

Isle of Wight

Carers' Strategy



2023 to 2028



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Introduction

The Isle of Wight Carers' Strategy is aimed at everybody with caring responsibilities, across all ages, who provide unpaid care for people living on the Isle of Wight.

The strategy has been co-produced with the Isle of Wight Council, the NHS, our voluntary and community sectors and, most importantly, local people who have caring responsibilities. This was at the heart of its development and demonstrates our commitment to identifying and supporting carers across the whole Island.

Caring is a selfless role, where families and friends look after their loved ones or others that they feel a sense of responsibility for, but it should not be carried out at the expense of the carer's own health and wellbeing. However, we know that many carers do not access the support that they may need as they do not think of themselves as 'carers' or have not been identified by statutory organisations as such (known as 'hidden carers').

The Isle of Wight is a place with a rich and varied history, but with huge potential for future generations and filled with people passionate about our unique Island. This community pride and sense of belonging gives the Island and its people the compassion and resilience which carers demonstrate each day.

We need to do more to identify these quiet heroes in our island's community and ensure they have the help and support to enable them to carry out their caring responsibilities, but also flourish in whichever goals and ambitions they have for themselves.

We need to promote, improve and protect our island's unpaid carers wellbeing for the future.



Forewords

Supporting the Island's unpaid carers

Over 19,000 people were identified as unpaid carers on the Isle of Wight in the 2021 census.

Having a new unpaid carers strategy which is supported by the Isle of Wight Council, The Hampshire and Isle of Wight Care Board and the Isle of Wight NHS Trust recognises the important and vital role of our island's unpaid carers.

This new strategy aims to make a real difference to the lives of our island's unpaid carers. It will have three key priorities:

Priority one: To ensure that our Islands unpaid carers are recognised.

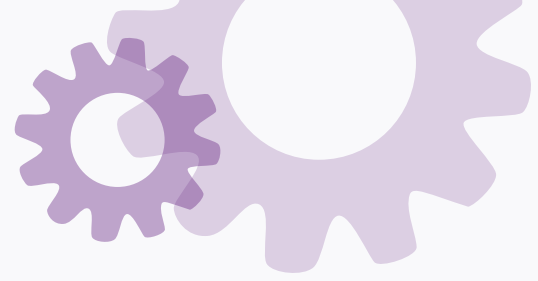
Priority two: Our islands unpaid carers can communicate and have access to health and social care services when needed.

Priority three: Unpaid carers on the Island are supported, so that their health and wellbeing are improved.

We would like to thank all of those who took part in our Island survey, workshops and focus groups. We would like to especially thank Carers IW, Age UK, Healthwatch Isle of Wight and People Matter Isle of Wight for their continued support and involvement in the ongoing work, making the new unpaid carers strategy something which the island can be proud of, improving the lives of both the unpaid carers and indeed their cared for.

Laura Gaudion

Director of Adult Social Care and Housing Needs



Committed to supporting local people

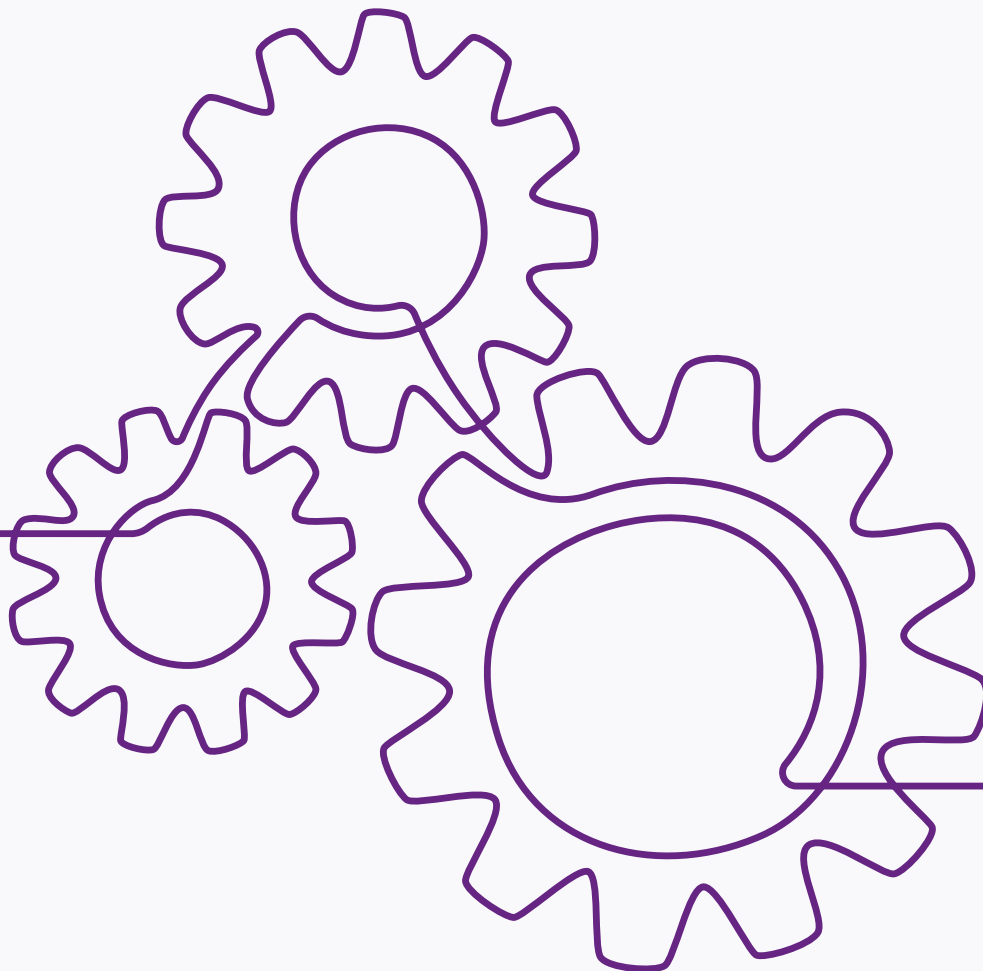
I am delighted to support this strategy which sets out a joint vision for identifying and supporting carers across the Island.

