



ANNUAL REPORT 2021

1 APRIL 2020 TO 31 MARCH 2021



A Network Partner of
**CARERS
TRUST**

MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR OF TRUSTEES

What a strange year for us all!

Battling with the Covid situation whether as a carer, cared for, volunteer or paid worker has occupied us virtually all of the year.

We have seen an increase in the number of referrals, an increase in registrations and have been blessed with a strong staff team that really appreciate each other's skills in providing a service to carers.

We have a new website that we feel is more modern, easier to navigate and accessible for both carers and professionals. Late in 2020 we also circulated a short survey to carers asking about their experiences over the year and what kind of support they would like to see offered. This information will be instrumental in helping us plan for future projects and services. The move to online support groups and workshops has been a learning curve for both the staff team and carers, and although it helps keep us connected while restrictions are in place, I know that the staff team and the volunteers are keen to get back out into the community for some face to face meetings.

The Trustee Board has been extremely focussed on a tight structure and service delivery plan to ensure that value is given for every penny that we receive. Our funding from the local authority and the clinical commissioning group has continued, for which we are very grateful given the restrictions in many of their internal functions.

Matfen Hall very generously continued to support us as their Charity of the Year despite a very difficult time for the hospitality industry, and we have received many donations of various sizes from individuals, parish councils and grant funders – too numerous to mention, but we are grateful to them all.

Despite changes to the role, we have had ongoing support from the Carer's Lead at Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, and I would like to thank the outgoing Carer's Lead, Debra Dodds for all her support and welcome the new Carer's Lead, Lynn Elliott into the role. Their advice and guidance and championing of carers issues within statutory services is invaluable.

I would also like to thank my Trustee Board colleagues for ensuring strong and effective governance and leadership to the organisation over the past year.

These strange times have given us a tremendous opportunity to increase public awareness of the role of unpaid carers. Let us continue to use every opportunity we can to create awareness and provide support.

Anne Arter

Chair of Trustees

2020 - 2021 UPDATE

At the end of March 2021 there are 3278 Carers registered on Charitylog, 103 are young carers, 98 are former carers and 279 are parent carers. 1143 new carers registered in the year. In 2020/2021 we supported 2057 people and undertook 8030 actions on their behalf. This is a 63% increase in the number of carers supported and a 40% increase on actions completed compared to last year.

3738
phone calls

877
emails

817
online
contacts



COVID-19 UPDATE

During the first part of 2020 we were quickly adapting to lockdown, working remotely and trying to plan the best way to continue supporting carers during this unprecedented time. One of our first actions was to produce a new Carers Card to help carers during the first lockdown, the card is something that they can carry to prove their caring status, this was especially useful when making extra essential journeys, or accompanying the person they care for to appointments / shop etc.

We were able to move all of our processes to an online format, ensuring no gaps in service to carers, our phones were moved to an app based system and all paper based processes were digitised.

We produced information for professionals to ensure they knew to still refer and to confirm our offer to the carers of the county.

Next, we moved all of our face to face groups and workshops to Zoom, gradually adding more throughout the year. Initially take up was slow, everyone hoped the lockdown would be short lived and we would be back out in the community by the summer. As the year went by our online services increased in popularity and we now hope to continue some online groups to complement our face to face work when we are able to get back out there.

As news about the vaccine arrived, many new carers started to identify themselves and when guidance was announced that carers would be included in group 6 for the vaccination programme, we saw more new carers than we ever have before. We registered a record number of new carers in the later part of the financial year, with more registrations in Jan – Mar than we would normally process in a full year. We worked alongside the CCG to support the GP practices in identifying carers, developing a referral process in which carers would come to Carers Northumberland and we would pass their details to GP's.



Emergency Card

There have been 192 new Carers Emergency card applications which have been processed and forwarded to the British Red Cross.

