



Carers  
First

Our strategy

2024–27

## Introduction

# From our Chief Executive and Chair of Trustees

**Two in three of us could expect to become a carer at some point in our lives; however, when it happens, many of us struggle to access the right help and support at the time we need it.**

**At Carers First, we work directly with carers to provide personalised information and support to make it easier for those caring for someone else to achieve a balance in their lives, so they can live their lives to the fullest.**

Increasing numbers of us are becoming carers earlier in our lives. This means that at Carers First we are working with more carers and employers to help sustain employment. We're also doing more with young carers to help them build the bright futures they deserve.

Questions about the future of social care endure. Whether promised reforms begin to tackle the funding crisis and the growth in demand as society ages is unclear. But what is certain is that carers need us more than ever.

Our new three-year strategy intends to build on the strong foundations we have been putting in place over the last three years so that we can reach more carers early in their caring role.

It reflects the changing face of caring in the UK, as well as the growth in demand.

We know that early engagement with carers is critical, and we must continue to work collaboratively with partners to deliver the reach and impact that carers need and these themes shape our new strategy.

We intend to rise to the challenge and continue to put carers first in everything that we do.

**Alison Taylor**  
Chief Executive



**Samantha Neal**  
Chair of Trustees



**“We intend to rise to the challenge and continue to put carers first in everything that we do.”**



Introduction

# Our strategy

**Co-production and collaboration are at the heart of how we operate. We have developed this strategy in partnership with our people, our partners, our funders and the carers we support.**

This strategy sets out our ambitious plans to support significantly more carers, forge new partnerships and collaborations and deliver innovative approaches to scale our support and impact for carers.

## Our Ambition

To enable carers to thrive in their role and achieve the balance in their lives, they wish to achieve.

## Our Mission

Carers First provides support, for carers, with carers – so they can live their lives to the fullest.



# Our strategy

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## Our Values

### Positive

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We are dedicated to working with carers to make a positive, material difference in their lives. We celebrate diversity and work in an inclusive, positive and supportive way, actively listening and valuing everyone's contribution.

### Collaborative

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We recognise the importance and strength of working in collaboration with local and national organisations to deliver improved support to carers. We also know the importance of collaborating with our Carers First colleagues, sharing knowledge and learning, being curious, respecting differences and working with integrity and transparency.

### Ambitious

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We are ambitious and tenacious in our determination to support more carers in better ways. We will innovate and develop our Programmes of Support so more carers are able to obtain the support they need, at the time they need it, to achieve a balance in their lives and enable them to live their lives to the fullest.

# Penny's Story

**Penny\*, 40, looks after her son Nathan\*, aged 13, who has learning difficulties and autism; relying on Penny for round the clock care.**

## **When Penny needed support, she contacted Carers First.**

"My husband works long, unsociable hours and I'm always supporting my son with his care. I'm often physically exhausted — I might need to get up with Nathan several times in the night as well as caring for him throughout the day. The school holidays are particularly hard."

"I cope with things how any parent would who has a child with autism. We can't go out much and money is always a struggle with only one wage coming in and having high living costs. Talking about our feelings and asking for help is not always an easy thing to

do, but asking for help has made all the difference to us."

"The support from Carers First has been fantastic. Our support worker has helped us with a grant to purchase a laptop, which has been essential for us. It helps us to stay connected with family in Bulgaria, access online services and support, shop online, and allows Nathan to do his homework. The benefits of this are huge."

"Carers First has also assisted us with short breaks for Nathan which have made it possible for us to have some quality time as a couple which we don't often get. The support we have received has made a serious difference to us as a family."

**Like many parents, it took time for Penny to recognise her role as a carer.**



“The support we have received has made a serious difference to us as a family.”