We need to do more to help and support carers who provide such a vital role in our community often at great cost to their own health and wellbeing. I regularly witness how meaningful involvement and inclusion of carers can lead to better care for people accessing our services.

The Isle of Wight NHS Trust is committed to supporting all local people with caring responsibilities and delivering on the priorities identified by them in this strategy.

Juliet Pearce

Director of Nursing Midwifery and AHPs



Definition of a carer

What do we mean by a carer?

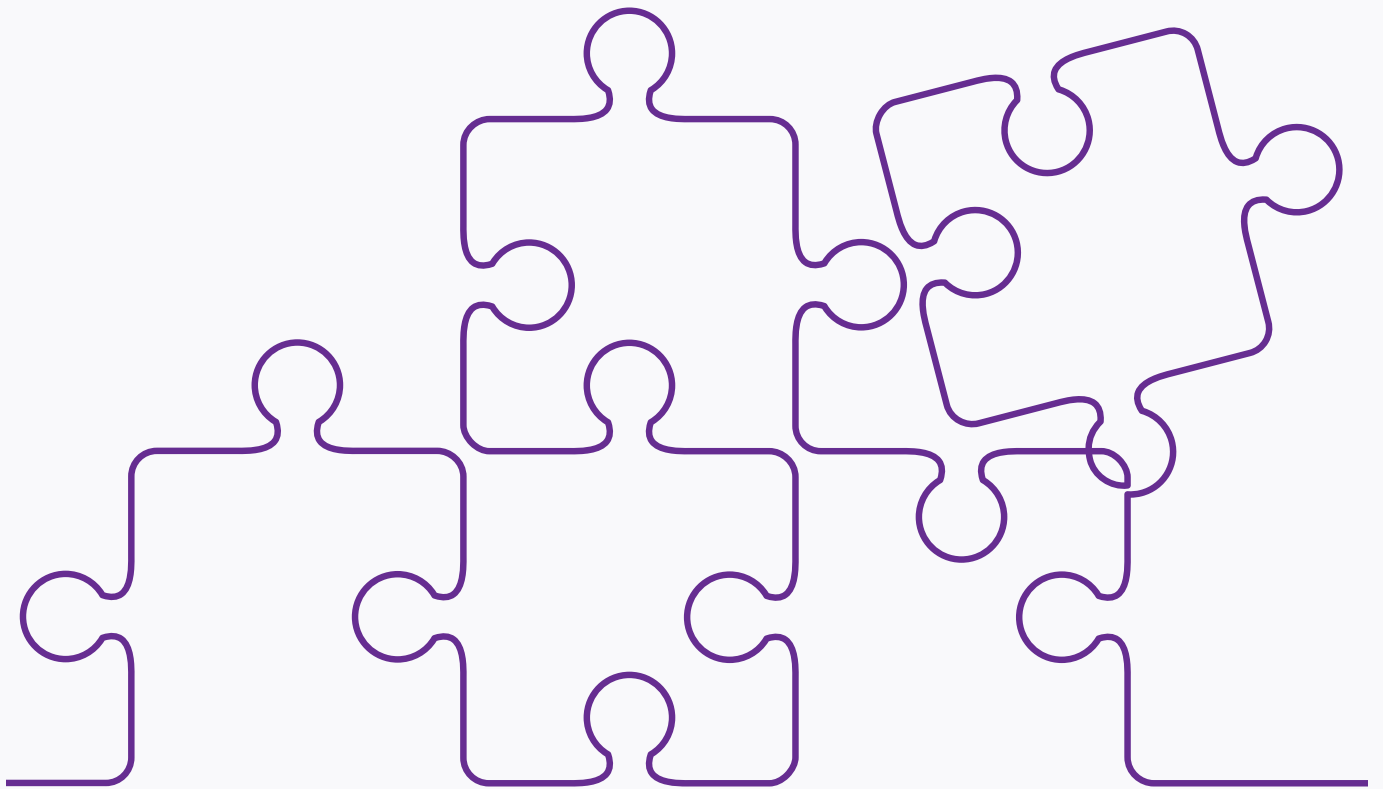
The standard definition of a carer is *"A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction cannot cope without their support. Caring for someone can take up a few hours each week, or a carer may be caring for 24 hours a day, seven days a week."*

