond with empathy and flexibility.
- **Signpost to local support** – display information about local carers' organisations, helplines, and support services.
- **Partner with the community** – work with local authorities, carers' groups, and community organisations on awareness campaigns and events.
- **Think about your own employees who are providing unpaid care** – explore the information about building carer friendly communities in the workplace.
- **Become a [Carer Confident](#)¹ and/or [Carer Positive](#)² accredited employer.** These benchmarking schemes assist employers to build a supportive and inclusive workplace for staff who are, or will become, carers.

Together, these actions help create everyday places where carers feel recognised, respected, and supported, contributing to stronger, more inclusive communities.



British Gas

While many organisations focus on supporting carers within their workforce, British Gas has extended its carer friendly approach to its customers as well. Recognising that many customers have caring responsibilities, the company has embedded systems, processes and training to help staff identify carers and respond to their needs more effectively.

Customers who are carers often face additional pressures when managing essential services such as energy. They may need flexible communication, faster support in emergencies, or the ability to manage services on behalf of the person they care for. Without mechanisms to identify carers, these needs can easily go unnoticed.

British Gas has introduced a number of practical measures to address this. Frontline colleagues, customer service teams and third-party suppliers receive training to help them recognise when a customer may have caring responsibilities and understand how to provide appropriate support. The company has also identified around 9,000 carers through its Customer Relationship Management system, improving awareness of carers within the customer base.

To support this, British Gas has introduced a 'Carers Flag' on its database so advisers can quickly identify customers with caring responsibilities and offer additional help. A separate flag identifies vulnerable customers who are being cared for, enabling engineers and customer service teams to communicate directly with the carer rather than the person receiving care.

Carers can also access support through the Priority Services Register, which provides advance notice of planned power outages and priority assistance during emergencies. This helps carers plan ahead and maintain continuity of care.

These actions reflect key principles of our blueprint: recognising carers within organisational systems, building staff awareness through training, and providing practical mechanisms that reduce stress and administrative burden. It shows that becoming a carer friendly organisation can extend beyond the workforce, creating more inclusive and responsive services for carers in the wider community.

Resources: Business and services

Find out about [Carer Passport schemes in the community](#)³

Check out our [Carer Friendly Company Blueprint](#)⁴

A blueprint for **Education**

What does it mean?

Education providers such as schools, colleges, and universities play a crucial role in building carer friendly communities by recognising and supporting both young carers and adult carers within their learning environments. Schools can also help parents recognise their caring responsibilities.

By offering flexible learning options, clear support pathways, and trained staff who understand carers' diverse needs, these institutions can help carers of all ages remain (or become) engaged in education and achieve their potential. In doing so, education providers remove barriers to learning. They also model inclusive practices that promote understanding, compassion, and long-term cultural change across the wider community.



How to build a carer friendly community:

Education

Why is it important?

- Fewer than half of young carers (46%) leave secondary school with five GCSEs including English and Maths, compared with around 60–65% of their peers without caring responsibilities, showing a substantial attainment gap.⁵
- Young adult carers are around 38% less likely to obtain a degree than their non-carer peers, and those caring for 35+ hours per week are even less likely to achieve this level of qualification.⁶
- Young people with caring responsibilities have much higher rates of not being in education, employment or training (NEET) than non-carers.⁷

How?

There are many ways in which education providers can make a difference to unpaid carers of all ages – to support better outcomes for them and help ensure the educational inequalities they face are reduced. Schools, colleges and universities should:

- **Sign up to and support the Young Carers Covenant:** Education providers can demonstrate their commitment to supporting young carers by signing up to the Young Carers Covenant. This includes taking practical actions to raise awareness of young carers, reviewing policies and practices, and working with local partners to improve support for young carers in education.
- **Make carers a priority group for careers advice and widening participation initiatives:** Young carers and student carers may face additional barriers to accessing further education, training and employment opportunities. Education providers should ensure carers are recognised as a priority group within careers guidance and widening participation initiatives. This can include tailored careers advice, support with applications, mentoring opportunities and targeted outreach to help carers explore and access future opportunities.
- **Appoint a dedicated young carer or student carer lead:** Schools, colleges and universities should identify a named lead with strategic responsibility for supporting carers. This individual can coordinate identification and support for carers, ensure carers' needs are reflected in policies and practices, and act as a point of contact for carers, staff and external organisations. A dedicated lead can also help strengthen links with local carers' services and community organisations.

