

Supporting carers during Covid-19



Carers UK report, October 2020

Since Covid-19:

- 15 million people in UK being supported at home by unpaid carers.
- 4 in 5 unpaid carers (81%) are currently providing more care than before lockdown.
- More than three quarters (78%) of carers reported that the needs of the person they care for have increased recently.
- Most carers (64%) have not been able to take any breaks at all in the last six months.
- More than half (58%) of carers have seen their physical health impacted by caring through the pandemic, while 64% said their mental health has worsened.
- 78% report being physically and mentally exhausted.
- Over 70% said they didn't know how they would get through winter.

Carers Trust report, October 2020

Since Covid-19:

- 40% of young carers and 59% of young adult carers say their mental health is worse.
- 67% of young carers and 78% of young adult carers are more worried about the future.
- 66% of young carers and 74% of young adult carers are feeling more stressed.
- 69% of both young carers and young adult carers are feeling less connected to others.
- 11% of young carers and 19.7% of young adult carers report an increase of 30 hours or more in the amount of time they spend caring per week.

Carers in North Somerset since Covid-19

Around 22,500 carers in North Somerset (Census 2011).

Main issues since April:

- Increased stress/access to mental health support
- Lack of breaks from caring
- Feeling isolated and lonely
- Shopping/ prescription collection
- Increase in Safeguarding Adults referrals involving carers as both victims and perpetrators, especially physical and emotional abuse
- Increased proportion of contacts from carers of people living with dementia
19% increase



What has had to stop locally?

- Day care for the cared-for person
- Some carers ceased respite with care homes or care packages due to anxiety about Covid
- NSC face-to-face statutory Carers Assessments
- Many carers unable to spend their Direct Payments to meet their own needs in lockdown, e.g. unable to take short breaks, go swimming, have a massage
- Third sector face-to-face support groups and meetings
- Third sector in-person carer events e.g. arts and crafts days

How we adapted local carer support

Online and telephone contact has replaced face-to-face, e.g.

- Info and advice by phone at SPA, Carers Support Alliance, Alheimers Society
- Statutory Carer Assessments by SPA on phone
- Flexibility in how carers spend their own Direct Payment where original form of support not available
- Support phone calls by statutory and third sector to provide emotional support and reduce isolation
- Closed Facebook groups set up by Carers Support Alliance for online support
- Face-to-face activities switched to online by Carers Support Alliance and Alheimers Society, e.g online Singing for the Brain, coffee mornings



How to support carers this winter?

Carers UK are calling on the government to:

- Make sure that carers can take breaks and that the return of essential services is prioritised.
- Provide clear guidance, information, and advice specifically for carers
- Raise the level of Carer's Allowance
- Support carers' to look after their own health and wellbeing, and providing targeted funding for carers mental health support.
- Ensure that carers are better able to juggle work and care and remain in work.
- Provide sufficient funding for social care over the winter.



Young Carers and Young Adult Carers

Carers Trust is recommending:

- Greater prioritisation of mental health support for young carers.
- Greater support from education providers and employers to help young carers and young adult carers to juggle their caring roles alongside school, college, university or work.

What do we need to do next in North Somerset?

- NSC developing new Carers Strategy in partnership with carers and with other organisations
- Carers' employment supported by Employers for Carers membership funded by NSC and Alliance and Alliance Carers Employment support officer
- Can we arrange PPE for carers?
- How can we safely re-open day care or provide alternatives?
- Regularly re-evaluate when we can resume face-to-face work and re-opening of services
- Continue to be flexible with use of direct payments?
- Lobby Government on funding for social care & reform
- Lobby Government on raising the profile of carers
- Ideas from ASH members?

