

Impact report

2020-21



A message from our Chair and Chief Executive

It is important to recognise that the pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges and affected so many people in profound ways. We want to thank you for not allowing carers to be forgotten and working with us to provide support.

We have the privilege of hearing and sharing so many carers stories which move, challenge and inspire us. Carers like Kulbir. Her story shows how our support can help carers live their lives to the fullest over a long period of time.

You have helped us reach over 90,000 carers like Kulbir over the last year. We have developed new models of digital and telephone support in response to the pandemic which helped us

reach new carers. These models will be part of a blended service offer to carers going forward.

You have helped us make a material difference in carers' lives as they faced so many challenges. As a result, carers tell us they feel less alone, have maximised their income and are managing better in their caring role.

We would like to say a big thank you to Carers First staff and

volunteers for the way they have so often selflessly responded to meet the needs of carers who have been so impacted by the pandemic. You are amazing.

We ask for you to continue to work with us as we look to the future with an ambitious new strategy to reach 250,000 carers by 2024. Together, we can help more carers thrive in their roles and find the balance in their lives they wish to achieve.

About Carers First

Carers First works directly with and for unpaid carers to provide personalised information and advice. Making it easier for those caring for someone else to continue living their lives to the fullest. We currently serve carers across eight areas in the South-East, London, East Midlands and East of England.

Obtaining relevant support can be a challenge, but with it, unpaid carers can thrive. Therefore, Carers First provides a range of services, offering carers information and guidance, emotional and wellbeing support, practical help and financial assistance - online, by phone and face-to-face in the local community.



Alison Taylor
Chief Executive



Peter Davis
Chair of Trustees

Kulbir

Ranjit

“Without Carers First, caring would be a lot harder and I wonder if I could have balanced working and caring.”

Kulbir is a Community Engagement and Hate Crime Manager as well as a Carer Ambassador for Kent Police



My relationship of being a daughter has always come first. I was a carer for my father who sadly passed away in 2002 and since then for my mother. Being a Sikh and coming from an Asian background, caring is rarely spoken about as it is something which is ingrained in our values and expectations so on many occasions extended family come together. In some cases there can be a stigma to asking for support however, without it, the carer and the person they care for can suffer when they don't have too.

Working full-time alongside my caring role, which is nothing but an honour and privilege, leaves little time for myself. As a carer, I'm the doctor, cook, nurse, hairdresser, cleaner, taxi driver, counsellor and it can feel overwhelming at times. Caring has impacted on my physical health.

I reached out to Carers First quite a few years ago. I had a carer assessment which focused me on areas of my life

I needed to work on e.g. time for myself and my health and wellbeing. You can't look after someone else if you don't look after yourself. I learnt about my employment rights as a carer which has given me confidence to advance in my career.

It meant a lot to be able to speak with someone who listens, can empathise and doesn't judge you - the circumstances don't change but I felt I wasn't alone. I also became more knowledgeable of the various support available which coincided with me taking on a discretionary Carers Ambassador role for Kent Police.

The last couple of years have been incredibly difficult being a full-time working carer with minimal breaks. However, with support from Carers First and my employer, I know how to look after myself and continue to do what's most important to me as a daughter.

Reaching more carers

For much of the pandemic, we were unable to provide face-to-face services to carers. We swiftly moved our services online and increased our telephone support.

Support online

Carers increasingly turned to the internet and social media for information and support. We saw a 36% increase in visits to our website and 122% increase in followers on social media.

Moving services online has opened new groups and activities to carers across our areas; helping us to connect with traditionally harder to reach carers, including male carers, carers in rural areas and working carers. Many carers who find it difficult to leave the person they care for are attending virtual sessions. This has enabled us to widen our reach and impact.

Support by phone

Carers receiving ongoing wellbeing support from Carers First increased significantly compared to last year. This was particularly important for carers unable or unwilling to engage digitally. We carried out over 8,000 wellbeing calls to carers in the first six months of the pandemic. These calls often resulted in further support being put in place such as emotional support and practical help.

“It is just really nice to speak to likeminded people who are also working and understand what it’s like to be juggling all the different balls in the air and remain professional.”

Marian, working carer who cares for her mum with dementia



Peter

Olive

“I think I have made about twenty new friends online since lockdown. We share tips and advice. We all have a pretty good idea about what we all do and we support each other.”

Peter, 73, cares for his wife who has dementia

33,423

Total carers registered, a 15% increase on last year

14,944

Carers received one to one or group support, a 22% increase on last year

Over 90,000

Carers accessed information and support either online or in the community

Making a material difference in carers' lives

The COVID-19 pandemic has had a significant impact on carers' lives. It has increased the amount of care that many are having to provide, and is having a devastating impact on their relationships, mental and physical health, finances and employment. Thanks to you, we have been on the frontline tackling the challenges carers are facing.

Our Helpline and community teams have provided tailored information and support for carers including managing work or education, taking a break, getting financial support, handling legal matters and peer support.

