

THE BOROUGH THAT CARES

ALL-AGE CARERS STRATEGY

2026-2031



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FOREWORD

We are proud to introduce Rotherham's All-Age Carers Strategy for 2026-31, a strategy shaped by the voices of young carers, adult, and parent carers who generously shared their experiences, insights, and aspirations with us. They have been central to identifying the priorities that matter most and ensuring this strategy reflects the reality of caring in Rotherham today.

We met and listened to carers of all ages and background, including children and young people, those caring for a few hours a week to those providing round-the-clock support. They told us about the challenges of navigating services, the emotional and financial pressures they face, and the importance of being recognised, respected, and supported.

This strategy is our shared commitment to act on what they told us.

Over the next five years, we will work together to:

- Identify carers earlier and provide timely support
- Improve access to information, guidance, and peer support
- Support carers through times of change, including planning for the future
- Strengthen co-ordination across services and embed co-production
- Ensure carers are recognised as partners in care and empowered to live fulfilling lives alongside their caring role.

We know that caring can be both rewarding and demanding. That's why this strategy sets out our commitment to build a system that works with and for carers, one that is inclusive, responsive, and rooted in lived experience.

To every carer, professional, and partner who contributed: Thank You. Your voice is at the heart of this strategy, and your continued involvement will be vital in delivering real and lasting change.

Together, we are building a borough that cares.



Councillor Joanna Baker-Rogers
Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health



Councillor Victoria Cusworth
Cabinet Member for Children and Young People's Service



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



Nicola Curley
Strategic Director of Children and Young People's Services

INTRODUCTION

This All-Age Carers Strategy has been developed to ensure carers, living in Rotherham, or supporting someone that lives in Rotherham are recognised, supported, and empowered.

Developed through a comprehensive programme of co-production and engagement, involving 23 focus groups and nearly 400 individuals, it outlines a commitment by the Council, Health Partners and the Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise (VCSE) sector to work in partnership to improve the health and well-being of carers in the borough.

The views and experiences of carers of all ages and from all walks of life, adult social care staff, commissioned service providers, VCSE sector organisations, health professionals, and community groups and networks have contributed to its development.

With over 26,000 residents identifying as carers, and many more providing care without formal recognition, this strategy aims to reach carers at every stage of their journey.

What is caring?

A carer is anyone who cares for a friend or family member who can't cope without support. This might be because of aging, illness, disability, poor mental health, or an addiction.

It isn't someone who volunteers or is employed to provide support, a carer could be in education, in receipt of Carers Allowance or working whilst caring.

A caring role may develop over a period of time or happen suddenly without allowing time to prepare. It could be for a few hours each week, or 24 hours a day, 7 days a week and a carer may care for different people at different times in their lifetime.

A carer might be:

- an adult caring for other adults
- a parent caring for children who are ill or have a disability
- a young person caring for a parent, sibling, relative, or friend.



KEY LEGISLATION

THE CARE ACT 2014

Key provisions include:

- Legal right to a carer's assessment based on the appearance of need.
- Eligibility for support based on the impact of caring on wellbeing and personal outcomes.
- Requirement for support planning, personal budgets, and option for direct payments.
- Local authorities may charge for services, though most do not.
- Wellbeing principle places carers' wellbeing on equal footing with those they care for.
- Duties on local authorities include prevention, information and advice, transition support, and advocacy.

HEALTH AND CARE ACT 2022

Strengthens carer involvement in health services:

- NHS England and Integrated Care Boards must involve carers in planning and decision-making.
- Carers must be identified and involved early in hospital discharge planning.
- Emphasis on tailored support, recognition, and collaboration with local authorities and voluntary organisations.

This strategy
aligns to
these key pieces
of legislation

CHILDREN AND FAMILIES ACT 2014

Focuses on young carers and parent carers:

- Young carers (under 18) must be assessed if needs are apparent or on request.
- Assessment considers appropriateness of caring role, education, aspirations, and family needs.
- Parent carers of disabled children are entitled to assessment based on need.
- Encourages a whole-family approach and coordinated assessments.

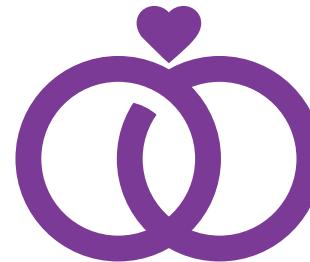
CARER'S LEAVE ACT 2023

- Statutory Unpaid Leave: Up to one week per year for employees to provide or arrange care for a dependant with long-term care needs.
- Day-One Right: Available from the first day of employment.
- Flexible Use: Leave can be taken in half days, full days, or a full week.
- No Proof Required: Employers cannot demand evidence of caring responsibilities.
- Employment Protection: Employees are protected from dismissal or victimisation for taking carer's leave.

