



**If you care,  
we care.**

A Network Partner of  
**CARERS TRUST**

Carers Support Centre  
Bristol & South Gloucestershire



**Carers Support Centre  
Impact Report 20/21**

## Carers have been hard hit by Covid 19

Carers have been hard hit by Covid 19 with 81% providing more care. On average, UK carers are now caring for a staggering 65 hours per week, with 70% of carers providing more care due to local services reducing or closing.<sup>1</sup>

Carers are playing a crucial role in the pandemic effort. The health and social care sector has been completely reliant on unpaid carers, and they have saved the country over £135 billion.<sup>2</sup> And they have done so behind closed doors; largely unrecognised, unsupported and facing increased isolation, anxiety and exhaustion.

58% carers have seen their physical health impacted by caring through the pandemic, while 64% said their mental health has worsened.<sup>3</sup> 72% of carers have not been able to take any breaks since the start of the pandemic.<sup>4</sup> In South Gloucestershire this figure is more alarming at 77%. 81% South Gloucestershire carers said that the changes in caring responsibilities have impacted on their health and wellbeing.<sup>5</sup>

A lot has changed during this challenging year, but what hasn't changed is our commitment to supporting carers. Most of our services have traditionally been provided face-to-face and we acted very quickly to adapt to a digital world. We made big changes to move service delivery online, including activity and peer support groups, training, careers cafes, fun activities for young carers, open meetings, assessments and one-to-one support.



In addition, we responded to Covid 19, by helping carers put together personal emergency plans, should they or the person they care for become ill; and providing regular check in and welfare calls for the most vulnerable and at risk carers. We worked with GP practices to ensure carers' registers were up-to-date and carers were being recognised as a priority group for vaccines; and promoted the vaccine roll out to carers, working with statutory and other voluntary sector partners.

Unsurprisingly, this year has shown us that 'one size does not fit all'. Some carers have found online support helpful, as they cannot leave the person they look after; while others value the chance to speak to someone face-to-face.

Looking forward, we will take our online learning and develop a 'blended' model of support. With demand always increasing, we hope this will help us meet the varied needs of carers appropriately and sustainably.

Tim Poole, Chief Executive

<sup>1</sup> Carers UK: Caring behind closed doors, 2020  
<sup>2</sup> Carers UK: Unseen and undervalued, 2020  
<sup>3</sup> Carers UK: Caring behind closed doors, 2020.  
<sup>4</sup> Carers UK: Breaks or breakdown, 2021  
<sup>5</sup> South Glos Council, 2021

## Carers Support Centre

Many carers do not consider themselves to be a carer – they are just looking after someone who needs help and getting on with what needs to be done. In order to care safely and in good health, carers of all ages need information, support, respect and recognition.

Carers Support Centre Bristol and South Gloucestershire is an independent charity, and network partner of Carers Trust. All our services are free and include:

- Carers emergency card
- Confidential telephone support line and online help
- One-to-one support and carers' groups
- Activities for carers to take some time out
- Short breaks service
- Employment support
- Counselling, befriending and mentoring
- Training for carers and professionals
- Support for young carers

Contact us

**CarersLine:**  
0117 965 2200

**Email:**  
carersline@carerssupportcentre.org.uk

**www.carerssupportcentre.org.uk**





We carried out 1,065 Carers Assessments

We registered 1,867 new carers

CarersLine took 4,141 calls from carers

We provided 1:1 telephone support to 1,277 carers, offering information, support, advocacy

## Covid didn't stop us supporting carers

"Caring is a 24/7 role and the fear of catching Covid-19 and leaving my husband without care is tremendous. Knowing there is Carers Support Centre at the end of the phone for help, support, advice or even just to listen is very important." Amanda

"There are a lot of things to 'sort out' when you become a carer for someone - there's financial issues, so many numbers to call - Carers Support Centre has been wonderful." Tim

"After the assessment I felt lighter and brighter." Jess

"My caring responsibilities have increased quite a bit. I'm now at my parents' home everyday, all day. I'm more tired. But thanks to Carers Support Centre, I know how to set my own boundaries. I also get to be part of a huge group of people who also care." Carina

## We supported carers in GP practices and hospitals

"You were brilliant when you supported me recently while I was providing care and support in the hospital to my daughter, during her admission. Having you as a point of contact really helped me through a difficult time." Mary

"The referral to your service has made all the difference in supporting the patient and his family to access the assessments he needs and appropriately plan for next steps from here." Frailty team at North Bristol NHS Trust



Our health team has achieved:

39% increase in referrals at North Bristol Trust

12.5% increase in referrals at University Hospitals Bristol and Weston

123% increase in the number of young carers registered with their GP practice

## We supported carers' wellbeing

85% of carers who had counselling reported an overall improvement in their wellbeing

69% of carers who received befriending or mentoring phonecalls reported feeling less isolated and more connected to people in their community

"I found it such a help to have someone to talk to each week. I didn't want the sessions to end. I would settle in my room and light a candle for my session with Rachel. I set aside that hour each week totally for myself and found it amazing support." Anne

"Mentoring is positive, encouraging and gives you incentive and motivation. It's nice to touch base with another adult in a similar situation to me." Sajid



We gave 116 carers counselling

We gave 47 carers regular befriending or mentoring



We sent 10,489 carers regular information

110,815 people visited our website

2,700 people kept up-to-date on social media

## We kept carers connected

We have stayed in touch online through monthly carers' groups, caring courses and workshops, e-bulletins, and webinars. We've also posted 3 issues of our magazine, Carers News, straight to carers' doorsteps.