Carer Support Fund

We have processed 153 applications for carer support fund and awarded £15,410. Carers have still managed to spend their awards to support them to take a break from caring despite some of the usual things (spa treatments, personal care, short breaks, concerts) being less accessible throughout the year due to changing restrictions. Some have managed to get time away for a break, but others have spent their awards on things for the garden and home which helps them to take time for themselves.

Information and Advice

The Information Service has provided support to carers by telephone, social media, email and video chat throughout the year. They provide information and advice on a wide range of issues such as carers rights, accessing assessments, welfare rights, legal issues, housing, social care and local services. The Information Team are responsible for registering carers and also work alongside our other services and volunteers to deliver support groups, training and events. The Information Team pull all the relevant information for carers together to produce Caring Matters our regular newsletter which is published bi-monthly.

"I did not know I was able to get any help, just one phone call and I was told they could help and give me support. I'm so very pleased I made that call. Staff were pleasant and could not do enough for me. Not sure you could improve anything, to me you were perfect." - Carer



GROUPS & EVENTS

Carers Week 2020

For Carers Week we held a number of online activities as our usual event was unable to go ahead due to Covid-19. We asked the public to take a photo of themselves using the #ICare, here are the team's photos:



During Carers week we also held a photography competition where carers could submit their photos of pets and gardens, we had lots of submissions and the winning photographers received a voucher.

We also held an online quiz and carer workshops during the week.



Carers Rights Day 2020

The information team produced a series of videos called "Ask us anything" that were published to our social media. Topics included, carers assessments, young carers, Lasting power of attorney and information about Carers Northumberland

For Carers Rights Day we launched a pilot of a new project, the Advance Planning Service. This was designed in response to a number of carers reporting that the costs associated with producing a lasting power of attorney were prohibitive and they didn't feel well enough informed about the process. The information team designed a new project to support carers and the people they look after to make a lasting power of attorney, an advance decision to refuse treatment and an advance statement, while also providing advice and information to ensure they were able to make informed choices. The project was a great success and has now been added to our core delivery.

"Can I just say that Lisa from Carers made this whole process simple. She went through the background to the LPAs and to each of the forms. We went through both forms together and she completed them, returned them to me for the signatures and then I posted them off. Brilliant service. Everyone needs these to be set up. Thank you." - Carer



CN Elves

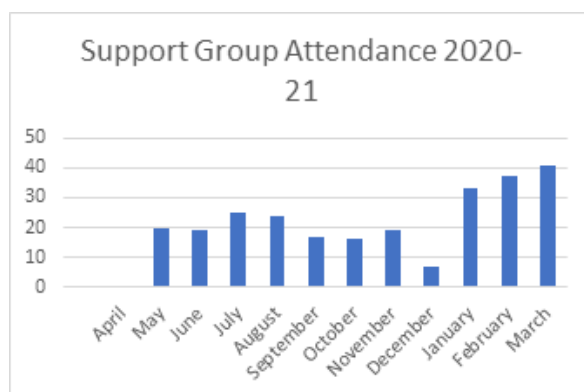
At Christmas time we usually arrange festive lunches around the county for carers to attend, this year we decided to spread cheer by becoming the CN Elves, delivering gift bags to carers across the county. We distributed 100 gift bags.

"My toes are now cosy & my cheeks are now rosy,
hot chocolate & biscuit was just the right ticket, to give me a
hug from my mug- The pennies can't be spent so onto my tree
they went, along with the cracker & bauble- The satsuma is delightful
and could sit on my trifle looking festive and really very sweet, the pen will be
handy, shaped like sugar candy will hang on the wall not getting lost at all. Well I think that's the lot, hope
non been forgot so MERRY CHRISTMAS to you all and THANK YTOU so much for always keeping in touch and BEST
WISHES for 2021." - Carer feedback after receiving a gift bag



Groups

There were 258 attendances at our peer support groups and other online events (craft activity sessions) throughout the year. The transition to online groups was slow to begin with and attendance fairly low but this has increased over the last few months of the year.



