

Strategy 2025-2028

(1) Introduction

A carer is anyone, including children and adults, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give is unpaid. Unpaid carers who provide high levels of care for sick, or disabled relatives and friends, are more than twice as likely to suffer from poor health compared to people without caring responsibilities.

Carers' Support (Bexley) is dedicated to making a significant impact on the lives of carers in the London Boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich. Our mission is to alleviate the physical, mental, and material distress of carers by providing flexible home-based respite care, support, and information. This business plan outlines our three-year strategic goals, service profiles, and 25/26 Operational plan.

Our Vision

Our vision is to make a real difference in the lives of carers in Bexley and Greenwich by tackling isolation and loneliness through information, advice, support, and respite services. We value our staff, volunteers, and the people we serve, ensuring a compassionate, respectful, and professional approach. A borough where every carer feels recognised, supported, and able to care without sacrificing their own wellbeing.

Mission Statement

Our primary objective is to relieve distress among carers of individuals who are frail, elderly, disabled, or have special needs. We aim to provide comprehensive support, information and flexible home-based respite care to assist carers and their dependents.

Our values

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.

People First

We recognise and value people as individuals with individual needs and feelings and we are committed to providing flexible and creative services in response. Our focus is on putting people first and treating people how we would wish to be treated. We will be compassionate, warm, polite, empathetic, understanding and approachable at all times.

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 believe that acting with integrity and honesty is integral to our reputation; this means we do what we say we will and deliver our promises. We are open, honest and transparent in the way we work.

Professional

We have a skilled and experienced team of staff and volunteers who are committed to working in a professional way and delivering excellence within all our services. We pride ourselves in having a "can do" attitude where we aim to say "yes" rather than "no" as much as we can.

Valuing Our Volunteers

We have a dedicated and enthusiastic team of local volunteers who support our work. We are led by a voluntary board who provide direction and leadership to Carers Support (Bexley). We also use volunteers from all over the world within our respite service and we believe that this adds real value, making this service truly unique.

Independence

We value our independence as an organisation whilst recognising that partnership working is essential to our success. We will work in partnership where this enables us to achieve our vision and deliver better services to carers.

Free

We believe that our services should be free to carers wherever possible.

(2) Living with Dementia: A Daughters Perspective

My name is Sue and I am a full-time carer for my mum who was diagnosed with mixed dementia about 2 years ago.

I must just say that speaking here today is completely out of my usual comfort zone but when I was asked if I would I had no hesitation in agreeing. Carers support have done so much for me and my mum that I wanted to try and give at least something back, to support them and to show my appreciation.

I moved in with my mum nearly 7 years ago following my father's death, more just to keep her company and keep an eye on her than anything else. She was elderly and becoming more frail and had been married just short of 65 years when my father passed. She'd never been on her own and had no clue on either finances or maintenance of the house. They had always been 'man jobs.' At the time I thought it would benefit us both as I was living in rented accommodation and although I was working full time in a position I loved I was struggling financially.

Becoming a full-time carer was never a situation I was expecting to be in. Having previously worked in a care home for a short period I understood the implications and the possible effects but I never for once understood the struggle for those living both with dementia and beside it.

When I first moved in with my mum I suppose I expected life to continue pretty much as normal. Mum was doing well for her age albeit becoming more frail and with more health issues, but the reality of being diagnosed with mixed dementia turned my world upside down.

I was still struggling emotionally with the fact that I'd given up my home and watched as two thirds of my belongings were taken away by a house clearance company. As my parent's house was already full to bursting point I had to find a way to fit my own and my daughter's possessions in somehow!

I'd given up a job that I loved, I'd moved to a completely different area and although I'd moved back to the same area, in fact the same house that I'd grown up in, my friends and essentially my old life had to be left behind.

I was still grieving the loss of my dad and along with that my daughter moved out to begin university when I realised I felt completely lost.

I can't actually recall how I found out about Carers support (I think that's a common problem for carers.... Your brain turns to mush!) but what I do recall is the fact that as soon as contact was made I felt supported. Someone was listening that understood and more importantly cared!