However, we know that it can sometimes be difficult for carers to view themselves as carers, when they are fulfilling that role through, friendship, love, compassion, and loyalty. They understand the person they care for better than anybody else.

Carers understand their physical and emotional needs, their interests, what they enjoy, and what causes them anxiety. This level of insight and understanding is something which statutory services could never replicate, and which emphasises what an incredible role they all play.

Unpaid carers are holding families together, keeping individuals safe and enabling them to participate within the community, while at the same time making an enormous contribution to society.





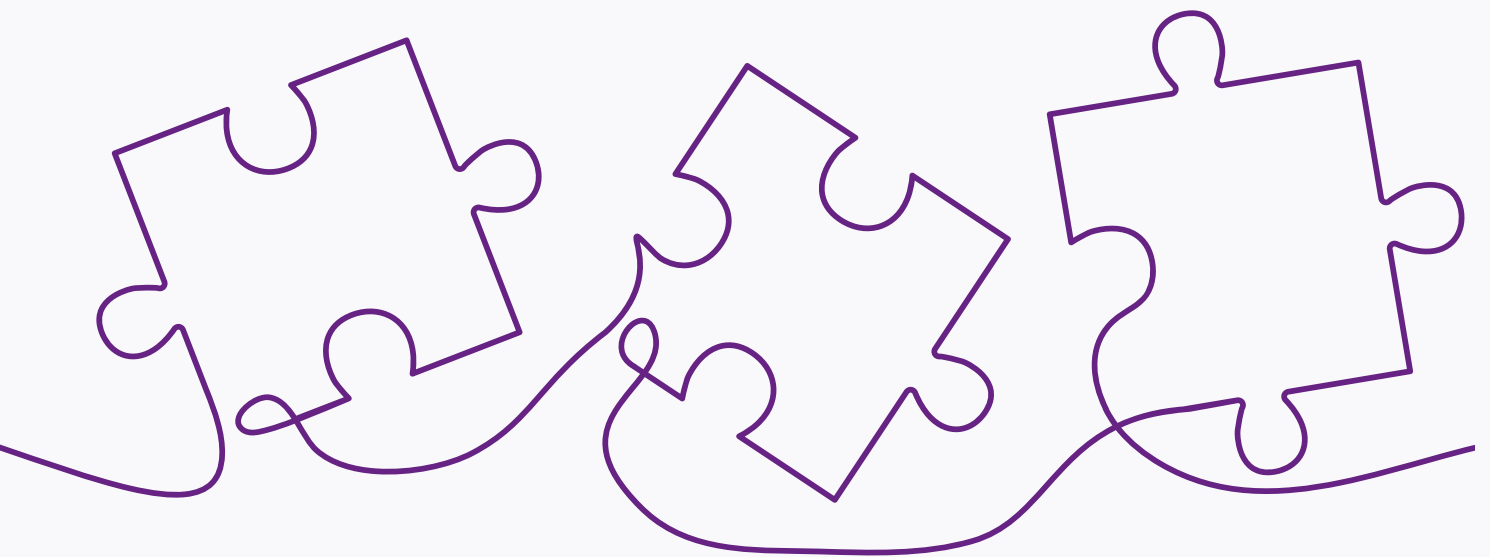
The national picture

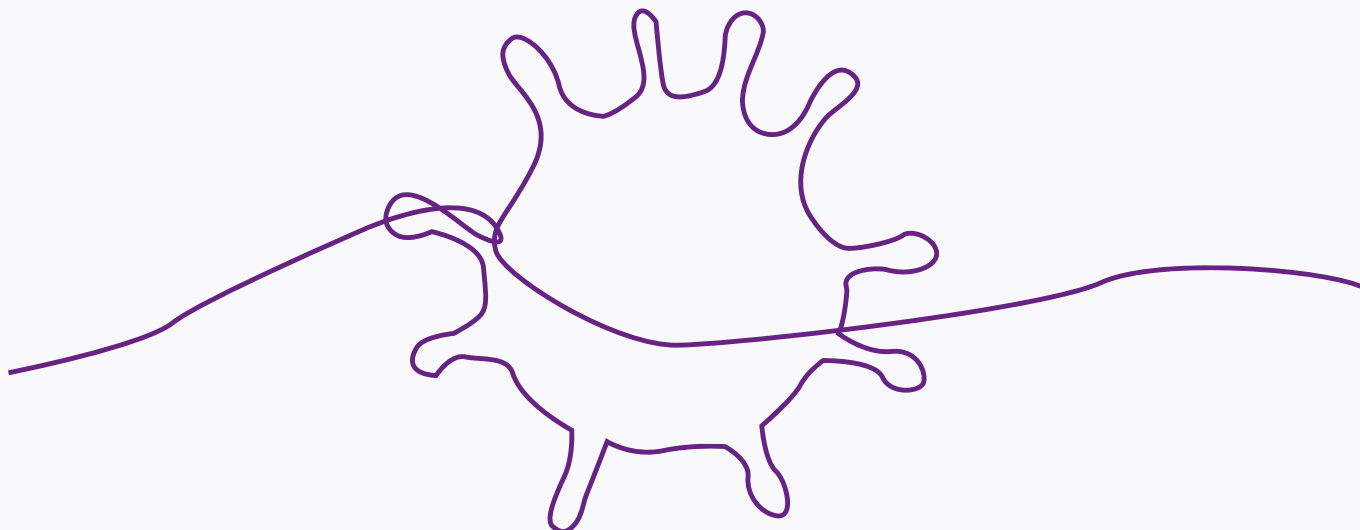
- Support provided by carers is valued at around £132 billion a year before the pandemic and during 2020 over £193 billion. (Nuffield Trust Report, October 2022)
- It is estimated that the number of people aged 65 years or over who are caring has grown to over two million - a 43 per cent increase from 2011 to 2019.
- Disabilities amongst working age adults and the numbers of older people in the UK who requiring help with personal care are increasing.
- People are living longer due to better access to medical care, healthier lifestyles, and fewer labour-intensive jobs, meaning they stay physically fit for longer.
- Many carers suffer from loneliness and isolation, require support to help them stay in work, and face their own health problems as a result of their caring role.
- Carers may have to give up paid employment, school, or study which affects their independence, wellbeing, and their economic wellbeing. This may also have a substantial effect on their former employers' productivity and lead to high costs of recruitment and training.

Ref: CARERS UK policy briefing, August 2019

Island carers

- The Isle of Wight has over 19,000 unpaid carers over the age of 18 within our island's community, providing essential support to those they care for. (Census data 2021)
- Split between male and female carers on the Isle of Wight that have completed a carers assessment are 59 per cent female carers and 41 per cent male carers. (Census data 2011)
- The average age that carers on the Isle of Wight to receive a statutory assessment is 68 years. (Isle of Wight Council 2022)
