

Committee Name and Date of Committee Meeting

Cabinet – 15 December 2025

Report Title

Unpaid Carers Strategy 2026-2031

Is this a Key Decision and has it been included on the Forward Plan?

Yes

Strategic Director Approving Submission of the Report

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Report Author(s)

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Ward(s) Affected

Borough-Wide

Report Summary

In July 2022, the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board approved the Borough That Cares Strategic Framework 2022-2025. The strategic framework created a foundation of support, improved information and advice, established a carers network, and introduced a co-production programme with communities to build a carer friendly borough. In addition, it established the Borough That Cares Network, which has facilitated several engagement opportunities, including the development of the Council's carers webpages and a proposed new 'The Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031'.

During April to August 2025, engagement has been undertaken with carers, adult social care, health and other key stakeholders to reflect on progress and gather feedback on achievements between 2022-2025, and to co-design the vision, priorities and commitments for the next five years to 2031.

This report seeks approval for a further five-year strategy to continue the support for carers within the borough.

Recommendations

That Cabinet approves the Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031 which is due to be launched in April 2026.

List of Appendices Included

- Appendix 1 The Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031
- Appendix 2 Part A Equality Analysis Screening
- Appendix 3 Part B Equality Analysis Form
- Appendix 4 Carbon Impact Assessment

Background Papers

[The Borough That Cares Strategic Framework 2022-25](#)

Consideration by any other Council Committee, Scrutiny or Advisory Panel

Improving Lives Select Commission – 28 November 2025

Health Select Commission – 28 November 2025

Council Approval Required

No

Exempt from the Press and Public

No

Unpaid Carers Strategy 2026-2031

1. Background

- 1.1 In July 2022, the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board approved the Borough That Cares Strategic Framework 2022-2025. The strategic framework created a foundation of support, improved information and advice, established a carers network, and introduced a co-production programme with communities to build a carer friendly borough.
- 1.2 In addition, it established the Borough That Cares Network, which has facilitated several engagement opportunities, including the development of the Council's carers webpages and a proposed new 'The Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031'.
- 1.3 During April to August 2025, engagement has been undertaken with carers, adult social care, health and other key stakeholders to reflect on progress and gather feedback on achievements between 2022-2025, and to co-design the vision, priorities and commitments for the next five years to 2031.

1.4 Carers – Rotherham Context

There are approximately 26,313 carers living in Rotherham. This represents just over 10% of Rotherham's population.

- 1.5 A carer is anyone who cares, unpaid, for a friend or family member who can't cope without support. This might be because of ageing, illness, disability, poor mental health, or an addiction.
- 1.6 A carer might care for someone for a few hours each week, or 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, and be an adult caring for other adults, a parent caring for a child who is ill or has a disability or a young person caring for a parent, sibling, relative, or friend. For example:
- 9,312 (35%) of Rotherham's carers provide more than 50 hours per week, making these carers more likely to experience health inequalities as there is evidence to suggest a link between providing higher levels of care and experiencing higher levels of poor health.
 - 8,104 (30%) of Rotherham's carers are registered disabled.
 - Rotherham has 45,627 school pupils, 20 of these were identified as young carers in the school census. The national average is 337 young carers per local authority.
 - 12% of young adult carers in Rotherham (16-24 years old) have no educational qualifications.

1.7 **The Borough that Cares Strategic Framework 2022-2025**

The strategic framework set out the Council's commitment to support carers living in the borough, with specific objectives to achieve in year one, year two and year three, co-designed with carers and wider stakeholders.

1.8 Initial implementation of the framework was however delayed due to the impact of the Covid pandemic. Work took place to continue to provide appropriate support to Rotherham carers.

1.9 **Key Achievements of the Borough that Cares Strategy 2022-2025**

There are a number of key achievements over the three-year period, namely:

- Supported the stabilisation of voluntary sector carer groups/services through the delivery of a small grants programme. 19 small organisations accessed funding to implement projects to support carer health and wellbeing. The groups were successfully linked with Voluntary Action Rotherham (VAR) to support further funding opportunities, and the majority continue to support carers through their general offer.
- The Borough That Cares Strategic Network provided a well-attended regular forum for organisations and groups supporting carers and carers with lived experience to meet, share good practice and influence decisions. This network continues to meet and flourish.
- Established a voice, influence and engagement task group with a focus on the health and wellbeing of Carers known as the Unpaid Carers Multi-Agency Strategic Group, an officer task group, with representation from adults and children's social care and health services to consider issues and/or requests for change and action raised through the Borough That Cares Network.
- Refreshed and improved the information, advice and guidance available to carers, including the launch of the carer's newsletter, the development of the carer's information pages on the Council website, and the carers support directory.
- Embedded an integrated approach to identifying and supporting carer health and wellbeing through the partnership working of the Borough That Cares Network which represents social care, health and the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS).
- Introduced a co-production programme with communities to build a carer friendly borough via The Borough That Cares Network, utilised to facilitate a number of opportunities including the development of the Council's carers webpages and the vision, priorities and commitments for the new strategy to 2031.