Phone conversations were had and visits were made. Suddenly things began to fall into place. Benefits were applied for, advice was given. Groups were recommended that I could either attend alone as a carer for emotional support and groups that I could take mum to that she would enjoy and for social contact.

As things have progressed once again Carers support have been there for me. More recently after mums' dementia diagnoses a further needs assessment was completed which has resulted in mum attending Day Care one day a week which she loves. It's a win: win situation as its good for mum and gives me a much needed break.

More recently we have arranged a sitting service for a few hours a week. Again this gives me more freedom to either just relax for a while or go out and know that someone will be there for mum.

Carers support have had such a huge positive impact on my caring role. I can readily admit that at times I felt so lost in the situation and have ended up in a very dark place, the support given by Carers support including free Counselling sessions, have made a massive difference. I've felt seen, I've felt heard, I've felt understood, I've felt cared for!

The impact of caring for someone is so little understood by so many, the sheer pressure of all the responsibility you suddenly have, the physical and the emotional aspects, the loss of your own 'life' in so many ways that the support given is invaluable.

From my own personal experience I can say that I went from a place of confusion, anxiety and pretty close to desperation in my role as a carer to a place where I knew I was fully supported, practically and emotionally.

So, to end I just want to say a massive thank you, to Carers support for all that they do, all the groups that they run (mum absolutely loves the singing group by the way!) and to all the staff that that give so much to those who, without a doubt, need them.

(3) Quality Assurance

The Chief Executive has ultimate responsibility for quality assurance within the organisation. We adhere to rigorous standards to ensure the highest quality of service delivery. We hold the [Advice Quality Standard \(AQS\)](#) for our Information and Support Service. The Advice Quality Standard (AQS) is awarded to organisations that give advice to members of the public on legal issues. Organisations are audited every two years and have to demonstrate that they are accessible, effectively managed, and employ staff with the skills and knowledge to meet the needs of their clients.

We have a mandatory induction programme and comprehensive mandatory, and enhanced, training framework for all staff and volunteers and produce quarterly monitoring reports and monitor and review quality through case note and file sampling and annual beneficiary feedback and evaluation.

As part of our quality assurance approach, we have Business Continuity Plans in place to ensure that our services can continue safely and effectively during periods of disruption (e.g., staff shortages, IT failure, severe weather, or public health emergencies).

Our plan outlines critical services, standard operating procedures, key risks, response protocols, and recovery timelines.

This ensures that carers receive consistent, reliable support—even during unforeseen circumstances—and that we maintain the quality and integrity of our service delivery at all times.

(4) Governance

Our charity benefits from an experienced and committed Board of Trustees, many of whom bring valuable lived experience of unpaid care, ensuring our governance is grounded in empathy, insight, and real-world understanding. The trustees are responsible for providing strategic oversight, ensuring compliance with legal and regulatory obligations, safeguarding the charity's assets, and monitoring performance against objectives. They work collaboratively to shape our long-term vision and delegate operational delivery to the CEO, whom they support and challenge to ensure the effective implementation of our strategic direction. The Board maintains robust governance processes, including regular review of risk registers, financial reports, and safeguarding practices, ensuring due diligence and strong internal controls. Through a

culture of transparency, accountability, and regular evaluation, the trustees provide a vital check and balance system that underpins the charity's integrity and sustainability.

The Board of Trustees has overall responsibility for ensuring that Carers' Support (Bexley) is resilient in the face of operational and strategic risks.

As part of our governance duties, we maintain and annually review a Business Continuity Plan, which identifies critical functions, contingency arrangements, and risk mitigation strategies. Trustees receive updates on risk management and business continuity through regular board reporting.

This proactive approach supports our duty of care to staff, volunteers, and carers, and ensures that our legal and contractual obligations can be upheld even during periods of disruption.