RETURN TO WORK CARERS PROJECT



The Carers into Work Project which is in partnership with Newcastle Carers and North Tyneside Carers Centre and funded by the North of Tyne Combined Authority has been in place for a full year after starting off in the midst of the first national lockdown. The initial project was work with the wider North of Tyne project delivery team and local employers to support carers who want to return to work into various different opportunities depending on their individual circumstances. The ongoing issues related to the coronavirus pandemic has meant that engagement in the project across all three local authorities has been low, particularly in Northumberland where there are significantly less opportunities to engage with larger employers, an older population and a large rural geographical area. In response to the changing priorities for carers throughout the pandemic, the North of Tyne Combined Authority, in partnership with the three carers organisations have applied to change some of the parameters of the project. These changes were approved by the North of Tyne Investment Panel in March 2021. The project will still aim to support unpaid carers into employment, education or training but will now also include carers who are aged 16 to 17 years (and all carers 18 years and over) who are:

- Not in work and wish to progress into employment, training or education
- In work and are looking for a change of employment which better meets their employment and caring needs
- In work and wish to maintain their current employment but need support to implement strategies to balance their work and caring responsibilities.

The three Carers into Work Advisors have put together a package of online training via Teams which gives carers the opportunity to take part in a range of workshops including application forms, CV writing, interview techniques and confidence building. There is also a session available to carers to discuss and explore the viability of assistive technology to support them to return to work and be reassured that the person the care for is safe.

The Carers into Work Advisor for Carers Northumberland decided to move on from the role at the end of March 2021 and we are in the process of recruiting for the post. It is hoped that the new member of staff can really push the project forward, especially now that the criteria and parameters have changed to include support for a larger demographic of carers.

"They have given me so much advice with everything to my CV, to applying for jobs and giving me brilliant tips and advice as well as being there for emotional support."

- Anonymous Carer

NORTH OF TYNE



COMBINED AUTHORITY





The Young Carers service was commissioned in August 2020 by Northumberland County Council's Children's Services.

The service is the first of its kind in Northumberland to support Young Carers directly. The development of the project and the identification of young carers is initially a year pilot.

The service supports young carers up to the age of 18, all young carers are initially referred via Northumberland County Council's Early Help Service, the young carer or their referrer complete a wellbeing assessment which gives an initial picture of the young carer's life.

Working in partnership with the Early Help Team and Northumberland Adolescent Services has enabled us to jointly deliver Young Carer Awareness Training to staff both within Children's and Adult Social Care and establish a Young Carers Steering group, with professionals from mental health, education, social care and the voluntary sector, the group focuses on issues such as assessment, identification of young carers in school and other issues relating to impact upon young carers.

Throughout the first 6 months lots of new ways to support young carers have been introduced but Covid 19 has made developing certain aspects of the service difficult. However, we have been able to support young carers with individual support in school, helping them with emotional support, building resilience and establishing safe circles of support as well as introducing coping strategies, like relaxation techniques as coping toolboxes or as one young person renamed it her 'Happy box'

As a result of restrictions during the Covid 19 pandemic young carers told us they found it difficult to get into supermarkets without challenge and would like some way of identifying themselves. We introduced ID cards to provide proof of their young carer role and these also help young carers to tell professionals about their caring role, sometimes showing the card can be easier than explaining.

We send a regular newsletter filled with information, activities, and fun facts, and even a Maltesers bunny made its way into our Easter newsletter. At Christmas, 25 Young Carers, accessed a gift bag, packed with festive gifts, treats and activities.

In partnership with Northumberland County Council and Active Northumberland, young carers are able to access free passes to use their local Leisure Centre, the pass enables young carers to take a break from their caring role and enjoy a healthy activity.

"I just got my Active Northumberland pass last week, and I have already been swimming 4 times, it's been great to take a break" - YC aged 14

We are able to offer young carers access to a grant to enable them to take a break, since the start of the project, 15 young people have been able to access £1524.00 in grants. These grants help young carers take a break from caring and have been used for days out, sports equipment and hobbies like gaming and horse riding.

