

Carers' Support (Bexley)

Greenwich Volcare

Annual Report

2022–23



Contents

Message from our Chair	3–9
Message from our CEO	10
About us: our values	11
Review of our year	12–13
Feedback	14
Household Support Fund	15
Our groups and events	16
Our team	17
Our Finances	18

Definition of a Carer

Carer [noun]

[1] Cares (unpaid) for family or friends who have a disability, illness or who need support in later life: Washing bodies. And laundry. And dishes. Keeping appointments. And records. And tempers. Giving medicine. And time. And hugs. Filling forms. And fridges. And silences. Dealing with doctors. And nurses. And pharmacists. And social workers. And benefits agencies. And care workers. And a lack of sleep.

[2] Needs support to manage a life of their own

Message from our Chair

Welcome

With our new Chief Executive, Vikki Wilkinson, in post, as you would expect, the past year has been one of fast paced change, and positive growth for all at Carer's Support.



Nicky Fry
Carers' Support (Bexley) Chair

Alongside, a strengthening of ties with our fellow charity partners in Bexley, so enhancing the quality of services that we are able to offer Carer's in Bexley and Greenwich. Working collaboratively with our partners improves all of our services.

Thankfully, life has returned to something approaching 'normal' following Covid, during the last financial year, so there have been no restrictions to the 'in person' vital help that we are able to provide to families. But we are now in the midst of a new plague and that is the Cost- of- Living Crisis, where the price of all lives' essentials, food, energy and fuel have gone through the roof. This disproportionally affects Carer's, those they care for and any person with a disability or medical condition.

The cost to run vital electrical equipment, such as home hoists, stair lifts, or charging of electric wheelchairs is an absolute necessity of life, with no option of reducing energy usage. Likewise, people with disabilities and medical conditions, have a need for heating and hot water that is generally higher than that of an equivalent size household. Disability costs.

Chairs Report 22-23

Carers' Support have seen a steep rise in requests for help across all our many services as families' struggle to cope. We were very fortunate to have received funding from LBB for a Household Support Grant fund. This grant specifically for unpaid carers and Carer's Support have given out approximately £45,000 for those in need. This fund is still on-going, so please speak to one of our staff for further details.

Our Respite Service, which offers respite at home, continues to be in great demand. What a unique service this is! And so special. I don't believe there is another like it in the whole country, where volunteers from overseas, generally from much warmer climes, offer us a year of their life, to help carers in cold, rainy England.

How selfless and altruistic are these young people and we will be hearing from them about their experience of life with Carers' Support. Led by Maria Jenkins and Margaret Arnold, the project has provided an amazing 1320 visits for families in their home this year, giving the carer a proper break. Free time to use as they will. Having received these visits myself, I understand how precious they are.

One of our client's commented that for her mother, 'Having someone young to share some time with her, has brought a sparkle into her life'.

In August last year we welcomed Sarah into the post of Senior Administrator. Her role is to support the day -to- day operational elements of the organisation and one of her main focuses is on our IT and financial systems. We have had many new technological systems implemented in the last year, which have involved staff training which will lead to a more efficient and organised charity. Sarah has also updated our charity website and it looks brilliant!

Chairs Report 22-23

Our Information and Support Service, led by Felicity Packard with Claire Hunt, Jo Flitton, Jackie Collen and supported by Jenny Miller, have had contact with thousands of carers over the year, providing them with the practical help or knowledge that they so desperately needed. 800 of these contacts were provided by our volunteer team, where people have freely given generously of their time, to support their fellow carer's. Lesley Skinner and Sandra Nutkins have since joined and add a huge amount to the team.

Likewise, we have volunteers who have been trained in giving benefit advice and to assist with completing benefit claim forms. The whole benefits system is an unfathomable jungle of complexity for so many people. So, this help is such important and vital help for carer's, who are often on low incomes through no fault of their own. This demonstrates how Carers' Support continually strives to make a real difference to the quality of unpaid carer's lives

Our Team have given carer's 383 welfare benefits advice sessions and submitted 214 claims forms over the year.

I'd also like to thank Jenny Miller, who has worked as our office Administrator for over 18 years. She is essential to the smooth running of our office, and I am so glad we were able to fund, at last for Jenny, an all singing, all dancing photo-copier for her work. Thank you, Jenny for your patience and persistence, in working with your very old machine, for so long.

