

All-Age Carers Strategy

Carers Matter – Our commitment
to carers in Walsall Council

2024-2027



Walsall Council





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Introduction

The purpose of this strategy is to highlight the role of carers in Walsall and outline our intentions for improving the wellbeing of carers living in the borough.

Our partnership with carers, young carers and their families, partner agencies, providers, health colleagues and community voluntary sector organisations is of paramount importance to deliver on the priorities highlighted in this strategy. Carers could be looking after someone who is a family member, partner or friend and need support to maintain their wellbeing and to support them in their caring role. We know that the support carers give is unpaid, underestimated and often undervalued. In this document we have set out our strategic aims and priorities to support:

- Unpaid carers
- Young adult carers
- Young carers

that are caring for family or friends living in Walsall. This strategy builds on the progress made over recent years in identifying and improving the experience and wellbeing for carers. We are incredibly grateful to the carers who have shared their experiences of what caring is like and what support they need. These views have shaped and informed the intentions in this strategy. We have included both national and local priorities with details of the proposed actions over the next 3 years. This strategy has been developed through a process of co-production and ongoing communication with carers, our Carer's Hub, the voluntary sector, Walsall young carers service and other key stakeholders. We promise to support you and acknowledge and recognise your caring role in Walsall. We aim to improve our understanding of the needs of our carers, and from this, help to design, shape and improve services in Walsall to meet these needs. Walsall will be a place where carers are recognised, valued, and supported. Carers will be able to achieve their full potential, live their lives with confidence and resilience and access quality services when they need it, and in a way that works best for them.

We want carers to be able to live a healthy and fulfilling life outside of their caring role.

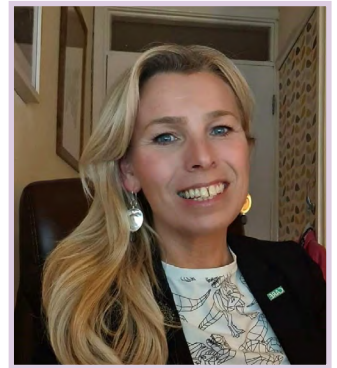
We would like to thank any carers in Walsall for the difference that they make to people's lives.



Our commitment to carers

As the Executive Directors of Adult and Children's Services we are proud to acknowledge the vital role that carers play in our community.

The selfless dedication and tireless work of carers is essential in supporting our residents to live with dignity in their own homes, and we are extremely grateful for their contribution. Our Carers Vision sets out an ambitious 3-year plan to build on our current work and improve further the identification, support and recognition for carers across the borough. We are committed to identifying and supporting more carers, to improve their wellbeing and quality of life.



The Council remains committed to delivering a range of measures to support carers in Walsall. These include increased access to information, advice, and practical support, as well as training, education, and respite services. We are passionate about ensuring that carers are recognised, valued and supported in every way possible. The Council is dedicated to working with carers to ensure that they receive the help they need to maintain their own wellbeing, and to continue caring for their loved ones, friends and neighbours. Finally, we would like to express our deep appreciation for the contribution that carers make to our communities, and we assure all carers in Walsall that we remain committed to providing the support they need to continue their vital work.



We recognise the crucial importance of identifying and supporting young carers in our borough, ensuring their unique needs are met. Through active listening and engagement, we have understood what is essential to them in providing effective support. Our strategy is designed to help young carers thrive, reach their potential, and make a successful transition to adulthood. By prioritising their wellbeing and offering targeted resources, we aim to create an environment where our young carers are empowered and can continue to flourish.

We look forward to working with carers to achieve our vision of a caring and supportive community for all.

Kerrie Allward
Executive Director - Adult Social Care

Colleen Male
Executive Director – Children's Services

Thank You

It's only right to start by thanking Walsall's carers – of all ages - for the invaluable role they play in our community.

It's because of their dedication and hard work, that many of our most vulnerable residents can continue to live with dignity, in their own homes, supported by people they know and trust.

The council recognises the immense contributions that carers make to our society 365 days a year, 24/7, and we remain committed to supporting you.

Caring can be a demanding and challenging role, and we want to assure all carers that the council will remain here to offer the help and support you may need.

We know that our carers are a diverse group of people, and it's important that the support they receive is useful to them and their circumstances.

We want our carers to be able to access information, advice, and practical assistance easily, without any extra fuss, so they can do what they do, whilst also looking after themselves and their wellbeing.

It's quite simple – we want our carers to receive the recognition, respect, and support they deserve, and we are committed to achieving this in every way possible.

Thank you for everything you do, and continue to do, for those you care for.



Councillor Keir Pedley
Portfolio Holder for Adult Social Care

Councillor Stacie Elson
Portfolio Holder for Children's Services

Who is considered to be a carer

A carer is anyone 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. If you are under the age of 18 you are defined as a young carer.

Many carers don't see themselves as carers and it takes them an average of two years to acknowledge their role as a carer. It can be difficult for carers to see their caring role as separate from the relationship they have with the person for whom they care, whether that relationship is as a parent, child, sibling, partner, or a friend. It's likely that every one of us will have caring responsibilities at some time in our lives with the challenges faced by carers taking many forms. Many carers juggle their caring responsibilities with work, school and study and other family and social commitments. Some are not known to be carers. They don't tell relatives, friends or health and care professionals about their responsibilities because of a fear of separation, guilt, pride or other reasons.

This means that the sort of roles and responsibilities that carers have to provide varies widely including emotional as well as practical support. They can range from help with everyday tasks such as getting out of bed and personal care such as bathing, to emotional support such as helping someone cope with the symptoms of a mental illness. (Definition – NHS England 2024) Young carers can have a wide range of caring roles and responsibilities, including house work, healthcare, intimate personal care and wider tasks such as translating for non-English speaking family members or managing the family budget. (Hidden from view – the Carers Society 2013)

Many people do not see themselves as carers because they are simply doing what they can for a relative, a friend or a loved one who needs them because of their disability or illness. Carers often put their lives on hold to provide care for a loved one, friend or relative. This care could be for a few hours a day or more and could be around the clock care.

Anyone can become a carer. Carers tell us that often they do not choose or plan to become carers, and caring responsibilities can arise unexpectedly without any training, knowledge, or preparation. People carry out their caring role out of love, kindness or a sense of duty for the cared for person who could not cope without this 'necessary and ongoing care'.

National Context

According to Carers UK, nationally:

- 42% of carers do not find it easy to access information and advice.
- 8% of unpaid carers in England are approaching their local authority for help.
- 65% of carers agreed that the increase in the cost of living was having a negative impact on their physical and/or mental health.