Finance

In the past year, Carers First have provided grants thanks to our partnerships. These grants helped provide carers with essential items like beds, washing machines and breaks from caring. We know caring is expensive and money worries impact on carers' health and wellbeing. Our dedicated Carer Rights Advisers supported carers to access welfare benefits.

Health and Wellbeing

4,145 carers accessed our peer support and activity groups ranging from dance classes, book clubs and wellbeing groups to workshops for people in different caring circumstances.



Dennis

“The group has been a lifeline for me. We have a good laugh, even if I am the only man in the group. It helps to chat to people in a similar situation to me and hear different ideas on caring for someone with dementia.”

Dennis, who attends a dementia carers group

94%

Of carers were helped to navigate health and social care services

93%

Said they now understood their rights as a carer

91%

Of carers were helped to maximise their income through benefits and grants

Leane

Isla

“It has had a big impact on my mental health and how I treat myself. I look for the positive in everything now and I’m much more resilient to the challenges that come with caring. I’d recommend the wellbeing course to anyone in a caring role.”

Leane cares for her daughter Isla, 7, who is autistic



Supporting young carers

The pandemic saw many young carers’ roles intensify as they missed the respite of school and seeing friends. We adapted our support, introducing virtual chat groups and private WhatsApp groups to keep young carers in touch with one another. We also supported young carers and their families with grants for equipment, such as laptops and in some cases, arranging support from Food Banks.

COVID 19/Vaccination programme

We worked closely with local authorities to support the local Covid-19 vaccine programmes. Across all of our service areas we worked with Commissioners and community partners to identify carers eligible for the vaccine and provide them with advice and information.

Co-production

Co-production with carers is at the heart of our work and our Carer Forums are a key channel for this. Carer Forums were reviewed in 2020 to give them a renewed focus. The Forums are facilitated by Carers First team members and provide carers with the opportunity to have a voice and be heard, to influence the planning of their local carer service and to shape the organisation.

Carer Forums are now held quarterly across all seven service areas. We increased the number of Forums held by 33% in the past year as well as nearly doubling the number of carers taking part.

£4m

Secured £4m in benefits and 100k in individual grants for carers

94%

Had connected with other carers, making them feel less alone

97%

Of carers told us our support has helped them in their caring role

“It has been a grieving process. The son I knew was lost in his mental illness and I couldn’t reach him. I kept hoping one day to wake up like it never happened. I wanted my old Jamal back.”

Denise took on the role of Jamal’s carer which she likens to the experience of looking after a child again however you’re in your mid-fifties and your child is a grown adult. She felt she couldn’t leave Jamal alone in the house. And worried terribly about when he went out in case he found himself in a situation he couldn’t cope with.

Her caring role put a huge strain on Denise physically and emotionally. She didn’t know where to turn for information about his condition and was consumed by writing letters, attending appointments, learning about medications and making sure he was looking after himself. She was also dealing with her feelings of loss of the son she knew. One of the most helpful things for Denise has been support from Carers First and fellow carers.

Denise

Jamal



“Accessing support for myself early helped me manage better in my caring role. My friends from the group were a lifeline and a great comfort to me as I went through such difficult times with Jamal. They were always there at the end of the phone or to meet for a coffee when I needed it.”

Denise now leads her own Carers First peer support group

Working in partnership

We recognise that working in partnership helps us achieve greater impact and support for carers.

We worked closely with local authorities and other partners to identify carers. We also referred carers for support from partners.

During the pandemic, we worked with local Council partners to make sure carers were supported to access food and supplies, and given priority access to the vaccines.

We have partnered with community organisations to help us deliver specialist training and support. For example, we worked with Lincs Digital to help over 1,000 carers get online during the pandemic.

We have worked with several businesses to support carers. For example, we partnered with Anglian Water to promote the Priority Service Register to carers. We delivered training to their Customer Service team on recognising carers and the challenges carers face.

We developed a new partnership with Legal & General this year. This has included 42 Legal and General volunteers who helped support 50 carers with telephone befriending. This has benefitted the volunteer just as much as the carer.

“Talking to my carer about where he grew up, his perspective on day-to-day situations makes me look at life differently. We should be grateful of what we have and understand everyone has their own “story” to share.”

Rahul Pratap, Claims Relationships Manager at Legal and General and Telephone Befriender



Legal & General Carers First

“I’ve worked with Carers First on a number of different initiatives and have always enjoyed the process. I have found them to be collaborative, open with communication and driven to support both their beneficiaries along with our own colleagues and customers. As care considerations increase in the UK we’re delighted to be able to turn to Carers First to help us prepare for the future.”

Toby Wyithe, CSR Business Partner, Legal & General

£22,050

Legal & General colleagues gifted 1,050 hours from May 2020- May 2021. This is the equivalent value of £22,050

124,000

People reached through Anglian Water partnership



“I’m studying for my degree and wanted to get some volunteer experience. I was unsure about the role at first because I’m not the most confident person and was worried about calling strangers. However, Jenny (Ariel’s Volunteer Coordinator) has encouraged and supported me every step of the way. It has been sobering at times hearing how tough some people’s lives are and has made me appreciate my life more. I would recommend volunteering with Carers First. They are really supportive and it makes you feel like you’re doing good.”