Chairs Report 22-23

Another vital service that we provide is that of emotional support. Demand for this service in the current economic crisis has, not unexpectedly, soared. This year Jo Flitton led this service, with carer's receiving over 400 free counselling sessions. The emotional benefit received by carers from this service is incalculable. It's vital for us to be listened to and heard. Being a carer can be so isolating and lonely.

Our Social Groups continue to grow in numbers and provide vital companionship and support for a wide range of people.

The Groups are organised and run with great dedication and passion by Jo Flitton and Jackie Collen. But it is an Information and Support Service team effort, with other staff assisting. We have our Music and Singing Club, the Monday Club, for Adults with Learning Disabilities and their carers', Art Group, Pub Group, Café's and Coffee Mornings.

In partnership with the Alzheimer's Society, we are now able to provide additional group sessions for people with memory loss and their carer's, one of these is Music for Memory. Something for everyone I hope you would agree.

Each Group is there to lift the spirits, and bring some happiness, friendship and joy into people's lives. A regular activity that families know they can look forward to. It is a constant and that is what Carer's Support has always striven to be. A constant in the lives of unpaid carers in Bexley and Greenwich.

Chairs Report 22-23

Our Support Worker Service, our only chargeable service, continues to grow and provide a variety of help to our clients. Led by Vicky Baker, this is a very adaptable service, tailored to individual need. Offering companionship, shopping or help to get out and about. In April 23 we welcomed Hannah Flitton to the team and she offers valuable support to the service. Another example of Carer's Support recognising an unmet need and pro-actively finding a solution.

We welcomed two more new team members this year, Hazel Grout and Tracey Youngs, to work as Trusted Assessors, for the Pathways Project within the One Bexley Consortium of 8 Local Charity Partners. Within this service Carers' Support undertake Carer's and care needs assessments on behalf of Bexley Council. It is often very complex and challenging work. Involved and time consuming. **In this year we have completed 56 carer assessments, 66 needs assessments and 56 reviews. Kayleigh joined the team in April 23 and has been a brilliant addition to the team.**

We were able to hold our first Tea Party since Covid in June last year, Vikki had applied for Lottery funding to host a tea party in honour of Her Majesty Queen Elizabeth's Jubilee.

Happily, this application was successful and a very joyous, happy tea party took place. This was great fun and really special.

The organisation and planning was undertaken by Jo with help from the entire team and many volunteers. This was an immense piece of work, so all of us on the Committee want to thank you Jo and team. It really was appreciated. Then we were all saddened to hear of our Queens death in September

Chairs Report 22-23

It was decided to hold a 'Thank you' meal for all our many volunteers' and staff, following all the horror's and stress of the Covid years. This was held at the Holiday Inn in Bexley. It was a fantastic evening with immense planning and work for the team. Thank you all.

As ever, during the past year all of our staff team and volunteers have gone the extra mile to provide, in my view, an unbeatable, first-class service with such a compassionate heart. I, and our Committee, would like to thank all of our staff for their resilience and forbearance throughout the very hard winter. At times without heating, flooding through the roof and electrical problems to name but a few issues. They really are the most dedicated team of people, who never lose sight of their objective to help unpaid carers improve the quality of their lives.

One client told us, 'Thanks for all your help throughout the year. Always the heroes when needed. Thank you'

Our charity is governed by a group of people called Trustees. We are all volunteers and give freely of our time because we all have a connection and a passion for Carer's Support (Bexley). Our current group are Treasurer, Elisabeth Petchey, Vice- Chair Iris Benjafield, Tim Delee and newly appointed members Mary Phillips and Sheryl Chappell. We were sad to lose Alison Cutting last year for family reasons. A big thank you to you all. It has been a challenging and very busy year and each of you has joined together to face every difficulty.

Chairs Report 22-23

Finally, I would like to thank our funders, without whom, none of this work would be possible, the London Borough of Bexley, The Royal Borough of Greenwich, The City Bridge Trust, The National Lottery Community Fund, the Wax Chandlers Charitable Trust via BVSC and The Alzheimer's Society (Bexley).

Also, for people who make one off donations or give regular amounts monthly. Every penny you have donated goes towards helping unpaid carers. I hope you have seen today, that your money is well spent.