(5) History, Structure and Current Services and Activities

History, Structure, and Current Activities

Carers' Support (Bexley) began in 1994 as "Bexley Volcare" and became an independent charity in 1999. We have expanded our services to include respite care, information and support, the In Touch service, and the Independent Living Scheme.

Information and Support Service

Our Information and Support service (ISS) is designed to assist unpaid adult carers at any stage of their caring journey- whether they are new to caring or have been doing it for a while. The team offers friendly, expert and knowledgeable advice and support, including signposting to local service, free information and advice on welfare benefits and help with completing claim forms. With a wealth of experience they understand the challenges carers face and are there to make sure carers get the right information.

Counselling service

A free carers counselling service of 18 sessions offering a therapeutic counselling service to adults.

The service is managed by Carers Support (Bexley), delivered by trainee counsellors receiving regular clinical supervision. Counsellors are members of the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP), keep their own Professional Indemnity up to date and receive enhanced DBS checks.

Independent Living Scheme

The Carers' Support (Bexley) Independent living Scheme continues to play a vital role in supporting carers who manage individual budgets and Direct Payment on behalf of the person they care for, as well as those funding their own care. Our scheme offer independent advice and information to help carers navigate their responsibilities with confidence. It also provides practical support with budget management to ensure that care funds are used effectively. For those employing their own care staff the scheme offers guidance with employment and payroll processes, with a small charge being made for outsourced payroll services.

Support Worker Service

Our permanent, integrated team of 6 Support Workers can provide companionship, trips out, and assistance getting to and from appointments, and a break for the carer. Our Support Worker Service was remodelled in 2023 to move from a large team of casual hours staff to a permanent salaried model of a smaller, integrated team to provide high quality, consistent support for carers and their loved ones, with benefits for carers and for the team.

Respite and Volcare (carer breaks) service

Our volunteers, aged 18 to 35, mostly from overseas, dedicate 12 months to Carers Support (Bexley), helping others by full-time volunteering. We provide their accommodation, living expenses, training, holiday leave and full support throughout their stay. All volunteers undergo police checks from their home country and enhanced DBS checks upon arrival, and they receive comprehensive training for their role.

Our service offers companionship and social interaction to the person being cared for at home, allowing carers to take a much-needed break.

Once matched with a volunteer, our Respite Team visit the home to meet the carer and family and complete an assessment, creating a tailored Support Plan and gradually introduces the volunteer to their client.

Our Respite Managers provide ongoing care and oversight, holding monthly one-to-one supervisions to ensure volunteers remain confident and effective.

Pathways (One Bexley) Trusted Assessor Service

One Bexley is a partnership between 8 charities in Bexley who are working to support people in Bexley to be happy, healthy and live the lives they want to lead.

Our Trusted Assessors undertake statutory care act assessments. Developing support plans, on behalf of the local authority with a relational, compassionate, strength based and person-centered approach.

(6) Profile of Bexley and Greenwich carers

Our service users are carers in the London Boroughs of Bexley and Greenwich. Carers provide unpaid care for family, partners, or friends who need help due to illness, frailty, or disability.