- The Isle of Wight has around 300 young carers, who are likely to be juggling their caring role alongside education and other interests. This can make it hugely challenging for young carers to enjoy the same opportunities as their peers.
- Relatively low numbers of people from culturally diverse backgrounds identify as carers or access support services on the Isle of Wight, due to our island's demographics and unique geographical location, however support must be made available for all unpaid carers regardless of who they are or their background.





The impact of Covid-19

Carers UK estimates that an additional 4.5m people have taken on caring responsibilities since the Covid-19 pandemic. Research in the early part of the pandemic showed that carers were providing an additional ten hours of support per week on average. (Carers UK, Caring Behind Closed Doors, April 2020)

- Carers have seen invaluable day service provision for the person they care for, being suspended, which meant they were unable to take a much-needed break from their role.
- Carers may have been unable to visit the person they care for if they were admitted to hospital, which added to their anxiety about whether they could provide the support they needed when they returned home.
- Carers may have been unable to access medical appointments due to their increased caring role, meaning their own health and wellbeing suffered.
- Carers may have been furloughed by their employer and receiving a reduced salary, meaning they have experienced additional financial challenges.
- Carers may have been unable to access some services which moved to online only support, meaning they felt more isolated and unable to cope. In a Carers Trust report published in July 2020, 56 per cent of young carers say their education has suffered, and 40 per cent of young carers (aged 12-17) and 59 per cent of young adult carers (aged 18-25) say their mental health has deteriorated. (Carers Trust, My Future, My feelings, My Family, July 2020)
- Age UK recently reported that 27 per cent of older people are unable to walk as far since the pandemic, with 25 per cent living with more physical pain. This is likely to be placing additional pressures on carers. (Age UK, One Year On, July 2021)

These findings illustrate the scale of the challenge now facing us. However, they emphasise the extraordinary strength, commitment, and resilience of carers to continue in their caring role.