One final word, and that is a big thank you to Vikki Wilkinson, Vikki has worked relentlessly for CSB, developing her role and getting to grips with the many complexities of being CE of such an amazing organisation. She has a real passion for obtaining the best outcomes for unpaid carers and a real passion for maintaining a happy staff team, creating an open, honest and reflective culture for staff and volunteers alike. Thank you Vikki.

Message from our CEO

I feel privileged to be part of Carers Support through another year, working with such an amazing and committed staff team, Trustees and volunteers; all who keep unpaid carers central to all that they do. I hope that you enjoy this summary report, giving a flavour of our work this year.

We continue to work hard to ensure that our core offer reaches as many carers as possible; to give carers a break, support companionship, provide information and maintain financial and personal wellbeing.



Vikki Wilkinson
Carers' Support (Bexley)
CEO

All our services are in high demand, and we thank our funders, donors and supporters who enable us to continue to provide carers breaks, counselling, welfare benefits guidance, groups, activities, carers and care need assessments and more.

The team have worked with hundreds of carers this year and we have also increasingly worked with partners recognising that we are stronger together. This has led to developments in contingency planning, carers card, a new carers website, community advice drop-ins to help address digital exclusion and an active involvement in the Carers Partnership.

Unpaid carers are a foundation of our community, and we continue to strive to lessen their burden through our services and through influence and advocacy in our partnership role.

Thank you for your support.

About us

Carers' Support (Bexley) is an independent registered charity that is supported by London Borough of Bexley and Royal Borough of Greenwich. We have a team of trained staff and volunteers who provide a wide range of information, support and respite services to local adult carers residing in the Bexley and Greenwich boroughs..



Our vision

We want to make a difference to the lives of unpaid carers in Bexley and Greenwich. We are committed to tackling the isolation and loneliness that many carers feel by providing information, advice, support, respite and other services to those who dedicate their lives to caring for their loved ones. We pride ourselves in working with unpaid carers and their families, in a positive, responsive, professional and creative way to improve their lives.

Our values



- **People First** – recognising and valuing people as individuals with individual needs and feelings.
- **Respect** – We aim to treat everyone with dignity, understanding and respect at all times. We value diversity and embrace people's differences in the way we work.
- **Honesty and integrity** – We do what we say we will deliver our promises. We are open honest and transparent in the way we work.
- **Professional** – Our experienced and professional team of staff and volunteers are committed to delivering excellence within all our services.
- **Valuing Our Staff** – We aim to be a good employer, ensuring that all staff and volunteers receive adequate training and support and opportunities for personal development.
- **Valuing Our Volunteers** – We have a dedicated and enthusiastic team of volunteers both locally and from overseas who support our work. We are led by a voluntary board who provide direction and leadership.
- **Independence** – We value our independence as an organisation whilst recognising that partnership working is essential to our success.
- **Free** – We believe that our services should be free to carers wherever possible.

Review of our year



- Over 5000 information and/or support contacts have been provided with nearly 800 being provided by volunteers
- Carers have received over 400 counselling sessions
- More than 5600 copies of our newsletter, Carers Voice, have been posted to households.
- We ran 192 support groups
- Carers have received 383 welfare benefits advice sessions and 214 claim forms have been submitted.
- Our Respite/Volcare volunteers have provided over 1327 visits in our carers breaks service

“Gives me a chance to get out and visit friends, as my Dad now finds it difficult to be on his own in the house. Dad likes to talk to the volunteers and looks forward to their visit.”



The Support Worker service supported up to 60 carers and families at any one time, with a team of up to 20 Support Workers

Review of our year

“Thank you once again. I don’t know how I would have managed without you.”

“She wanted to pass on how pleased she was with the visit and how helpful Angela was. She felt like she was talking to a friend. A really lovely lady.”



- An afternoon tea was hosted for the Queen’s Jubilee with 100 attendees
- We helped plan and attend the Carers Week “Bexley wellbeing” event in June 2022 engaging with over 60 unpaid carers
- The Carers Drop in Information Hub was launched in April 2022 offering support and advice to unpaid carers in the community.



Our One Bexley Pathways Trusted Assessors (TAs) have undertaken 56 Carer Assessments and 66 Needs Assessments and 56 reviews.

Feedback from carers and volunteers

Respite Volunteers

“Volunteering is an amazing opportunity to help, travel, meet new cultures, share with people. I have grown as a person, that was one of my objectives”.