'I am excited to go horse riding with the money I received from the young carers support fund' — YC aged 9





Looking to the future we hope to continue to support young carers across Northumberland and receive continuation funding from Northumberland County Council. With the support of the Free Masons we are able to recruit an Activities working and during summer 2021 we will deliver a program of fun activities.

'This program has given me support and a chance to talk about how I feel with people that understand, how I am feeling' —YC aged 14

"Young carers Northumberland have supported me by getting a grant for driving lessons and access to a gym membership. It has been nice to feel and know that I am being listened to and supported as a young carer as I have been forgotten for so many years and my voice is now being heard. It is nice to talk to somebody who has knowledge of what I am going through. If anyone is in my situation I would highly recommend getting in touch and support through this service." - Young Carer

Carer Story

A seven year old young carer was referred in by the Early Help team, she helps to look after her brother who has a diagnosis of Autistic Spectrum Disorder (ASD). The young carer was presenting as anxious and frustrated, she was often confused and upset by her sibling's behaviour and did not understand how to process those feelings. Our Young Carers Worker met with the Young carer one-one in her school.

The appointments were initially every few weeks, during the sessions, the worker introduced relaxation activities such as 'Sleepy Starfish' and the breathing square, introducing ways to relax and help deal with her feelings. We helped her to build her emotional resilience and create safe networks of people to talk to through activities. She was shown the young Sib's website, so she could understand Autism and why her brother acted in certain ways and was given some stories to help to understand Autism.



Initially the young carer was shy and quiet, but soon began to open up and explore her feelings further.

The young carer created her own coping toolbox or 'Happy Box' this helped to give her a coping tool to take some time out if needed.

The young carer told us that the activities and support really helped, she is feeling less stressed and has now returned to school. Carer Northumberland are providing ongoing support to this young carer.

TRAINING

Carers Northumberland provide training workshops for carers as well as carer awareness and identification training for health and social care professionals.

Training for health and social care professionals has been delivered remotely using Teams since May 21. Training workshops for carers have also moved to remote access via Zoom.

Carers Northumberland were successful with a joint bid with Newcastle and North Tyneside Carers Centre's to purchase Carers UK's Digital Resource for Carers (DRC) online learning platform – this went live in June 2020, and although take up hasn't been as much as anticipated it is a useful additional resource.

The take up of training by professionals has been sporadic throughout the year and sessions have been cancelled at short notice due to changing priorities in relation to both Covid-19 and the vaccination programme.

Work with GP's has been particularly difficult to maintain throughout the year as the demands on GP's and their staff has been immense. Despite this, the work that we have done in the past with GP's has meant that we were able to respond effectively to the news that carers were going to be included in one of the priority groups for the vaccination and liaise with practices across the county to ensure that carers were able to be identified via their local surgery.



VOLUNTEERS

Opportunities for volunteering has been reduced this year due to the pandemic and groups being moved online. However, some of our regular support group facilitators have continued in that role whilst services where moved online. Trustees have continued in their roles, providing much needed support to the Chief Executive and ensuring that the organisation meets its aims, objectives and obligations.

116
trustee hours

60
support group
hours

176
volunteer
hours

FEEDBACK

We received 60 responses to our feedback questionnaire over the year, with overwhelmingly positive responses. This was also supported by our annual survey which was completed by 386 carers.



This chart shows responses to questions where carers are asked to rate out of 5. Responses were positive across the board, with no one scoring 1 – 3 on any question.

