



Annual Review 2020-21

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A message from the Chair...



The year under review was dominated by the Covid-19 pandemic, which put huge extra pressures on carers, increasing anxiety and restricting practical support.

Sadly, Covid-19 also hit hardest in parts of our community which could least bear the strain.

Carers, nevertheless, played a crucial role in protecting people vulnerable to the virus, providing emotional support and a lifeline to the outside world. Despite the unprecedented pressures, there were positives too, as more carers came forward for help, which we were

able to provide with new digital dimensions to our services, as well as measures to address inequality.

Navigating these 12 months was never easy and the Board of Trustees want to thank the dedicated, talented and compassionate team of staff and volunteers who rose to the challenge, as well as our supporters who helped us meet some of the extra costs.

As the new Chair, I also want to pay tribute to my predecessor Chris Raper, who has done so much to strengthen the charity financially and enable us to look to the future with confidence.

Dr Neil Churchill OBE
Chair of the Board of Trustees

...and Chief Executive



Care for the Carers is here for all unpaid carers in East Sussex, through our services, and by speaking up with and for carers. Our aim is that no one is left to care alone.

During 2020-21, life changed fundamentally, especially for carers who contributed hugely to caring for our communities during the pandemic. The year saw rapid change and development for the charity too, as we sought to swiftly understand the impact of the pandemic on local carers, and to respond. We adapted our services so they could continue remotely

through lockdown, and found new ways of working to keep carers informed and connected.

I'd like to thank everyone who made our work possible this year. Thank you to our Board of Trustees for their unstinting support and guidance, in particular to Chris Raper for his commitment and insight. Thank you to our funders and partners. Working together across sectors to support carers was crucial this year, and it is a privilege to be part of such a committed team of voluntary sector, social care and NHS professionals and volunteers.

Jennifer Twist
Chief Executive

Our services during the pandemic

With the continuation of the pandemic, we were able to act swiftly in response to measures taken by the Government to control Coronavirus.

Our priority was to ensure carers continued to receive high quality support and advice, as well as protecting carers and staff from the virus and supporting their wellbeing.

Although our office was closed to the public, our telephone lines remained active as our staff transitioned to working from home. We quickly developed and implemented alternative service delivery models for counselling, Carers Groups, activities, and training to continue online or by telephone. We increased our use of technology ensuring carers are not left to care alone.

We adapted our Annual Carers Conference in July 2020 so that it was wholly delivered online, featuring online and video content, live workshops and panels with participant carers and keynote speakers discussing a range of topics. Delivering the conference virtually ensured that we still captured and amplified carers voices during this unprecedented time.

Our Carers in Touch service responded to carers' needs during the pandemic, making keeping in touch calls to carers at risk of social isolation.

During this period of uncertainty, we increased our engagement and collaboration with partner organisations. We worked closely with the Sussex Health and Care Partnership and other Sussex carers' organisations, Carers Support West Sussex, the Carers Centre for Brighton and Hove and Amaze, implementing a Sussex-wide vaccination media campaign combined with cohesive communications and registration process so that carers could receive the latest vaccination updates and information during the vaccination rollout across Sussex.

We were fortunate to secure additional funding from external funders to invest in a number of new service delivery models. We delivered a mixed model of telephone, online, and face-to-face support, adapting to meet carers' changing needs and working within the changing government restrictions as the year progressed.

Looking forward, we intend to provide a blended model of delivery for our services, ensuring we build on the learning from supporting carers during the pandemic.

We plan to retain some online service delivery, which has made our services more accessible for working carers, alongside face-to-face options to continue to make our services as accessible as possible.

"Thank you very much for calling all this time, lockdown has been quite grim and it has been nice to talk to someone."

"Please pass on my thanks to the people from CftC. I really have benefited from the calls." (Carers In Touch service)

"You phoned just at the right time. I really believe in fate. I was sitting there saying 'help' to the universe and you phoned. Came to my rescue, just when I needed it."