FACTS ABOUT CARERS



266,000
people live in Rotherham,
26,313 (10.48 %) are carers



60%
of carers
are married

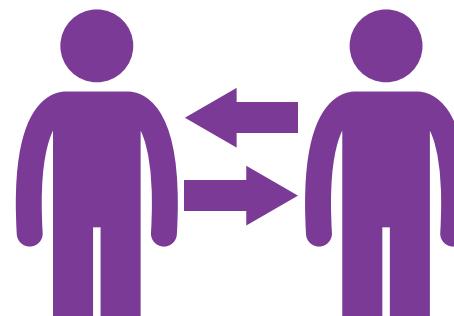
30.8%
of carers are
registered
disabled



45,627 school pupils
in Rotherham borough,
82 of these were identified
as young carers in the 2025
school census



44% of people
caring more than
50 hours per week
are not in good health



In 2025 **34** young
carers received one to
one support to reduce
the impact of their
caring responsibilities

FACTS ABOUT CARERS



3.2% of residents are in receipt of Attendance Allowance



51% of carers are economically inactive

12% of residents are in receipt of the daily living component of PIP or the care component of DLA



46.6% of carers are employed, 40.4% of these are employed in the public sector



15.2% of Rotherham's population have care needs



3% of carers are in receipt of carers allowance

ACHIEVEMENTS OF THE BOROUGH THAT CARES STRATEGIC FRAMEWORK 2022-2025

Carers Strategy Manager appointed to oversee the implementation of the Strategy.

Improved Access to Information via the carers information page on our website, a carers directory in both digital and paper formats, and the carers newsletter. Six editions have been published, with a growing subscriber list of 132 to date. Webpage activity continues to grow, with an average of 890 views and 375 users per month.

Information Navigator Roles integrated into commissioned services to support carers who may face barriers in accessing information, ensuring personalised advice and guidance is available.

Expanded Community Support through a small grant programme, third sector organisations were supported to deliver tailored services that promote carers' health and wellbeing.

This included support for carers with additional needs such as dementia, head injuries, substance misuse, parent carers, and carers from minority communities (BAME, Chinese, LGBTQ+).

A total of 19 community organisations received funding, benefitting an estimated 830 individuals.

Carers reported improvements in physical, social, mental, and emotional wellbeing. The programme also strengthened engagement with community services and encouraged organisations to 'think carer' in their ongoing work.

Strengthened Carer Voice and Influence by growing the Borough That Cares Strategic Network as a platform for voice, influence, and engagement. 30 members now regularly attend the monthly meetings.

Celebrated Carers by recognising Carers Week (June) and Carers Rights Day (November) as major community events, with growing participation each year. Over the three years, 21 events were co-produced for Carers Week and three for Carers Rights Day, led by the Borough That Cares Network.

Established a Multi-Agency Strategic Group to drive change within member organisations which now includes 23 registered members, fostering collaboration and shared responsibility.

Increased Carer's Assessment capacity through the employment of Carers Link Officers resulting in reduced waiting times and improved access to timely support.

Began developing a digital app, utilising funding from the Accelerating Reform Fund, carers are working with a commissioned provider to design a bespoke app to enhance the ability to identify and support carers. This tool will extend the reach, particularly to those not currently engaging with services.

Embedded Co-Production and engagement as a core principle across local carer groups and organisations, with high levels of participation. This collaborative approach has directly informed the development of the strategy for 2026-2031.

WHAT CARERS TOLD US

Over the period of the Borough that Cares Strategic Framework 2022-25 carers have shared examples of positive changes that have helped them in their caring role, however carers have also told us that more needs to be done to drive further improvements.

So to develop this new strategy, between March and August 2025, we undertook a comprehensive engagement process to gather the current views and experience of carers and cared for people in the borough.

We also gathered insight from a wide range of stakeholders, social care and health professionals, care providers, and representatives from the VCSE sector. In total, nearly 400 individuals participated in this engagement.

Themes began to emerge, reflecting the lived experiences and needs of carers in Rotherham. These local themes, such as accessible information, maintaining their own health and wellbeing and combining caring with paid employment, often aligned with broader trends in national sources of evidence, helping us to validate and strengthen our understanding of the issues that matter most.

