

Carer voice and involvement plan



Welcome

At Caring Together, we believe that carers really are the experts when it comes to issues affecting them and those they care for, and so we are committed they should be at the heart of all that we do. One of our core values is that everything we do is based on what carers are saying will make the greatest difference for them and the people they care for. Similarly, people who have been carers have got invaluable insight into what works, but also what doesn't work.

Therefore it is essential that carers can see how their voices influence not only our work across the organisation, but also the work of other organisations.

We are committed to learning from the experiences and insight of former carers when their caring role comes to an end. In addition to the benefit they bring to our work, we believe it can also be beneficial for the former carer. Throughout the document, for reasons of space, any references to carers will also include former carers.

We have set up a carer voice and involvement steering group made up of carers, former carers and employees whose role it is to make sure that the voice of carers is regularly informing the work that we do across all elements of our work. This carer voice and involvement plan sets out what you can expect from us and the wide range of opportunities to get involved and have your voices heard.

This carer voice and involvement plan is designed to:

- Set out our approach to promoting the voices of carers.
- Make it clear to carers how they can get involved in all aspects of our work and throughout their caring journey.
- Give an overview of the work being done by the organisation to promote the voices and involvement of carers as experts by experience.
- Highlight examples of the ways in which we involve carers.

This plan was produced by the steering group which was then shared with carers, former carers and organisations who support carers more widely so as to ensure as many carers as possible were able to be involved in this work, and also to help us choose how we will measure how well we are doing.

We hope this plan makes it clear how carers can ensure their voices are heard, and we want to thank the carers, staff and volunteers who have contributed to the development of this plan.

Miriam Martin - chief executive, Stuart Evans - chair of trustees and the carer representatives on the carer voice and involvement steering group



Richard Cross



Rylan Ray



Steve Acklam



Laura Potter



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Caring Together and carer voice and involvement – at a glance

We will always look for more opportunities to work with other organisations to promote the voices of carers further.

We exist because of carers.

Involving carers leads to better services for carers.

Every carer will know that their voice is important and how it can be heard.

We are not just interested in how we use carers voice, we are committed to influencing other organisations to have a similar commitment to the voice of carers.

Support for individual carers will always revolve around what matters most to them and those who they support.

The carer voice and involvement plan will be monitored by the carer voice and involvement group, which feeds directly into the executive team and trustee board.

We are committed to providing a range of opportunities for carers and bereaved carers to get involved in our work – including through volunteering.



so that carers have choices

Carer voice and involvement

We are committed to hearing the voices of as wide a range of carers as possible, including young carers, former carers and carers not accessing our support.

Involving carers will help us to achieve better outcomes for carers more quickly.

Carers are experts by their own experience – they know what the issues are, but also often what the solutions are.

Everyone (carers, funders, employees, volunteers) will easily be able to see how we use the voice of carers and the difference feedback from carers makes.

One size doesn't fit all – we will provide a range of ways for carers to be heard and for carers to be involved.

Caring will not be a barrier to carers being able to be involved.

What are we aiming to achieve?

As an organisation, we have years of experience of involving carers in different parts of our work – be it from recruiting our current chief executive, to raising awareness of issues facing carers, to using the voice of carers to help us know what support is needed.

But with this plan, we want to go further. We want to:

1. Increase the number and variety of ways for carers to have their voices heard, making best use of technology and new ways of working.
2. Increase the number of carers who are involved.
3. See even more carers report that they have felt heard/listened to.
4. Ensure that we are hearing the voices of carers from a wide range of backgrounds, including carers whose voices are not as often heard (e.g. carers from minority ethnic communities, LGBTQ+ carers and those from a military background). We also want to make sure that carers of all ages, including young carers, parent carers, those balancing work with caring, and bereaved carers are not forgotten.

We also want carers who don't access our support to feel that their voices are being heard and that they are able to get involved.

5. Ensure that carer voice and involvement is central to the work done across the whole organisation, and not just within a particular team or area.

How will we know we are getting it right? What does good look like?

There are lots of different measures, targets or indicators that could be used to measure how well we are doing in the implementation of this plan and so the carer voice and involvement steering group will review these annually to make sure they are still relevant, or if any need changing.

For 2021/22, 'good' would look like:

- A minimum of 90% of carers who have received Caring Together services or support rate us as good, or very good, or would recommend us to another carer.
- A minimum of 90% of carers/former carers involved with Caring Together activities or support report feeling heard/listened to.
- A 100% increase in the number of carers/former carers involved in Caring Together forum activities.
- A 100% increase in the number of carer involvement opportunities.
- All actions on the 'what we are going to do in 2021-22 to make this happen' list completed.