Ariel, 24, is one of our Check-in and Chat volunteers

Supporting staff and volunteers

Carers told us in our annual survey how important it was to them having someone to talk to who they could trust, and who could provide empathy and emotional support. We are proud to consistently receive positive feedback from carers on their experience with our staff and volunteers.

We are committed to developing a vibrant, inclusive and supportive place to work and volunteer. Our managers are key to bringing this to life and 30 Carers First managers participated in a bespoke Management Programme covering a range of tools, techniques and resources such as understanding themselves as a manager, project planning and creating high performing teams.

292 Trustees, staff and volunteers completed 78 different courses between them ranging from mandatory courses such as safeguarding to skill enhancement courses like group facilitation and appraisals.

It was vital to look after our teams’ wellbeing. We held daily and weekly wellbeing check ins as well as offering activities including yoga, mindfulness and dance.

This year, more volunteers have joined us, in more roles, to enrich the support we can offer. Because of your support, we have been able to scale up vital volunteer services in response to the pandemic. This has included significantly increasing the number of carers supported by phone. Volunteers have helped us launch new peer support groups including cooking, art, poetry, photography and Moving On groups for former carers.

61%

Increase in volunteers

800%

Increase in carers supported
by volunteers

1,000

Carers supported by
volunteers



Thank you

A massive thank you to all our supporters, partners and volunteers who have helped make sure carers have been supported in such a challenging year. Below are some of the Councils and organisations who have made a substantial contribution:

- Active Lincolnshire
- Anglian Water Positive Difference Fund
- BBC Children in Need
- Carers Trust
- Essex County Council
- Hackney Borough Council
- Legal & General
- Lincolnshire County Council
- Managed Care Network (Lincs)
- Masonic Charitable Foundation
- Medway Council
- Mercers Company
- NHS Kent & Medway CCG
- Newham Borough Council
- Postcode Neighbourhood Trust
- T.E.D funded by the National Lottery
- Uttlesford District Council
- Waltham Forest Borough Council
- William Frederick Haines Foundation

Ways to support

1	2
Take part in an event or set yourself a fundraising challenge	Support a project via your Trust or Foundation
3	4
Provide for the future with a gift in your Will	Make a donation – either one-off or regular
5	6
Partner with us via your company	Volunteer with us

Find out more how you can support carers:

Visit carersfirst.org.uk/get-involved Email partners@carersfirst.org.uk

Plans

In April 2021, we launched our new three-year strategy which sets out our ambition to help 250,000 carers by 2024. Alongside our new strategy, we have refreshed our brand to help raise the profile of Carers First and secure more support.

Key developments in the year ahead will include a public facing campaign across our service areas to increase awareness of the support available to carers.

We will develop our service offer, both online and in the community. We launched our new website in September 2021 which provides carers access to a greater range of information, tools and resources aligned to their caring situation. We will build upon and develop new programmes of support including wellbeing/mental health, resilience and maximising income.

We will start to deliver our ambition to quadruple our voluntary income and diversify our funding base. We need you to achieve this. Together, we can achieve something amazing.

The difference we want to see by 2024:

1

Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity

2

Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in their lives

3

Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations

4

Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team

5

Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations

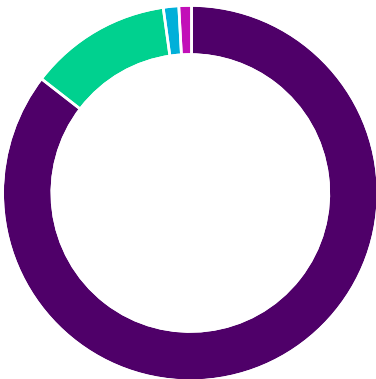


Our funds

Full accounts available on request

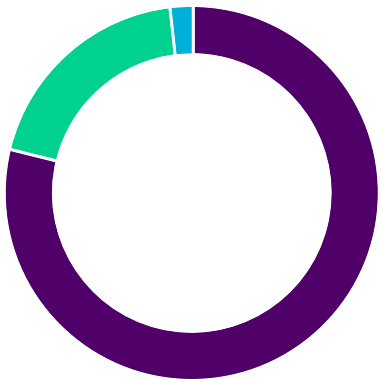
How we raised our funds

Contracts	86%	3,664,997
Grants	12%	525,844
Donations & legacies	1%	57,058
Investments	1%	37,230
Total		4,285,129



How we use our funds

Frontline services to support carers	79%	3,259,395
Support for frontline services and raising funds to support more carers	21%	872,826
Total		4,132,221







carersfirst.org.uk

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*Independent research with 1,150 carers, August 2020.

Getting in touch

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We are registered as a charity in England and Wales (1085430). Carers First is also a Company Limited by Guarantee, registered at Companies House (04144820).

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