



SOUTH TEES CARERS STRATEGY 2021-2026

March 2021

This strategy sets out the priorities across the South Tees region for the identification and support of unpaid Carers of all ages. The Strategy is produced jointly between Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council and Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group.

*'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**.'*¹

Our vision is to improve services, support, recognition and outcomes for unpaid Carers of all ages and backgrounds in South Tees

Background

Unpaid Carers of all ages across the UK provide a vital care and support network to their loved ones, the value of which should not be underestimated by health and social care services who would otherwise struggle to meet the support requirements that Carers absorb on their behalf. The 2011 UK census showed that there were approximately 6.5 million people of all ages providing unpaid care to a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill. However, a 2019 poll published by Carers UK indicates that this number could now be closer to 8.8 million. The number of people aged 65 years or over has also grown from 1.4million in 2011 to potentially over 2 million in 2019.

An Office for National Statistics report highlighted that in 2016 there were a total of 7.9 billion hours of unpaid care provided in the UK, the equivalent to just over 4 million adult social care workers working delivering their average weekly hours for every week of the year every week of an entire year. Despite the importance of unpaid Carers to the social care system, results from the 2018-19 National Carers Survey showed that outcomes for Carers appear to be worsening rather than improving. Over-all Carer quality of life scores had decreased on a national and regional level when compared to the 2016-17 survey. In addition, the number of Carers who said that their caring role had made them feel stressed had increased, as too had the number of Carers reporting that the caring role had caused them significant financial difficulty.

Young Carers

2011 census information showed that there were 166,000 young Carers between the ages of 5-17 providing support to a parent or sibling with illnesses or disabilities in the UK. However, The Children's Society estimate that this figure is closer to 800,000, largely due to the number of young Carers who remain unidentified. On a regional level, ONS data shows that there are approximately 2,500 Young or Young Adult Carers across South Tees between the ages of 0-24.

Statistics show that as many as 27% of young Carers aged 11-15 miss school due to their caring role, and 39% of Young Carers report that nobody within their school was aware of their caring responsibility. Also, research by the Carers Trust revealed that 38% of young Carers had experienced problems with their mental health.

It is also important to consider the support that young Carers need when transitioning to adulthood. Nationally there are approximately 300,000 young Carers in the 16-24 age category, yet according to

¹ [NHS England reference to the definition of Carers](#)

Children's Society research only 13% of these Young Carers had received a Young Carers Transition Assessment. Early identification and support of Young Carers is vitally important to ensure that caring is not detrimental to the education and life opportunities of young people.

South Tees Demographic & Geographic Comparisons

Both Middlesbrough and Redcar & Cleveland have similar population sizes and comparable numbers of unpaid Carers estimated to be living within their boundaries, approximately 14,000 and 16,000 respectively. However, there are some notable differences in the geographical make-up of the two local authorities with Middlesbrough being a more densely populated urban area compared to Redcar & Cleveland which has more sparsely populated rural towns particularly in the east of the locality, meaning transport and access to services can be more of a challenge for many Redcar & Cleveland residents.

In addition, Middlesbrough has a much more diverse population, with a greater number of black, Asian and other minority ethnic communities (11.8%) than Redcar & Cleveland (1.5%) and there is a higher percentage of people aged 65 and over living in the Redcar & Cleveland area (22.3%) compared to Middlesbrough (16.2%).

Middlesbrough ranks much more poorly than Redcar & Cleveland on the Index of Multiple Deprivation scale by local authority areas in England, however both local authorities are far below the national average rank (Redcar 40, and Middlesbrough 5), meaning that there are significant health and wellbeing and socio-economic challenges affecting the population of both boroughs. In relation to unpaid care within the two boroughs only one other local authority area in England reports a higher percentage of residents providing one or more hours of unpaid care per week than Redcar & Cleveland (11.9%), with Middlesbrough falling just above the national average with 10.2%. (statistics taken from The Local Government Association).

Data from the 2018/19 national Carers survey informed us that Carers in both Redcar & Cleveland and Middlesbrough were reporting a lower quality of life and lower over-all satisfaction with services than they had previously in 2016/17.