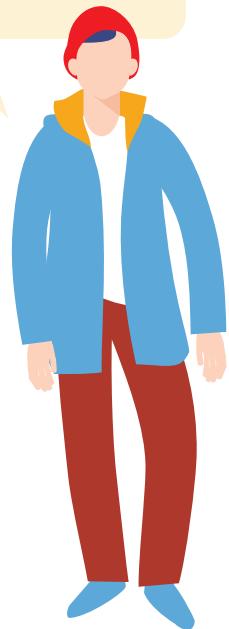
A lack of early information and advice was a major cause of stress and burnout. Many carers only discovered the support available to maintain their own health and wellbeing after reaching a crisis point.



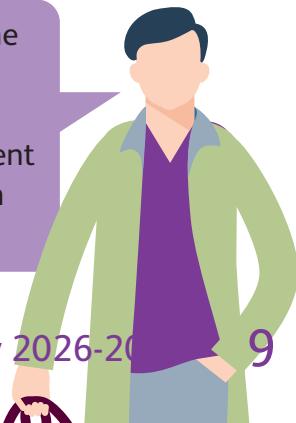
Carers in employment, said that low-level needs often go unrecognised and unsupported, yet these can quickly escalate, forcing a reduction in hours or leaving the workplace altogether.

Young carers shared that they often live with high levels of anxiety, especially when their family unit is under strain. They rely on the stability of their family, and when that falters, their sense of security is shaken, until someone recognises their situation and steps in with support.

Carers raised concerns about health inequalities, sharing that they often delay seeking treatment for their own health issues due to caring responsibilities.



Carers told us that one of the hardest parts of being a carer is navigating the different systems across health and adult social care.



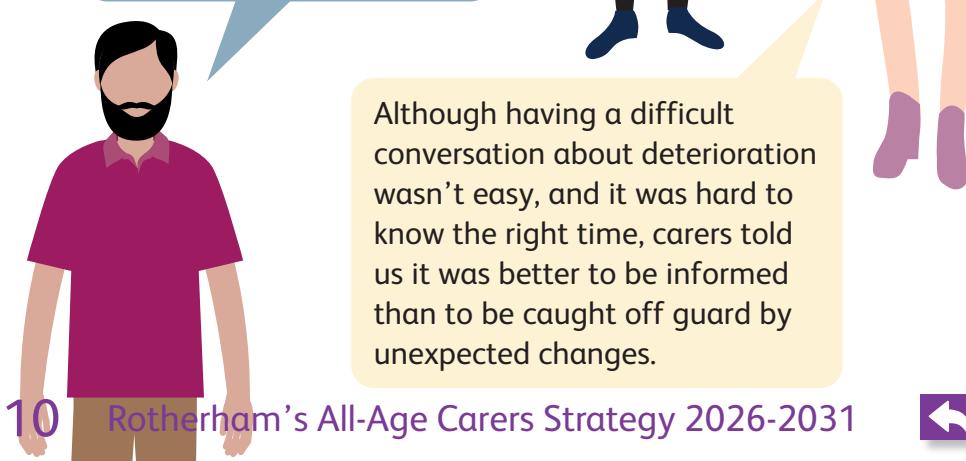
WHAT CARERS TOLD US

Many carers found valuable support online in relation to the health conditions of those they care for, when there was a clear diagnosis pathway they were signposted to support services. However, they expressed frustration that guidance wasn't automatically provided during health service interactions. Too often, the responsibility fell on carers to seek out information themselves, including speaking with other carers and they told us we must do better.