- 1.10 In addition, the Council employed a Carers Strategy Manager to oversee the implementation of the framework, priorities and future strategies, strengthened the carers offer and employed Carer Link Workers to increase the numbers of Carers Assessments to support carers in their own lives, as well as with their caring responsibilities.

2. Priorities for the refreshed Strategy 2026-2031

- 2.1 During April to August 2025, a programme of engagement was undertaken with carers, social care, health, the VCS and service providers to reflect on progress and gather feedback on achievements between 2022-2025, and to co-design the vision, priorities and commitments for the next five years to 2031.

- 2.2 Twenty engagement sessions took place involving 399 participants, further details are set out at Section 4 below.

- 2.3 The feedback from the engagement sessions has shaped the detail of the strategy for the next five years and is focussed around five key commitments. These are set out below with the voice of carers, their views and experiences, and what matters most to them and their cared for loved ones. The Strategy is attached at Appendix 1.

2.4 Commitment 1 – Identification and Early Intervention

Carers said they:

- had different experiences of accessing support,
- did not always receive timely information and support,
- did not always initially recognise themselves as a carer, nor were they recognised by professionals they interacted with,
- thought that being set on a pathway at the beginning of their caring role would have made life easier and provided the opportunity for timely information and support.

They said we should:

“Change our language, unpaid carer isn’t helpful when trying to get carers to self-identify. It’s confusing re employment and carers allowance”

“Identify Carers through GPs, hospital discharge and the hard to reach groups, through community activity”

“Tell illustrative stories which are more powerful than survey results”

“Work together better to identify carers”

“Maintain a ‘universal’ local register”.

2.5 **Commitment 2: Support Carers and Ensure Their Voice is Heard**

Carers said:

- their role can be all consuming, making it difficult to see the point they need a break before experiencing burn out,
- that not all of them knew what a Carer's Assessment was for, thinking it would be to assess their ability as a carer,
- there was a feeling of needing someone to give them 'permission' to look after themselves too.

They said we should:

"Ensure advice and information is accessible for all and carers know how to locate it"

"Increase use of assistive technology to complement the caring role"

"Reduce the health inequalities experienced by carers"

"Reduce isolation and loneliness experienced by carers"

"Support preventative planning"

"Ensure meaningful consultation and champion the carer voice"

"Recognise carers have rights rather than treat them just as family members who have a duty to care".

2.6 **Commitment 3: Support Carers Through Times of Change**

Carers said:

- that coping with life's ups and downs combined with the changes experienced by the cared for person, adds an extra dimension to the caring role,
- although a difficult conversation they would prefer to be fully informed about the cared-for person's health condition and know what to expect.

They said we should:

"Mental health needs fluctuate so changes in their role can be frequent, things improve and then go under again"

"Both sides need to understand that needs change and different support may be required"

"Helping them stay in work benefits their health and wellbeing because it provides another focus and gives a social outlet"

"We get a lot of information initially but then nothing further as no review set, Carers don't think about coming round again as they don't know that there could be a different outcome next time"

"There is a lack of bereavement support for carers."

2.7 **Commitment 4: Work in Partnership**

Carers said:

- they were frustrated that organisations could just not work together, resulting in a fragmented system.

They said we should:

“Organisations need to maximise the resources that they have and utilise budgets in the best way, without duplication”

“Lack of data sharing causes problems”

“The transition from hospital to home was not joined up”

“Look at how you can integrate and share resources”

“Make sure services rotate around the person and follow on”

“I’m frustrated with professionals not interacting with one another and not sharing knowledge which leads to inconsistency”.

2.8 **Commitment 5: Co-Design a Responsive Support Offer for Carers**

This overarching commitment will ensure that the support offer to carers has the maximum impact on their health and wellbeing and that professionals are engaged, knowledgeable and can support carers fully at all stages of their caring role.

Carers said:

- practitioners stated that they were not always confident they fully understood the offer to carers as part of a Carers Assessment.

They said we should:

“Improve the flexibility of the carer break offer and encourage carers to take time out before they experience carer burnout”

“Continue to develop the carers offer and support that through the carers assessments”.

3. **Options Considered and Recommended Proposal**

3.1 **Option 1: Recommended**

Cabinet approves the Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031 (Unpaid Carers Strategy). The strategy provides clarity on the future vision, priorities and commitments to unpaid carers. It also enables continued engagement and ensures a voice for the carers of the borough.

3.2 Option 2: Not recommended

Cabinet does not approve the Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031. Without a carer's strategy, it will be unclear what our future commitments are for carers and the needs of carers may not be recognised or fully addressed.

