

Carers Leeds Strategy (1 April 2026 – 31 March 2031)

INTRODUCTION

This strategy document sets out the principles and priorities which form our strategic ambitions for the next 5 years. It has been informed by Carers Leeds Board, staff, volunteers and of course, carers.

We have set the strategy period to mirror our core contract from Leeds City Council. We will review the strategy each year and develop and refine it based on carers needs, the needs of our organisation and the external context.

Our annual operational plan will align to the strategy, as will the annual objectives of the Carers Leeds staff team.

OVERALL OBJECTIVES

Carers are people who look after a relative or friend who otherwise couldn't manage without their help. Carers Leeds works with unpaid adult and parent carers across the city. We want to help carers:

- access the resources they need to carry out their caring role
- mitigate the negative impact of caring
- enjoy life beyond their caring role
- have good health and wellbeing, social connections and financial security

STRATEGY PRINCIPLES

Our strategy is underpinned by a set of strategic principles. Our overarching principle is:

- **To identify and create positive change for more, and more diverse, carers**

We want the people we reach to truly reflect the diverse carer population in our city. We have started on this journey, but there is much more to do particularly when it comes to male, younger and LGBTQ+ carers and those from ethnically diverse communities.

Our other strategic principles are:

- To **start with carers strengths and skills**, working with carers to improve their own lives
- To **identify carers earlier** and provide timely support to **prevent crisis**
- To provide **high quality and impactful information, guidance and support**
- To **work in partnership with others** to deliver our service and to influence them to act
- To be a **financially resilient organisation** with a **diverse income**

OUR SERVICE

By the end of the five-year strategy period, we want to reach 15k carers each year with information, guidance and support (around 1 in 4 carers in Leeds). We currently reach around 10k carers with our service.

We will implement changes to our service model; and grow and develop our service to ensure we reach more, and more diverse carers with the right support, at the right time and in the right place. We will be intentional as we grow our reach, so that we maintain our focus on quality, impact and financial sustainability.

We will strive to ensure that our service is accessible for any carer, wherever they live in the city and whatever their needs and preferences are.

- **Strengthened Support Line and deliver a more generalist service model**

We will embed a generalist Carer Support Worker (CSW) model, with all CSWs covering our Support Line, 1:1 case work and universal support, rather than organising our information, guidance and support by teams focused on the condition of the cared for person or by type of support. We will provide an enhanced learning and development offer to CSWs, to support the change.

We will evolve and grow our service model to meet the needs of carers. This includes our universal support: carer support groups, information and learning programme, training and welfare benefits. It includes the ways carers can contact and engage with us, alongside our opening times. For example, we will consider whether we should provide more out of hours support.

- **Enhance and integrate our digital offer**

We will take a bold, responsive approach to digital—embracing new tools and ways of working that advance our mission. Everything we do will put people first, with accessibility and inclusion at the heart of our digital offer.

We want carers who access our virtual front door (website, webchat, social media) to have parity of service with those who access Carers Leeds via the telephone or in-person, and experience the same high quality and impactful information, guidance and support. We have built the foundations of this with our website, webchat and virtual appointments. We will grow and develop this with more interactive resources for carers on our website and social media, such as how to guides, prompts, videos and learning.

Over the life of our strategy, we will integrate our digital offer into our wider service and train and support all staff to be confident with digital. Our approach to building digital capabilities and digital integration will consider carers, workforce and systems.

- **More community-based support**

Being more present in communities across Leeds, makes Carers Leeds more visible and helps us identify and engage underrepresented communities. It enables greater accessibility and choice for carers in how and where they access support.

Over this strategy period, we will bring more support closer to where carers live by increasing our presence in community venues, building on the learning from our Reginald Centre pilot. We will develop a plan to scale and spread our community-based support offer, including expanding the geographical spread and number of carers' support groups across the city, ensuring we are intentional about how and why we grow. Our approach will go beyond simply booking rooms in community spaces; we will work in partnership with local organisations, and transformation projects to become integrated and well known within local communities.

- **Financial wellbeing**

You are more likely to experience poverty if you are a carer, than if you are someone who doesn't provide care. During the life of our previous strategy, we strengthened our work to support the financial wellbeing of carers, including securing funding for a dedicated Welfare Benefits Worker and signing up to [Money Guiders](#) to train and support staff to give financial guidance. During this strategy

period, we will bring dedicated welfare benefits support into our core offer and train more CSWs to deliver this part of our service. We will put all CSWs through the Money Guiders foundation training.

We know that work can be a route out of poverty and can have a positive impact on carer identity and wellbeing. We also know that carers face barriers to entering and remaining in the labour market. In partnership with others, we will seek funding to develop a tailored employment support offer for carers. This will include pre-employment support (such as digital skills and goal setting) and partnership working with others to ensure that carers get employment support which meets their specific needs.

- **Mental health support for carers**

Providing emotional support to carers, is a core part of our service. We know that caring can have a negative impact on a carer's mental health and in the most challenging circumstances, can mean that carers are at risk of suicide.