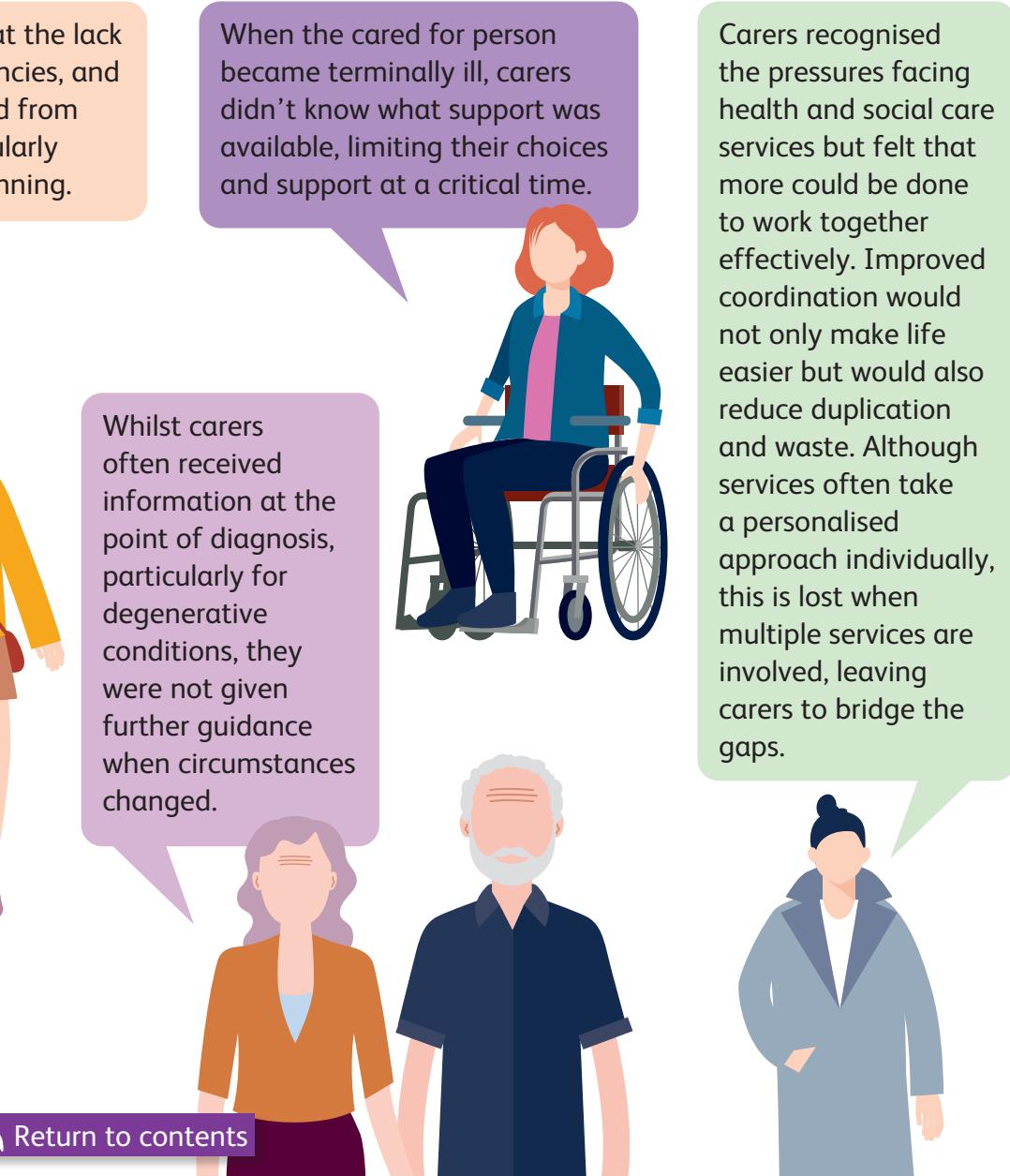
Carers expressed frustration at the lack of coordination between agencies, and that they were often excluded from important discussions, particularly during hospital discharge planning.

When the cared for person became terminally ill, carers didn't know what support was available, limiting their choices and support at a critical time.

Carers recognised the pressures facing health and social care services but felt that more could be done to work together effectively. Improved coordination would not only make life easier but would also reduce duplication and waste. Although services often take a personalised approach individually, this is lost when multiple services are involved, leaving carers to bridge the gaps.



Although having a difficult conversation about deterioration wasn't easy, and it was hard to know the right time, carers told us it was better to be informed than to be caught off guard by unexpected changes.



Whilst carers often received information at the point of diagnosis, particularly for degenerative conditions, they were not given further guidance when circumstances changed.



OUR COMMITMENTS

The commitments set out in this strategy require strong and sustained partnership working. We are committed to working collaboratively across social care, health, education, and the VCSE sector to deliver meaningful change for carers in Rotherham.

Identification and early intervention	Identify carers, including young carers, earlier in their journey and ensure timely access to advice, support, and preventative services before needs escalate into crisis.
	Provide clear, practical guidance on the carers' service offer and how to navigate it, ensuring carers are aware of available support through clear, multi-channel communication.
	Explore flexible support options for carers in employment, including better workplace awareness, access to low-level interventions, and improved links with employers.
	Promote carer friendly health services that recognise the barriers carers face in accessing care for themselves, and ensure carers are supported to prioritise their own health.
Support carers and ensure their voice is heard	Ensure carers are routinely provided with clear, timely information during key health and social care service interactions.
	Develop clearer pathways for carers, especially at the point of diagnosis, so they are easily connected to the right services and support.
	Recognise the value of shared experiences and increase opportunities for carers to connect with and support each other.
	Work with schools, youth services, and family support teams to identify and support young carers earlier, ensuring their emotional wellbeing and family stability are prioritised.
	Provide training and resources to frontline staff across health and social care to improve recognition of carers and ensure they are treated as partners in care.
	Continue to involve carers in shaping services and monitoring progress, ensuring their voices remain central to everything we do.