"If I could not get Carers News, I would be completely isolated. I do not know how I would cope. Carers News is my only contact with the outside world." Jerry

"The chance to participate in an online mindfulness course, has been an absolute godsend. I can see benefits both for my own health and for my ability to care patiently, effectively and kindly for my wife." Mike

"I have valued attending the carers' meeting, which has helped with isolation and being a carer at home. Thank you for all your help." Sue



We issued **884**  
Carers Emergency  
Cards

## We gave carers reassurance

“ I fell down the stairs at my home and suffered a head injury. I care for my elderly mother and I handed my Carers Emergency Card to the paramedic who assured me they would call the number on the front of my card. The emergency response team went to see mum and continued to pop in for a couple of days. Meals on wheels were arranged and a supply of her medication in dosette boxes arrived. Goodness knows what would have happened if I hadn't had the card. I'm sure it aided my recovery not being constantly worried about the situation at home. I would urge anybody who doesn't have one of these magic cards to get one as soon as possible.” Sue

“ Carrying a Carers Emergency Card gives me great confidence, particularly when I'm out. I know that if something happened to me unexpectedly my son would be checked on.” Lou

## We empowered carers to speak out

This year, carer representatives attended Bristol Learning Disability Partnership Board meetings to finalise a Quality Standards document, which has been presented to Bristol City Council commissioners.

They also engaged with Healthwatch Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire to improve dementia services, and worked with South Gloucestershire Council to develop a survey to understand carers' experiences throughout the Covid-19 pandemic.

Meanwhile, our Young Carers Voice members have delivered young carers awareness training for professionals, raised awareness of young carers in the BRI emergency department, and helped to shape Bristol City Council's Young Carers Strategy. Members also contributed to Young Adult Carers service design and delivery proposals.



# We helped carers into employment

Kelly attended regular one-to-one sessions with one of our support workers, to get support with updating her CV, preparing for interviews and writing job applications. Abi helped Kelly identify part-time job roles and where to find them. In lockdown, Kelly managed to secure her first online job interview.

“ I am over the moon. It’s only with your help building my confidence that I got the job out of 60 applicants! I still can’t quite believe it! ” Kelly



We supported 14 carers to find flexible carer-friendly employment



We gave 191 young carers a needs assessment

We provided 314 breaks from caring

We supported 436 young carers

Our one-to-one support increased by 25%

# We supported young carers

Young carers have never needed support more. Since the pandemic, their mental health is worse and two thirds feel stressed, are less connected and more worried about the future<sup>6</sup>. They are providing more physical and emotional care and the impact of this is severe. 92% are anxious or worried, 79% are low or depressed, 77% struggle to sleep, 30% experience panic attacks and 14% self-harm<sup>7</sup>.

We provided crucial one-to-one support and breaks for young carers with online and small group activities including cooking, dance, boxing, drama; and planting and painting in our young carers garden.

“ Caring can affect you mentally, I sometimes get stressed out. Young Carers helps you to cope. I have made some really good friends and my best friend is from Young Carers. It’s amazing. ” Lily

Our Young Carers in Schools programme grew to 87 members; and we supported 10 member schools to get bronze and silver awards. We worked with schools to check in with young carers; and encouraged schools to provide achievable educational goals during lockdown, to limit the negative impact on young carers’ educational prospects.

<sup>6</sup> Carers Trust: impact of coronavirus on young carers, 2020  
<sup>7</sup> Carers Support Centre young carers annual survey, August 2020

## I can't leave my husband alone

Amanda cares for her husband who is severely sight impaired. She's recently signed up to be a Carer Representative, to campaign for carers.

“ Becoming a carer crept on up me, as my husband's eyesight loss was gradual at first. For the first few years it was a minor inconvenience to him, but then his eye condition accelerated resulting in him being registered as severely sight impaired.

For me I would describe being a carer as rewarding, challenging and lonely. It is difficult at times to remember I am still an individual as life quickly becomes centred on the person you care for. Perhaps the biggest challenge is maintaining a balance as a 'normal couple' when caring for my husband. I am aware that support is available but as some of my husband's care needs are personal he doesn't want anyone else to do it.

For a long time I didn't recognise that I was a carer. It was a gradual transformation from doing things you take for granted as a couple to being relied upon. It is a life changing event that no one prepares you for. I first heard of Carers Support Centre by chance when I found a leaflet at the Health Centre, and read their definition of a carer: caring is looking after someone who couldn't manage without you. That was what clicked for me.

