Caring Together Charity

No unpaid carer in crisis

Strategy 2026-2029

(Final June 2026)

Introduction

Caring Together is a registered charity supporting unpaid carers of all ages across Cambridgeshire, Peterborough and Norfolk. Over the past 45 years we have dedicated ourselves to helping them access the support they have needed to make their caring role easier.

We are proud of all we have achieved but being an unpaid carer remains extremely challenging and demanding.

In the 2021 census, more than 150,000 people identified themselves as unpaid carers in the areas we work, with over 60,000 of them caring for more than 50 hours per week. Based on the number of carers we support, we believe that there are many more who could benefit from our help but may not know what is available or how to access it.

We are a Network Partner of Carers Trust and a member of Carers UK. Our homecare services are rated 'Good' by the Care Quality Commission (CQC) and our fundraising activities are regulated by the Fundraising Regulator.

We employ around 130 members of staff, with 70 of those being members of our homecare team. This equates to just under 100 full-time equivalents.

Our work is also supported by 40 volunteers who carry out a variety of important roles.

Our services

- Providing breaks from caring.
- Planning ahead and responding to emergency situations.
- Training and equipping carers with skills and knowledge to help them care safely.
- Information and advice.
- Someone to talk to with specialist help available to support carers experiencing domestic abuse.
- Using carer voice to raise awareness and influence the work of others.

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Our vision

We set ourselves a bold new vision in 2023 of:

'No unpaid in carer in crisis, isolated or struggling alone.'

We recognised that more and more unpaid carers were contacting us either in or on the verge of being in crisis and that we felt our role was very much about preventing that, valuing and listening to carers.

For this strategy period we retain that vision as there is still much more to do.

'We will achieve our vision by ensuring unpaid carers are informed of their rights, receive support and are recognised as partners in care.'

We want the lack of recognition and support for unpaid carers to be seen as unacceptable in same way that it is unacceptable not to wear a seatbelt in a car or to drink and drive.

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Our values

We act boldly because we care deeply – we speak up, we challenge, we act with courage and compassion.

Always open, always human – we listen with empathy, we communicate with respect, we are real, approachable and inclusive.

Stronger together – we collaborate, we lift each other up, we win together.

Think big, start small but start now – we aim high, we take action, we learn, adapt and keep moving forward.

Our strategy 2026-29

This strategy reflects the changing environment we are working and living in and the impact this is having on unpaid carers who tell us that;

- They struggle to access help and support from health and social care services for the person they are caring for and themselves.
- They do not recognise themselves as unpaid carers so do not get the help and support they are entitled to early enough.
- Everything feels hard, from applying for and renewing Blue Badges, coping with the financial pressures caused by having to give up work to care and the impact of cost-of-living pressures.
- Caring is wonderfully rewarding but totally exhausting.

During the last strategy period we have faced a lot of change and challenge:

- The merging of Integrated Care Systems which now cover a much larger geographical area and proposals for local government devolution which are as yet undecided. We continue to learn what this means for carers and the challenges and opportunities this may bring us as a charity in the coming years.
- Fundraising is taking longer to grow with competition for charitable donations growing. Grant income is harder to secure and competition for contracts is greater than ever.
- Homecare remains difficult to make viable and it is essential to keep the blend of private and local authority-funded care, and the costs of delivery, under review. Recruitment of care professionals has continued to be challenging. However, we know how valuable homecare is to carers as it provides a listening ear, an opportunity for a break and a sense of not being alone.

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Despite the challenges we have had success with the implementation of our digital plans. New system implementation has helped bring about efficiencies and helped us use all the data we collect to assist our decision making.

We have developed some very positive partnerships with local organisations and have played a pivotal role in shaping hospital discharge pathways to help identify and support unpaid carers as well as our local hospitals.

We have identified four pillars to our new strategy:

- Marketing and awareness
- Partnership
- Income generation
- Digital and artificial intelligence.

1. Marketing and awareness

We will invest more in raising awareness of the challenges facing unpaid carers and the support we can provide them. We will increase our reach generally but target the more deprived and isolated communities across our geography where carers remain unsupported.

We will target recruitment for paid employees and volunteers in deprived and seldom heard-from communities so we can better reach and support under-represented communities.

2. Partnership

We will work in partnership with health and social care organisations, local businesses and the voluntary sector to reach more unpaid carers, encourage the early identification of carers and strengthen referral pathways.

Where it makes sense to do so and the sum of the parts is greater, we will welcome the opportunity to work with other organisations to create new partnerships through mergers as a way of growing services to unpaid carers.

We will work with local neighbourhood teams to ensure that the needs of carers are recognised and met through new approaches to multi-disciplinary working.

3 Income generation

We will grow unrestricted income to increase the control we have over the services we offer to carers. All our income is used in the delivery of services to unpaid carers.

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This means using our marketing activity to promote our charitable purpose and grow our supporter base to increase fundraising income through a variety of means. We will continue to invest in fundraising growth during this strategy period with the aim of it delivering a surplus in 2027/28.

Our homecare service will continue to be a core part of our service delivery. We will reach new carers who might benefit from this service and maintain the planned levels of cost control. We will open our first charity shop and, if successful, will seek to open further ones during this strategy period.

We will continue to look for other opportunities, including those that might result from mergers, to grow our income so we can invest in new initiatives in support of unpaid carers.

4. Digital and artificial intelligence

We will use digital technology to extend our reach to carers and improve the effectiveness of our work. We will continue to look for efficiencies created by artificial intelligence (AI) and develop on-line services to dovetail with our in-person and telephony-based operations.

We will investigate the merits of working with technology-enabled care (TEC) providers if it makes caring easier and carries limited upfront investment and risk.

Measures of success

1. A 30% increase of unpaid carers contacting us, with 15% from the most deprived areas of the geography we work in.
2. Achieving or exceeding our budget.
3. Have a positive impact on unpaid carers by increasing the number of people we take out of crisis through our support.

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