Headline Facts & Figures

- Carers UK estimates there are 13.6 million unpaid Carers in the UK
- 1.4 million carers provide more than 50 hours of care per week.
- Carers save the economy £132 billion per year.
- 40% of carers have given up work to provide unpaid care.
- 1 in 7 people in the workplace are also carers.
- 2/3rds of carers are aged 51+

These statistics are often to the detriment of the carer:

- 27% of unpaid carers have bad or very bad mental health, rising to 31% for those caring for more than 50 hours a week, or for over 10 years.
- More than three quarters of all carers (79%) feel stressed or anxious, 49% feel depressed and half (50%) feel lonely.

Young Carers

- In the last census data (2011) there were 166,363 young carers in England.
- 2024 school census data said 53,976 pupils were recorded as young carers, this is a low representation with 72% of schools across the country saying they do not have any young carers.

The Children's Society report (Hidden from View 2013) shared:

- 1 in 12 young carers spend more than 15 hours a week looking after a parent or sibling.
- 1 in 20 young carers said they missed school because of their caring responsibilities.
- On average young carers miss or cut short 48 school days a year.
- The average annual income for families with a young carer is £5,000 less than families who do not have a young carer.
- 26% of young carers said they have been bullied at school because of their caring role (Carers Trust 2017).
- 97% of young carers do not receive transition support, when they become adult carers.

Our duty to carers

Key principles of the Care Act 2014 that link to duties of local authorities in supporting unpaid carers.

- A carer has the right to request an assessment under Section 10 of the Act and the local authority has the duty to undertake an appropriate and proportionate assessment if there is an appearance of need.
- The purpose of the carer's assessment is to identify with the carer their personal outcomes, existing needs, and impact of the caring role on their individual wellbeing.
- A carer's assessment must also seek to establish if the caring role is sustainable and if the carer is willing and able to care for the adult needing care.
- The carer should have been provided with appropriate information and advice to enable them to work towards their priorities and personal outcomes, having been supported to identify their existing or potential set of personal strengths.
- Upon completion of a carer's assessment, the local authority should have a full picture of the carer's needs, priorities, and personal outcomes.
- The local authority must provide the carer with a copy of their assessment and their eligibility determination.

The local authority has a responsibility to identify and support young carers. These responsibilities are set out in the Children's Act 1989 (as amended by the Children & Families Act 2014) and under the Care Act 2014.

The SEND Code of Practice 2015 and the Children and Families Act 2014 give guidance to health and social care, education, and local authorities to make sure that children and young people with SEND are properly supported.

The SEN Code of Practice 2015 provides guidance on the role of carers in supporting children and young people with special educational needs (SEN) or disabilities. Here are some key points:

- The code emphasizes the importance of involving parents and carers in decision-making processes regarding the support and provision for children with SEN. It highlights that parents' views are paramount and should be considered in all decisions
- Local authorities are required to provide information and advice to carers about the support available, including respite care, training, and financial help. This is to ensure that carers are well-informed and supported in their roles
- The Walsall Local Offer is a single place of information, services, and resources for children and young people (aged 0-25) with special educational needs and disabilities in Walsall.
- The code also outlines the responsibilities of local authorities to identify and support young carers, ensuring that their needs are assessed and met appropriately. This includes providing timely assessments and direct help for families to ensure sustainable progress for children

For more information visit send.walsall.gov.uk/

Walsall Council has a responsibility to follow Ofsted guidance and:

- Identify children and young people in need of help and protection, including young carers.
- Complete assessments that are timely and result in direct help for families and sustainable progress for children
- There is a clear focus on promoting carers' wellbeing and taking account of the impact caring has on all aspects of their lives.
- Councils must provide and maintain an information and advice service for all carers about what can be done to help them (and those they care for) prevent, reduce or delay the development of longer-term needs for care and support, and to help them look after their own wellbeing.

- A young carers assessment must consider the young carers wishes and aspirations as well as their needs for leisure, support with education, and future employment opportunities.
- A young carers assessment will identify and put in place measures to reduce the caring role and reduce any negative impacts it has.
- A carer's eligibility for an assessment is based solely on them having the 'appearance of need' for care and support. Councils must offer an assessment on this basis.
- Eligibility for support is based solely on whether the carer's role has (or is likely to have) a 'significant impact' on their wellbeing and as a result they are unable to achieve one or more of the wellbeing outcomes described in the Care Act; this is a lower threshold than the person being cared for, whose eligibility is based on being unable to achieve two or more of these outcomes.
- There are no requirements for carers to be providing substantial and regular amounts of care, or for a set number of hours, to be eligible for an assessment or support. This is important where carers may be providing care that fluctuates over time.
- Carers must be given a written copy of a council's decision about their eligibility for support.
- Carers eligible for support must get a support plan, including a personal budget "sufficient to meet their care and support needs" that can be spent in a number of ways. Carers must always be offered the option of taking some, or all, of their personal budget as a direct payment.
- Young adult carers receive transition assessments as they approach adulthood, to enable a 'whole family' approach to providing assessment and support as they become adult carers.
- Since April 2015 young carers have been entitled to an assessment of their needs from the local authority to assess and support children and young people from taking on excessive or inappropriate care. If young carers have inappropriate or excessive caring responsibilities they may be identified as children in need under the terms of the children's act and the family may be offered additional support by Children's Services.

The Care Act 2014 defines a carer as 'An adult who provides or intends to provide care for another adult (adult needing care)' Section 10 (3) Care Act 2014"

NHS England defines a carer as 'Anyone 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'.

Carers provide unpaid care alongside their other responsibilities, with people often putting their lives on hold to provide care for a loved one, friend, neighbour or relative. This care could be for a few hours a day or more and could be around the clock care. Anyone can become a carer.

Carers tell us that often they do not choose or plan to become carers, and caring responsibilities can arise unexpectedly without any training, knowledge, or preparation. People do out of love, kindness or a sense of duty.

Many people do not see themselves as carers because they are simply doing what they can for a relative, a friend or a neighbour who needs them because of their disability or illness.