The above statistics are a sample of some of the challenges that must inform the range of support that is offered to unpaid Carers within the South Tees area. A new Carer Strategy represents an ideal opportunity to bring about a significant change in outcomes for Carers across South Tees.

National Agenda Informing Local Action

The Carers Action Plan 2018 -20: Support Carers Today outlined the cross-government programme of work to support Carers in England over two years and built on the National Carers Strategy. It retains the strategic vision for recognising, valuing and supporting Carers which has been the vision of successive governments. It sets out the present Government's commitment to supporting Carers through 64 actions across five priorities emerging from the Carers Call for Evidence. The actions focus on delivery and tangible progress and give visibility to the wide range of planned work. Future provision across South Tees will be developed in line with this vision and work will be undertaken locally to establish real outcomes for Carers.

The ambition is to align Carer services into one shared all-age Carer Strategy for South Tees from 2020 onwards. There is a raft of local policy and guidance in existence and it makes sense to streamline this and understand the context for a South Tees approach.

Aligning services and commissioning across South Tees seems like a natural step forward, but also an opportunity to revamp the way we deliver support in the region to our Carers, based on some of the national and regional context.

Our Vision

The vision is that, through a joint commissioning approach, an equitable and efficient offer is provided for Carers across South Tees, ensuring that local authority boundaries do not represent boundaries to services. At the same time a collaborative approach to services aligns with the priorities of the South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board and the strategic vision for joining up health and social care.

We are committed to ensuring Carers are supported across South Tees in a range of ways. As part of a joined-up and inclusive approach we will:

- Value Carers as real and expert partners in care
- Ensure Carers have access to a wide range of support and supportive opportunities
- Focus on prevention to help avoid Carer breakdown
- Raise awareness amongst the public and staff
- Work in partnership and Integrate our ways of working
- Develop a Strengths Based Approach to build on individual Carer's strengths and resources to make positive personal change

Strategic Aims

The development of the Strategy has been led by Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council and Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group, who together form the South Tees Joint Commissioning Group for Carers Services in South Tees.

The Strategy has been prepared in consultation with South Tees Carers Forum, which consists of over 100 representatives from organisations across South Tees, including: Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council and Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group; Carers and organisations supporting Carers; children's and adult social care services; public health; voluntary and community sector organisations and networks; primary and acute care providers; education, employment and skills; business; and housing.

The process of developing this Strategy from Winter 2019 to Spring 2021, has helped build a common vision and ownership amongst partners and stakeholders. There is real commitment to working together in new ways, sharing expertise, improving collaboration and ensuring Carers voices are heard and their lived experience taken into account. The Covid-19 pandemic has made this even more of a priority, as it has exacerbated the challenges of Carers and the people they care for, as well as increasing pressure on services.

The Strategy will be approved by the South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board and is recommended for adoption by all Forum partners. The governance and review arrangements are on p12.

The South Tees Carers Strategy recognises and is informed by:

- Carers' experiences, needs and views
- the ongoing, serious impact and implications of the Covid-19 pandemic
- the breadth of expertise and existing services and support for Carers from:
 - organisations with statutory responsibilities – local authorities and NHS services
 - commissioned services designed to provide specialist support to Carers
 - the wider infrastructure of services and support from the public, private and voluntary and community sector which provides support to people in South Tees, some of whom are Carers
- partners' commitment to collaborate and maximise their combined expertise, reach and resources to address challenges and gaps and to improve integrated working, referral and support for Carers
- the need to reflect Strategy objectives and outcomes across wider policy, planning and services

The National Carers Action Plan 2018-20 contains key strands that are based on evidence and feedback from Carers. To ensure we work in line with local and national priorities, we have based our strategic aims on the five themes in the National Plan with a focus on the specific needs of Carers in our region.

The five themes are:

1. Services and systems that work for Carers
2. Employment and financial wellbeing
3. Supporting Young Carers
4. Recognising and supporting Carers in the wider community and society
5. Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for Carers

Key Objectives have been set in line with each of the five themes to form key priority areas for South Tees. By setting a series of Primary Outcomes in each of the five themes we anticipate that they will act as our indicators for successful delivery of the Objectives.