OUR COMMITMENTS

Support carers through times of change	<p>Support carers during key transitions and ensure that health and social care professionals provide carers with timely, updated information when the condition of the person they care for changes, not just at the point of diagnosis.</p> <p>Empower carers to plan for the future, providing structured support to develop contingency plans and long-term care arrangements, when they are no longer able to provide care.</p> <p>Support professionals to have sensitive, timely conversations with carers about deterioration and end-of-life care, helping carers feel more prepared and informed.</p> <p>Raise awareness of the support available during end-of-life care and bereavement, and ensure this information is accessible, clear, and shared proactively with carers.</p>
Work in partnership	<p>Improve joint working across education, health and social care, particularly to identify carers at key contact points such as hospital discharge, ensuring carers are included in planning and decision-making.</p> <p>Develop clearer, more joined-up pathways, digital tools and carer champions to help carers navigate complex systems.</p> <p>Develop a shared understanding of personalised care across all services, so that when multiple agencies are involved, the carer and the person they care for experience joined-up, person-centred support.</p>
Co-design a responsive support offer for carers	<p>Regularly analyse feedback and data to understand carers' experiences and outcomes and identify gaps between assessed needs and actual support received.</p> <p>Provide a clear and easy-to-understand overview of available services, and create flexible ways for people to access support without always needing a Carers Assessment.</p> <p>Increase practitioner confidence in supporting carers to access advice, information and support, utilising universal services, the VCSE sector and commissioned services to meet need and achieve identified outcomes.</p> <p>Evaluate the success of existing services and co-design new services or information with carers.</p> <p>Involve carers in shaping training to ensure it is relevant and include carers' voices through stories, videos or lived experience contributions.</p> <p>Improve ways to track satisfaction, uptake and wellbeing outcomes to inform ongoing service development.</p>

HOW WILL WE MAKE IT HAPPEN?

Each year, carers and partners will help shape a delivery plan. Progress will be shared through the carers' network and strategic group, with updates on achievements and outcomes reported to the Rotherham Health and Wellbeing Board.

Our commitment to carer involvement

We recognise that carers are experts by experience, and your ongoing involvement is essential to shaping, delivering, and monitoring our strategy. We are committed to working in partnership with you at every stage.

How you can get involved

- **Regular feedback:** We will provide opportunities for you to share your experiences and suggestions through surveys, focus groups and forums
- **Co-production:** We will invite you to help design and review services, ensuring your voice is central to decision-making
- **Monitoring progress:** We will involve you in reviewing our progress against the five commitments, using your insights to help us understand what is working and where we need to improve
- **Case studies and stories:** We will welcome your stories and examples to help us illustrate the real impact of our work and highlight areas for change
- **Carer reference groups:** We will support the development of carer-led groups to provide ongoing advice and challenge to our work.

We will make sure that all involvement opportunities are accessible, inclusive and flexible to fit around your caring responsibilities.

We want to work with you to make sure our strategy delivers real change for carers in Rotherham. If you would like to share your experiences, join a carers' group, take part in feedback sessions, or help shape future services, we would love to hear from you.

To get involved or find out more:

- Contact us by email at commissioningenquiries@rotherham.gov.uk
- Visit our website at www.rotherham.gov.uk/carers

Together, we can make a difference.

CONNECTING STRATEGIES

USEFUL CONTACTS AND INFORMATION

[Rotherham Council Plan 2022-2025](#)

[Rotherham Adult Social Care Strategy 2024-2027](#)

[Rotherham Learning Disability Strategy 2024-2027](#)

[Rotherham's Housing Strategy 2022-2025](#)

[Rotherham Council's Digital Strategy](#)

[Rotherham Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

[Rotherham Hospice Living Life's Wishes 2024-2030](#)

[Rotherham Loneliness Action Plan 2023-2025](#)

[Moving Rotherham Partnership Action Plan 2025-2026](#)

[Adult Contact Team](#)

01709 822330

[Children and Young People Services](#)

01709 336080

[Rotherham Carers Newsletter](#)

[Carers Information Hub](#)

[Your own important numbers](#)