Our Objectives

# How we will deliver our strategy

# 1

**Reach and engage more carers early in their caring role**

[Read more on page 07](#)



# 2

**Develop new innovative models of collaboration, delivery and programmes with the potential to scale our reach and impact**

[Read more on page 09](#)



# 3

**Achieve the highest quality of support possible, so we can maximise the difference made to carers' lives**

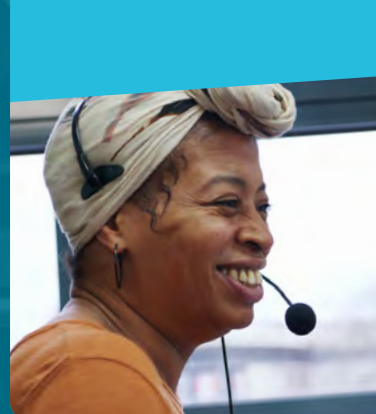
[Read more on page 12](#)



# 4

**Champion talent and diversity**

[Read more on page 14](#)



# 5

**Grow and diversify our income to enable us to achieve more for carers**

[Read more on page 16](#)



1

Reach and engage more carers early in their caring role.

## Carers play a remarkable role in the lives of the people they support and in their local communities.

According to Carers UK, by helping people live independently carers are contributing a staggering £184bn to the UK economy each year<sup>1</sup>, almost matching the annual budget for the NHS. This figure is likely to rise significantly over the next decade as more of us require care.

We know that reaching carers early in their caring journey is critically important to their ability to thrive. Becoming a carer can be incredibly fulfilling and rewarding. It can also be overwhelming, with many carers not recognising themselves as such and as a result missing out on specialist support and resources which can lead to burnout and feelings of isolation, as well as having an impact of physical health and wellbeing.

“The support from Carers First has been a game-changer – it gives me the strength to keep going.”

<sup>1</sup> Petrillo & Bennett, 'Valuing Carers 2021', The Centre for Care, University of Sheffield 2022  
[https://centreforcare.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Valuing\\_Carers\\_WEB2.pdf](https://centreforcare.ac.uk/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Valuing_Carers_WEB2.pdf)



## Our Objectives

# Objective 1: Reach and engage more carers early in their caring role.

## How we'll do it

Working with healthcare professionals, social care providers, employers, voluntary organisations and local communities we will promote our Think Carer approach. We will continue to raise awareness of the work that carers do and the value they contribute to local communities and the economy as a whole.

We will work with partners to increase the number of carers we reach, locating ourselves where carers are so that we can engage and support carers according to their assessed needs. We will continue to build our offer across a range of practical, financial, emotional and rights-based themes. This will include our Programmes of Support which delivered tailored support around specific caring situations.

Building on the success of the "Lighten the Load" and "We Care For You" campaigns, we are committed to raising awareness through similar impactful and interactive initiatives. We plan to continue this approach by launching campaigns led by carers that amplify their voices, helping individuals recognise themselves as carers through shared experiences and stories. We will also encourage influencer engagement and support through dynamic digital communications.

We will actively broaden our carer activities and events, particularly targeting hard-to-reach groups. Through inclusive initiatives, we aim to help carers feel more connected to their communities, while also boosting their well-being, creativity, and resilience.

We will provide culturally sensitive, accessible and inclusive support online, via our helpline and face-to-face in local communities in the East of England, Midlands, London and the South East. We will continue to expand our online offer so that all carers can benefit from our support, regardless of where they live in the UK.

We will also develop our ambassador programme to help us build our reach and inspire others to share their stories.

**“I felt like I was in a box where it’s hard to see out. Now I’ve realised I’m not on my own. It’s good to share and relate to others who understand, which has helped me a lot. There are so many different aspects to Carers First, and it’s amazing all the things they can help you with.”**

Diane, 61, carer

## By 2027 we will:

- Increase our reach by 45%
- Increase the number of carers registered by 40%
- Increase the number of carers receiving personalised tailored support by 35%
- Increase our online community by 40%
- Support more carers earlier in their caring journey – within the first 12 months.
- Ensure the number and diversity of carers supported reflect the profile of their local community.





# 2

**Develop new innovative models of collaboration, delivery and programmes with the potential to scale our reach and impact.**

## Our Objectives

## Objective 2: Develop new innovative models of collaboration, delivery and programmes with the potential to scale our reach and impact.

### How we'll do it

We know that in order to support carers effectively we will need to be agile and responsive to changing circumstances.

We will proactively seek opportunities to work with partners across statutory, voluntary and commercial sectors to further increase our reach and impact.

This will include developing our digital offer, co-designing solutions with carers and stakeholders and pursuing opportunities to scale our programmes to support growing numbers of carers.

