

CareLine

The FREE magazine for unpaid carers in East Sussex



In this issue:

- State of caring in 2021
- Stay well in body and mind
- Taking some time for yourself
- Upcoming events
- Celebrating young carers
- Recognising and dealing with caring related stress



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East Sussex
County Council



The state of caring in 2021

The Carers UK State of Caring survey is the most comprehensive survey of unpaid carers in the UK, and the 2021 survey was the largest survey so far.

8,500 carers shared their experiences about caring during 2021, as well as their concerns about the future.

What carers are saying

Carers shared how challenging their financial situation has become with nearly **three quarters (74%)** carers saying they were struggling to make ends meet.

Over a third of carers (36%) stated that their financial situation had worsened since the start of the pandemic, with 23% of carers not able to manage their monthly expenses.

Carers are worried about practical support with 55% of carers experiencing reduced or no access to day services.

The pandemic and the increased amount of caring is having a significant and detrimental effect on carers' health.

A quarter (25%) of carers said their physical health was bad or very bad, while **3 in 10 (30%) carers** said their mental health was bad or very bad.

It is estimated that at the height of the pandemic over a quarter (26%) of all carers who are working were juggling work and care.

There has been a substantial move to working from home, with **47% of carers working from home** either some or all of the time. For some carers, this helped them to balance work with their caring responsibilities, but for others it was a challenge to concentrate on work whilst at home.

One in five unpaid carers are worried they may not cope financially over the next 12 months.

55% of carers are experiencing reduced or no access to day services.

A quarter (25%) of carers said their physical health was bad or very bad.

69% of carers said their mental health has worsened.

26% of all carers who are working were juggling work and care.

What's next?

Carers UK have campaigned successfully for better guidance during the pandemic, testing for carers, PPE for unpaid carers, carers' 'support bubbles' and exemptions to allow carers to get a break. Carers were included in the COVID-19 vaccination priority list, and Carers UK campaigned for advice to support juggling work and care.

This latest research ensures that carers' voices are heard by the Government and informs the response to the social care White Paper.

It will be used to campaign for improvements to carers' benefits to tell decision makers what matters to carers.

Read the full report on Carers UK's website at www.carersuk.org/SOC2021.

If you are finding it difficult, would like support, information or someone to talk to, please get in touch with us.

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Cover photo: Carers on a photography workshop

Save the dates!

For Caring Out Loud! Carers Voices Conference

**Monday 14th to Friday
18th March 2022**

Join a week of live and online events giving East Sussex carers a platform to voice your ideas and share experiences.

Read more on page 7 and check our website: www.cftc.org.uk



Welcome to this edition of

CareLine

Welcome to the Spring 2022 edition of CareLine.

We were delighted to win the System Led Support for Carers Award 2021 at the HSJ Awards in November last year.

Our Hastings Primary Care project has really demonstrated how joint working with GP practices can make a difference to carers' lives.

This month, we are excited to announce our upcoming Carers Voices Conference, 'For Caring Out Loud!', taking place from 14th to 18th March 2022.

The week will give a valuable and much-needed platform for carers to speak about what affects you and to share your experiences of caring. It is also a fantastic opportunity to connect with other carers and have some time to focus on you. You can join in person, or take part in sessions and workshops online and there should be something of interest for everyone. We look forward to seeing you during the week.

As part of the conference, we'll be celebrating Young Carers Action Day on 16th March. We're proud to be premiering a film created by local young carers, more on page 8.

With Spring approaching, we've included some tips on keeping well and active on page 5, and insight from a specialist into recognising and dealing with stress that may help at busy and difficult times.

With best wishes,

Jennifer Twist, Chief Executive



Jennifer Twist

Care for the Carers wins prestigious HSJ Award

We are absolutely thrilled and delighted that Care for the Carers won the System Led Support for Carers Award 2021 at the HSJ Awards! This award recognises our work with Hastings GP surgeries to improve carers' health and wellbeing and give carers the support they need.

The project aims to improve carers' health and promote positive wellbeing, reduce carer crisis and family breakdown and deliver a consistent approach to give carers support. Carers who experience health inequalities as well as hidden carers, who are not known to local services, have been assisted through the project.