I wish I had known about this sooner! By this time juggling work and caring was wearing me out. My employer had a flexible attitude towards parents, but not to carers, making it hard to plan any holidays as annual leave needed to be reserved for caring duties.



Carers Support Centre were able to help me with support and tools, such as a Carers Emergency Card and a Carer's Passport, to take to my employer. It was also great to be part of a Carers Week exhibition, and to have three of my photographs on display.

Caring is a 24/7 role and the fear of catching Covid-19 and leaving my husband without care is tremendous. It increases the isolation too. I found it hard when we came out of lockdown and people said 'yay it's back to normal'. Not for some of us it isn't. I can't leave my husband alone and I still can't see my friends and family.

Knowing there is Carers Support Centre at the end of the phone for help, support, advice or even just to listen is very important. “

## I used to keep feelings and thoughts to myself

Georgia is 16 years old and cares for her father, who suffers from chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, epilepsy and depression. She and her dad live alone and Georgia is his primary carer. She cleans the house, goes shopping, looks after the dog, organises appointments and medication. She also has to read and write for her dad who is illiterate, gives him emotional support, and gets up in the night to help him if he has a fit.

When we assessed Georgia, she told us her dad was her top priority. Georgia didn't leave the house and tried to miss school because she was so scared for her dad. She sometimes forgot to feed herself and didn't have the energy to get washed and dressed. She had a whole host of feelings that she struggled to express - angry, lonely, sad, tired, stressed, jealous, embarrassed. She told us that she self-harmed and sometimes had suicidal thoughts.

Georgia took part in our pilot 'Walk and Talk' project, aimed at young adult carers. She and her key worker met up for walks and, using active listening, they explored some goals that Georgia wanted to achieve. She wanted to improve her mental health, physical stamina and confidence in her caring role. She also wanted to feel less anxious, lonely and upset. Due to Georgia's anxiety around leaving the house, we began with walks close to her home, and gradually moved on to locations further away.

On the walks, we helped Georgia identify some practical steps to address her concerns about her dad's care. These included a referral to Families in Focus and a referral to adult social care for her father. We also arranged a phone call with Georgia's dad's GP so she could ask any questions she had about his care needs. Georgia and her keyworker rehearsed the questions together on their walks.



Now, Georgia feels less anxious and more relaxed and confident in her caring role. She says:

“ I am stressing and panicking less. Getting scared of what could happen while I am outside has improved, I don't see as much danger as I used to. At some points I have still been really upset, but my mood has improved and I don't feel as sad as I used to be all the time. I now try to think more of the good things rather than the bad and can use strategies to help me if I get sad.

I used to keep feelings and thoughts to myself, but now I am really open and honest about how I feel. I am going out more on my own and with other people for walks now. My walking stamina has improved a lot. I went for a 2-hour walk with dad this week. I used to manage maybe 10 minutes at a time and couldn't handle long distances, I used to just moan about my legs hurting!

These walks are really relaxing because you can talk about stuff and you can go back home with your life feeling really relaxed and your mind clear of any stressful stuff. My boyfriend and dad have both noticed I am more calm. “

# We couldn't have done it alone

Our 127 volunteers contributed 1,248 hours to help us support carers

46% of our volunteers are carers or former carers

“ I feel I'm doing something useful and worthwhile and it's great to talk with other carers and feel you are making a contribution. ”  
Karen

100% of volunteers would recommend volunteering for Carers Support Centre

Our staff team stepped up to ensure continued service provision during the pandemic. And we supported them through our staff wellbeing programme, which includes flexible working, reflective practice sessions, peer support, telephone counselling service, staff wellbeing newsletter and online sessions.



Our work is funded by Bristol City Council, South Gloucestershire Council and NHS Bristol, North Somerset and South Gloucestershire Clinical Commissioning Group, The National Lottery Community Fund, European Social Fund.

In addition, we want to thank all the trusts who have supported us in the last year. They include Bristol Charities, Bristol City Council Youth Sector Support Fund, Bristol Masonic Benevolent Institution, Carers Trust, Co-op Local Community Fund, Coronavirus Response Fund, Denman Charitable Trust, Fulmer Charitable Trust, Garfield Weston Foundation, John James Bristol Foundation, John Lewis Community Matters Scheme, Mark Benevolent Fund, Masonic Charitable Foundation, Novia Foundation, Quartet Community Foundation, Sport England Tackling Inequalities Fund, Sunrise Foundation, The Nisbet Trust, The Honourable Company of Gloucestershire Charitable Trust, The Julia and Hans Rausing Trust.

Thanks also to our community funders.



Thanks to Carers Trust and Invisible Army for granting permission to use their images. Carers Trust images are posed by models. Our thanks go to the local carers who collaborated with Invisible Army. You can find out more about their work at: [www.invisiblearmy.org](http://www.invisiblearmy.org)

Designed by Rebecca James  
[rebeccajames.myportfolio.com](http://rebeccajames.myportfolio.com)