Our Impact in 2020/21



9,047

carers accessed support in 2020-21



1,438

carers signed up for the Carers Card



69,241

carers in East Sussex



1 in 5

of our services are funded through donations



274

Carer Ambassadors



38,000

visits to our website



235

carers are members of the Carers Voices Network



10,000

carers receive CareLine magazine



7,376

followers on social media

Support, advice and guidance

Throughout the pandemic and the ongoing Government restrictions, we supported carers, encouraging them to get in touch with us. Carers experienced many and sudden challenges, whether getting food shopping and prescriptions, caring safely with limited or no PPE, feeling isolated or looking after someone for the first time.

Carers can get in touch via our Carers Hub in a number of ways, including by phone, email and via the website. We act as the single point of contact, helping to streamline the system for carers and those supporting them.

Our specialist team provides support to carers quickly, through Care for the Carers' own services, or from our partners across the county. This year we again reached more carers, with 63% more newly identified carers being supported compared to the previous year.

We provide one-to-one support through regular "Directions" sessions and Coaching. This dedicated time with a support worker enables carers to access specialist information, advice and guidance by telephone, online, in person near to their home, or at home if necessary.

"Nice that I can have someone ask me what I need rather than having to ask for help which makes a difference when feeling overwhelmed."

Our counselling services, Time to Talk and Teen Talk, provide emotional support to carers and young carers. These services can help carers work through the emotional impact of caring, and support them to build their own health and wellbeing.

"It's good to unload all the negative feelings I have about being a carer. I'm not allowed to open up to anybody else in my role as a carer. Friends and relatives don't want to hear that I'm unhappy and I don't want to scare them away. It's good to talk to someone about how I really feel." (Counselling service)

Our Carers in Touch listening service launched in April 2020, providing regular wellbeing calls to carers who feel socially isolated, particularly during the pandemic.

9,047

carers across East Sussex received information, advice and support

457

carers accessed one-to-one specialist support, advice and guidance through 894 Coaching or Directions sessions

240

adult and young carers accessed our Time to Talk and Teen Talk counselling services

98%

of carers received a response within five working days

42

young carers accessed services

2,421

newly identified carers

CARER STORY

My mental health group



Anna Newman looks after her husband, Thomas. Anna writes about her caring role and meeting with the Care for the Carers' Mental Health Carers Group.

I have been a carer for my husband, Thomas, for 10 years. Thomas has Schizoaffective Disorder which is a severe mental illness. He suffers from audio and visual hallucinations, as well as depression and delusions. He also has some physical health issues. Thomas has recently been diagnosed with treatment resistant Schizophrenia, meaning that after trying many medications, nothing has worked.

I help my husband with medication, preparing meals, emotional support and arrange to take him to all medical appointments. I also have to prompt him to remember to do certain things, as when he is partially unwell, he can struggle with his memory or lose track of time.

Before the COVID-19 lockdown, I used to go to the monthly Lewes carers group; this now takes place online. I also take part in the monthly Mental Health Carers Group which started last year. I find this group particularly helpful as I can relate to the struggles that come with caring for someone that is mentally unwell. It is nice to share stories and stresses with a group of people who completely understand what you are going through.

It is also good to have time set aside for something that benefits my own mental wellbeing and to meet other people in a similar situation.

Even before lockdown, being a mental health carer can be quite isolating at times. People don't always understand the severity of the

illness or why sometimes plans have to be cancelled at the last minute, or the reason a person may behave in a certain way when they are unwell.

We are very open about Thomas's diagnosis; education is key to ending the stigma surrounding mental illness.

I have previously attended activities arranged by Care for the Carers. It was nice to socialise with other carers and be spoilt. I have been for a pub meal at the Cock Inn with my Lewes carers group. I have also had afternoon tea at both the Grand in Eastbourne and The Shelly's in Lewes as well as attended a Tai Chi class.

"I would recommend joining a carers group as it is a great way to meet new people, share stories, get support and find out about other services you may not be aware of."

Carer Support Worker, Rachel Lawson, who facilitates the group, says: "The group has been running online since 2020, and has proved to be a fantastic way to bring carers from across the county together."

"We provide a safe, confidential space for those caring for someone with significant mental health difficulties to be able to talk openly and honestly about the challenges they face and to support members to feel less isolated, lonely or judged."