“This is a fantastic result for a great organisation, which provides such vital help and support to carers across the county. This award recognises Care for the Carers’ invaluable work to improve the health and wellbeing of carers in Hastings and is well deserved. Congratulations to everyone involved in the project.”

Cllr. Carl Maynard, Lead Member for adult social care and health at East Sussex County Council

Working closely with High Glades Medical Centre and Hastings and Rother Healthcare – also known as Warrior Square Surgery, Hastings Old Town Surgery and Churchwood Surgery – we are proactively identifying and registering carers quickly so that they can be given the right healthcare and support when they need it.

The project so far has enabled 30% more carers* to receive one-to-one support, and supported GP practices to get help from the charity for many more local carers. Awareness about the impact of caring has also been improved, helping more carers to come forward and know that support is available.

With thanks to East Sussex County Council and NHS East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group, Healthy Hastings and Rother Programme, the Hastings and St Leonards Primary Care Network and our team who worked so hard on this initiative.

*compared to 2020.

“This award is hugely deserved. It is welcome recognition for the work that Care for the Carers does to improve health outcomes for carers, who provide such valuable support to friends, family members and neighbours across the county.” *Jessica Britton, Executive Managing Director, East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group*



Stay well in body and mind

Our physical and mental health are connected and go hand in hand, so finding new ways to take care of your health can boost your mood and help you feel more in control.

You may have had feelings of anxiety or uncertainty through the pandemic which can impact your mental and physical wellbeing. You may already be physically active in your day-to-day caring role and want to do something for you, or improve your fitness, nutrition and diet, lose weight, quit smoking or cut down drinking.

Taking some time out for yourself and your wellbeing can help to reconnect with who you are and what you want for your life too. Whatever you want to do to improve



your health and wellbeing, making the smallest changes to everyday habits can make a big difference.

Get physical! Research shows that physical activity can help lessen the risk of major illnesses, boost self-esteem, mood, sleep quality and energy, as well as reduce your risk of stress, clinical depression, dementia and Alzheimer's.* Find what works for you, whether exercising at home, joining regular exercise or dance classes, taking a daily local walk, walking by the sea or joining a running club.

A wealth of health tips NHS' Better Health programme offers some great tips online with useful apps that can be downloaded. Information includes an NHS Weight Loss Plan, easy meal ideas and recipes, an app for walking and running,

a 'How are you?' Quiz with a personalised health score and tips to improve health. There's information to help quit smoking, including a Personal Quit Plan, and practical tips to help cut down on drinking. www.nhs.uk/better-health

Take care of your mental health

As well as physical health, the NHS provides information on mental wellbeing with their Every Mind Matters initiative. We all experience ups and downs in life, so having a holistic approach to mental health and knowing that you can give yourself proactive self-care can really help you get through difficult times.

Tips are available for improving mental wellbeing, with a Mind Plan Quiz and self-care information on dealing with life's challenges for adults and young people. www.nhs.uk/every-mind-matters

Online resources Carers can access free digital resources provided by Care for the Carers.** Health and wellbeing advice includes nutrition information and looking after yourself as well as e-Learning courses on building emotional resilience and finding support. Sign up on our website: www.cftc.org.uk/digital-resources.

Carers UK have a range of handy health and wellbeing online resources and an online course at: www.carersuk.org

Not online? If you're not online, check your local newspaper, library and local community noticeboards for activities, exercise and clubs near you, there is always something going on locally that can benefit your wellbeing. Get in touch to find out about our walks and talks, wellbeing sessions, cooking workshops and other activities that can help you maintain a healthy lifestyle as well as meet other carers.

*NHS Benefits of exercise, more at: www.nhs.uk/live-well/exercise/exercise-health-benefits

**Teaming up with Carers UK, East Sussex County Council and East Sussex Clinical Commissioning Group

Taking some time for yourself

Carers O'Clock is a wellbeing programme, developed and run by Culture Shift, which gives carers a well deserved break. We caught up with Julia Roberts, Co-Director at Culture Shift, to find out how these monthly group sessions have been going.

What is Carers O'Clock?