- **Provide carer awareness training for staff:** Staff across education settings should receive training to help them recognise when a student may have caring responsibilities and understand the challenges carers may face. Increased awareness can help staff respond appropriately, offer support and signpost carers to relevant services. Training can also help ensure that carers feel comfortable identifying themselves and asking for support.
- **Creating a supportive learning environment:** Education providers can also support carers by developing flexible and inclusive approaches that recognise the realities of caring. This may include providing flexibility around deadlines and attendance, offering wellbeing support, and ensuring carers have access to information and advice.

**Good
practice**



Identifying young adult carers

New College Durham is a further education college in the North-East of England with over 6,000 students each year. Over the last year the college has identified a significant number of young adult carers. They have been identified through self-declaration on application, tutor training to enable identification, and collaboration with the local authority young carer support service.

Support for young adult carers in college comes under the umbrella of the Advice, Support, and Careers department. The Safeguarding Support and Wellbeing Officer in this team has taken up the role of the Young Carers Lead in college, advocating for the cohort and raising awareness amongst staff and students.

There are several ways this has been achieved across the last academic year:

- a weekly drop-in with young carers
- a note on their record to inform curriculum staff of their carer status to give lenience in extenuating circumstances
- referrals to The Bridge (local young carer support service)
- a carer's card which gives access to a free salon treatment/coffee or snack each term.

Resources: Education

Further information about the [Young Carers in Schools programme](#)⁸

Find out more about the [Young Carers Covenant](#)⁹

A blueprint for **Employment**

What does it mean?

A carer friendly community at work is one where carers can balance employment and caring in an understanding environment that identifies and supports them. We want to see a future where all employers, large and small, support carers to achieve their potential at work, recognise the value of employees with caring responsibilities, and create workplaces that enable and empower unpaid carers to thrive.

Through flexible working arrangements, compassionate line management, and clear carer support policies – including paid Carer’s Leave – employers can help carers balance work and care without having to leave the workforce. By fostering understanding, reducing stigma, and actively promoting inclusive practices, employers not only improve wellbeing and retention but also contribute to stronger, more supportive communities where carers feel respected, valued, and able to participate fully in working life.



How to build a carer friendly community:

Employment

Why is it important?

Many carers say that they want to continue working alongside their caring responsibilities for as long as possible to protect their finances, while many say it gives them personal value and a break from their caring responsibilities.

However, evidence shows that:

- 1 in 7 workers in the UK are juggling work and care¹⁰ but 600 carers a day have to give up paid work to provide unpaid care.¹¹
- More than 1.9 million people in paid employment become unpaid carers every year. That's 37,000 people every week or 5,300 people every day.¹²
- 400,000 people in employment are providing over 50 hours of unpaid care a week.¹³
- Employers lose £8.3 billion in productivity per year from carers leaving work.¹⁴
- The annual cost to the economy of unpaid carers being unable to participate in paid work is £37 billion per year.¹⁵

How?

By taking a few simple steps, workplaces can help to build carer friendly communities. Whether an employer is large or small, there is a wide range of support that can be adopted, helping carers to remain in the workplace whilst also ensuring employers retain staff with vital skills and experience. This includes:

- Understanding who unpaid carers are within your workforce.
- Providing training to line managers to ensure they understand and support those managing paid work alongside providing unpaid care.
- Providing employees with the flexibility they need at work to balance work and care.
- Implementing the Carer's Leave Act 2023, giving five days unpaid Carer's Leave.
- Going one step further and providing employees with paid Carer's Leave.
- Ensuring HR policies are clear about carers' rights and any support available.
- Senior leaders sharing their own personal experience of caring and fostering a supportive and inclusive workplace for all unpaid carers.
- Appointing a senior manager as an internal sponsor.