What we are going to do in 2021-22 to make this plan happen

What we are going to do	Why we think this is important
Create more opportunities for the voices of carers/former carers to be heard.	Teams across Caring Together, and other organisations will be able to benefit from the expertise and experience that carers bring.
Ensure all employees are aware how the voice of carers is important to their role through job descriptions, performance management and team meetings.	Employees who work for Caring Together need to know that promoting the voice of carers is a key part of their job, no matter what their role.
Undertake a governance review so as to identify and put in place a range of ways in which the voices and experiences of carers drive the work of our trustee board.	It is important that there are a variety of ways for the voice of carers to feed into and drive the work of the trustees and senior management team.
Increase the number of carers/former carers taking part in Caring Together Forum activities.	Having a wide range of carers involved will ensure the work is as representative as possible and we can benefit from the widest experiences. It also reduces the pressure on carers feeling like they 'have' to help us out every time.
Introduce 'you said, we did' onto our website and create an annual summary.	Carers need to be able to see how we've acted on feedback from carers.
Make changes to our IT system so it's easy to capture the voice of carers in our everyday work.	Employees have told us that this is a barrier to capturing carer voice so this needs to be removed, so we can easily identify themes and trends.
Provide training for carers to support them to have their voices heard.	We want carers to feel comfortable and confident in sharing their experiences – whether that be in a meeting, or to the media.
Explore options around Timebank for carers who get involved with the Caring Together Forum.	Carers are extremely busy already and so we need to acknowledge both their expertise and the fact they are giving up their limited time.
Put in place a consistent and simple way of capturing feedback from carers.	We get care feedback from lots of different sources, but we want to ensure it's happening consistently across the organisation and that we capture feedback through our advice line and helpline when some carers may only be in contact with us once.
Put in place processes for making sure carers know about opportunities quickly and easily.	Carers have busy lives and often it is difficult for them to find information so it needs to be simple for carers to see what they can be involved with and how.
Work with carers and local funders/decision-makers to agree what are the important questions to ask carers.	We want to ensure that we are hearing what matters most to carers, without overloading them with lots of surveys.

The cycle of carer voice involvement

Throughout the workshops, there were three common questions that carers were looking for answers to when it came to having their voices heard.



1. Why we want carers involved

For any opportunities for carer involvement, whether they be ours or that of another organisation, it must be clear to carers why they are being asked for their involvement.

For any partnership boards, strategy groups or other similar meetings looking to involve carers, carers need to know what the meeting is about and their role on the group.

Carers need to know what level of involvement is possible – is it a completely blank sheet of paper? Are there some bits which can't be changed? What exactly is it that the organisation is looking for from carers?

The key message from carers is that any opportunity needs to be real and meaningful – not just a means of ticking a box.

2. How carers can be involved

Carers' time is limited and precious, so it's our job to ensure it's really clear and simple for carers to understand how they can be involved and what they need to do in terms of next steps for any carer involvement opportunities.

It will also be really clear about what help is available if there are barriers to carers taking part:

- Are travel expenses covered?
- Is it possible to arrange replacement care for the person they look after?
- Who do they need to speak to if they have any questions about the opportunity?

It is also really important that for any carers who do get involved, whether it be focus groups, surveys, or awareness-raising, that we make clear where/how they can access support.

3. How carers will know the outcome of their involvement

Carers tell us that one of the most frustrating parts of taking part in surveys, focus groups, meetings and other similar opportunities, is when they give up their time and share their experiences, but then hear nothing back.

Organisations who want to involve carers in their work, and benefit from their expertise, need to make it clear how carers will hear the outcome of their involvement, and also the timescale – if the project is six months long, then make sure carers know that it'll be that long before the outcome is known – but similarly, make sure carers know who to contact if they have any questions in the meantime.

Carer voice and involvement opportunities throughout our organisation

We have created a specific section of our website which outlines all of the different opportunities available for carers to get involved and have their say, and carers can always phone us.

Any opportunities listed on our website at caringtogether.org/forum will need to meet the three above tests before it is listed on there for carers.

Through the workshops with carers and employees, we have identified four areas of our work where the voice of carers is key.