We will do all of this with our commitment to sustainability and reaching net zero by 2050 at the fore.



**Tracey Varela is an HR Business Partner at the Ministry of Justice.**

Tasked with undertaking a piece of work with the National Prison Officers Union on supporting carers in the workplace, she was introduced to Carers First.

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We received a fantastic level of support from Carers First helping us to identify areas where we can improve communications, awareness, and support.

They supported us with several local and online events and visited several workplaces, talking with colleagues across HMPPS on how they can access support both via internal and external channels. The work and supporting documents produced in partnership with Carers First have been a great platform for HMPPS to driving forward support for working carers.

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### By 2027 we will:

- Be using data to effectively anticipate emerging carer needs
- Be working with commissioners to develop new solutions to address the issues that carers face
- Have forged strong collaborations and partnerships with statutory, voluntary and commercial organisations to support more carers.
- Have championed digital innovations to improve our support to carers.



# Amy's Story

**The critical link between caring and employment rights cannot be underestimated.**

Amy, 47, primary carer for her husband, Ron.



**Amy is a primary carer for her husband, Ron, 61, who is living with early-onset dementia and peripheral arterial disease.**

Balancing a full-time job while caring for her husband, Amy understands how crucial flexible work options can be. Through communication with her employer and support from Carers First, she learned about her rights as a working carer and how to advocate for the adjustments she needed.

**“The support I’ve received has been incredible... I’ve been able to open up to my employer about my caring role.”**

Amy's experience is a powerful reminder that understanding your rights and accessing appropriate support is vital for managing both work and caring responsibilities without experiencing burnout.

**Amy's experience is a powerful reminder that understanding your rights and accessing appropriate support is vital.**





# 3

Achieve the highest quality of support possible, so we can maximise the difference made to carers' lives.



## Our Objectives

## Objective 3: Achieve the highest quality of support possible, so we can maximise the difference made to carers' lives.

### How we'll do it

Providing high quality support for carers is our core purpose. We take a strengths-based approach to deliver positive outcomes for carers at every stage of their caring journey, promoting carers' choice, control and resilience.

We will continue to place co-production at the centre of our approach, using the experiences and views of carers to inform the support and services that we develop.

We will continue to rigorously evaluate the impact of our support so that we can improve our offer and innovate for the future.

We will share best practice with partners, stakeholders and commissioners, reporting with openness on how different approaches work for different groups of carers.

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To be honest, I wasn't aware that I am a young carer until recently. Once my college came to know about the additional responsibilities I have at home, they understood the situation and made sure I was receiving the support I needed.

”

Abida, Young Carer

### By 2027 we will:

- Increased the number of young and adult carers working with us to co-produce our services and support.
- Developed new innovative programmes of support based on carers situations and needs.
- Have increased the number of young and adult carers experiencing improved outcomes across health, wellbeing, resilience, personal finances and work as a result of our interventions.
- Evidenced and promoted good practice services to funders and key stakeholders to inform future opportunities.

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Carers First listened to me. They took away the pressure.

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Our Objectives

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Champion talent  
and diversity.

“  
Knowing that Carers First is  
there for me has made a world  
of difference. The practical and  
emotional support is invaluable.”



## Our Objectives

**Objective 4: Champion talent and diversity.****How we'll do it**

We know our people are deeply valued by the carers they support. Quite simply, our people are our greatest asset. To deliver for carers, we know we need a highly-motivated, vibrant team of people who feel valued, supported and heard. Having a diverse workforce, which reflects the communities we serve, and an inclusive and supportive culture is critical to our long-term success.

We are committed to recruiting, developing and retaining the very best talent. We want all of our employees and volunteers at Carers First to feel able to be themselves and have the opportunity to grow with us.

We will continue to invest in the skills and development of our team, recognise outstanding contributions and celebrate successes.

We will challenge inequality wherever we see it and model our new organisational values in everything that we do.

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

“Because of my brother's condition, I sometimes find it hard to understand his thinking and mentality, and sometimes I feel I can't handle it. Carers First has really helped me to feel less alone and know I have someone to talk to.”

Moraiah, Young Carer

**By 2027 we will:**

- Be recognised as having a vibrant, diverse, inclusive, supportive and positive culture.
- Have demonstrably embedded our organisational values in everything we do.
- Have invested in developing the talent and skill base of our people and supported them to grow within our organisation.
- Have grown our volunteer team to enrich the support that we offer carers.