Legal responsibilities

The Isle of Wight Council and other statutory bodies have a legal duty to meet the needs for unpaid carers and the people that they care for, below is the list of those duties and commitments to unpaid carers.

- Care Act 2014 places a requirement on local authorities to promote the wellbeing of individuals when carrying out their social care functions. Carers have a right to an assessment to establish whether they have eligible needs, together with the provision of information and advice to help make the best choices about accessing support.
- Children and Families Act 2014 makes it easier for young carers to have an assessment of their needs and introduced 'whole family' approaches to assessment and support.

In addition, the NHS Commitment to Carers sets out eight priorities for the NHS:

- Raising the profile of carers
- Education, training and information
- Service development
- Person-centred, well-coordinated care
- Primary care
- Commissioning support
- Partnership links
- NHS England as an employer, the National Institute for Health and Care Excellence (NICE) has also produced a guideline on supporting adult carers which will underpin all our future work to improve support. We also have a duty to safeguard carers from any kind of abuse or neglect, in relation to their own needs or those of the person they care for. This includes making it straightforward to raise any kind of safeguarding concern, safe in the knowledge that we will be supportive and non-judgemental throughout.



Working together as an island

This strategy has been shaped by the voices and experiences of carers and those organisations which support them, to ensure that the priorities for the future are based upon what is most important to them as carers.

We did this in a number of ways:

- Holding focused discussions with carers in a range of locations to gather real life examples of their everyday challenges and what might help.
- Carried out an islandwide survey during 2021.
- Held regular meetings with our strategy partners, Healthwatch IW, Carers IW, AGE UK IW and People Matter IW.
- Held a workshop with carers to review the draft strategy and give their feedback.

Carers told us

- From our survey nearly a third of those who responded to the survey were neglecting themselves, this is a shocking finding and something which needs to be reduced within our island's community.
- Carers have told us that they are increasingly getting into crisis situations because of the lack of support available. We need to ensure that the right support is available at the right time at the right location.
- All carers who responded to our survey reported that they had their own disabilities. This means our carers have more barriers increasing the difficulty of their role as a carer.
- The majority of our island's carers who completed the survey said that they were frequently disturbed at night and did not have a regular sleep pattern.

Carers told us that the support groups and advice offered by Carers IW was invaluable and vital for their care journey. They also told us that having regular telephone support and contact with Carers IW helped them sustain their unpaid caring role.

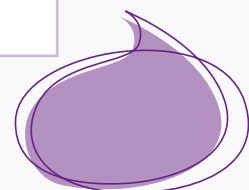
Carers told us that they also received invaluable support from other organisations within our community including People Matter Isle of Wight (PMIW), Healthwatch Isle of Wight and AGE UK Isle of Wight.



"We are experts by experience for the people we care for and being an unpaid carer is difficult."

"I'm not just an unpaid carer I'm a cook, cleaner, financial accountant, a husband, a father, a gardener, a taxi driver, a social worker and a nurse."

"We as unpaid carers do everything."



Strategic priorities

The themes identified throughout our conversations with carers and the people they care for have enabled us to clearly identify the three areas which need to be prioritised to support unpaid carers.

We are absolutely committed to delivering against these three priorities.

Priority One

People being recognised as a carer and recognition of the important role they play within our island's community, carers being able to shape the services they need.

Being recognised

The first priority which our conversations and survey showed us was that carers don't feel that they are always recognised and involved with many of the important decisions along their care journey. Carers told us that when services were needed to support them and their cared for they were often missed out. Carers also felt that they were unable to help shape the services and support which they needed.

What are the challenges?

We recognise that supporting unpaid carers with the services which they need, including respite is an area which needs to be improved.

- Carers told us that the availability of day respite care, to help them sustain their caring role is rarely available.
- Carers told us that overnight respite care is also rarely available to help them sustain their caring role.
- Carers told us that services often don't allow them to help shape the services which the cared for needs.
- Carers told us that they feel they are not recognised as an unpaid carer when in hospital or by health and social care professionals.

How are we going to overcome the challenges?

- Through better partnership working with statutory services making the role of the unpaid carers more visible.
- Promoting and raising awareness of the Emergency Carers Alert Card so that it can be used more widely within our island's community.
- Ensuring that statutory services consult with carers on what respite and support they need and ensuring that options are available.
- Commissioning a voice through a community carers support service for our island's unpaid carers.
- Ensuing information, advice and training is available through a suitable commissioned service for our Island's unpaid carers.
- Educating our Health and Social Services to identify and recognise our island's unpaid carers and the impact that decisions have on them both as individuals.
- Providing advice and information to those people giving unpaid care in strategic locations including but not limited to Severnaces, St Mary's and Carers Centre in Newport.