Good
practice



TSB Bank

TSB Bank is a retail bank, serving customers through digital channels, over the phone and in branches across the UK, with over 5,000 employees. As an Employers for Carers member, and a Carer Confident Ambassador, TSB is committed to supporting employees with caring responsibilities. TSB recognises that flexibility and understanding are essential to help employees balance work and care and that anyone with caring responsibilities is an asset – with their own life skills and work experience.

In June 2020, TSB introduced a Carer's Policy, giving employees with caring responsibilities access to up to 70 hours of paid Carer's Leave (pro rata) on a rolling 12-month basis and a Carer's Passport – so carers need only tell their manager once throughout their TSB career about their situation. Carers at TSB describe the policy as a '4th emergency service', which allows them the flexibility they need to support short or longer-term caring needs. On average, employees took four days of paid leave in the last twelve months, with more than 9,600 hours used since the launch of the policy. TSB's broad package of support not only attracts but also retains caring colleagues, with carers in the company more likely to have longer service than non-carers.

Good
practice



Renfrewshire Council

Renfrewshire Council employs around 8,500 staff, many of whom balance work with unpaid caring responsibilities. As an exemplary Carer Positive employer, the council recognises the important role unpaid carers play within both the workforce and the wider community. The council promotes a carer friendly culture by recognising that caring for someone affected by disability, illness, frailty, or substance misuse can impact wellbeing and work-life balance. Staff are supported through practical measures including paid Carer's Leave, special leave, flexitime, and temporary home working arrangements.

Supportive conversations are encouraged through the Carer Passport, which helps employees discuss their caring responsibilities with managers and agree appropriate adjustments. Peer connection is also important. The Carers Connected network offers a space for employees with caring roles to share experiences and access support. Staff are also signposted to external help through partnership with Renfrewshire Carers Centre and can access counselling services.

By combining flexible policies, supportive management, and links to community resources, Renfrewshire Council demonstrates how workplaces can help build a carer friendly community that values and supports unpaid carers.

Resources: Employment

Find out about developing a [Carer Passport in the workplace](#)¹⁶

Understand more about the benefits of introducing [paid Carer's Leave](#)¹⁷

Join [Employers for Carers](#),¹⁸ Carers UK's employers' membership forum

Get [Carer Confident](#)¹⁹ and/or [Carer Positive](#)²⁰ (in Scotland) accredited

Check out our [Carer Friendly Company Blueprint](#)²¹

A blueprint for **Health**

What does it mean?

Building a carer friendly community across the NHS means that the health service identifies and recognises the crucial role of unpaid carers, treats them as partners in care, whilst also promoting and protecting their own health and wellbeing.

It means unpaid carers are visible throughout the NHS - embedded in strategy, recognised in policy, and acknowledged in every interaction. Every part of the NHS has a role to play in supporting unpaid carers and everyone can make a difference.

The shift to providing more care in the community, and the establishment of Neighbourhood Health Services in England, present important opportunities to ensure carers are better supported.



How to build a carer friendly community:

Health

Why is it important?

- Carers' support is worth £184 billion a year across the UK – the equivalent of a second NHS.²²
- Carers' health and wellbeing is worse than non-carers²³ and carers also have poorer mental health than non-carers.²⁴
- 1 in 3 NHS staff is an unpaid carer.²⁵
- Young carers aged 16-24 are more likely to have mental and physical health needs than young people without caring responsibilities (60% vs 44%).²⁶

How?