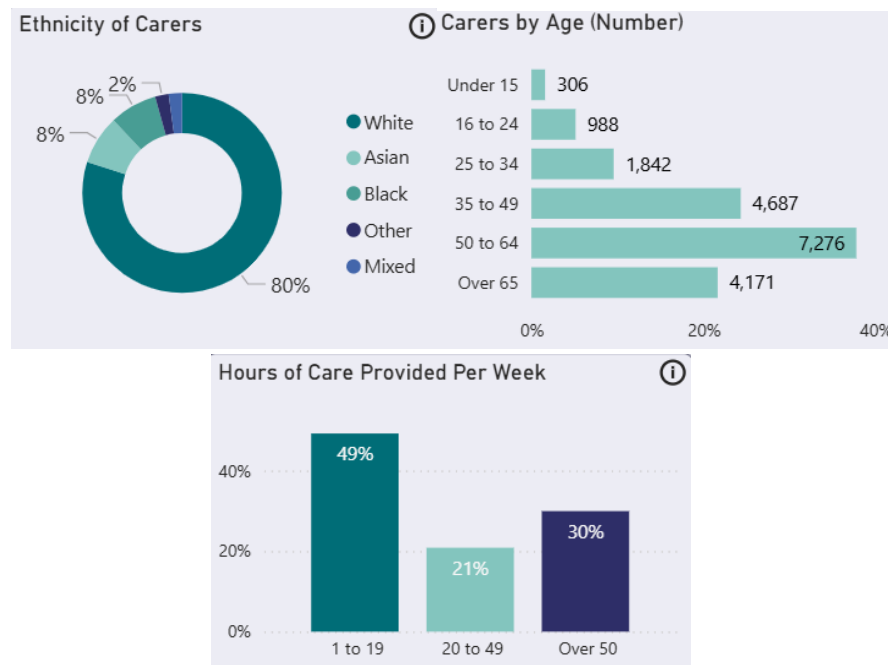
Bexley Unpaid Carers*

19, 270 carers 60% female 45.8% not in work 6.3% in poor health
 28% with a degree 25% registered as disabled 30% provide 50+ hours of care per week
 *Census 2021

[Healthwatch Bexley](#) 2023 research identified:

- That only 24% of carers had undergone a carer's assessment
- While 70% know where to get support, 61% do *not* feel supported to plan for future needs, and just 25% have an emergency plan in place
- 95% report worrying about the future—emphasizing the emotional and planning needs of carers.

[Unpaid Care Dashboard | the Centre for Care](#): The London Borough of Bexley



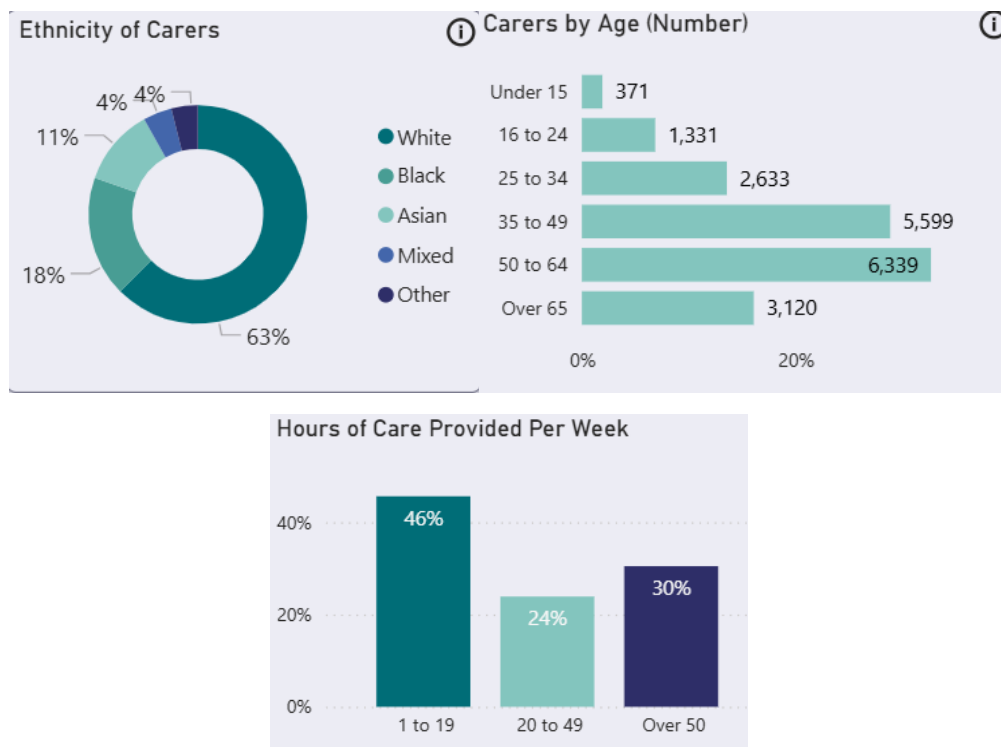
Greenwich Unpaid Carers*

19,391 carers 60% female 46.7% not in work 7.5% in poor health

23% with a degree 27% registered as disabled

30% provide 50+ hours of care per week

*Census 2021



Key Insights for Strategic Planning

a) High-Intensity Caring Load

Thousands of people are providing over full-time (50+ hours) unpaid care, suggesting high risk of burnout and need for respite.