- Offering advice and information that is more geographically accessible within our island's community.
- Recognising unpaid carers as experts and that the Island has a joined up approach to the identification and recognition of the carer and their cared for.
- Encouraging carers to register with their GP as an unpaid carer, and recognition for their role.
- Carers are recognised by the health and social care system and supported so that they don't become in need of care and support themselves.



"Everyone's care and life journey is different making sure that we need statutory services understand this."

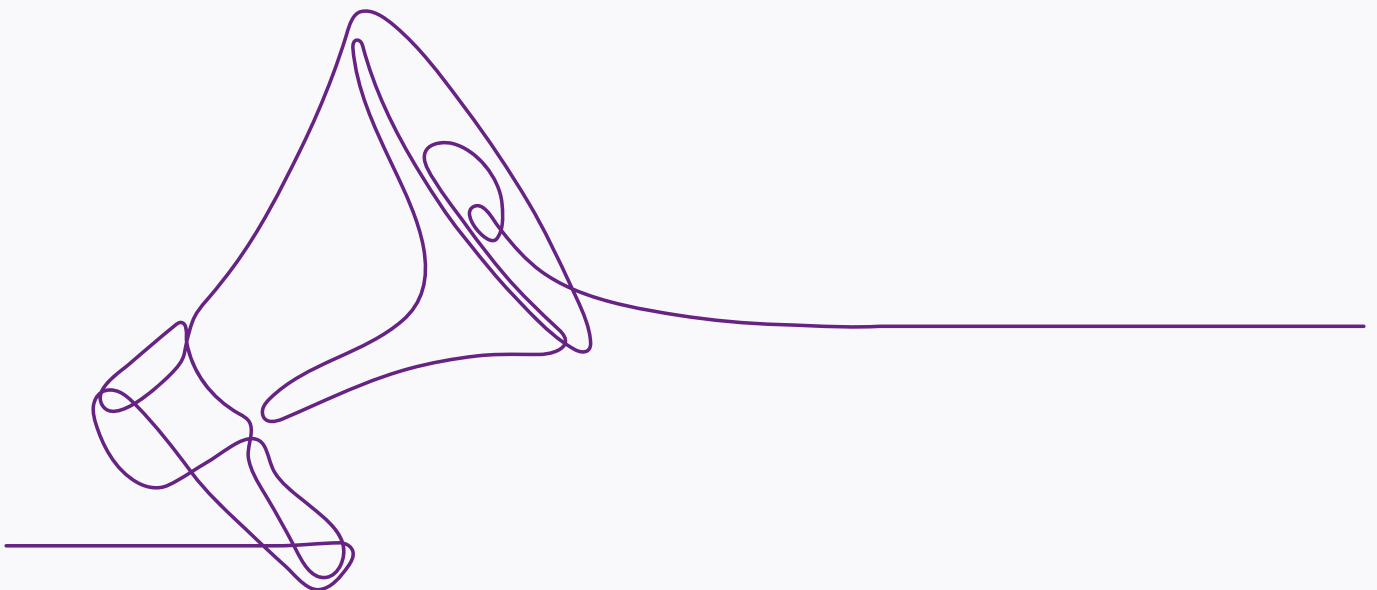
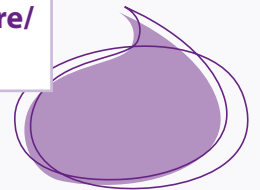
"I have not been spoken to or asked about caring at all."

"I appreciate a two-to-three hour break twice a week, but really a full morning or afternoon is the minimum needed to do anything relaxing, when you are on call 24/7. Live in carers get two hours off every day as well as being paid, so why are unpaid carers discriminated against?"

"I rang the mental health crisis number and was told that my partner needed to contact his GP, they totally ignore carers, we are never listened to"

"Services more accessible and easier to contact, services linked. At present there is no cooperation with GPs/Consultants/Social Care/Support Services. All operate independently argh!!"

"My opinions and observations are dismissed - they are The Professionals and they Know All About It."



Priority Two

Being able to communicate and have access to health and social care services, and those services being provided by other organisations when needed.

Being able to communicate

We recognise that being able to communicate, clearly and appropriately with each other is very important to ensuring that carers are supported through their care journey. Our island's unpaid carers told us that they are not always able to communicate clearly and appropriately, which causes a lot of problems for them and makes their role increasingly difficult.

What are the challenges?