Caring In Walsall

- There were 26, 415 unpaid carers in Walsall in 2021
- This represents 10% of the total population in the Borough
- The majority of unpaid carers are woman (66%)
- The largest group of carers are aged between 45-64 years old

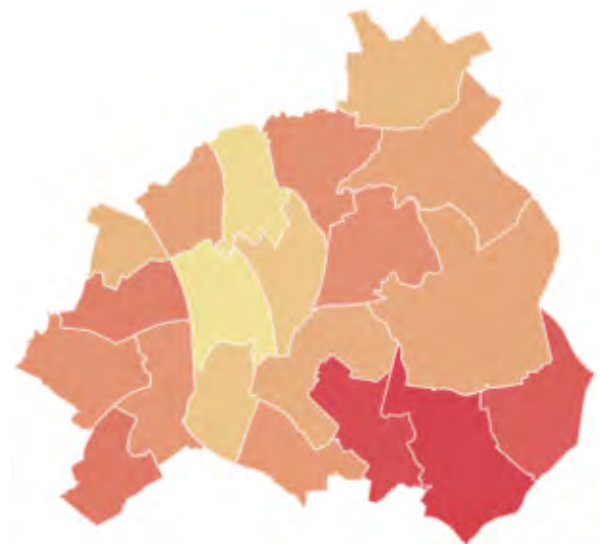
There are currently 276 young carers from the age of 8 – 21 years old in Walsall

- Over 60% of our young carers are female
- The largest group of young carers are aged 13 – 15 years old

Unpaid carer change between 2011-21 by ward, census 2021

Indicates the change in proportion providing some form of unpaid care

Ward	2011%	2021%	Change
Pheasey Park Farm	12.6%	9.1%	-3.5%
Paddock	12.9%	9.6%	-3.3%
Streetly	12.8%	9.8%	-3.0%
Darlaston South	10.8%	8.2%	-2.6%
Short Heath	12.6%	10.1%	-2.5%
Rushall-Shelfield	12.7%	10.4%	-2.2%
Pelsall	13.0%	10.8%	-2.2%
Willenhall South	10.5%	8.3%	-2.2%
Bentley and Darlaston North	11.0%	8.9%	-2.1%
Palfrey	9.8%	7.8%	-2.1%
Bloxwich West	11.8%	9.8%	-1.9%
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	12.6%	10.7%	-1.9%
Aldridge Central and South	12.6%	10.7%	-1.9%
St Matthews	10.3%	8.5%	-1.8%
Willenhall North	11.1%	9.4%	-1.6%
Brownhills	11.7%	10.1%	-1.6%
Pleck	9.4%	8.0%	-1.4%
Blakenhall	10.0%	8.6%	-1.4%
Bloxwich East	11.7%	10.6%	-1.1%
Birchills Leamore	9.7%	8.8%	-1.0%



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Caring In Walsall...

- Around 60% of carers in the Walsall area provide care for 20 hours or more per week
- 35% of carers in Walsall provide over 50 hours of care each week
- The economic value of unpaid care is estimated to be around £605 million per year
- Around 60% of carers provide care for a spouse or partner

Unpaid carers by category and ward, census 2021

Indicates the proportion providing care by hours per week

Ward	Provides 1 to 19 hours unpaid care a week	Provides 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week	Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week
Aldridge Central and South	6.5%	2.0%	3.2%
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	6.5%	1.9%	3.3%
Bentley and Darlaston North	4.3%	2.0%	3.6%
Birchills Leamore	3.5%	2.2%	3.5%
Blakenhall	3.4%	2.3%	3.6%
Bloxwich East	4.5%	2.3%	4.3%
Bloxwich West	5.1%	2.2%	3.5%
Brownhills	5.1%	2.2%	3.6%
Darlaston South	3.7%	2.2%	3.5%
Paddock	6.7%	1.9%	2.6%
Palfrey	4.0%	2.0%	2.8%
Pelsall	6.4%	2.1%	3.4%
Pheasey Park Farm	6.2%	1.7%	2.9%
Pleck	3.5%	2.4%	2.7%
Rushall-Shelfield	5.8%	2.0%	3.7%
Shorth Heath	5.6%	2.1%	3.6%
St Matthews	4.8%	1.9%	2.5%
Streetly	7.1%	1.5%	2.7%
Willenhall North	5.3%	1.9%	3.0%
Willenhall South	4.2%	2.1%	3.1%





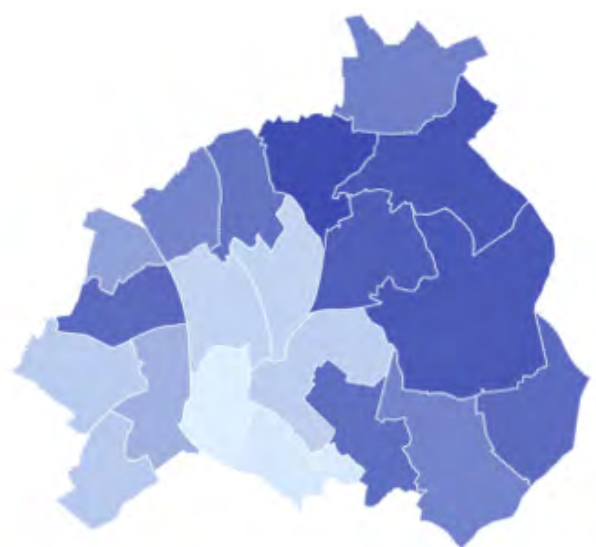
Caring In Walsall...

- Approximately 77% of carers provide care within their home

Unpaid carers by category and ward, census 2021

Indicates the proportion of the Ward's population whom provide some form of unpaid care

Ward	Change 2021%	2021%
Pelsall	9.1%	10.8%
Aldridge North and Walsall Wood	9.6%	10.7%
Aldridge Central and South	9.8%	10.7%
Bloxwich East	8.2%	10.6%
Rushall-Shelfield	10.1%	10.4%
Brownhills	10.4%	10.1%
Short Heath	10.8%	10.1%
Bloxwich West	8.3%	9.8%
Streetly	8.9%	9.8%
Paddock	7.8%	9.6%
Willenhall North	9.8%	9.4%
Pheasey Park Farm	10.7%	9.1%
Bentley and Darlaston North	10.7%	8.9%
Birchills Leamore	8.5%	8.8%
Blakenhall	9.4%	8.6%
St. Matthews	10.1%	8.5%
Willenhall South	8.0%	8.3%
Darlaston South	8.6%	8.2%
Pleck	10.6%	8.0%
Palfrey	8.8%	7.8%
Total	57,049	9.3%