Groups and activities

During the pandemic, we continued Carers Groups online and by phone so that carers could stay in touch.

Carers Information and Advice Groups offer carers new to the caring role an opportunity to meet one another and access information, advice and support and build confidence, resilience and resources. At a monthly evening group, working carers can get together at a convenient time to suit them.

Carers Wellbeing Groups are the next step after a carer has attended a Carers Information and Advice group for 12 months. These groups focus on anything that the group feels would improve their wellbeing, including activities such as walking, arts and crafts or meeting for a coffee and chat.

Carers Groups focusing on specific needs or interests include 'Making Memories' Dementia Groups and a monthly Mental Health carers group for carers of people with mental health conditions. Feedback and input from carers lead the focus of these groups.

"Just received my spa kit from Care for the Carers and it is really lovely and made my day. Thank you for this wonderful gift and thinking of me. Thank you for your support, it makes such a difference."

Young Adult Carer groups for carers aged 17-25 years involves Young Adult Carers (YACs) influencing how services are run and offering social activities which their caring role prevents them from accessing. This year, generous donors has made it possible to provide vocational support and social activities for the YACs.

Our new Young Carers service offers a range of groups and activities designed to give young carers space for respite and peer support, as well as engaging with them to better represent and amplify their voices. Activities include fun and games sessions, and online and face-to-face social groups.



Our popular carers activities programme, funded by donations mainly from local trusts, give carers a much needed break, some fun and an opportunity to get together with other carers. Activities have included online bingo and quizzes, letterbox wellbeing gifts, wellbeing and pamper days and Christmas lunches for all our carers groups.

"I don't know what we would have done without CftC. We meet up a lot, have good chats and a good laugh, chat about our problems, help one another, phone if anything is needed."



513

carers attended
131 carers groups



132

Young Adult Carers
(YACs) are registered
on our closed
Facebook group



24

YACs from across the
county were supported
at our specialist groups



"Loved the bingo and Dad said he had never played before but he was really good at it. Thank you for a lovely afternoon and his birthday wishes."

Care for the Carers' engaging and innovative Photographer in Residence programme continued during the year. The workshops give carers the opportunity to reflect on their caring role and share their experiences of caring through a camera lens. Carers can learn about photography and build their photography skills including editing, composition, lighting and other basic technical skills.

What was the best thing about the photography workshops?

Learning another way to capture the experience of being a carer.

The respect, empathy and expertise from John.

Great to be in a new location with new people.

What did you learn about photography?

Taking note of 'light' and framing the shot.

Looking at work of other photographers to learn and have ideas.

Composition, lighting and experimenting with ideas.

Tools and resources

All of our work involves equipping carers with the tools and resources that will support them to manage their caring role.

Practical tools to help in everyday situations include Wellness Recovery Action Planning courses, Carers Groups, providing peer support, and creative workshops and learning. Our Carers Groups equip carers with skills and information on a wide range of topics, including mindfulness, managing stress, first aid and emergency planning.

Our Carers Card gives discounts to carers from a wide range of businesses in East Sussex. Offers are from diverse businesses ranging from retail, food and drink, health, legal and financial. These local partners pledge their recognition of carers. The card also identifies holders as a carer, and links with a back-up care plan with the Council, which is particularly important during the pandemic for carers who can have an emergency plan and short term cover in place.



We also administer two grants. The Small Grants for Carers fund supports community groups that help carers – both to set up and develop their offer, and the Healthcare Appointment Respite Grant enables carers to attend healthcare appointments, training courses or carer engagement opportunities. Grants were given to carers for items to help them in their caring role, such as beds, mattresses, car repairs and washing machines, and for respite care to attend appointments.

“We’re delighted to be working with the Carers Card to provide discounted Butlin’s breaks for carers. The work carers do is invaluable and after what has been an extremely tough year, we hope to see many of them across our resorts having a well-earned family holiday.” Butlins

Care for the Carers has been commissioned by East Sussex County Council and NHS East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group (CCG) to act as their Strategic Partner.