The National Carers Action Plan was set to conclude in the summer of 2020 with a report expected from the Department of Health & Social Care on the achievements made and the priorities for Carer support going into 2021 and beyond. However, in light of the Covid-19 global pandemic, it is anticipated that there will be a delay to any revised national guidance being published.

Impact of the Covid-19 pandemic

The global Covid-19 pandemic has brought unprecedented challenges and pressures on every aspect of people's lives and to all organisations and services. The implications and impacts are likely to continue for many years. Ongoing national directives, regulations and policy changes in response to the pandemic will continue to affect everyone and the strategies, planning and delivery of services and support across health and social care, education, housing, employment, communities and the economy.

The impact on Carers has been significant and has exacerbated many of the issues and challenges that they had prior to Covid-19, as well as bringing new challenges for them and for the services and support they need:

- The value of unpaid care is estimated at £530 million/day during the pandemic - caring responsibilities and time spent caring has increased, without access to breaks or respite
- Carers feel socially isolated and many have had a decline in physical and emotional health and wellbeing
- Carers have suffered due to the reduction or suspension of face-to-face services and support, for instance, day services, domiciliary services, homecare, respite and sitting services to name a few Carers wary of resuming these due to concerns over safety for themselves and the people they care for
- They suffer from not being able to engage in community groups and activities and to take a break
- There has been a challenge in accessing primary care and acute health services
- Online services and telephone support can only go so far and many Carers, of all ages and backgrounds have struggled, find it difficult or are not able or willing to access support in this way
- Young Carers have struggled to engage in education with their increased caring responsibilities and many are significantly impacted in terms of their social isolation, education and social development
- Carers' financial resilience has decreased - for those Carers who were working, their ability or options to continue have decreased and for those who want to work, access to training and employment is increasingly difficult

South Tees response

Significant consideration to the after-effects of the covid-19 pandemic will be integrated into any future planning of Carer support services across South Tees. As the future landscape remains uncertain, it is vital that services for Carers are delivered flexibly and are able to respond to newly identified needs in a swift and effective manner.

Any revised or new directives from the government going forward will be incorporated into the development of services across South Tees.

1. Services and systems that work for Carers

Carers often have extensive contact with the health and social care system, so it is important that services value and involve Carers. Services and systems should bear consideration to the diversity of Carers and their circumstances, from an elderly neighbour, to a Young Adult Carer and including someone serving in the armed forces. They also need to be responsive and flexible, recognising and supporting Carers at different stages in the caring journey. The actions below target the way health and care systems support Carers. They are designed to improve awareness and understanding among health professionals and social workers, and work with local government to ensure Carers are able to access the support they are entitled to.

Overarching Objectives

- To ensure Covid-19 recovery plans take account of Carers' views and the pandemic's impact on them
- To improve the awareness about Carers with health and social care professionals, frontline workers and relevant services, to increase the identification of Carers and relevant responses to their needs
- To ensure Carers can access health and social care services in a way appropriate and personal to them
- To take Carers' views into account and facilitate representation across services and systems
- To commission services based on evidence, which are responsive to the identified needs of Carers
- To improve the collective knowledge, connections and communication between services in South Tees

We need to address gaps between health and social care services that impact significantly on Carers. Often there is health support available for the cared for person but not to the Carer, and they may not be included in discussions, planning and decision making.

We need to improve the flexibility and support around Personalisation in line with Care Act and Children & Family Act duties to ensure Carers are provided with the resources they need to enable them to care for as long as they wish to do so.

The population across South Tees is ageing. We need to identify and support older Carers and Carers of people with dementia.

We need to reach Carers in the community that are not known to services, especially those supporting people with mental health, substance misuse or domestic violence issues by building community capacity and developing support networks.

Carers need identifying and informing early in the Carer journey not just at point of crisis. We will work alongside Carers to provide information in different formats, particularly the use of social media, and in different venues.