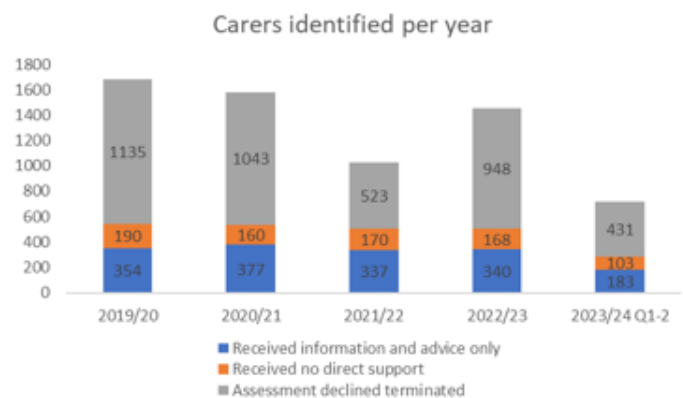


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Survey 100019529

Impact Caring has on you

As part of the development of this strategy there has been consultation and engagement with carers and commissioned providers and usage of National Surveys. The Survey of Adult Carers is a statutory biennial survey, carried out by local authorities across England on behalf of NHS Digital. The survey seeks the opinions of carers aged 18 or over, on a number of topics that are considered to be indicative of a balanced life alongside their unpaid caring role. It used to monitor the impact of the National Carers Strategy.

- The survey was comprised of **31** individual questions, **1** of which were bespoke to Walsall in order to obtain local intelligence.
- There are **26,415** known unpaid carers in the borough living in Walsall.
- **1,534** carers were known to Walsall Adult Social Care during the survey eligibility period of 01/09/2022 to 31/08/2023. Of these, **521** received a carers assessment and/or review within the 12-month window and were therefore sent a copy of the survey. **1013** declined an assessment and were therefore ineligible to be surveyed.



Of the **521** Carers in receipt of an assessment and/or review during the period:

- **349** received information and advice only (of which replacement care provided to the cared-for person in **182** cases).
- **172** received no direct support (of which replacement care provided to the cared-for people in **121** cases).

A summary of the findings from the people who responded to the 2023-24 survey are:

- Response rate is the lowest since the survey was commissioned in 2012-13
- Overall satisfaction with Adult Social Care services has increased by 3.8%
- Carers reported quality of life has decreased by 0.6%
- The proportion of carers who find it easy to find information about services has increased by 0.9%
- The proportion of carers who report they have been included or consulted in discussions about the person they care for has decreased by 7.6%
- The proportion of carers who reported they had as much social contact as they wanted increased by 2.5%

Respondents were encouraged to offer suggestions/comments, some of which can be found later in this section.

- 56% of carers did not feel supported
- 59% said they did not know where to turn for information or advice
- Some carers describe their role as a “24/7 job” with 75% of carers reported feeling stressed as a result of their caring role.
- Carers have reported a sense of loss and grief for the life they had before starting caring
- Carers feel they did not have enough time to take care of their own health
- 78% of carers reported that they did not feel their contribution to a society as a carer was valued

What you have told us

- 60% of carers reported that their caring role has had a negative impact on their physical health and 70% reported it had a negative impact on their mental health
- 54% of carers reported that their caring role had become more difficult as a result of the pandemic
- 70% of carers have they had lost touch with friends or found it difficult to maintain connections as a result of their caring role.
- 62% of carers reported that they have experienced a loss of income



Carer / Respondent suggestions from recent consultation

"Need to speak to a person not a machine, telling you "will be in touch in the next 24-28 hours"

"Initial aids or help is good but fades after a few months, because I suffer with anxiety and depression, I lack the motivation to seek out help. Therefore, a monthly check in service could prove useful as sometimes when I have my dark periods talking to someone would be good"

"If the social services would be more helpful, efficient and supportive it would be very nice"

The carer experience

"I am tired and feel I just can't cope as a carer anymore"

"As I'm getting older I find it harder to look after my husband when I'm by myself. We are very grateful in what social services do for us but when there is a problem it is hard to speak to someone especially in the finance department. I'm still waiting for someone to call back and I have been trying to speak to someone since August to explain to me about the contribution we have got to pay because I think it's wrong"

"Carers are the forgotten, neglected group who save the NHS and indeed the country millions of pounds every year looking after relatives, young or elderly whilst having to put their own lives and the lives of their partners on hold and can only imagine what they may have enjoyed or achieved throughout all those lost years"

"Fatigue is a cause of stress that affects my well being. Uncertain about the future"

"I am stressed, tired and lonely because I am not having enough rest"

"The service I have received has been very good but like most things takes time and a lot of back and forth to get things sorted out. Other than that well done from my point and thanks for the help"

Positive reviews



"I have had great support from the social worker who was assigned to my mum- she was extremely helpful and compassionate. She also provided a lot of help about benefits etc"

The comments i have to give a truly blessing in disguise, how to lift my wife when she falls, if she falls, I can humbly say I have had support I never knew existed.

The work is good and I hope that I stay in good health myself and thank all carers and Council officials from the bottom of my heart"

"The help of Walsall Council has been very good. No complaints at the moment. Thank you all"

"I found social services always happy to help out in any situation. We have passion for care company and are very good"

"I didn't feel the support service was good in Sandwell as I never had a carers assessment. I did manage to be offered a carers assessment when moving house and under Walsall Council. I am very pleased with the care I received in finding my mom a suitable home, although I did get to a stage where my mom's care caused me alot of stress and pressure not having suitable support until a social worker was involved there at a cross stage"

Negative reviews



"I felt that I had no control social services took over and giving me no option or anything"

"No communication from one department to another, just passing the buck as the saying goes and getting nowhere. So stressful"

"Contact from social services was minimal, time consuming and lacked in appropriate support"

"I had to go through so many numbers and was passed around before i got any advice"

"I desperately need a holiday. Social services promised to find respite care but failed on the 2 occasions I requested it in the last 12 months"

What's going well?

What you have told us about the support you receive...

- “Thank you for this its appreciated”.
- “Thank you for the phone call its nice to know someone cares”.
- “Keep up the good work”.
- “She thanked us so much and said we had been a brick and that it was so good to talk to people who are interested and understand things. She said she loved us to bits!”
- “Thank you for all of your help and signposting for the information”.
- “Thank you ever so much for all your ongoing support and updates. I really appreciate it”.



Some of the things you have told us you need...