b) Long-Term Commitment

Many have been in a caring role for over a decade—indicating deep, sustained reliance on families.

c) Low Assessment Uptake & Planning Gaps

With relatively low number, as indicated in Healthwatch research, having received formal carer assessments and limited contingency planning, there's a crucial need to improve awareness and access.

d) Varied Demographics

Carers span life stages—from young parent carers to older adults—so services should be tailored to diverse life situations.

The data highlights strong justification for our strategic priorities around welfare benefits support, outreach, mental health services, inclusive offerings, and flexible support options.

(7) Organisational Planning process

The Trustee Board meets quarterly and holds an annual Business Planning and Review Session to set the vision and direction for the organisation in consultation with staff and volunteers. The annual Business Planning is informed by:

- Review and analysis of monitoring information
- Review and analysis of complaints and compliments
- Staff and volunteer feedback via team meetings, 1-1 supervisions and annual reviews
- Carer and beneficiary feedback and service evaluation
- Tools for staff to contribute to the draft Business plan including surveys, post its, engagement sessions.
- Risk analysis, stakeholder engagement and horizon scanning.

(8) Organisational Structure

Our organisational structure includes a Chief Executive, staff, volunteers, and a voluntary Trustee Board that provides strategic direction and leadership. See *Appendix A*.

(9) Funding

Our services and support are offered with funding we receive from The London Borough of Bexley and The Royal Borough of Greenwich. We are eternally grateful for the support we receive from donations.

Our 23/24 accounts can be found [here](#).

For the year 2025/26, our annual income is circa £565,629, comprising various funding sources., noting that £70,000 of this comprises small grants we distribute directly to carers.

(10) Strategic Objectives 2025-2028

Support for Working-Age Carers

We are prioritising support for working-age carers because this group faces unique challenges in balancing employment, caring responsibilities, and personal wellbeing. Many are at risk of financial hardship, social isolation, and career disruption. National and local data highlight that working-age carers often miss out on support due to limited availability outside standard working hours or low visibility in existing systems. By expanding our engagement and service flexibility, we aim to prevent burnout, enable carers to stay in work where possible, and ensure they are fully recognised in local policy and practice.

Equity, Diversity & Inclusion (EDI)

We recognise that caring is experienced differently across communities, and that barriers to support still exist for many due to language, culture, disability, or systemic inequality. Prioritising EDI ensures that our services are genuinely inclusive and responsive to the diverse carers in Bexley and Greenwich. Through audits, targeted outreach, and accessible service design, we commit to closing gaps in access and outcomes. This aligns with national carer strategies, the Equality Act 2010, and our own values of compassion, respect, and fairness.

We also recognise that our internal culture must reflect the inclusivity we strive for externally. We are committed to creating a diverse and welcoming environment for staff, where all team members feel respected, valued, and have autonomy and purpose. This includes reviewing recruitment practices to reduce bias, embedding regular EDI training, and strengthening policies that support inclusive leadership and progression.

Income Diversification & Sustainability

To deliver consistent, high-quality services for carers, we must build a resilient funding base. Dependence on single contracts or short-term grants puts continuity at risk. Prioritising income diversification—including trusts, corporate partnerships, community fundraising, and multi-year funding—will futureproof our organisation and enable us to respond flexibly to emerging needs. This work is not only about sustainability but about growth, innovation, and deeper community and partner ownership of our mission.