- Carers told us that they feel departments/wards within statutory services don't talk with each other clearly enough, and when they do its often a confusing message.
- Carers told us that they feel the hospital and the council don't communicate with each other well enough and there is too much red tape.
- Carers told us that they feel ignored, and taken for granted by professionals, and that when they try to tell their story, that they are not listened to.
- Carers told us that they often feel isolated and unable to access support which is available within our island's community.
- Carers informed us that paperwork and financial assessments are not easy to understand and complicated to complete, and often it's difficult to understand the results from them.
- Carers stated that some professionals don't know what support is available for carers and that they should know what is available and proactively signpost them.
- Carers told us that they need better information in a clear and concise form to help them with advice and about what support is on offer.

How are we going to overcome the challenges?

- Through better information to our island's professional statutory services enabling them to understand and communicate better with our island's unpaid carers.
- Access to awareness training to our statutory service departments, wards, GP practices, and emergency services on the important role of our island's unpaid carers.
- When financial assessments are required, that they are carried out in a respectful and timely manner, and that a clear explanation of the results is given to the carer and the cared for when appropriate.
- Encouraging GP practices recognise and take account of where an unpaid carer is involved in supporting someone, and that they are kept informed, and supported in their role.
- Supporting unpaid carers through the Living Well and Early Help service which is now embedded within the Island's community.
- The Voluntary Community Social Enterprise (VCSE) community are aware of the support available to unpaid carers, which can help improve their wellbeing.
- Recognising that preventative help and advice will stop small problems becoming bigger ones.
- Realising that a phone call should be a last resort when a carer is falling into crisis or at crisis point and that a face-to-face response is offered when possible, to prevent or reduce the situation from deteriorating further.

- If carers are to undertake fundamental roles like dressing ulcers, that they are offered the necessary support and training from professional services, including the ongoing monitoring by a professional.
- If actions are promised by services, that they are carried out, as a phone call back on the same day could prevent a carer going into crisis.
- Look at options to increase the day care and respite options for carers.
- Increase the carer awareness training to organisations and statutory services across the Island.



“Communication is extremely difficult and frustrating with the hospital.”

“It’s distressing when you get an answerphone message saying someone will call you back and they never do.”

“I was not involved in my partner’s discharge from hospital at all; do I not count?”

“The GPs don’t seem to want to know or help with current medical situations with regards to Mum, it’s not easy to speak to them either.”

“I never knew that I could call Carers IW in a crisis situation.”

“Biggest issue I have is communication between cared for, GP and unpaid carer, I can’t get support from admiral nurses without going through her GP.”



Priority Three

Regular support to help the unpaid carers within our island's community, ensuring both the cared for and the carers health and wellbeing are improved.

Being Supported

Supporting carers is recognised as a significant part of ensuring our community not only survives but thrives, ensuring that people's wellbeing is not only protected but improved and promoted. We need to ensure that the right support is available, at the right time and in the right location for our island's unpaid carers where possible.

What are the challenges

- Carers told us that there is not enough respite is available for their cared for person and that this has a massive impact on the carer's health and wellbeing.
- Carers told us that they are not just carers they are nurses, cleaners, cooks, friends, bankers, bill payers, home repair specialists and gardeners and that they need better timely support if they are to stay in their role.
- Carers told us as carers they are financially worse off and with the cost of living increasing, they have no fall back position.
- Carers asked for more training to help them cope better and where specific medical conditions require specialist training that its available in a timely manner, in the right location at the right time.
- Carers told us that they often struggle to get a diagnosis from the mental health and dementia service, which can impact on them both financially and with what support is available.
- Carers and the people they care for do not have a named social worker which means that they often have to tell their story over and over again.

How are we going to overcome the challenges?

- By ensuring that unpaid carers are aware of the support available through commissioned services.
- Offering carers access to carers crisis support plans through Carers Isle of Wight.
- Increasing the access to respite offer and improving access to it.
- Offering more tailored respite support.
- Review and improve the local authority's processes to identify the gaps for respite and finding alternatives or funding to be able to create those opportunities.
- Access to immediate support for those carers who are experiencing domestic violence and abuse.
- Increasing knowledge to ensure that a consistent message is given to all unpaid carers and professionals across the Island.
- Offering carers opportunities for their voices to be heard both locally and nationally.
- Encouraging the use of networking events to allow organisations to grow their knowledge and support on what is available, and to encourage collaborative working to improve carers lives.



"I would just like a A4 sheet of paper when we get a diagnosis of who can help us."

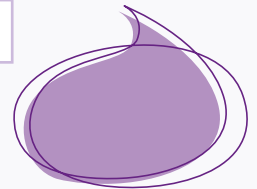
"I am 63 and I don't know what financial support is available."

"My mum was referred to the Mental Health Service over a year ago and still no one has been in touch."