We will look to embed these into our priorities and delivery plans

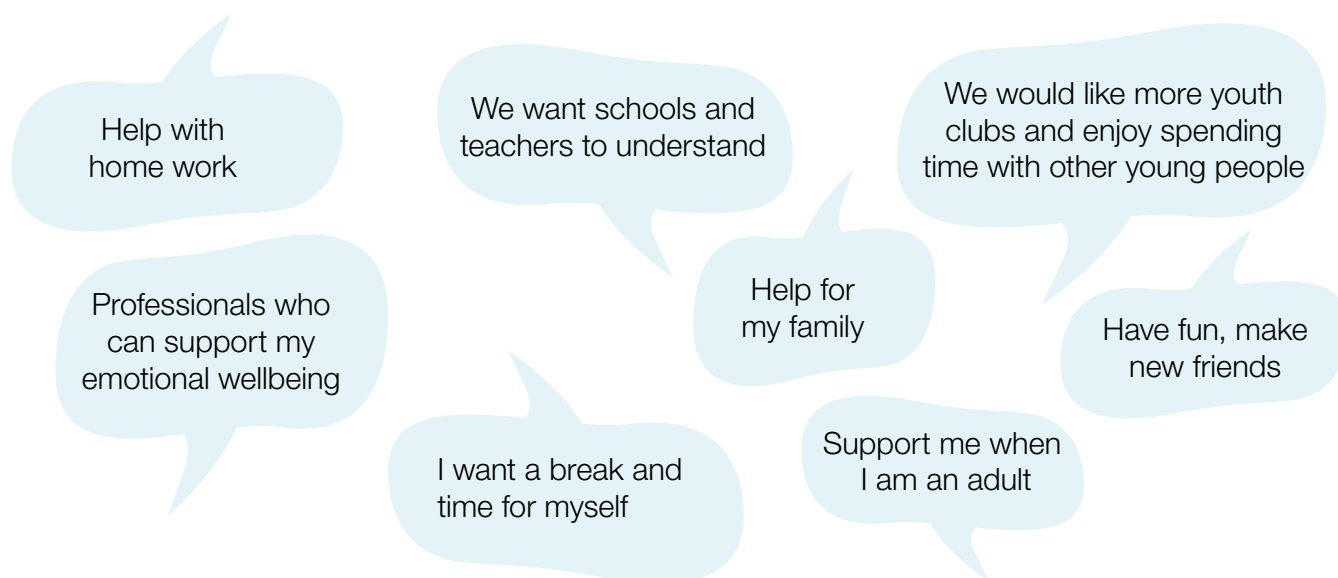
- “A visit or telephone call to advise on the help and benefits available to carers.”
- “I feel council departments could learn from charitable organisations, in particular such as Age UK and Carers UK, who offer considerable information with regard to carers. Perhaps adult social care departments could work more closely with these excellent charities, for the benefit of carers.”
- “I think it would be useful if there was a number that a carer could ring when feeling down and be able to speak to someone because sometimes you can feel completely alone and not wanting to put on family, just to talk things through. Sometimes that’s just enough, no more is needed.”
- “People disappear and you end up repeating your story over and over again.”
- “Access to Compliments and Complaints process – How can I give a compliment?”
- “A leaflet of benefits or of contacts which may be helpful would be good. Not everyone has the internet!”
- “There is some assistance available but it’s very difficult to get hold of.”
- “I need my own assessment and review... what was right for me 2 years ago isn’t now.”
- “Caring for someone is not easy at times so when you do need advice from services it is a little frustrating when your calls aren’t answered and you have to do the chasing. Also I don’t think you are always told about all the services that are available to yourself and the person you care for.”
- “Improvements to health and social care systems are needed urgently. I have felt unsupported and uncared for when trying to provide my mom with care. Funding was always being mentioned as a barrier to improve care.”
- “The importance of someone remaining within the home environment is the main desire of so many cared for people, but today it feels more driven by the financial needs of councils, rather than the carer’s observation of the situation in which they find themselves and the wellbeing and safety of the person being cared for.”



The voice of Walsall young carers

We regularly consult with our young carers to evaluate the service they receive and make sure they have access to the right support for their caring roles.

During young carers action day we asked our young carers what support and services were important to them. They shared:



Walsall young carers have agreed the following actions with young carers practitioners:

Be aware	Listen
Increase the awareness and identification of young carers and their needs.	To what young carers and their families have to say. Improve the assessment and support of young carers and their families
Work together	Have fun
Strengthen partnerships with services supporting young carers. (we call this a multi agency approach)	Create opportunities for young carers, providing support and positive things to do.

Our promise to young carers:

- Young carers have the same rights as other children and young people.
- Young carers should be recognised and valued for their contribution to their families and society.
- Young carers should be involved in the planning and delivery of services that affect them.
- Young carers should have access to appropriate information, advice, and support.
- Young carers should have the opportunity to enjoy a life outside their caring role.
- Young carers should be protected from harm and exploitation.
- Young carers should be supported to achieve their full potential.
- Young adult carers are supported with transition

Our promise to young carers in Walsall has been implemented within the 6 key priorities for carers.



Our Key Priorities for carers

We want Walsall carers to be able to live a healthy and fulfilling life outside of their caring role. We want to improve the quality of life for carers. Walsall Borough Council's All-Age Carers Strategy links to:

- Adult Social Care Commissioning Strategy where there is a strategic commissioning intention focused upon unpaid carers. Commissioning Intention 4 - "We will improve our carers support offer" This commissioning intention aims to enhance the Walsall carers support offer, ensuring that unpaid carers receive comprehensive, tailored support that recognises their invaluable contribution, promotes their wellbeing, and strengthens their ability to provide care. It will address the diverse needs of carers, improve their resilience and ensure they have everything they need to provide and experience quality care.
- Walsall's Early Help Partnership Strategy, Approach and Response to Children, Young People & their Families.

Improving the quality of life for carers is important to us because:

- We want to recognise the contribution they make. We know they play a vital role in supporting individuals who have physical or mental health needs, disabilities or age-related conditions. We want to acknowledge and recognise the valuable contribution they make to the independence and wellbeing of those they care for and society.
- We want to promote wellbeing. Caring for a loved one has multiple demands so we need to work to prevent burnout, stress and exhaustion by ensuring there is an 'offer' so carers can maintain their own health and resilience and achieve their full potential.
- We want to be able to enhance the quality-of-care carers provide by ensuring they have the skills and knowledge to manage complex care tasks, navigate the system and address the changing needs of the person they care for.
- We want to promote independence to ensure people remain living in their own homes for as long as possible. We want to make sure carers are prevented from needing to use residential and nursing care where it is appropriate and safe to do so.
- We want to facilitate social inclusion to help carers connect with others who are in similar situations, reducing common feelings of isolation and to provide emotional support/solidarity. Carers should have the opportunity to enjoy a life outside their caring role.
- We want to enable choice and control so carers can make informed decisions about their caring role and the services they may wish to access. We want to ensure carers can assert their rights, voice their concerns and navigate the system effectively. Young carers should have access to appropriate information, advice, and support.
- We want to make sure carers have financial sustainability by alleviating the monetary burden they may experience, ensuring they have the resources to sustain their important role.
- Young carers have the same rights as other children and young people and should be protected from harm and exploitation.
- Carers should be involved in the planning and delivery of services that affect them.
- We want to facilitate social inclusion to help carers connect with others who are in similar situations, reducing common feelings of isolation and to provide emotional support/solidarity.
- We want to enable choice and control so carers can make informed decisions about their caring role and the services they may wish to access. We want to ensure carers can assert their rights, voice their concerns and navigate the system effectively.
- We want to make sure carers have financial sustainability by alleviating the monetary burden they may experience, ensuring they have the resources to sustain their important role.