4. Consultation on Proposal

Key stakeholders have been fully engaged in the development of the refreshed strategy to ensure the voice and experience of carers remains at the centre of service design and delivery across Rotherham.

4.1 Engagement Activity

Between March and August 2025, an extensive programme of engagement took place as detailed below:

Participants	No. Engaged	Method of Engagement
Adult Social Care (ASC) Staff	13	2 x Focus Groups
Learning Disability Providers	13	Provider Forum
Beacon SY Carer Group – Carers	10	Focus Group
Borough that Cares Network	11	Monthly Network Meeting
Carers Forum – Carers	12	Focus Group
Carer Link Officers, Community Connectors and Social Prescribers	27	Focus Group
Community Occupational Therapists	24	Focus Group
Crossroads Carer Group - Carers	39	Focus Group
Dementia Cafés Brampton Bierlow, Dalton, Maltby, Thurcroft - Carers	20	Focus Groups
Domiciliary Care Providers	18	Provider Forum
SYICB Dementia Review Event – Health Professionals	58	Presentation with Feedback
Headway – Carers and Cared For	26	Focus Group
Kashmiri & Yemeni Older Peoples Group – Carers	33	Focus Group
RDaSH Swallownest Hospital Friends & Family Group – Carers	9	Focus Group
Rotherham Hospice – Carers	5	Focus Group
Rotherham Recovery Forum – Carers and Health Professional	10	Focus Group
Rotherham Sight and Sound – Carers and Cared For	12	Focus Group
VAR VCS Community Network - Carers Community Group Leaders	11	Focus Group
Wah Hong Association – Carers	40	Focus Group
Family Action Young Carers Group – Young Carers	8	Focus Group
Total	399	

5. Timetable and Accountability for Implementing this Decision

- 5.1 The refreshed strategy is due to be launched in April 2026. A detailed communication and engagement programme will be developed and implemented.
- 5.2 An annual delivery programme will be co-designed with carers and key stakeholders. Reporting of progress will be overseen by the strategic group, network and reported to the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board.

6. Financial and Procurement Advice and Implications

- 6.1 There are no direct procurement implications arising from the recommendations detailed in this report. Should there be a need to engage third party suppliers to support the delivery of the strategy then these must be procured in accordance with relevant procurement legislation (Public Contracts Regulations 2015 or the Procurement Act 2023 dependent on the route to market identified) as well as the Council's own Financial and Procurement Procedure Rules.
- 6.2 There are no financial implications arising from the adoption of the Borough that Cares All-Age Carers Strategy 2026-2031. Any additional work will need to be completed from within existing budgets.

7. Legal Advice and Implications

- 7.1 The Care Act 2014 places a duty on the local authority to promote individual wellbeing, to identify carers whose needs are not being met, prevent the need for care and support arising in the future, provide information and support and ensure that there is a choice of appropriate support services in its area to meet the needs of eligible individuals and their carers. The strategy outlined in this report addresses those statutory responsibilities and will provide the necessary resources to aid carers in their role.

8. Human Resources Advice and Implications

- 8.1 There are no Human Resource implications associated with this report.

9. Implications for Children and Young People and Vulnerable Adults

- 9.1 The strategy covers all demographics of carers in the borough and therefore is designed to address all carer needs.

10. Equalities and Human Rights Advice and Implications

- 10.1 An equality assessment has been completed to inform the proposals and is attached at Appendices 1 and 2. The proposals in this report support the Council to comply with legal obligations encompassed in the:

- Human Rights Act (1998), to treat everyone equally with fairness, dignity and respect, with a focus on those who are disadvantaged because of disability.
- Equality Act (2010) to legally protect people from discrimination in the wider society.

11. Implications for CO2 Emissions and Climate Change

- 11.1 The assessment is attached at Appendix 3. There are no direct implications as a result of this report.

12. Implications for Partners

- 12.1 Partners have been fully engaged in the co-design of the refreshed strategy and are fully committed to work in partnership to support carers in Rotherham.

13. Risks and Mitigation

- 13.1 Failure to agree a revised strategy will leave the Council with no strategic direction in its support offer to carers and the momentum made over 2022-2025 will not be further progressed.
- 13.2 Agreeing the refreshed strategy will confirm the Council's commitment to carers, as required by the Care Act 2014.

14. Accountable Officers

Ian Spicer, Strategic Director, Adult Care, Housing and Public Health.

Approvals obtained on behalf of Statutory Officers: -

	Named Officer	Date
Chief Executive	John Edwards	28/11/25
Strategic Director of Finance & Customer Services (S.151 Officer)	Judith Badger	25/11/25
Assistant Director of Legal Services (Monitoring Officer)	Phil Horsfield	25/11/25

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