Over the strategy period we will design and implement an enhanced mental health support offer for carers in response to increasing demand for mental health support across our service. This will be informed by carer needs, our existing practice and wider evidence. We will continue to develop our carer specific suicide-prevention work, including training for health and care professionals. We will design and seek funding for a tailored counselling offer for carers.

INFLUENCING OTHERS

We will continue to raise awareness of carers and the support available to them, ensuring professionals and key organisations across the city understand why carers matter and how, together, we can improve their lives. Through clear key messages, ongoing communications and strong partnership working, we will promote action that leads to meaningful change for carers in Leeds.

Partnerships are central to our approach. The Leeds Young Carers Support Service are a key partner, to ensure that carers of all ages are identified and supported. Our other priority stakeholders are:

- Health (primary, community and secondary)
- Adult social care
- Education and children and families' services
- Employers and businesses

We will work at every level – frontline, operational and strategic – to ensure carers are identified early, offered information and support, and referred to Carers Leeds where appropriate. We will be bolder in speaking truth to power, while working collaboratively with local partners to deliver change. Carer voice will be at the heart of our influencing work.

Beyond Leeds, we will work with national partners including Carers Trust, Carers UK and as part of the Carer Poverty Coalition to influence change on wider issues affecting carers.

SUPPORTING OUR SERVICE MODEL AND INFLUENCING WORK

- **Equity, diversity and inclusion**

We will continue our journey to embed equity, diversity and inclusion across our organisation as both a service provider and employer. EDI will be a core consideration within our charity governance, helping to ensure accountability and that EDI is at the heart of our organisation.

As a service provider, we will use data, insight and engagement to understand who we are — and are not — reaching and take action to remove barriers. We will adapt our communications, service model and partnerships to ensure carers from all communities in Leeds can access support equitably.

As an employer, we will continue build and sustain a culturally competent workforce that reflects and understands the diversity of carers in Leeds. We will foster a workplace culture that is inclusive, welcoming and fair, where difference is valued and everyone has equitable opportunity to thrive and contribute.

- **Being data driven**

Data will be central to delivering our strategy. We will collect, analyse and use data and insight to drive decisions, improve our service delivery and influencing work, and maximise our impact. We will use data to guide growth and innovation, ensuring all new developments are evidence-based and aligned to identified need.

We will strengthen the quality and accessibility of our monitoring data by streamlining Charitylog systems and implementing a live data dashboard. This will ensure we are better able to evidence our reach – who we engage, support and where gaps remain.

We will review and develop our evaluation tools and processes, to ensure we gather evidence of carer satisfaction with our service (our target is 4.5 out of 5) and improved outcomes for carers accessing our service.

- **Carer voice**

Carer voice will be central to shaping our services, priorities and influencing work. Our ambition is that carers lived experience directly informs decision-making at every level of the organisation. We will invest time and resource across the organisation, to strengthen and grow carer voice activity and impact over the life of the strategy. This will include:

- Establishing and sustaining engagement mechanisms to ensure ongoing, structured dialogue with carers.
- Continuing to publish our annual State of Unpaid Caring report and using what we hear to shape our service and inform influencing priorities each year.
- Embedding carer voice in governance and strategy, with carers represented in key decision-making spaces and involved in service design and review.
- Amplifying carers' stories to influence change, sharing lived experience evidence in influencing work, and evidencing annually where carer insight has contributed to change.

- **Income diversification**

By the end of the strategy period, we will have strengthened our ability to generate diverse and sustainable income streams, including unrestricted income. This will enable us not only to sustain our core services, but to innovate and grow in response to carers' needs.

We will build on our success in raising funds from trusts and foundations. We will generate at least £150,000 over the strategy period from corporate partnerships, community fundraising and individual giving, delivering a new plan for this area of fundraising.

We will embed fundraising across Carers Leeds, make fundraising everyone's business, whatever their role. We will also explore the best routes to securing additional resource for this area of work, starting with external consultants to increase our capacity and capability to generate funds.

We will invest new income strategically, sustaining and growing priority initiatives such as The Caring Kind Project and expanding our support for carer mental health and financial wellbeing.

- **Our people**

Our people are central to delivering our strategic ambitions. We will continue to invest in building a diverse, engaged and skilled workforce that delivers a high-quality and impactful service, and influences others to act. We are a values-driven organisation and will always look for ways to ensure our colleagues feel included, supported, empowered and proud to work at Carers Leeds.

We will continue to support workforce wellbeing, in a meaningful way through pay, terms and conditions and line management and peer support. We will conduct a staff wellbeing survey each year and use the findings to improve our support for wellbeing at work. We will invest in learning and development, ensuring that 100% of staff have annual reviews and tailored learning opportunities.

We will practice what we preach and maintain our Carers UK, Carer Confident Level 3 (Ambassador) Award for best practice in supporting working carers. We will regularly benchmark ourselves against organisations in the voluntary and public sector, to ensure that we remain an employer of choice.

We will strengthen our leadership capability by providing all managers with leadership development and supporting them to grow and develop their teams effectively.

We will review and refresh our organisational values with staff involvement, reporting annually on how our values and behaviours are being lived across the organisation.