In addition to this of the 60 people who returned a questionnaire:

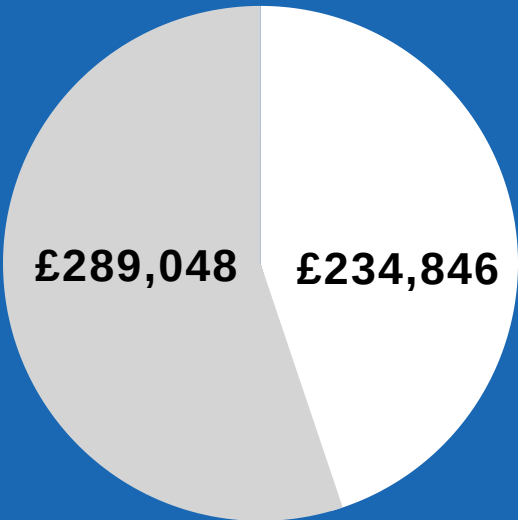
- 35 told us they know more about their rights as a carer now
- 38 told us they feel more confident
- 39 told us they feel more in control
- 42 said they are less lonely / isolated
- 55 said they know where to go for advice and support

"I have always felt more at ease when I have spoken to anyone from Carers Northumberland. I know they will always listen and offer advice. I appreciate they are always just a phone call away if I need to talk"



Statement of Accounts for period ended 31 March 2021

TOTAL INCOMING
RESOURCES



TOTAL EXPENDED
RESOURCES

Reserves - £54,202

GOING FORWARD

With so much of our usual activity not able to happen this year, the main focus for Carers Northumberland going forward is to support carers to feel confident about attending activities, events and groups when restrictions are eased to a level where our community work can restart.

We're keen to start our face to face peer support groups again, and we'll be looking at how this can happen safely. We're undertaking a review of the venues, times and locations of the groups we run across the county so there may be some changes to group schedule. Of course, we're excited to get out and about again, but we'll also be continuing some of our online groups as we realise not everyone is able or wants to attend physical groups.

We couldn't run our groups without the support of our volunteers and we're hoping that we'll be able to offer more opportunities for them to get involved with events and activities in the coming months.

We will be continuing our Carers into Work project and we're just about to welcome our new Carers into Work Advisor onto the staff team. This project gives carers more opportunities to think about their own wellbeing and their aspirations beyond their caring role.

The project offers carers who are thinking about returning to work, training or education and those carers who are currently in work but considering a change to received tailored one to one support to suit their own circumstances. Although a project primarily based around employment and opportunities, carers who are involved will still be able to access support for all their caring concerns, this is one of the benefits of being registered with Carers Northumberland, we can help with all aspects of caring related queries.

The Young Carers project has been extended for a further year, and we're expecting this to go from strength to strength. In addition to the one to one support that's been offered since the start of the project in August 2020, as we come out of lockdown, we'll be organising activities, groups and event for young carers. This is something that the young carers we've been able to support since the start of the project have said they would like – the chance to meet other young carers, share experiences and get a break from their caring responsibilities. Identifying young carers, especially in schools, is also something that we'll be working towards into the next 12 months. Our Young Carer Support Worker, in partnership with other professionals from education, health, youth services and social care has been working on a Young Carers in Schools Toolkit which will be piloted from September 2021 in a selection of schools throughout Northumberland. It is hoped that this will be rolled out to all Northumberland schools if successful.

Our Operational Plan for 2021-22 includes opportunities to develop services and partnerships where there is a clear benefit for carers. We are working on strengthening our links with providers of mental health services to ensure that carers are considered in their plans both as carers of someone with a mental health condition and as individuals themselves. The strain of the past year on unpaid carers cannot be underestimated and easy access to ongoing support is essential.

Debra Blakey

Chief Executive Officer

TO OUR SUPPORTERS, THANK YOU.

Northumberland County Council – Adult Services and Children's Services

Northumberland NHS Clinical Commissioning Group

Northumbria Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust

North of Tyne Combined Authority

Carers Trust

The Triangle Trust 1949 Fund

Matfen Hall Hotel

Hauxley Church

Adapt NE

Community Foundation Tyne and Wear and Northumberland

The Linden Family Fund

The Squires Foundation

**Players of the Northumberland Lottery and all our
individual donors, fundraisers and supporters**

Her Grace the Duchess of Northumberland



Northumbria Healthcare
NHS Foundation Trust



Northumberland
County Council



Northumberland
Clinical Commissioning Group



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