There are many ways in which the NHS can make a difference to unpaid carers – to support better outcomes for them and the patient, as well as protecting their health, wellbeing and futures. This includes:

- Embedding carers within strategic planning, recognising carers in their own right and ensuring the needs of all carers are reflected in policies, services and community planning.
- Working in partnership across services, employers, community organisations and the voluntary sector to deliver or commission the right support for unpaid carers of all ages.
- Recognising and identifying unpaid carers as early as possible, including those who may not yet identify themselves as carers, and ensuring they can access timely information, advice and tailored support.
- Upholding and promoting the rights and entitlements of carers of all ages, ensuring that carers are aware of their rights and supported to access them.
- Ensuring professionals 'think carer' as a default, recognising the vital role carers play and working alongside them as partners in care.
- Involving carers in shaping services and policies, ensuring decisions affecting carers are informed by lived experience and developed in partnership with carers themselves.
- Providing flexible and responsive support that recognises the unpredictable nature of caring and adapts to carers' changing needs.



Person-centred hospital discharge in Sefton

A recent initiative in Sefton demonstrates how local partnerships can help build a more carer friendly community by recognising and supporting unpaid carers during the transition from hospital to home.

Hospital discharge can be a particularly challenging time for carers, who often take on significant new responsibilities with little preparation or support. In Sefton, partners worked together to address this by ensuring carers were recognised as key partners in care and supported as part of the discharge process.

The initiative brought together NHS services and local voluntary sector organisations, including Sefton Carers Centre and the Sefton CVS Hospital Discharge Service. By working collaboratively, partners ensured that carers were identified early and included in personalised discharge planning.

Carers were consulted about their capacity, concerns and support needs before the patient returned home, helping professionals better understand the realities of caring. Following discharge, carers and patients could access up to six weeks of tailored support, including practical help, emotional support and advice on financial assistance.

The impact of this partnership approach was significant. More than 850 patients and carers received support, with same-day responses to referrals during operating hours. Hospital readmission rates remained low, suggesting that when carers are prepared and supported, patients are more likely to recover safely at home. The service also helped families access over £250,000 in benefits and emergency grants, helping to reduce financial pressures often experienced by carers.

This example shows how recognising carers, listening to their experiences and working in partnership across health services and community organisations can make a real difference. By embedding carers within discharge planning and connecting them with community support, Sefton is helping to create a more carer friendly community where carers are seen, supported and valued. Find out more information [here](#).²⁷

Resources: Health

The Carers Partnership has developed a [resource for health and social care professionals in England](#),²⁸ covering many different practice areas to support unpaid carers.

[Carer Aware](#)²⁹ is a joint project in Wales which provides resources to help health and care professionals better empower unpaid carers to be actively involved in decisions and services for the people they care for and themselves.

[Involving Carers in Discharge Planning](#)³⁰ is a practical guide for health and social care practitioners involved in discharge planning from hospital in Scotland.

Find out about [Carers Passports in Hospitals](#).³¹

A blueprint for **Social care**

What does it mean?

Social care services can help to create communities where unpaid carers are recognised, valued, and supported as equal partners in care. In a carer friendly community, carers are visible, respected, and actively involved in decisions that affect both the person they support and themselves.

Social care should not view carers solely as a resource within someone else's care plan. Instead, carers must be recognised as individuals with their own rights, aspirations, health needs, and wellbeing. This approach aligns with the principles set out across the UK in various pieces of legislation, each of which establishes carers' rights to assessment and support in their own right.³²

A carer friendly community in social care is one in which:

- carers are identified early and offered support proactively
- carers are treated as expert partners in care planning
- services adopt a whole-family approach
- support is flexible, preventative, and tailored
- carers have a meaningful voice in service design and commissioning.



How to build a carer friendly community:

Social care

Why is it important?

Unpaid carers provide essential support that sustains health and social care systems and enables people to live independently. Without them, statutory services would face unsustainable demand. When carers are overwhelmed or unsupported, the impact extends beyond the individual. The person they support is more likely to require hospital admission or residential care. Preventative support is therefore both a moral and economic imperative.