Design, delivery and evaluation of services

Why we want carers involved

- The needs of carers, and the support that will help them the most, changes over time, and as in the case of the COVID-19 pandemic, sometimes very quickly.
- As a carer organisation, we need to ensure that what we are doing is what is needed, not just what we've always done so that we are offering support to carers which is both relevant, making best use of the available resources. We also need to ensure that we are delivering the support that will have the greatest impact for carers and the people they care for.

How carers can get involved

- We will regularly seek feedback from carers on their experiences of support for carers (both with Caring Together, but also other organisations).
- Carers also need to know they can share their feedback at any time, rather than waiting for a survey or feedback form by giving us a call on 0345 241 0954, emailing haveyoursay@caringtogether.org or filling out the 'have your say' form on our website. Carers can also write to us or speak to us in person.
- Through consultations, surveys and focus groups – both those that we organise, and those from other organisations.
- By joining our 'carers quality assurance' group – which checks the quality of support provided across all of our services
- By helping to design and/or evaluate specific projects, whether those be our own, or new services being put together for carers by other organisations. This can range from focus groups to helping put together bids/presenting to funders.
- We will also ensure that common themes and trends being identified through our carer support (e.g. carer clinics, enquiries from carers, advice/helplines) are also being identified and acted on.
- By getting involved in delivering services e.g. peer support, as a volunteer, paid work.
- By making suggestions for new/extended services or identifying service gaps or unmet support needs.
- Helping us know how best to get information about support out to carers.

How carers will know the outcome of their involvement

- For any surveys or consultations that we do, we will produce a response to it, outlining what we are doing based on what carers have said, as well as what we already have in place.
- For carers involved in funding bids for projects, we will always share the outcome of the bid.
- We will publicise changes we have made, or improvements we've made as a result of what carers have told us, e.g. 'you said, we did'.

Have you got an idea about how we can better support carers or reach more carers? Have you ever thought "I wish that service existed"?

If so, then share your ideas by emailing haveyoursay@caringtogether.org

Case study

Norfolk Young Carers Forum

Through our Norfolk Young Carers Forum, young carers have been able to take the lead on their own campaigns and also running awareness-raising conferences and events.

They have put together their own surveys, where the young people decided on the questions they wanted to ask and also helped to share the survey with other young carers, and then got involved in the analysis of the results.

With their awareness-raising conferences, the young people were involved at every stage – from deciding the purpose of the event, to who to invite and where to hold it, to them taking on all of the key roles during the event itself (including hosting, delivering presentations and organising social media coverage).



Case study

Face-to-face volunteer support

During COVID-19, at one of our virtual hubs, the carers were discussing how for some of them, the person they cared for was really struggling as they were missing male company which they used to get from their community groups and other activities. This was causing more stress for the carer and they were also unable to take a break.

As a result of this conversation, the idea was put forward about setting up a scheme where a male volunteer would go and spend time with the gentlemen with dementia so that the carers could get a break.

Once all of the necessary COVID-19 measures were in place, and the process was ironed out to ensure everyone would be safe, Richard, one of our volunteers was able to start his visits. These visits enabled the carer to get out of the house for a break and was really well received by both the carer and person being cared for.

On the back of the success of this pilot, we are going to roll it out more widely and are looking into the possibility of the volunteer being able to do activities with the person being cared for so the carer can enjoy a break.



Carer awareness (including fundraising and influencing policy)

Why we want carers involved

- Many carers still go years without any support because they don't even realise they are carers. We constantly need to educate people on what is going on for carers – our audience isn't just carers, or funders, but also those who are yet to be carers.
- Carers and former carers are the greatest ambassadors for carers – they tell the most powerful stories.
- Involving them ensures our messages remain topical and current (much more than statistics which date quickly).
- Can help to motivate/win around employees/supporters/organisations.
- Carers will be helping us decide who we need to get our messages to.
- It empowers carers and helps them to know they are not alone.

How carers can be involved

- Timely surveys/consultations (ours and others) – carers will be able to shape what questions are in there, as well as how we will be surveying carers – the balance needs to be right between asking carers what matters to them, not overwhelming them and actually acting on what carers are telling us.
- Forums bringing together groups of carers to discuss issues/challenges and speak together about how to go about implementing change. These might be ones run by other organisations that we link carers into and support them to access, of they might be ones we run ourselves.
- Feeding into carer forums of other organisations – we believe that if we are being asked to attend as a carers organisation, then carers will also have the opportunity to input directly.
- Helping to design and deliver our carer awareness-raising sessions.
- We will ensure carers are represented in other surveys so their voices are heard.
- Sharing experiences through media opportunities, such as radio, TV and social media, as well as raising awareness through our fundraising appeals.
- Becoming a Carer Friendly Tick Award assessor – reviewing applications from organisations who are wanting to be recognised as 'carer-friendly'.
- Helping with the planning and delivery of conferences and campaigns on key carer issues.
- Raising awareness internally – to trustees and employees meetings/training.