We also lead the East Sussex VCS Carers Network, made up of partner organisations including Crossroads, Coastal Wellbeing and hospices. We work together to support other service providers commissioned to deliver carer services so that a dynamic, responsive and cohesive offer can be provided to local carers. This collaborative approach also enables carers to be identified at the earliest opportunity.

67
grants were issued
to 59 carers

1,438
carers signed up for
the Carers Card

169
businesses signed up to
offer discounts to carers

Our partnerships

East Sussex VCS Carers Network

We work closely with a range of organisations and community groups and this year these partnerships have been crucial. Working together enabled us to maximise the collective impact of our services, learn and support one another and make the most of our resources.

We facilitate the East Sussex VCS Carers Network, whose members are voluntary sector organisations providing services to

adult carers. We work together to deliver and develop carers’ services and collectively offer dynamic, responsive and cohesive support. This collaborative approach helps carers to access the right services quickly and when they need them, and enables services to adapt to carers’ changing needs. All the Network’s members went above and beyond during this challenging year – we commend their hard work and commitment and thank them for their peer support.



East Sussex VCSE Alliance

The East Sussex VCSE Alliance is made up of 15 independently constituted community, voluntary and social enterprise organisations. We work in partnership to support our diverse communities within East Sussex and act as an active partner and stakeholder in the transformation of the design and delivery of public services.

Further Afield

We have also continued to build our partnerships beyond our county borders this year, forming the Sussex Carers Partnership with the Carers Centre for Brighton & Hove and Carers Support West Sussex. This has enabled us to collaborate with the NHS at the Sussex level, and enhance our engagement work. Being a Network Partner of Carers Trust and member of Carers UK ensures that local carers’ voices influence strategic planning nationally.



Awareness, information and communication

During the pandemic, we worked with East Sussex County Council and local councils, partner organisations, voluntary and community groups and communicated priority information about community hubs and contact centres that were set up to ensure that the most vulnerable, local residents could access contact, food, essentials and medication.

We are building a carer-friendly community that raises awareness of the valuable role carers play, their needs, experiences and the challenges they face. We work with local businesses and organisations, supporting them to become more carer-aware, for people who access their products and services and their own employees who are carers themselves.

“Blown away by how well the Care for the Carers website is put together and run – informative, well presented and easy to use.”

Our ‘Think Carer’ training has evolved into a bespoke programme which is in high demand in health, social care, commercial and the voluntary sectors across East Sussex. Through this training we identify Carer Ambassadors who are an organisation’s ‘go to’ person for carers.

We lead awareness campaigns including Carers Week, Carers Rights Day and Young Carers Action Day, together with local partners, organisations and businesses. These campaigns raise awareness and highlight carers and the vital role they play.

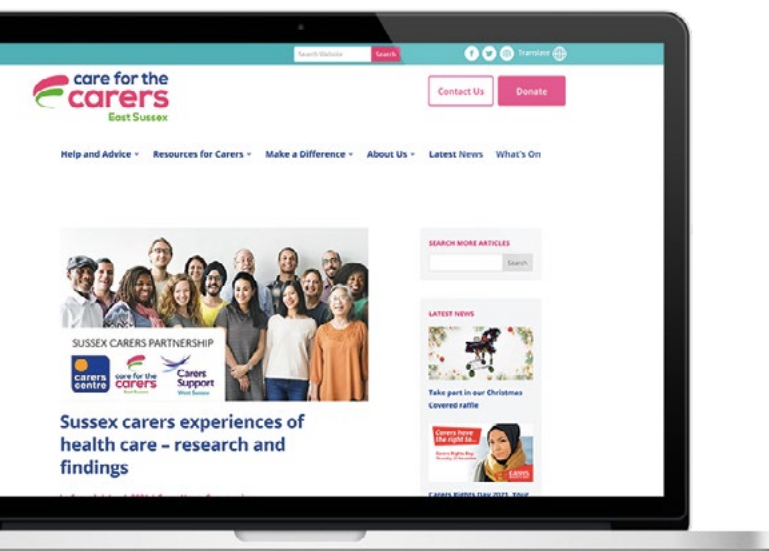
Our communications include CareLine, the quarterly magazine keeping local carers updated with information about caring and support available, along with our informative, monthly e-newsletter providing carers with engagement and feedback opportunities.