Supporting carers is also a matter of equity and rights. Carers are entitled to recognition, information, and support. Embedding these rights in practice strengthens community resilience and promotes social inclusion.

Employment is a critical factor. Access to affordable and reliable alternative care enables carers to remain in work. 35% of carers who had given up employment said more affordable, accessible, or reliable social care services would have prevented them from having to give up work.³³

Communities that support carers are stronger overall. When carers maintain employment, relationships, and wellbeing, caring becomes more sustainable and crisis interventions are reduced.

How?

Achieving a carer friendly community requires systemic leadership from social care, accessible, flexible and tailored support, alongside partnership working and cultural change. This includes:

Early identification and recognition:

- Carer identification should be embedded across all contact points, including assessments, hospital discharge, and community referrals.
- Staff should routinely ask who provides ongoing support and offer a Carer's Assessment.³⁴ Recording carer status and ensuring follow-up prevents carers from remaining hidden.

Embedding carers as equal partners:

- With appropriate consent, carers should be involved in care planning and recognised as experts in the needs of the person they support.
- Information-sharing processes must balance confidentiality with carers' need for information to be able to provide safe care.
- A whole-family approach should underpin assessment and safeguarding.

Accessible, flexible support:

- Support should address practical, emotional, and financial needs. This includes respite and short breaks, direct payments, emergency planning, peer support, wellbeing services, social security advice, and employment support.
- Flexibility enables preventative solutions rather than crisis responses.

Co-production and service design:

- Carers should be actively involved in shaping services through advisory groups, commissioning processes, and strategic engagement.
- Co-production ensures services reflect lived experience.

Cross-sector collaboration and culture change:

- Adult social care must work beyond statutory boundaries, partnering with health services, voluntary organisations, housing, and employers.
- Initiatives such as Carer Passports and carer friendly workplace policies reinforce recognition across systems.
- Workforce development is equally vital: professionals need the skills and supervision to identify hidden carers, understand carer stress, and adopt strength-based approaches.

By taking a strategic, preventative, and partnership-based approach, social care can move from reactive crisis management to system leadership. In doing so, it can help build communities where caring is recognised, supported, and sustained — not at the expense of the carer’s own wellbeing, but alongside it.

Resources: Social care

The Carers Partnership has developed a resource for health and social care professionals in England,³⁵ covering many different practice areas to support unpaid carers.

Carer Aware³⁶ is a joint project, between Carers Wales and Carers Trust Wales which provides resources to help social care and health professionals to better empower unpaid carers to be actively involved in decisions and services for the people they care for and themselves.

The Equal Partners in Care (EPiC) learning resource for health and social care staff in Scotland helps professionals to have better conversations and interactions with carers.³⁷

A blueprint for **Community**

What does it mean?

Building carer friendly communities means creating places where carers feel recognised, included and supported in everyday community life. Community organisations, groups and local spaces – such as libraries, community centres, faith groups, sports clubs and neighbourhood networks – can play an important role in helping carers feel connected and supported.



How to build a carer friendly community:

Community

Why is it important?

By raising awareness of caring, creating welcoming and inclusive environments, and offering opportunities for social connection and peer support, communities can help carers feel understood and valued. Small actions, such as signposting carers to local support, offering flexible ways to participate in activities, or simply checking in with someone who may be caring, can make a real difference.

How?

Community groups and organisations can play a powerful role in building carer friendly communities because they are often trusted, local and accessible. Practical steps do not need to be complex – small, intentional changes can make a significant difference to carers' daily lives.

Below are practical actions community organisations, groups and local spaces can take to help build a carer friendly community:

Increasing awareness of carers:

- Encourage volunteers and staff to ask simple questions such as, “Do you look after someone?”
- Mark events such as Carers Week, Carers Rights Day and Young Carers Action Day to highlight carers in the community.