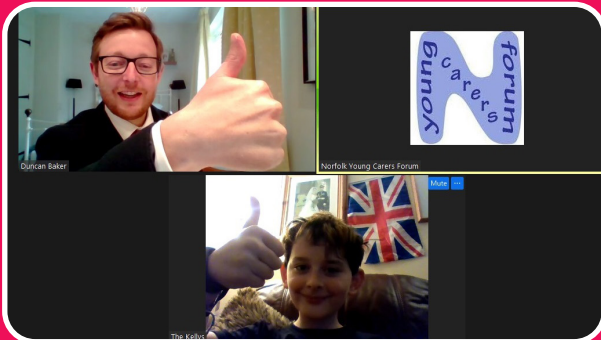
How carers will know the outcome of their involvement

- We will share the findings of any surveys that we do, including what we plan to do in response.
- We will include updates on carer involvement in awareness-raising activity in our publications such as the carers magazine, ebulletins and on our website/social media.
- We will ensure that all Carer Friendly Tick assessors know the outcome of the applications they have assessed.
- Through the development of a 'you said, we did' section of our website.

Case study

MP Zoom sessions

During the COVID-19 pandemic, we carried out a survey of both young and adult carers about their experience of the pandemic. We sent the results of the survey to every MP in Cambridgeshire and Norfolk. We then arranged three zoom sessions between local MPs and carers, including young carers. This led to the issues discussed being raised by one of the MPs in Parliament



Case study

Carer Friendly Tick Award

Young Carers from our Norfolk Young Carers Forum consulted with other young carers across Norfolk to find out what they would look for from their school in terms of how to identify and support young carers. They then used this feedback to create the Carer Friendly Tick award scheme. These standards have then been extended to community and health organisations, as well as employers.

Every Carer Friendly Tick application is assessed entirely by a panel of carers, and carers have also helped deliver awareness-raising sessions and supported organisations to put together their agreements.



Case study

Ruth May, NHS England

The Chief Nursing Officer for NHS England, Ruth May visited our Ely hub to meet with carers and hear about the challenges they and their families face. The carers had the opportunity to share both their own experiences, but also those faced by other carers.



Organisational governance

Why we want carers involved

- We want to ensure that decisions made throughout the organisation are always based on what carers need.
- Decision-making must be transparent - It's not enough just to say you are involving carers and listening to their voices - it needs to be visible to funders, donors, employees and most importantly carers.
- A combination of approaches are needed to show how carers voices feed into decision-making at the highest level.
- Trustees have a balance between responding to the voice of carers and their wider responsibilities as trustees (e.g. ensuring the organisation acts legally and isn't put at risk).

How carers can be involved

- Regular opportunities for carers to connect directly to trustees and senior managers – we will ensure that they routinely go to carers, not just expect carers to go to them.
- Carers will be able to send messages directly to the chief executive and the chair of trustee board if they have any carer issues that they want to raise.
- We will ensure that in addition to the relevant professional experience/skills, there is always lived experience of carers/caring on the board.
- Getting involved with setting the future direction of the organisation (e.g. organisational strategy planning, business planning).
- We will ensure that for any new organisational policies we complete a carers' impact assessment, so that we take into account how it might affect employees who are carers.
- Trustees will also review the trends/patterns being identified so that they can ensure we are responding to any changes.
- We will also look to ensure carer representation on our internal employees forum.
- The carer voice and involvement steering group is going to formally link into our trustee board

How carers will know the outcome of their involvement

- If carers have raised a specific issue to be discussed by our senior management/trustees, they will be invited to the relevant part of the meeting to talk directly about it to the senior managers/trustees
- Where any issues raised by carers (directly or indirectly), are discussed at our senior management/trustee board meetings, we will share the outcome via our 'you said, we did' section of our website
- We will ensure that individual carers who raise issues/ask questions to the senior management/trustees receive direct feedback in relation to their involvement.

Case study

Young carers and trustees

We arranged for a group of young carers from Huntingdonshire to meet with our trustee board. They talked about what it is like being a young carer and how our support helps. They also talked about what other support might be useful.