Moving forward, and using carer and partner organisation feedback, we have set out 6 key priorities to deliver upon. These are:-



Priority 1: Identification and Recognition

- We heard that it is important that we identify and recognise people with caring responsibilities. We aim to identify and recognise more unpaid carers within Walsall. Many carers provide care within a family network and do not want or need additional support. We know that many carers and young people do not think of themselves as a 'carer'. However, some carers need support to prevent the escalation of their own needs, and those of the person they look after. We aim to identify carers early, this will help to ensure carers know where to go to when they require support, keeping them well for longer and helping to avoid crisis which necessitates involvement from statutory services.
- We will raise awareness, promote our Walsall carers offer and young carers service, train professionals in NHS, adult social care and other agencies to identify, champion and work with carers. We particularly want to improve our links with hospitals, GP practices and education to promote support for carers and raise the profile of caring. We will also utilise annual calendar events such as Carers Week, National Young Carers Action Day and Carers Rights Day.
- We will work with partners across the statutory, and the community and voluntary sector to ensure that carers if they wish to, are identified earlier and provided with information, advice, guidance, and support. We will ensure that carers continue to be involved as expert partners in the designing, commissioning, and evaluating of carers services. Carers will be well informed and able to exercise choice in relation to the support services available to them.
- Carers are valued and respected as expert partners in the care of the person they look after. We will support former carers and recognise that carers need support to rebuild their lives after their caring commitment ends.
- Work with schools to ensure the school census figures reflect young carers identified in Walsall Council.
- Continue the Young Carers Champion Roles with partners and the delivery of Walsall young carers multi agency action group with partners
- We will continue to promote Walsall young carers identification card scheme with partners
- We will collaborate with partners throughout Walsall to identify and provide support to underrepresented young carers who currently do not utilise available services.



Priority 2: Improving the health and well-being of unpaid carers

- You told us that improving opportunities for carers to maintain good wellbeing is essential to supporting carers in their caring role. We will support carers health, mental health and wellbeing to enable them to remain mentally and physically well.
- Our partnership work through Walsall Together aims to better support people and the communities they live in, so they can manage their own health and wellbeing needs, prevent ill health and live happier lives.
- The Walsall Wellbeing Outcomes Framework, which was created in 2023 following extensive engagement and consultation within the Borough, provides the infrastructure for our partnership to plan, report, and account for its activity. It will be used as a mechanism for analysing progress towards improved population wellbeing whilst simultaneously integrating it into all partnership activity. Walsall Wellbeing Outcomes Framework. (<https://walsalltogether.co.uk/our-work/resilient-communities/walsallwellbeing-outcomes-framework>).



The Walsall Wellbeing Outcomes Framework

- We intend to work in partnership with carers, health and adult social care colleagues, the voluntary sector and employers to support carers to maintain good physical and mental health, and to help carers to carry on caring.
- We will encourage carers to be known to their GP practice in order that appropriate support can be offered when required. We will encourage the training and development of carer Champions and young carers champions within our GP practices across the Borough.
- We will develop a culture where professionals working with the cared for, acknowledge and respond to the needs of carers to maintain their health and wellbeing before reaching the point of crisis.
- We will promote and raise awareness around carers rights and legislation across the Borough, ensure mechanisms are in place to ensure more employers are made aware of an employee with caring responsibilities and that employers can take simple, but effective action to enable carers to balance their caring and employment responsibilities. Where possible we will aim to influence businesses to consider what flexible working practices might help both the employer and employee, recognise and supporting carers in the wider community and society, raising awareness of caring among the wider population in order to build carer friendly communities.
- Carers tell us that they need flexible working arrangements and better care for the person they care for to enable them to remain in employment. We will aim to become an exemplar employer leading by example and increasing the knowledge of our partners and businesses of issues that affect carers. We will encourage the adoption of carer friendly practices. We will also support former carers to adjust to a life after caring. We will develop a Walsall Carers Charter with the voice of Walsall carers. Its purpose is to be a statement of values, standards and principles that outlines Walsall's commitment to supporting carers. It will cover various themes that will be defined by carers, partners from health, Walsall Together, adult social care, the Council and voluntary sector. It will be promoted with all organisations and settings across Walsall to help support carers and ensure that any future services are designed to better support carers to continue in their caring role.

- We recognise the emotional demands on carers and will offer carers their own assessment and Care Plan and young adult carers transition plan, which will support carers with the demands of caring. Improving wellbeing is a key area within our carers assessment process. We will also promote wellbeing assessments through our commissioned and partner organisations. We will review Care Plans on at least an annual basis to ensure they continue to meet carers needs.
- We will support young carers to have the same rights as other children and young people.