We launched a new website with a refreshed design and additional features to improve accessibility and navigation, making it more carer-centric, adding translation features for 90 languages, and further ‘out of hours’ help and advice for carers.

Our website is often the first port of call for carers and professionals who use it to find the help that they need. Popular content includes the Sussex vaccination programme information, getting a Carers Card, our online resources, latest news and our calendar of events.

Care for the Carers is also very active on social media reaching out to as many carers as possible from diverse groups.

“The training was very informative, and gave a good insight into who carers are, how they feel and what support is available to them.”



274

Carer Ambassadors building a carer-friendly community



3,315

carers and professionals reached with our monthly e-newsletter



10,000

carers receive CareLine magazine

“The training was incredibly helpful and I came away feeling very empowered and comfortable around giving support to carers.”



335

volunteers and professionals attend Think Carer awareness training through 39 training sessions

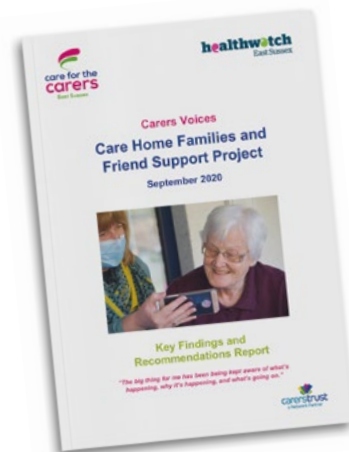


38,000

visits to our website

Engagement and representation

The Carers Voices Network offers opportunities for carers from across the county to share their views, experiences and needs, and to influence decision making around issues that impact on their lives.



During the year, network members participated in a range of engagement opportunities, including a research project exploring carers experiences of healthcare during the pandemic, co-delivered with the Carers Centre for Brighton & Hove and Carers Support West Sussex. Carers of

care home residents were also invited to share their views to explore the impact and potential solutions to the separation of care home residents during the pandemic.

Carer engagement is threaded through all that we do, with live issues experienced by carers being understood through our one-to-one support work. This enables us to identify themes and ensure carers voices influence our own service delivery and are represented in our contributions to strategic debate with and for carers. Key engagement debates are shared with all Carers Wellbeing Groups, ensuring they are informed of topical issues and empowering carers to have their say.

In 2020 Care for the Carers held its countywide Annual Carers Voices Conference throughout July. It focused on the theme, Healthy Caring, Healthy You, comprised of a series of online engagement events and offline engagement.



235
carers are members of the Carers Voices Network



88
carers and 9 professionals were represented at the annual conference



95%
of carers felt listened to and could share their experiences

"I have joined in most of the sessions you have facilitated and have been very pleasantly surprised by getting the feeling of being listened to and sharing experiences - you don't feel so alone. Very good sessions. Well done to all."



"There was so much respect in the 'room', I found it very emotional both telling our own story and hearing other people's, as we had so much in common."

The aims of the conference were to keep carers informed and share information, bring carers together and listen to and amplify carers voices. We worked in partnership with Carers Trust, Carers UK and a variety of Sussex partners so that carers could feed back and give their input directly to influence future strategies and policies.

Building on the success of our previous Carers Voices events, we incorporated the popular elements of keynote speakers, a live Q&A session with carer organisations, opportunities for carers to visit a virtual marketplace, and consultation workshops on the hot topics for carers. All of this was delivered online and through telephone discussions due to the COVID-19 pandemic restrictions.



"Just a quick note to say what an excellent job you did in writing up the feedback from the Annual Carers Voices Conference. The report effectively captures the ideas that were expressed. I hope that both documents help to add weight to the impact of your valuable work. Many thanks for organising such a useful conference online."

Governance and management

Our Board of Trustees are volunteers, and are also Directors of Care for the Carers (which is a Charitable Company). The Board sets Care for the Carers' overall strategic direction, delegating day to day management to our Chief Executive. Most of our Trustees have lived experience of caring, and together they hold a broad range of professional skills and expertise.