Scaling Welfare Benefits and Mental Health Support

Navigating the benefits system is complex and emotionally draining, particularly for carers managing multiple responsibilities. Many miss out on vital entitlements, increasing financial pressure and poor mental health. Our advice services have already secured significant income for carers, and demand continues to grow. Mental health remains a top concern for carers, yet access to appropriate support is patchy. Scaling these services ensures more carers receive holistic help, reducing stress, improving wellbeing, and strengthening families' resilience.

Property & Premises Sustainability

Our ability to deliver welcoming, accessible, and safe spaces for carers—and a healthy working environment for staff and volunteers—depends on fit-for-purpose premises. Prioritising property sustainability means we can improve user experience, accommodate future growth, and operate cost-efficiently. Whether through modest improvements or capital development, investing in our physical infrastructure is an investment in our community presence and long-term operational stability.

Cross-Cutting Foundations

Staff well-being

We believe that the wellbeing of our staff and volunteers is not just a value but a foundation for delivering high-quality, compassionate services to carers. Over the next three years, we are committed to building and sustaining a culture where people feel safe, trusted, included, and supported to do meaningful work.

- Develop a structured wellbeing and inclusion action plan, co-designed with staff and volunteers.
- Expand access to reflective practice, training, and leadership development.
- Ensure all staff and volunteers are equipped with modern, fit-for-purpose digital tools, systems, and physical environments that support both service delivery and individual wellbeing.
- Measure wellbeing through regular surveys, supervision feedback, and organisational health metrics—and act on what we learn.

Governance & Leadership

Strong, skilled, and diverse governance is vital to ensuring that Carers' Support (Bexley) remains mission-led, accountable, and responsive to the changing needs of carers and the communities we serve.

Over the next three years, we will invest in the development and sustainability of our Board of Trustees to ensure it provides robust leadership, strategic oversight, and lived experience insight.

- **Planned Succession:** We will implement a structured 3-year trustee recruitment and succession plan, ensuring continuity of leadership while welcoming fresh perspectives.
- **Business continuity:** Staff and volunteers are regularly briefed on their roles in continuity planning, and the plan is reviewed and tested annually.
- **Diversity and Representation:** We are committed to expanding board diversity—in background, skills, identity, and experience—so our governance better reflects the communities we serve.
- **Skills and Performance:** We will introduce annual self-reviews and skills audits to identify gaps, develop trustee competencies, and support a culture of reflection and learning at board level.

Excellence in Quality and Assurance

We are committed to embedding a culture of quality, safety, and continuous improvement across all services. Led by the Chief Executive, our quality assurance framework ensures that all activities are delivered to a high standard, remain resilient during disruption, and evolve in response to feedback and external benchmarks such as the **Advice Quality Standard (AQS)**.

Over the next three years we will:

- Conduct regular and robust internal quality file/case audits and deliver quarterly quality monitoring reports across all service lines.
- Review and test the Business Continuity Plan with staff.
- Collate and analyse annual carer and partner feedback for quality improvements.
- Integrate lived experience into quality reviews
- Publish a 3-year “Quality and Learning Review” to share insights and trends.

Monitoring & Evaluation

We are committed to using evidence, insight, and reflection to continually improve our impact, remain accountable to our community, and plan purposefully for the future.

Our approach to monitoring and evaluation will ensure that our strategic priorities are not only clearly defined, but actively tracked, understood, and refined in partnership with those who use and deliver our services.

- **KPI Tracking:** We will develop and maintain a strategic dashboard to monitor progress against key performance indicators (KPIs) on a quarterly basis, enabling timely decision-making and early identification of emerging issues or successes.

- Inclusive Feedback: We will regularly gather feedback from carers, partners, staff, and volunteers through surveys, focus groups, supervision, and informal input—ensuring our services evolve with real experiences at the centre.
- Annual Impact and Planning Meeting: Each year, we will convene a joint Impact and Planning Meeting with trustees, staff, and volunteers to reflect on outcomes, share learning, and shape the direction for the year ahead.

Further contact and information

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<https://www.carerssupport.org/>

Appendix A: Organisational chart

5. Appendices

Appendix A: Organisation chart

CARERS SUPPORT (BEXLEY)