Priority 3: Improving information, advice and guidance to carers

- You told us of the importance of having access to good quality information, advice and guidance about support services available in the Borough. You explained that this is key to enabling carers to have choice and control and to be able to continue to care. We aim to improve access to clear, concise relevant information in a range of formats for our population that will help to avoid, reduce or delay the need for assessment and more intensive support. Information will be provided on a range of topics, including navigating the care system, accessing benefits, and managing their own health and well-being.
- We will use relevant sources of information across the Borough, within our Walsall Connected sites and other partner venues including GP practices, across the Internet through various digital platforms and social networking as well as through our new Wellbeing Directory which was introduced earlier in 2024. We will ensure that information is reliable, easily accessible and up to date which gives carers the best chance of knowing what is on offer in their communities to support them at any stage in their caring journey.
- We will keep up-to-date with technological opportunities by developing and improving digital resources as a primary source of information, and utilising social networks to empower and enable collaboration within communities.
- As well as for carers themselves, it is of paramount importance that we make information available for professionals and any agencies who come into contact with carers.
- We will ensure that we signpost carers who want more information about benefits, grants and financial management to relevant financial support and advice.
- We will review our personalisation offer for carers to enable them to have more influence over their lives and increased flexibility around how they use the resources they are eligible for. For example, through direct payments.
- Increase the identification and awareness of young carers by updating Walsall council Young carers website and access to young carers services
- We will continue to build partner relationships through Walsall young carers multi agency action group offering services and support to young carers and their families



Priority 4: Supporting carers to have a good life outside of caring, as well as after caring ('Time for Me')

- We heard from you that being able to take a break (Time for Me) from caring responsibilities and having the opportunity to work and access education and leisure opportunities are vital areas of support to carers. We aim to give carers a break from their caring responsibilities, allowing them to recharge and pursue their own interests and needs. Carers should be able to maintain their social relationships with family, friends and others. Remaining socially connected has an impact on our mental and physical health, therefore, identifying and developing opportunities for carers to meet others, either in the same situation or otherwise, is a key focus.

- We will support carers to be able to access social and leisure interests away from their caring role as they choose. We will improve our offer to provide flexible options that enable choice and value for money and where possible look towards discounts for carers as well as considering the introduction of a carers lanyard to help show empathy, raise awareness and offer support
- We will have fun! Providing young carers with access to our young carers groups and enrichment activities. Creating new opportunities and positive things to do including family days, activities within the school holidays and Young Carers Festival
- We will Provide a young adult carers group to support young people transitioning to adult carers
- We will support carers through putting them in touch with the carers Hub and our commissioned and non-commissioned services available in the Borough in order to establish new connections and a wider support network
- We will promote digital solutions such as through digital apps and social media, to enable carers to form and sustain new networks of support. Hopefully this will lead to good support and fewer experiences of carers feeling isolated.
- We will continue to support carers to have a break from their caring role in a way that suits them to enable them to continue to work and to continue with their interests outside of their caring role. We will continue to ensure that carers are aware of opportunities for them to participate in their communities or interests and support them to be able to do this. We will extend our support so carers can remain in work, training and or education if they wish.
- For carers whose role as a carer has come to an end, we will link them to relevant support which could be bereavement support, support around their mental health as well as the wider Walsall Carers Offer. For some former carers, there may be aspirations around providing care in their community or pursuing training or employment opportunities in the care sector.
- As sensitively as possible, we want to support former carers to return them back to their life of their personal aspirations prior to becoming a carer.



Priority 5: Improving Carers Assessment and Support

- Through the discharge of the council's legal duties to adult carers, we will improve how we identify the specific needs, challenges, and preferences of unpaid carers, ensuring that support services are tailored to their individual circumstances and direct payments are applied if applicable.
- We will review (and amend as necessary) our current carers assessment and support arrangements (including self-assessments) to ensure the most effective and affordable support arrangements are in place to deliver support to carers equitably across Walsall. We will endeavour that the need for carers to repeat their story is kept to a minimum.
- We will improve our partnership working and encourage carer support providers to work together in true collaboration with each other for the benefit of Walsall carers.
- We will continue to promote and explain carers rights to an assessment and routinely offer one on the identification of need-suggest removal as carers assessment would identify need, explaining the benefits of an assessment to the carer. Where an assessment identifies eligible needs, we will look to meet these with support from their local community in the first instance, avoiding the need for statutory provision wherever possible.

- We will offer information, advice and guidance to all carers, as well as signposting to support from their local community.
- We will seek to increase the number of carers who have their own Carer's Assessment and recognise that needs change and therefore support will need to be reviewed. All carers who have a Carer's Assessment will be offered the choice to be referred to our Carers Hub for further advice, information and support and/or to be signposted to other appropriate support organisations.
- We will support young adult carers from 16 years of age with a transition assessment and plan to support their role as an adult carer.
- As previously mentioned, we will also promote wellbeing assessments through our commissioned and partner organisations.
- We will conduct an assessment for any child or young person identified as a carer, considering their wishes and aspirations and implementing steps to lessen the caring role and its negative impacts. The assessment will include family members using a whole-family approach.
- We will look to co-produce with carers of all ages to improve our Carer's Assessments and support offered.



Priority 6: Crisis management and professional awareness

- You told us that we need to do more to support carers at point of crisis. We know that many carers are able to manage their caring responsibilities independently of help from statutory agencies and have established family networks whom they can call on in a crisis. However, some do not have robust contingency arrangements and may need support.
- We aim to provide support to help carers to plan effectively should a crisis occur and provide a prompt response and support in the event of such a situation.
- We will aim to ensure that professionals are trained and skilled in order to recognise a potential crisis and help to put arrangements in place to prevent one occurring. We will raise awareness with the promotion of Carer Champions within the Borough to raise the profile of unpaid carers.
- We will ensure that carers know where they can get help in the event of a crisis and our respite offer is clear. We will ensure that carers who are eligible can access a break from caring and provide this in a cost-effective manner, doing the best we can within the resources available.
- We will ensure that robust arrangements are in place so that, in the event of a crisis, responses from Adult Social Care and partners are prompt, provide reassurance and show respect towards the feelings of the carer and the cared for person.
- Young carers practitioners will support young carers and their families. If we have any concerns for young people and their family we will discuss this with young carers and access the appropriate support through Walsall children's services and partners
- We will encourage carers to be known to their GP practice in order that appropriate support can be offered when required. We will encourage the training and development of Carer Champions within our GP practices across the Borough.
- We will develop a culture where professionals working with the cared for, acknowledge and respond to the needs of carers to maintain their health and wellbeing before reaching the point of crisis.

- We will promote and raise awareness around carers rights and legislation across the Borough, ensure mechanisms are in place to ensure more employers are made aware of an employee with caring responsibilities and that employers can take simple, but effective action to enable carers to balance their caring and employment responsibilities. Where possible we will aim to influence businesses to consider what flexible working practices might help both the employer and employee, recognise and supporting carers in the wider community and society, raising awareness of caring among the wider population in order to build carer friendly communities.
- Carers tell us that they need flexible working arrangements and better care for the person they care for to enable them to remain in employment. We will aim to become an exemplar employer leading by example and increasing the knowledge of our partners and businesses of issues that affect carers. We will encourage the adoption of carer friendly practices. We will also support former carers to adjust to a life after caring. We will develop a Walsall Carers Charter with the voice of Walsall carers. Its purpose is to be a statement of values, standards and principles that outlines Walsall's commitment to supporting carers. It will cover various themes that will be defined by carers, partners from health, Walsall Together, Adult Social Care, the Council and voluntary sector. It will be promoted with all organisations and settings across Walsall to help support carers and ensure that any future services are designed to better support carers to continue in their caring role.
- We recognise the emotional demands on carers and will offer carers their own assessment and Care Plan which will support carers with the demands of caring. Improving wellbeing is a key area within our carers assessment process. We will also promote wellbeing assessments through our commissioned and partner organisations. We will review Care Plans on at least an annual basis to ensure they continue to meet carers needs.