During 2020-21 the Board prioritised maintaining good governance during the pandemic, as well as supporting the leadership with adapting our services to the rapidly changing needs of carers.

Following the retirement of three longstanding Trustees at the 2020 AGM, the Board gave careful consideration to succession planning this year, including building the diversity of the Board to more fully reflect the community we serve. Dr Neil Churchill OBE was co-opted to the Board in December. Chris Raper resigned from the role of Chair in May, continuing as a Trustee to support a smooth transition. The Board appointed Neil as his successor.

We thank our Trustees for their guidance, commitment and dedication. We are particularly grateful to Jenny Ballard, Mandy Curtis and Sara Geater for their contribution to Care for the Carers over the years, and during their time as Trustees.

Trustees in 2020-21

Dr Neil Churchill OBE
(Chair from 28th May 2021)

Mr Chris Raper
(Chair to 21st May 2021)

Mr Jake Jay
(Vice-Chair from 28th May 2021)

Mrs Susan Lilja
(Treasurer from 28th May 2021)

Mr Alan Botterill

Ms Polly Evans

Mrs Jenny Ballard
(Resigned 17th December 2020)

Ms Mandy Curtis
(Vice-Chair; Resigned 17th December 2020)

Ms Sara Batista
(Resigned 17th December 2020)

CASE STUDY

Hastings Direct support staff who are carers

Alex Taylor-Beal, Web Insight Analyst, explains about being a working carer and the support he receives from his employer, Hastings Direct.

My experience in becoming a carer felt gradual and wasn't quickly recognised by myself for quite some time.

My wife (then girlfriend) started to get symptoms of Multiple Sclerosis around 10-11 years ago, and looking back now, my caring responsibilities began almost instantly – particularly as we were both living away at university and away from friends and family.

It wasn't really until I was in the workplace, after university, where it became clear that identifying as a carer actually opened doors in terms of understanding and accessing available support.

"Support at Hastings Direct has been great for me. My line manager, when joining, was already a Wellbeing Champion within the company, and was instantly incredibly supportive in terms of balancing my home and work life, along with my being a carer."

Working from home has also been very helpful in terms of being able to take care of smaller tasks, such as quick drop-offs to doctors or picking up prescriptions. My wife also works



from home, and being together while working helps a lot in terms of being able to be reactive to any given situation.

Richard Phillips, Commercial Executive and Carers and family Friendly Co-Lead, says; "During the pandemic, we released a Colleague Hardship Fund to help support carers and other colleagues who may be struggling financially, along with five paid days carers leave.

Our Wellbeing Programme has gone from strength to strength with more mental health First Aiders and Champions than ever before, and we are partnering with a new 24-hour virtual GP service.

We are so proud and privileged to be able to support our colleagues during this difficult period, and commit to keep going on this journey for the future."

Hastings
DIRECT

Our finances at a glance

Care for the Carers was in a strong financial position at the end of 2020-21, with cash balances of £632,019 and reserves of £2,092,221.

Our main sources of regular income during the year were grants and donations.

Grant funding increased by £113,392 to £786,608, and this increase can mainly be attributed to external funding, which we are very grateful to receive as it enables us to deliver additional services to support carers and improve carers’ opportunities. Income from donations also increased, by £82,690, to £124,415 and this increase is solely due to receiving COVID-19 funding to support our work and carers during the pandemic.

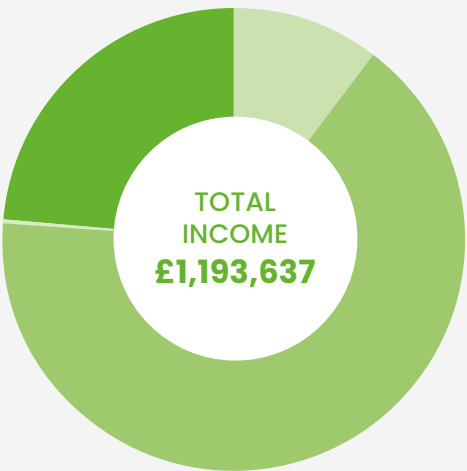
The year end result is a surplus of £367,490.