The system tends to operate on a 9-5 basis, which means that many people can only access services in that time and there are gaps at weekends and evenings. We will work together to make sure we commission services for Carers that are flexible and accessible to all.

In times when budgets are tight, we need to explore funding options and sharing of resources to support Carers.

GPs are often the first people to come into contact with Carers. We will encourage and provide support to the newly formed Primary Care Networks to adopt the NHS England 'Quality Standards for Carer Friendly GP Practices' 2019 to provide support to help build Carers resilience and avoid crisis situations.

Primary Outcomes

- Training will be available to health & social care professionals, knowledge gaps will be identified and new ideas developed
- Mechanisms will be in place to routinely collect the views of Carers in the community
- A marketing campaign will be in place to provide Carers in the community with information in a range of formats in different venues across South Tees to provide community-based information
- Carer services across health & social care will have been mapped to identify gaps
- Carers in the community, particularly those not known to services are identified and community capacity and support developed
- Commissioned services will be developed based on local intelligence
- Regularly collect, collate and analyse Carers' views and feedback to inform services and support and promote
- Partners work collectively under the We Care You Care brand and have a clear communications and engagement plan across South Tees to increase knowledge and awareness of services and support, improve the identification engagement of Carers and ensure effective referrals and signposting

2. Employment and financial wellbeing

Many Carers told us about the difficulties they face balancing work and performing a caring role. At the same time many are struggling to make ends meet, leading to financial hardship which in turn puts further pressure on the caring role. Where an employer is made aware of an employee with caring responsibilities, they can take simple but effective action to enable Carers to balance their caring and employment responsibilities. It makes good business sense to consider what flexible working practices might help both the employer and employee.

Overarching Objectives

- To raise the profile of Carers and encourage employers to improve their working practices to enable Carers to continue to work alongside their caring role.
- To provide support and training to Carers to help them to return to work, and at a level that is commensurate with their skills and experience.
- To assist Carers who want to work to do so

Many employers support Carers well in the workplace. We will endeavour to encourage others to develop Carer-friendly work practices and help them to become 'Carer Confident' employers and become part of nationally recognised the national Carers benchmarking Schemes.

We recognise that small employers cannot offer the same support as large employers. Smaller employers probably know their staff very well and their personal circumstances, but they will not necessarily have the capacity to absorb demand. This is a challenge that we will endeavour to address alongside these organisations.

Some working Carers are losing their jobs and some are losing their homes or getting into financial crises because of their caring roles. We will explore how we can help prevent financial crisis for Carers.

We need to challenge the instinct to give up work immediately by providing support and advice on staying in work or support Carers to change to more appropriate jobs that may be more flexible, should they not want to give up working. We will promote flexible working and its benefits to increase opportunities for Carers to return to work or continue to work alongside their caring role.

We recognise that returning to work is very individual and is different to being forced back into work. Care should be right for those who want to return.

Primary Outcomes

- Carer friendly work practices across South Tees will be developed, adopting any nationally recognised scheme. South Tees Carer Strategy partners will take a 'lead-by-example' role in policy development.
- DWP and Welfare Rights will support Carers to access the benefits they are entitled to and the support to stay in work or education
- Young Carers have a smooth, supported transition to adulthood and co-ordinated services helping them to engage in education, training or employment if they wish to, or are able to do so, alongside caring roles
- Better integration, awareness and referrals across services to ensure Carers who want to work have better access to training and employment, with relevant support in place for the cared for and their skills valued

3. Supporting Young Carers

Young Carers can suffer with poorer health and wellbeing, often missing out on education and training opportunities. Improved identification of Young Carers, to enable assessments that identify support needs alongside flexible educational opportunities is vital to providing support. This can ensure that Young Carers are able to access opportunities and have the same life chances as other young people that do not have caring responsibilities.

There are a substantial number of young Carers in the UK aged under 18. Estimates vary widely from 195,000 (2011 census) to as many as 700,000 ([Barnardo's 2017](#)). The wide variation in the estimates of numbers of young Carers emphasises the challenges of identifying them. We know that more needs to be done to support young Carers; 67% of young Carers who responded to the Call for Evidence told us they have not received any support. There is evidence that caring responsibilities can have a detrimental impact on the young person's personal, social and educational development and their health and wellbeing ([Local Government Association](#)).

