

Appendix 1 - Carers In Cheshire East background information

Understanding carers

Carers, also known as informal carers, family carers or unpaid carers, look after an adult in their life who would not be able to manage without their support. Carers may look after an ageing partner, a disabled adult child, support an elderly neighbour or a friend with substance use issues. These carers are not paid for the support that they offer. Not all carers choose to be in a caring role but find that circumstances or expectations force them to fulfil this role. Many people do not identify themselves as a carer as the care they provide seems self-evident and necessary.

While some caring roles are limited to several hours a day or week or for a temporary period of time, other caring roles become all-consuming with carers having to relinquish paid employment or give up their own interests to be able to care for someone else.

Nationally, around 11.9 million people provide unpaid care for a disabled, seriously ill or elderly loved one¹, saving the state £184 billion a year in 2021/22² – more than half of the total cost of the NHS in 2024/25. According to research done by Carers UK, carers save the UK economy £184 billion per year, an average of £15,462 per carer. 1 in 9 of the workforce across the UK are juggling caring responsibilities with work. However, the significant demands of caring mean that an estimated 600 people give up work every day to provide unpaid care for a loved one. Carer's Allowance is the main carer's benefit and is £83.30 for a minimum of 35 hours. That is £617 per week less than the average cost of home care in Cheshire East for 35 hours of care; this gap is greater when you consider unpaid carers will often provide more than 35 hours of care in a week.

While the support that carers provide on an individual but also national level is high, this can have devastating impacts on them. For instance, over three quarters (79%) of carers responding to Carers UK's State of Caring 2023 Survey said they feel stressed or anxious as a result of caring and over a quarter of carers (27%) said their mental health was bad or very bad. 54% said their physical health had suffered and 22% reported that caring had caused them injuries³. 8 in 10 people caring for loved ones say they have felt lonely or socially isolated, this rises to 86% for carers providing more than 50 hours of care a week.⁴

It is estimated that that 4.8% of the population (aged over 5 years) in Cheshire East, reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week based on the 2021 Census. This figure decreased from 7.6% in 2011. To note Census 2021 was undertaken during COVID-19 which may have influenced how people perceived or managed their provision of unpaid care. The census question in 2021 was also different than the 2011 question, which asked whether someone provides an unpaid caring role in excess of 19 hours per week.

¹ Caring About Equality: Carers Week report 2025 (Online)

² Petrillo, Zhang and Bennett (2024). Valuing Carers 2021/22: the value of unpaid care in the UK (Online).

³ Carers UK (2023). State of Caring 2023, The impact of caring on: health. (Online)

⁴ Carers UK (2019) Facts About Carers (Online)

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In the Survey of Adult Carers in England 2023/24, out of 227 responses, carers in Cheshire East reported:

- A self-reported quality of life score of 7.1 out of 12, compared to 7.3 nationally
- 55.9% had some social contact but not enough
- 18.2% felt socially isolated
- 12.7% often or always felt lonely
- 21.3% felt they were neglecting Themselves
- 15.9% felt they had no control over their daily life

Care Act 2014

Under the Care Act 2014, local authorities have a statutory obligation to ensure that people who live in their areas:

- receive services that prevent their care needs from becoming more serious, or delay the impact of their needs
- can get the information and advice they need to make good decisions about care and support
- have a range of provision of high quality, appropriate services to choose from. T

The Act gives local authorities a responsibility to assess a carer's needs for support and the impact of caring on the carer. It also considers what a carer wants to achieve in their own day-to-day life while also assessing whether the carer is able or willing to carry on caring, whether they work or want to work, and whether they want to study or do more socially.

Despite it being a statutory requirement that carers receive the same level of attention as the cared for, this has not always been the case with the focus often still remaining on the cared for person as the primary service user and client. Investment in, and a focus on, informal carers, is key to ensuring informal carers have opportunities to enhance their wellbeing and can access the right support at the right time in line with the council's priorities.

Supporting carers and preventing carer burnout also means less people will need access to formal care, whether that's for the carer or the cared for. This is beneficial on an economic level and personal level both for the carer and cared for.

Services for carers

Carers services offer a host of support to meet the multiple and varied needs of carers throughout their caring journey. Usually, the offer consists of a combination of information and advice, peer support and financial support to enable carers to make decisions that benefit their wellbeing.

Cheshire East's Carers Hub is currently run by Making Space who, as of 31 June 2025, have 7,942 adult carers registered with them; 21,338 adult carers were referred to the service between January 2023 – June 2025, of which 12.5% (2,672) were new to the service. This contract expires in December 2026.

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Core functions of the service include:

- identification of carers within the borough to enable more people to access appropriate support, particularly those who are seldom heard, such as working carers.
- information and advice in relation to a person's caring role and their own needs, including a quarterly newsletter
- completing carer's needs assessments to understand the physical and emotional impact of caring to identify what support they need and whether they are willing or able to continue caring
- one-to-one advice and support over the telephone or face to face including signposting and support to access other services and emotional/wellbeing support
- facilitated group-based support, delivered from a variety of community venues across the borough, providing group activities, informal training and opportunities for peer support and developing social networks
- Take a Break fund that provides a set number of free care at home hours for the cared for to enable carers to get a break from their caring role
- carer grants through the Living Well Fund
- also host events for carers, their families and professionals.

In addition to the contract with Making Space, in October 2024, a pilot project with an organisation called Mobilise was launched across all nine Cheshire and Merseyside Local Authority areas, funded through the Accelerating Reform Fund. Mobilise is a tech start up run by carers for carers. Mobilise aims to provide easily accessible and flexible support to unpaid carers using technology. The pilot will continue in Cheshire East until November 2025. [Support for unpaid carers in Cheshire East](#)

Their offer consists of:

- A weekly newsletter by carers for carers
- An e-support package, a personalised guide to caring
- 5-part email course - including essentials, rights around caring and working, registering with a GP, how to support yourself as a carer
- Virtual cuppas for carers
- Online carers financial checker
- AI-guided Mobilise Assistant that provides information on a range of topics, including national and local information/services
- 1-2-1 coaching over the phone with the Carer Support Team
- Peer to Peer Online Community Hub - carers can share their own experiences information, advice and emotional support

The preventative support offered by Mobilise to carers plays a significant role in avoiding carer burnout. 896 carers have accessed support from Mobilise in Cheshire East; 79% of carers in Cheshire East accessing Mobilise had never accessed support before.

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Part of Mobilise's success is the result of an untraditional approach and offer. For instance, the majority of engagement with Mobilise happens outside office hours, meeting the needs of carers at a time convenient to them.

The uptake of the out-of-hours support reflects a need amongst carers for flexible and personalised support outside of traditional working hours that is able to efficiently identify carers early and support them online.