One volunteer said one of the reasons they volunteered was to “help people, be part of the change”.

“The project is an amazing opportunity to be a volunteer, we are really comfortable in the accommodations, the families are amazing and teach us many things”.

Carers and their families

“Thanks for all your help throughout the year. Always the heroes when needed. Thank you!”

Mary told us she was delighted that she had made the phone call to us and could not believe that she had been offered so much support from one charity.

“The project gave me the opportunity to rediscover myself as a person and how far my limits can go. It also gave me new friends who speak another language and that will help me in the future.”

“Thank you so much for all of your support in 2022. You are both so dear and appreciated by us.”



Household Support Grants

Funded by the UK Government, the Household Carers Support Grant supported those Carers most in need of help with significantly rising living costs. In partnership with the Local Authority, Carers' Support (Bexley) facilitated the dissemination of the Household Carers Support Grant to unpaid carers living in the London Borough of Bexley from 3rd October 2022 to 17th January 2023.

The grant was available to adult carers who lived in the London Borough of Bexley and were over eighteen years of age. Applicants could claim a one-off payment of £200 which was paid directly to them. Applicants did not have to be receiving benefits to be eligible for this funding.

A total amount of £45,000 was given to unpaid Bexley carers with 21 organisations referring their clients for the grant.

How the grant helped

A family in Sidcup were finding that bills were becoming harder to pay. They care for Emma's mum and the care she needed meant that Sue had to reduce her working hours, and therefore their income, so they were limiting their use of heating. They received the £200 grant to enable them to top up their electricity. By linking in with Carers Support for the grant they also accessed our welfare benefits service and were referred for a care needs assessment for mum to help them with sustainable support.

"the feeling of self-worth it's given me that someone has listened to what would help us makes such a difference".

Our groups and events



With thanks to the National Community Lottery Fund we were able to organise a Platinum Jubilee celebration event for carers and their families.

Partnerships

We recognise that we can have even greater impact for carers when we work with partners.

We:

- Provide workshops for other charities supporting carers including Universal Credit (UC), Access to work and PIP.
- Community drop-ins for carers with 7 charity partners
- Co-chair the Carers Partnership meeting
- One Bexley Pathways



Bexley Carers Partnership

Are you an unpaid carer, or do you help a friend or family member?

Pop along to chat with local charities who are here to help at The Nest, Thamesmead between 10.00am – 12.00 noon on the first Wednesday of every month.

Advisors will be available to provide you with free support and information on a range of subjects

- ✓ Welfare benefits
- ✓ Counselling
- ✓ Carers breaks
- ✓ Support services
- ✓ Activities and groups
- ✓ Form filling

5 Jul 23	Carers' Support (Bexley) & Bexley Mencap
2 Aug 23	Carers' Support (Bexley), Headway SELNWK & Bexley Voice
6 Sep 23	Crossroads, Mind in Bexley & Bexley Voice
4 Oct 23	Carers' Support (Bexley) & Bexley Mencap
1 Nov 23	Headway SELMWK & Mind in Bexley
6 Dec 23	Carers' Support (Bexley) & Bexley Mencap

Carers' Support (Bexley)

Bexley Voice

Mind in Bexley and East Kent

CROSSROADS CARE South East London

mencap Bexley

Headway

All unpaid carers are welcome, even if you are not sure if you are a carer.

Thank you dinner for our volunteers

"What a lovely evening it was last night. The food was fab, and it was so nice to see everyone there. We really enjoyed it so thank you all for your part in showing how much we volunteers are appreciated by the charity".



Our team

Carers Support (Bexley) couldn't exist without our wonderful team, Trustee Board and volunteers. Thank you.



Finances

Our income and expenditure

Please see a draft summary for 22/23. Figures will be confirmed on approval of the Annual Accounts.

Income		Expenditure	
Grants	£504,000	Salaries	£421,000
Additional income	£166,000	Other expenditure	£207,000
Total income	£670,000	Total expenditure	£628,000

Total funds brought forward	£674,000
Total funds carried forward	£716,000

Thank you to carers for all that you do. And thank you to all our funders, donors and supporters.

This report and our Annual Accounts report will be available on our website. You can also sign up for our informative e-bulletin. www.carerssupport.org

For information, advice and guidance please also see <https://bexleycarers.co.uk>