Carers O'Clock started as a series of e-bulletins during the first lockdown, then as online meetings on Zoom and for nearly a year has been running as monthly in person sessions for all carers from East Sussex. It's free and a fun and informal space for carers to drop in at a time that suits them and enjoy a few hours with other carers. It gives carers the opportunity to take some time for their own wellbeing and reduces isolation that carers may be feeling.

"What a blessing this group has been to me. I know once a month I can go and meet up with lots of other like-minded people. I love the activities that are put on which make me concentrate on something for me. The fact that we have a delicious lunch prepared for us with no washing up is an absolute bonus!"

What do the sessions include?

The free drop-in days are monthly and open to all carers, between 10am-3pm. It's a safe and supportive space where carers can have some me-time and enjoyment, and really have a breather from their caring role.

Carers can spend time with one another and take part in a variety of creative activities led by experienced artists and crafters. It's an opportunity to relax and recharge, as well as enjoy drinks and lunch prepared by a professional chef. We also help with information about services and support available for carers. At the December drop-in day, everyone made festive wreaths and took them home for Christmas.

Do I have to book a place?

You can let us know that you are coming along, or just drop in to the monthly sessions on the day. If you would like a lunch, it would be helpful if you can let us know a few days in advance by emailing us at: info@cultureshift.org.uk.



How do you think these sessions help carers?

Carers have told me that they value having some time with others who understand what being a carer entails. Sometimes people talk about their worries and the challenges they face, but I think mainly everyone enjoys some time 'off duty'. The atmosphere at the events is always friendly and relaxed and we do lots of talking and laughing.

One minute we are talking about serious issues and the next we are howling with laughter! People really enjoy having a delicious lunch cooked for them and having an opportunity to try something creative too. It's like a miniature mini break!

Carers O'Clock is monthly at Community Wise, Ocklynge Road, Eastbourne, BN21 1PY. Dates are on www.cftc.org.uk/whats-on, or call us for dates. 10am-3pm. Carers can drop in, or email: info@cultureshift.org.uk.

Carers O'Clock is commissioned through the East Sussex County Council Adult Social Care Small Grants Programme and in partnership with Care for the Carers.

Upcoming events

There are many free events available for carers across East Sussex. Check our website and e-newsletter for more activities available, or get in touch.

For Caring Out Loud! East Sussex Carers Voices Conference

This year's Carers Voices Conference 'For Caring Out Loud!' takes place from Monday 14th March to Friday 18th March. The week promises to be an inspiring series of events, giving a platform for local carers to have your say and share ideas and common experiences. Responding to carers feedback, we are excited to bring to you both an in person event and a number of online workshops organised in collaboration with partner organisations.

Carers often tell us that it can feel as though your insight is overlooked, so the conference will include opportunities to connect with and tap into the knowledge, skills and experiences of other carers who are in many roles and situations.

It's going to be an interesting week and all carers in East Sussex are invited to join and participate in the events taking place and speak up about the topics that interest you. As part of the conference week, we will be celebrating and highlighting young and young adult carers for Young Carers Action Day on Wednesday 16th March (more on page 8).



Your experiences and views and the outcomes from the conference will be shared with decision makers and those who can make positive changes for carers through local policies and services. The 'For Caring Out Loud!' in person event will take place at Uckfield Civic Centre on Monday 14th March, from 10am to 3pm. Keep an eye on our website at www.cftc.org.uk and social media, or call us about further details and events taking place at the conference. You can book your place online on our website, or call us on 01323 738390, or email: info@cftc.org.uk.



Carers photography exhibition

Carers who took part in a series of Photography in Residence workshops are set to exhibit their photographs at a prestigious public exhibition. The exhibition will be open from April 2022 at The Conquest Hospital, Hastings, and an additional East Sussex venue to be confirmed.

Led and guided by local photographer, John Cole, carers took a variety of photos that reflected their experiences and day-to-day life caring for someone. Carers also learned photography and basic technical skills such as light, composition and editing. It promises to be an inspiring insight into carers and their lives.

Keep a look out on our website and social media, or get in touch with us for more details. The photography workshops and exhibition are working in collaboration with arts, education and events organisation, 18 Hours.

Celebrating young carers



Young Carers Action Day is coming up on Wednesday 16th March 2022.

An annual campaign, it highlights young carers and young adult carers and raises awareness of the pressures and challenges they face, and the incredible contribution they make in their caring role. It's also an opportunity to celebrate the skills that young carers have, and calls for more action to give them the support they need to live full and healthy lives.