5

Grow and diversify our income to enable us to achieve more for carers.

We continue to operate in an uncertain external environment, but what is certain is how much carers need us in order to be able to thrive in their role.

We have ambitious income growth plans to help us reach and support more carers than ever, both now and in the future.

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You have given me lots of support to receive the benefits I had a right too, but I am really grateful for the listening ear, the empathy, the time and the knowledge that is behind all the help that is given.

”



## Our Objectives

## Objective 5: Grow and diversify our income to enable us to achieve more for carers.

### How we'll do it

At the heart of our strategy is our work to diversify and increase our funding base. We have developed a three-year income growth plan to support the delivery of our strategy. We want to ensure long-term financial sustainability by developing income from trusts and foundations, community fundraising, major donors, legacies and corporate partnerships, alongside statutory funding.

We will continue to ensure the strong performance of our contracts with local authorities, integrated care boards and other partners, while actively exploring and pursuing additional opportunities both with our existing partners and in areas where carers are lacking support.

We will build capacity within the organisation to help us work with our partners to further develop our offer and to win new business and bring our offer to more communities across the UK.



**Carers  
First**

**Join  
us**

Our volunteers provide knowledge, skills and experience which helps our organisation grow. We

### By 2027 we will:

- Have further embedded our reputation for strong contract delivery, hitting all KPIs.
- Have increased and diversified the funding base of the charity.
- Secured additional funding to develop our support for carers both within current regions and beyond.
- Have grown our individual supporter base by 50%.

# Michelle's Story

**Michelle, 17, cares for her mother with epilepsy, which often leaves her feeling isolated and impacts her self-esteem as she misses out on activities with her peers.**

**Being a young carer can greatly affect a young person's health and self-confidence. Michelle, 17, cares for her mother with epilepsy, which often leaves her feeling isolated and impacts her self-esteem as she misses out on activities with her peers.**

Michelle first recognised her role as a young carer after a conversation with a social worker. "The social worker explained to me that I was a young carer, before that I didn't realise that what I was doing was caring."

Despite her mum receiving daytime support, Michelle worries about her mum's well-being and helps with household tasks after school, which limits her teenage experiences. "Even though my mum has support during the day I still spend a lot of time worrying about her when I'm not there."

When I get home from school I help with housework and making dinner if mum isn't up to it. I feel like I sometimes miss out on things that other teenagers get to do because of my caring role for mum."

Referred to Carers First for support, Michelle has joined our young carer activities, boosting her confidence and career aspirations. Meeting others has made her feel less alone. She shares, "My confidence has massively improved. I feel more comfortable talking to new people and sharing my experiences."

With our help, she also received a £300 grant for a laptop, aiding her GCSE studies. Michelle encourages others: "Be positive, remember you're not alone, and get involved with Carers First. They've helped me build my confidence, and they can help you too."



**“My confidence has massively improved. I feel more comfortable talking to new people and sharing my experiences.”**



# Thank you

Thank you to all of our local authority and health sector partners, including:



We would like to thank all our supporters and funders who have helped to make a vital difference in carers' lives, including:



# Five ways you can help us.

**Together we can enable carers to thrive. Here's how you can help make a life-changing difference:**



“  
We intend to rise to the challenge and continue to put carers first in everything that we do.”

## 1 Partner with us

We want to work with like-minded individuals and organisations. If you share our passion and commitment to support carers, we would love to work with you.

## 2 Make a donation or fundraise for us

Whether you want to make a one-off donation, give on a regular basis or undertake a fundraising challenge your support is vital in helping us support more carers.

## 3 Spread the word

We rely on word of mouth and people (and partners) talking about Carers First and the great support that we provide. The more we talk about carers, the greater chance we have of reaching those who are hidden.

## 4 Share your story

By talking about your experience as a carer, you can help us tell powerful stories that raise awareness of the needs of carers, help more people identify themselves as carers and help carers to feel less isolated

## 5 Volunteer

Volunteers are vitally important to enrich our work with carers. If you have a few hours to give a week, or would like to support specific short-term projects, we would love to hear from you.



# Carers First

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