One of our trustees also attended one of our Norfolk Young Carer Forum conferences to see first-hand the work that they do and meet with the young carers.

Share your ideas or feedback

If you would like to share any feedback directly to Caring Together's senior managers or trustees, please email Miriam or Stuart.



For senior managers

Miriam Martin
Chief executive
ceo@caringtogether.org



For trustees

Stuart Evans
Chair of trustees
stuart.evans@caringtogether.org

Workforce recruitment and development

Why we want carers involved

- As a carer-friendly organisation, we want carers to be represented within the organisation and our workforce.
- Every Caring Together employees role exists because of the need to support carers, so their voices and experiences are crucial.
- We want to know what it is that carers look for and value in terms of employees/volunteers who work for Caring Together.
- It will help us to make sure we get the 'right' employees before they join us.
- It will help employees and volunteers to gain a better understanding of the needs of carers.
- The more knowledgeable employees are on what matters most to carers, the more knowledgeable the organisation is.
- It can add to pride for employees around the work that they do, ensuring they remember the difference their work makes to carers.
- We need their input to be able to connect with them in the most meaningful way.
- It will help us continue to strengthen the organisation.
- It can help build our brand – if carers are involved at the heart of things such as recruitment and development, they are likely to talk about the organisation in a positive light because they know we value their expertise.

How carers can be involved

- By sitting on interview panels for new employees members.
- Helping with short-listing for new employees.
- Providing questions for interviews for new employees.
- Sharing their experiences with new employees and volunteers as part of their induction.
- Providing feedback on support provided by employees as part of their annual appraisal.
- Becoming volunteers so as to share expertise with other carers.
- Helping us to encourage more people to work for Caring Together (such as talking about the difference that our support makes for carers).
- Sharing carer experience with employees and volunteers (e.g. at team/employees meetings or with individual employees members).

How carers will know the outcome of their involvement

- Through regular communication – keeping them up-to-date, including successes rather than just lots of 'asks'.
- Sharing feedback (e.g. from induction sessions, meetings they attended).
- Sharing with them what difference their involvement in that process made (e.g. sharing their story for a job advert – how did we get on with recruitment?).
- Sharing outcome of recruitment process with carers who have been involved.
- Ensuring carers know what will happen with their feedback (e.g. if they have made a complaint/provided a compliment).

Case study

Through our Norfolk Young Carers Forum, young carers and young adult carers have regularly been actively involved in recruitment of employees to roles working with the forum.

Young people have helped in a range of ways, from supporting the production of the person specification, to coming up with questions for interview, to being part of the interview process.

We also had a carer and young adult carer involved in the recruitment of our current chief executive.

When we recruited for our parent carer lead last Autumn, we worked closely with Pinpoint Cambridgeshire and Family Voice to ensure that we were recruiting the 'right' person. They supported with the shortlisting process, and a parent carer was also on the interview panel alongside our two employees members.

Caring Together forum



As part of Caring Together's new carer voice and involvement plan, there are a range of opportunities for carers of all ages to have their voices heard and to be involved with the work of Caring Together.

You can choose how you want to get involved and be involved as much or as little as you like. There are four different areas you can get involved with across the organisation.

Design, delivery and evaluation of services

We are looking for carers to help us shape ideas for new projects and make sure that the ones we already have are working as well as they could. This could be from focus groups, to helping us put together funding bids.



Help us to raise awareness of carers

We want to hear from carers who are willing to share their experiences in our carer awareness and media work, and to share their stories to help us as a charity to fundraise to be able to support more carers. We also link carers in to other carer forums.



Workforce recruitment and development

We are looking for carers who are willing to be involved in recruitment and the induction of new employees and volunteers - this could be from being involved in interview panels, to sharing your experience as a carer as part of their induction.



Organisational governance

Carer voice and involvement is at the heart of what we do and it drives the work of our senior managers and trustees. So there will be opportunities to regularly link in with trustees, and also to help with things like developing key strategies.

For further information please contact Andy McGowan or Tony Elliott on 01480 499090, email hello@caringtogether.org or visit caringtogether.org/carers_voice_involvement

Thank you

Thank you to all of the carers who gave up their time and shared their experiences in the development of this carer voice and involvement plan.

We would also like to say thank you in advance to carers who decide to volunteer their time moving forwards to work with us to grow our carer voice and involvement work - we are really grateful for your involvement, expertise and experience.



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