Overarching Objectives

- To address the impact of caring on young people and on their education and life chances
- To develop training for social workers and other professionals around identifying Young Carers and assessing their needs
- To improve Young Carers' access to support services to make sure they are properly supported at an early stage and that interventions are put in place promptly where necessary
- To improve support for Young Adult Carers to enable them to make positive transitions between the ages of 16-24

We will build on the learning from local and national Young Carers services to empower young people and give them a voice, enabling them to take positive steps and actions for themselves and their communities. Many young people use social media platforms to reach and enable Young Carers to communicate with each other. We will utilise these mechanisms to provide support.

Awareness of the needs of Young Carers in schools and colleges is vital. We will develop mechanisms to encourage educational establishments to support those in their care and help them reach their full potential.

We will work with Adult and Children's Social Services to identify Young Carers, carry out needs assessments and provide family support particularly those in transition

We will listen to the voice of Young Carers and value their input in developing services to meet their needs particularly those from disadvantaged and seldom heard groups

Primary Outcomes

- There will be positive working practices within health and social care services to identify and assess the needs of Young Carers and their families
- Social media platforms are developed to engage with Young Carers in the community
- Robust transition pathway plans will be developed and maintained between adult and young Carer services and social care across South Tees
- Integrated working across Education, Early Help, Health, Children's and Adult Social Services, alongside commissioned Young Carers' services will ensure a joined-up approach and consistent support for Young Carers and their families, reflected in policies, strategies and operational delivery across South Tees

- Schools across South Tees are aware of and supported to engage with the Young Carers in School Award and identify Young Carers Champions to improve awareness of and positive outcomes for Young Carers
- Transition of Young Carers to Young Adult Carers is co-ordinated across children's and adult services, as well as across all Strategy themes and Action Plans and wider services and support

4. Recognising and supporting Carers in the wider community and society

Many Carers have little contact with services to meet their needs and are not receiving formal support in their caring role. It is, therefore, vital that we work with partners beyond government to raise awareness of caring among the wider population to build Carer-friendly communities.

Beyond the health and care services, Carers need to be supported by the wider community. Businesses and services are often inflexible and Carers struggle to access services within a standard working day. Carers also tell us that recognition of their role in society is important to them and support in community settings can provide a valuable lifeline to them.

Overarching Objectives

- To increase recognition of Carers in society and their local communities and to improve their everyday experiences.
- To seek to better understand how loneliness affects Carers and find ways to combat it
- To work in partnership with Carers and agencies that support them to develop services to meet their needs
- Improve opportunities for Carers to have a life alongside caring, to be active citizens, less isolated, and more connected to family, friends, work, volunteering, education, training, learning and leisure.

Using technology can connect Carers particularly those isolated because of their caring role. We will work in partnership with organisations across South Tees to provide information in a variety of formats to cater for Carers of all ages and abilities.

It is important to deliver support to Carers where they live. We will endeavour to deliver services and support in community settings across South Tees and link developments to the NHS Long Term Plan and Social Prescribing.

We will encourage the adoption of 'Making Every Contact Count' initiatives to provide timely information and support

We will work alongside Primary Care Networks to provide support and improve early intervention to avoid crisis

We will endeavour to build links into communities that may otherwise not engage with Carers

We will support the national agenda for introducing the Carers Passport Scheme on a local South Tees level.

Primary Outcomes

- Information will be available to Carers in a range of formats and through multiple services, not just those traditionally seen as Carer support services
- We will have developed varied and innovative approaches to enable Carers to take a break from their caring role
- Technology will be in place to connect Carers, particularly those isolated because of their caring role
- We will have developed services at a community level which are Carer and dementia friendly and help Carers engage in social activities.
- There is a Carer passport scheme established across South Tees

5. Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for Carers

The original national Call for Evidence provided a rich and informative evidence base on the experience of Carers across the country and the changes they would like to see. The process also revealed gaps in our knowledge and we recognise that there is more we can do to develop the evidence base. We know that as our population continues to age and more people live longer, the numbers of people providing unpaid care will also increase and their role may become more complex. Therefore, it is increasingly important to do full justice to the role Carers play so that future policies to ensure they are supported are underpinned by a strong evidence base.