Creating welcoming and inclusive spaces:

- Offer flexible participation, recognising carers may need to arrive late, leave early or miss sessions.
- Provide accessible venues and activities that carers and the people they care for can attend together where appropriate.

Helping to identify and signpost carers to support:

- Train staff and volunteers to recognise the signs that someone may have caring responsibilities.
- Keep up-to-date information about local carers' services and support organisations.
- Signpost carers to advice, benefits information, respite opportunities or local carers' services.

Creating connections and peer support:

- Host informal coffee mornings or peer support groups for carers.
- Create opportunities for carers to connect socially through community activities.
- Partner with local carers' organisations to run support sessions or outreach events.

Working in partnership:

- Collaborate with local carers' organisations, health services, schools and local authorities.
- Share information and resources with other organisations supporting carers.
- Participate in local networks or initiatives focused on improving support for carers.

Encouraging small acts of community support:

- Check in with neighbours or members of your community who may be caring.
- Offer practical help, such as collecting shopping or helping with errands.
- Promote a culture where carers feel comfortable asking for help.

When communities take these steps, they help create environments where carers feel seen, supported and connected. By working together, communities can ensure that carers are not only recognised for the role they play, but also supported to live full and connected lives.

Supporting Male Carers Through Community Connection

Good practice



The Men Do programme by Carers First is a strong example of engaging unpaid male carers aged 50+ who are at risk of isolation and less likely to access traditional support services. Delivered in rural and coastal East Lincolnshire, the project focused on shared activities and informal peer support rather than formal support groups.

Activities included breakfasts, local outings, brewery visits and practical workshops, helping carers build friendships and confidence in relaxed community settings. Monthly 'Banter Breakfasts' became a regular opportunity for men to connect with others in similar situations.

The programme supported more than 200 men in its first year, with participants reporting reduced loneliness and improved wellbeing. One carer said the group helped him feel "included, listened to, and welcomed".

Get involved

The support millions of carers provide each day sustains families, strengthens communities and supports our health and social care systems. Yet too often carers remain unseen, unheard or unsupported in the places where they live, work and connect.

This blueprint sets out a shared vision for change. By improving the visibility of carers, ensuring their voices shape decisions, creating flexible systems that respond to the realities of caring, addressing inequalities between carers, and working in partnership across communities and sectors, we can create environments where carers are recognised, valued and supported.



Collective action

As we have set out, no single organisation can achieve this alone. Building carer friendly communities requires collective action and everyone has a role to play in recognising carers and ensuring they get the understanding, flexibility and support they need.

Creating carer friendly communities complements and strengthens wider efforts to build age-friendly, disability-friendly and dementia-friendly communities. Carers play a vital role in enabling people to live independently and remain connected to their communities, often supporting older people, disabled people and those living with dementia. By recognising and supporting carers alongside the people they care for, organisations, services and employers can take a more holistic approach to inclusion.

When communities are designed to be accessible, understanding and responsive to carers' needs, they help sustain caring relationships and ensure that everyone – carers and those they support – can participate fully in community life. Together, these approaches create more resilient, inclusive communities where everyone can thrive.

The examples and commitments outlined in this blueprint show that change is possible. Across the UK, communities are already taking steps to identify carers earlier, involve them in shaping services, and develop practical support that makes a real difference to their daily lives.

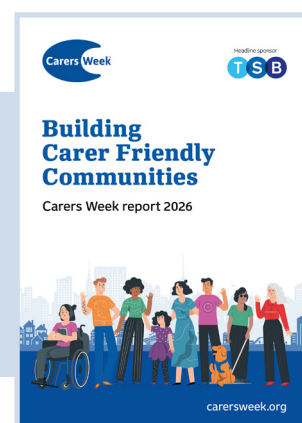
Now is the time to build on this momentum. We invite organisations, services and communities across the UK to join us and use this blueprint as a foundation for action – to champion carers, to strengthen support and to work together to create communities where every carer feels recognised, valued and supported.