Care for the Carers continues to look to one funding stream for the majority of its income: East Sussex Commissioning Grants, funded by the three local Clinical Commissioning Groups and East Sussex County Council. Trustees acknowledge the risk inherent in relying on this one main funding stream, and continue to prioritise diversifying the organisation’s income to reduce its reliance on statutory funds which has been demonstrated by the increase in grant funding this year.

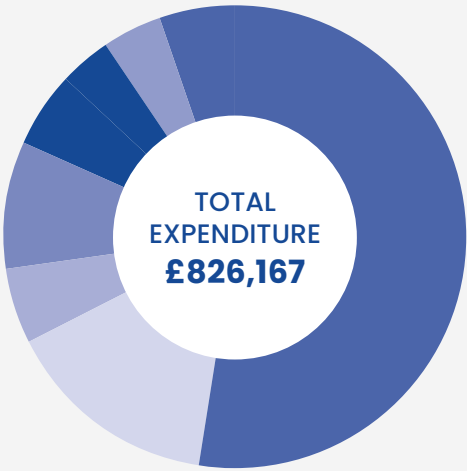
A deficit is budgeted for the coming year 2021-22, however, we expect to mitigate most of this forecast deficit thanks to the generous support of a range of funders.



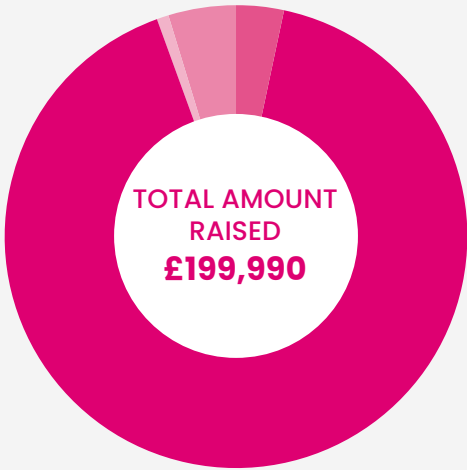
INCOME	(£)
Donations and Gifts	124,415
Grants	786,608
Other Income	2,538
Investments	280,096
TOTAL	1,193,637



EXPENDITURE	(£)
Support & Advice	450,592
Groups & Activities	128,112
Involvement (Engagement & Representation)	43,483
Carer Awareness	77,673
Information & Communication	45,438
Tools & Resources	30,230
Raising Funds	36,357
Development	44,282
TOTAL	826,167



FUNDRAISING	AMOUNT RAISED (£)
Corporate	7,809
Trusts	181,275
Individuals	1,939
Community	8,967
TOTAL	199,990



Fundraising update

Increasing the support of the charity's work has become a core part of our strategy, as we work towards diversifying our income streams. Funds generated enable the charity to respond to carers' needs by providing specific projects, such as our Teen Talk counselling for young carers, or one-off wellbeing events including journal writing workshops, virtual wellbeing cruises, and outings to venues such as Standen House.

We had a successful fundraising year, despite a difficult environment with all of our planned fundraising activities having to be put on hold.

We secured a fantastic £103,916 in funding for our COVID-19 response work and we want to extend huge thanks to those who contributed, including The National Lottery Community Fund, Sussex Crisis Fund, BBC Children in Need, Ernest Kleinwort Charitable Trust, Duke of Devonshire Charitable Trust and Tesco Bags of Help.

Thank you to the Masonic Charitable Foundation, BBC Children in Need, Chalk Cliff Trust and Woodroffe Benton Foundation for supporting the development of our work with young carers. Thanks to Wealden District Council, Carers Trust, St. James's Place Foundation and other funders who continue to support our activities programme.

And finally, a big thank you to local community groups and individuals, who have continued to raise essential funds during this turbulent year, including Eastbourne Soroptimists, Rotary club of Heathfield and Waldron, East Dean and Friston Town Council, Rotary club of Rye and Winchelsea, Hastings Winkle Club, Waitrose Hailsham and Crowborough, Birchwood Motor Group and 'Project Kindness' with Lynn and Bodhi.