"I never knew I could phone Carers IW in a crisis situation."

"What are the options for us for respite, my mum always says that my daughter will do that but I cannot cope."

"My son needs mentoring support which is not available."

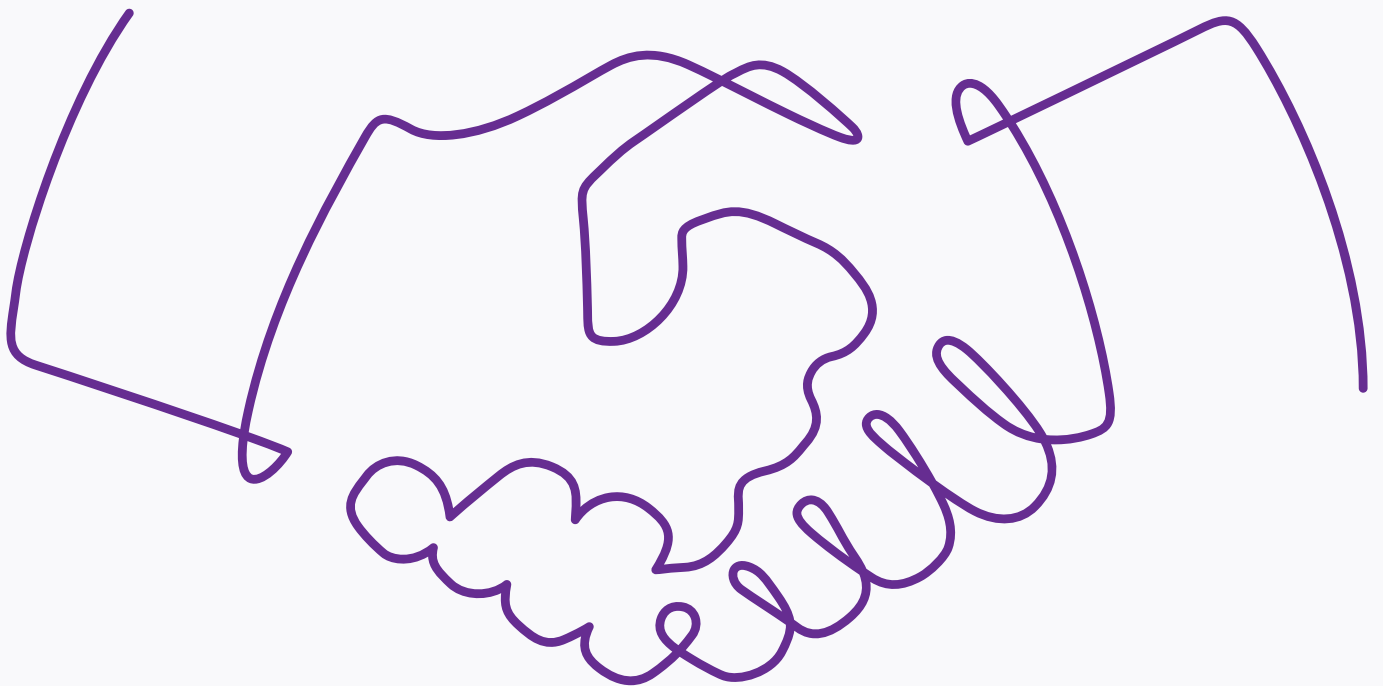


Putting the strategy into action

Developing the strategy has highlighted that a lot of activity is already taking place. In addition to this, to meet the outcomes of this strategy, we will develop an action plan to identify what we need, who will do it and by when. This will cover the commitments identified under the three priorities of the strategy.

The action plan will be led by Isle of Wight Council and Hampshire and the Isle of Wight Integrated Care Board and will be delivered in partnership with the local organisations who supported the development of the strategy and other relevant partners.

We will publish regular updates against progress, as well as all the reports produced to inform the strategy and consultation reports making these available via websites. This will provide evidence to support decision making by commissioners and service providers about carer support services.





Governance and monitoring

The Carers Strategy Steering Group will continue to oversee the implementation of the strategy. The group will meet regularly so they have the opportunity to address any issues highlighted and monitor progress. The steering group will provide twice yearly updates the to the Health and Wellbeing Board and Integrated Care Partnership.

The success of the delivery of the carers strategy will be measured by a set of indicators that will be used to create a dashboard to monitor effectiveness of the strategy. We know that to really meet the needs of the individual, it is important to listen to them and act. We will continue to re-visit our vision to ensure the voice of lived experience not only remains central to the strategy but helps to measure the impact of it.

Strategic Commissioning Team

Isle of Wight Council
County Hall
High Street
Newport
Isle of Wight
PO30 1UD

www.iwight.com
asc@iow.gov.uk