Because when communities support carers, everyone benefits.



Find out more about Carers Week
and get involved at carersweek.org

Read our 'Building Carer Friendly
Communities' Carers Week 2026
research report at:
go.carersuk.org/CW_Report_2026



Endnotes

- 1 employersforcarers.org/carer-confident
- 2 carerpositive.org
- 3 carerspassports.uk/community
- 4 Carers UK (2021) *Carer Friendly Company Blueprint*
- 5 Carers Trust (2025) *Caring and classes 2025 – Young Carers and attainment inequalities*
- 6 Baowen Xue, Rebecca E. Lacey, Giorgio Di Gessa, Anne McMunn (2023) *Does providing informal care in young adulthood impact educational attainment and employment in the UK?*
- 7 All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers & Young Adult Carers (2023) *Inquiry into the life opportunities of young carers and young adult carers*
- 8 youngcarersinschools.com
- 9 carers.org/campaigning-for-change/the-young-carers-covenant
- 10 ONS Census 2021
- 11 Carers UK (2019) *Juggling work and unpaid care: a growing issue*
- 12 Petrillo, M., Bennett, M.R., and Pryce, G. (2022) *Cycles of caring: transitions in and out of unpaid care* London: Carers UK
- 13 Carers UK (2023) *Carers' employment rights today, tomorrow and in the future*
- 14 Carers UK (2024) *Taking the next step for working carers – introducing a new right to paid Carer's Leave*
- 15 DWP (2025) *The cost of working age ill-health and disability that prevents work*
- 16 carerspassports.uk/employment
- 17 Carers UK (2024) *Taking the next step for working carers – introducing a new right to paid Carer's Leave*
- 18 employersforcarers.org
- 19 employersforcarers.org/carer-confident
- 20 carerpositive.org
- 21 Carers UK (2021) *Carer Friendly Company Blueprint*
- 22 Petrillo, M., Zhang, J., and Bennett, M.R. (2024) *Valuing Carers 2021/2022: the value of unpaid care in the UK* London: Carers UK
- 23 ONS (2024) *Unpaid care expectancy and health outcomes of unpaid carers*
- 24 Carers UK (2025) *State of Caring: The impact of caring on carers' mental health and the need for support from social care services*
- 25 NHS Staff Survey 2023
- 26 Carers UK analysis of GP Patient Survey (2025)
- 27 england.nhs.uk/long-read/person-centred-approach-to-hospital-discharge
- 28 Carers Partnership (2025) *Identifying and supporting unpaid carers in England to improve integrated system working*
- 29 carersuk.org/wales/for-professionals/carer-aware
- 30 hscscotland.scot/couch/uploads/file/planning-discharge-from-hospital-involving-carers-march-2019.pdf
- 31 carerspassports.uk/hospitals
- 32 The Care Act 2014 (England); Carers (Scotland) Act 2016; Social Services and Well-being (Wales) Act 2014; and Carers and Direct Payments Act (Northern Ireland) 2002
- 33 Carers UK (2026) *The 'tipping point': When unpaid carers can no longer combine caring with paid employment*
- 34 Or Adult Carer Support Plan in Scotland
- 35 Carers Partnership (2025) *Identifying and supporting unpaid carers in England to improve integrated system working*
- 36 carersuk.org/wales/for-professionals/carer-aware
- 37 centralcarers.org/wp-content/uploads/2021/10/EPIC.pdf



Headline sponsor



Carers Week is an annual awareness campaign to recognise the vital contribution made by unpaid carers across the UK.

In 2026, Carers Week is made possible through Carers UK working together with six other major charities: Age UK, Carers Trust, The Lewy Body Society, The ME Association, Motor Neurone Disease Association, and Rethink Mental Illness.

TSB is the headline sponsor for Carers Week 2026, and we are grateful for their support.



For more information about our blueprint for building carer friendly communities contact policy@carersuk.org