Overarching Objectives

- To build and expand on existing knowledge so that we can ensure we continue to develop policies and interventions that target support for Carers appropriately.
- To carry out research to improve the evidence base of information and data on Carers to inform future strategies to support them
- To use evidence to offer innovative solutions to support Carers

We will /apply as well as carry out research to provide us with an evidence base to help us understand Carers' experiences and what works in terms of services and support. This will be shared with decision makers to ensure Carers services are prioritised appropriately.

We will make sure commissioned services and projects are regularly assessed, with Carer input, to determine whether they are working and if not, why?

We will endeavour to engage more diverse groups in research and offer a range of ways to share loved experience to enter in to dialog with more Carers.

We will track Carer-defined outcomes and statistical data across services across South Tees to make sure we understand their needs.

Primary Outcomes

- Commissioned Carer support services are regularly and rigorously monitored
- Relevant and robust outcomes data is gathered by Carer services and used to inform future service design and delivery
- New approaches will have been developed to engage Carers not already in receipt of commissioned support, in order to gain their views on the barriers and gaps in service
- Learning and recommendations from national research will be adopted where necessary.

Adoption, Governance and Review

The South Tees Carers Strategy is formally approved by Middlesbrough Council, Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group and by the South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board. It is recommended that statutory, voluntary and community and private sector partners also adopt the Strategy through their Boards and make a top-level commitment to support its vision, aims, objectives and outcomes and, where appropriate, the delivery of the Action Plan which supports the Strategy. It is anticipated this will achieve transformation on a bigger scale and enable provision that is built on people's needs rather than organisational boundaries.

Governance

The Care Act (2014) and Children and Families Act (2014) place a legal requirement on local authorities and all agencies involved in public care to adopt integration, co-operation and partnership approaches to delivering services. This is in line with the strategic vision of the South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board for joining up health and social care across South Tees.

The South Tees Joint Commissioning Group, involving commissioners from Redcar & Cleveland Borough Council, Middlesbrough Council and NHS Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group, are responsible for producing, monitoring and reporting on the South Tees Carers Strategy and the Action Plan that supports it. The Group is responsible for working in partnership to support the commissioning of services to help meet the vision, aims and objectives of the Strategy and for monitoring these and managing their performance. To ensure accountability and transparency, the Group reports to, and is responsible to, the South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board.

The South Tees Carers' Forum was established in December 2019 and reports directly to the South Tees Commissioning Group. Its main objective is to act as an advisory body to help develop the South Tees Carers' Strategy and Action Plan, based on local and national priorities set out in the government's Carers' Action Plan 2018-20². The Forum brings together a broad constituency of partners and stakeholders. It enables the voice and views of Carers to be fed into and influence the Strategy and Action Plan, as well as raising awareness of Carers' needs, issues and challenges. The Forum promotes collaboration and integrated working between members in order to improve outcomes for Carers and may set up task groups on specific themes or issues.

We recognise that Carers views', voices and experiences are vitally important to inform the delivery of the Strategy. Not all Carers identify as such or engage with services and there is a need to engage Carers in a wide variety of ways and settings, which are relevant to them and their needs. Work carried out by the Forum will be shared across South Tees through public information campaigns. This will help identify and reach Carers and publicise services and support. It will raise awareness of the South Tees vision and partnership approach to services and support and gather views and information to inform the development of the South Tees Carers' Strategy.

Review

The Strategy will be reviewed and refreshed annually by the South Tees Joint Commissioning Group, in consultation with the South Tees Health and Wellbeing Board and the South Tees Carers Forum.

The Action Plan will be monitored on a quarterly basis by the South Tees Joint Commissioning Group and reported back to the South Tees Health & Wellbeing Board, the Senior Management Teams of the Local Authorities, Tees Valley Clinical Commissioning Group and the South Tees Carers Forum.