"Care for the Carers offer wonderful support for the hidden carers in our community, especially during this difficult time. Birchwood Group are delighted to be offered the opportunity to engage with such inspirational people and we are so proud to offer any support we can."

Paula Kemp, Marketing Director, Birchwood Group.

A huge thank you and congratulations to Eastbourne Soroptimists who had a successful year of fundraising, raising £1,293 for Care for the Carers. The Eastbourne branch selected Care for the Carers as their chosen charity for the year and took on a number of fundraising activities for us. Rising to the challenge, they came up with innovative ways to raise funds, particularly during the pandemic, including a 'Food to Make You Feel Good' virtual coffee morning in May and collectively walking 500 miles in September.



Additional support for carers at Hastings GP practices

Care for the Carers and Hastings GP practices are working together to support unpaid carers through a new project.

We are working closely with High Glades Medical Centre, Warrior Square Surgery, Hastings Old Town Surgery and Churchwood Surgery to proactively identify and register carers quickly so that they can be given the right healthcare and support when they need it.

Carers can receive free specialist information, advice and support, help to access local services and respite care, and counselling.

Information and guidance covers carers topics and issues such as where to get help with benefits, carers rights and accessing social care and health care services.

There is also a range of activities and carers groups so carers can connect with one another and take a break from their caring responsibilities. Activities are free and include online cookery sessions, wellbeing activities and online bingo.

Dr. Fox, High Glades Medical Centre, says;

“During the pandemic, many carers in Hastings are having a particularly difficult time and many more local people have become carers for the first time. Sometimes carers only ask us for help when they are in a crisis situation.”

“As a practice, we feel strongly that we can identify carers sooner, encourage them to register as a carer with us, and let them know

about the support that is available as early as possible. This will help us to give the appropriate healthcare to carers at the right time, as well as improve carers’ wellbeing. We are promoting this service at every opportunity and making sure that all our staff know about them.”



We are delighted to announce that Care for the Carers won the prestigious System Led Support for Carers Award at the HSJ Awards 2021 for this particular project. The HSJ awards is the largest annual benchmarking and recognition programme for the health sector.



CARER STORY

A young carer

Oliver is 11 years old and lives in Eastbourne. Oliver’s mum, Wendy, has a pacemaker and a mechanical heart valve and takes special medication for her condition.



Oliver saw his mum collapse and called an ambulance when he was 8 years old. He says: “I was shocked. I guess you don’t really cry because there’s not enough time to cry, and you’ve just got to be focused on the situation.

Since then, I have learned what to do. Me and my Mum watch YouTube videos and tutorials on how to do the recovery position. I practise and know how to do it. Sometimes I learn new things, now I know that Mum likes water on her lips when she is on the floor. I look after my Mum by getting her water and tea and always being alert and ready for when the worst can strike. I have spoken to my teacher at school and it really helps talking about it as it is a problem halved.”

Oliver joins in with Care for the Carers’ fun and games activities that the charity provides as part of its East Sussex Young Carers Service. Oliver explains about being part of the Young Carers Club. “It feels really nice having other

people around you who are struggling the same as me. We may struggle more or less, but I know there’s still a connection between all of us. The best club activities



are when we are in a team and working together, especially the sports activities.”

Oliver’s Mum, Wendy, says, “It is the hardest thing of all because as a rule, as a parent, you are the one meant to be looking after them. It’s tough because being a Mum, you have a lot of guilt anyway.

I don’t want to put pressure on Oliver, however I have to prepare him for the worst as well, just so he understands a little bit more. I have to allow Oliver time to talk about it. I’m quite resilient and get on with things, and it’s important that I give Oliver time to talk about how he’s feeling.

“Oliver is excited to have support and he’s not on his own. Children are able to interact with other people who are going through the same thing in a much different way than the support we are able to give as parents.”

Wendy, Oliver’s Mum.

It’s really hard to admit that you need help, but I am so glad that I spoke up and said something, because it has now given Oliver more support than I am able to give him.”

“Everything has moved in a positive direction since I picked up that Care for the Carers leaflet.”



No one left to care alone

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