If we deliver on our strategy, our aspirations and priorities...

As a carer....

- I can meet with people who are also carers so we can share our experiences and support each other.
- I will be treated with respect and dignity. My voice will be heard in planning what support I would like/need.
- I can live the life I want and do the things that are important to me as independently as possible.
- I will feel valued as a carer for the contribution that I make to my community.
- I will be supported to manage my own well being in a way that makes sense to me.
- I will feel safe and supported to understand and manage the risks to me as a carer.
- I will have access to respite care and other support services that will allow me to take a break from my caring responsibilities when needed.
- I know who to contact if something goes wrong.
- I will be offered my own carers assessment.
- I will be treated with respect, dignity and feel valued and respected by professionals for the person I support.
- I will have a better choice of good quality affordable services for the person I care for.
- I will feel valued as a carer for the contribution that I make to my community.
- I have a co-produced Carers Plan that sets out how I can be as active as I want to be and involved in my community.
- I will have a say in planning and monitoring future services as an expert with lived experience.
- I will know the Carer's Allowance I can claim and will receive the financial support that I am entitled to.
- I can maintain my links with family, friends and my community.
- I can live the life I want and do the things that are important to me as independently as possible.
- I have a plan for the future that helps me feel confident my cared for person will be OK.
- I will be supported as a former carer.
- I will have reliable good quality support that help my cared for person live well and stay independent.
- I can access support in a timely way.
- I will know that the person I support will be supported as well.
- I can get information and advice that helps me as a carer and is up to date and provided in a way that I can understand.
- I can get information and advice about my well being and how I can be as well as possible – physically, mentally, and emotionally.
- I will be aware of the activities, social groups, leisure, and learning opportunities in my community that can support me, as well as health and care services.
- I will know what my rights are and can get information and advice on what I need.
- I will have the same rights as other young people and children
- I will be supported to transition from a young carer to an adult carer
- I will be supported to achieve my full potential within education

Governance

'To help support the delivery of this strategy, we will work in partnership with carers, Walsall Children's Services, Adult Social Care, Walsall Together and statutory and voluntary agencies to provide the local steer for the commissioning and development of carer services and the Carer Offer within Walsall.

- We will also be mindful of the implementation of local and national priorities and strategies. We envisage that through building upon our strong approach to partnership working, adult carers will have more support, choice and control to have a life of their own alongside their caring role.
- In order to effectively address the gaps that exist in meeting the needs of Walsall carers and to implement the strategic priorities within this strategy, the following stages of work will need to be undertaken over the next three years, taking into account the financial challenges that the local authority and health service are currently under.
- We will introduce a robust governance structure and Carers Matter Partnership Board, where partners and carers will be represented. The Board will oversee the implementation of the strategic priorities highlighted within the strategy with a clear 'Strategic Delivery Plan.'
- We will look to co-produce delivery of the Strategy with all stakeholders including carers
- The Carers Matter Partnership Board will oversee and take responsibility for the implementation of the carers strategic delivery plan across multi organisations across Walsall.
- Task and Finish groups will be formed to ensure the development and success of the strategic priorities identified within the delivery plan. Clear links to any commissioned services and the Walsall Carers Hub will be made
- Walsall young carers action group will continue to meet and work in partnership supporting strategic priorities identified within the delivery plan.





What Next?

- We will introduce the Carers Matter Partnership Board which will develop an action plan setting out how we will deliver upon each of the priorities outlined in this strategy.
- We will continue to build partnerships to support young carers through our multi-agency young carers action group.
- We will regularly monitor and review progress against the action plan and our aspirations to support carers within Walsall.
- Our ambition is to work with partners including carers to progress an all-age multi-agency carers strategy across Walsall.
- We will continue to promote the importance of caring and the value of carers, celebrating the contribution that carers make to our community.
- By delivering upon the priorities outlined in this strategy we aim to ensure that carers in Walsall receive the support and recognition they deserve.

We want Walsall carers to be able to live a healthy and fulfilling life outside of their caring role.

Do you need support now?

Please contact Walsall Council on: **0300 5552922** or at our website www.walsall.gov.uk

Walsall Council Carers page: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/carers>

Walsall Young Carers page: <https://go.walsall.gov.uk/children-and-young-people/early-help/early-help-children-and-young-people/young-carers>

Walsall Young Carers email: youngcarersearlyhelp@walsall.gov.uk

You might find the following websites useful:

Walsall Carers Hub – our commissioned service Walsall Carers Hub is a service led by Forward Carers CIC with the regional charity, Midland Mencap as the lead delivery partner to provide support and services for unpaid carers in Walsall: <https://walsallcarershub.org.uk/>

Forward Carers: <https://forwardcarers.org.uk/>

Employers for Carers: <https://www.employersforcarers.org/>

National family carer network for carers of a relative with autism or a learning disability: <https://www.hft.org.uk/our-services/family-carer-support-service/>

Carers UK: <http://www.carersuk.org/>

For financial support:

Carer benefits: <https://www.gov.uk/carers-allowance>

Childrens society: <https://www.childrenssociety.org.uk/>

Carers society: <https://Carers.org/getting-support-if-you-are-a-young-Carer-or-young-adult-Carer/getting-support-if-you-are-a-young-Carer-or-young-adult-Carer>

Barnardos Sub Hub: <https://www.barnardos.org.uk/get-support/young-Carers>

Carer's allowance: <https://www.gov.uk/Carers-allowance>

You can also find more information about local and national services on the Walsall Wellbeing Directory contains activities, services and groups to help all residents of the Walsall Borough live healthy, active and fulfilling lives.

You can find something to help you, whether you want to:

- Keep healthy
- Be sociable
- Stay independent
- Feel included
- Improve your wellbeing
- Get involved
- Stay safe

Find suitable care and support:

<https://go.walsall.gov.uk/health-and-social-care/walsall-wellbeing-directory>

*Thank you to all our local carers
and to our partners, who worked
with us to develop our vision*