According to The Children's Society, there are an estimated 800,000 young carers aged 5-17 years who care for an adult or family member in the UK, and many more could be hidden.

Young carers' day-to-day responsibilities often include cooking, cleaning, shopping,

- **27% of young carers aged 11-15 miss school.**
- **39% said nobody in their school was aware of their caring responsibilities.**
- **80% of young carers felt more isolated during the pandemic.**
- **1 in 3 young carers have a mental health issue. ***

providing personal care, giving emotional support, financial management and caring for siblings. They can also provide a crucial communication link by being the primary translator in a non-English speaking family.

Having to care for someone can often mean missing school or college, or missing out on a social life and not having friends. It can put their childhood and young adulthood on the back burner.

Many young carers, and the people around them, are not likely to realise that they're carers.



Young Carers Action Day

Following young carers' feedback, this year's Young Carers Action Day focuses on addressing the isolation they experience.

Young carers highlighted how having the right support in place – such as regular short breaks from caring - can be really beneficial, giving them a better chance of succeeding in all parts of their lives.

The day is also a good time for young carers to recognise themselves as a young carer and to be aware that support is available and that they are not alone.

Young carers have said that, with support, they can meet other young carers, receive emotional help and a listening ear, take part in fun activities and have a break from caring.

*The Children's Society statistics

Celebrating young carers

Young carers film

Back in November and December, East Sussex young carers were involved in a day of drama, art and music and took part in a young carers film called 'Bursting the Bubble', featuring their experiences and thoughts on being a young carer. The film was made by Culture Shift in collaboration with Care for the Carers.

This film will have a special screening on Young Carers Action Day as part of the Annual Carers Voices Conference week. As well as premiering to young carers and their families, professionals and decision makers who have contact with young carers will be attending.

Rosie Lowman, Young Carers Services Manager, says; "We wanted to give a voice to young carers about what they are feeling and experiencing, especially over the pandemic. We know that young carers have been hit hard, with many doing a lot more caring. In this film, the only voices you will hear are those of the young carers themselves, telling their story, their way.

We decided to screen the film for Young Carers Action Day as it is the national day to raise awareness for young carers and gives us a wonderful platform to amplify their voice. The theme this year is 'Taking Action on Isolation' and we hope by raising awareness of young carers and their experiences we can help identify and support even more young carers."

Charley, 16, is a young carer and speaks about the process of developing the film and the Care for the Carers young carers

clubs she attends.

"I personally found it quite nerve wracking at first because it was new people and I don't really have a social life. But I was able to find that social life I was looking for and I love going to this group – it is a key part of my life."



Julia Roberts, Co-Director, Culture Shift, says; "We have been delighted to work in partnership with Care for the Carers to deliver creative sessions with young carers.

Getting to know them and learn about their lives as carers has been a real privilege and we hope that the short film we have made together helps to introduce this hidden community of exceptional young people to the wider public. We hope that this film is just the beginning of this exciting partnership project."

The young carers film and Culture Shift's time was funded by The Ragdoll Foundation. Thank you to The Masonic Charitable Foundation, National Lottery Awards for All and UK Youth for their funding and support.

Find out more about Young Carers Action Day on our website at: www.cftc.org.uk.

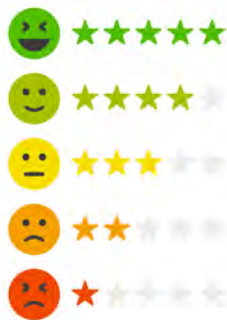
Recognising and dealing with caring related stress

After a long and rewarding career in the police, Lynne Bardell undertook a MSc in Positive Psychology and Coaching Psychology and took the decision to leave her career to become a full-time carer. As an active caregiver, she now uses her research experience to explore the power of nature and wildlife to support the mental and physical wellbeing of carers. Here Lynne talks about what she refers to as 'Carers Stress Syndrome' and how to proactively deal with it.



'Carers Stress Syndrome' is a term I recently saw which I thought related to a medical condition that developed as a result of the caring role. However, I couldn't find any medical references, but on researching further, it certainly reflects the stress, exhaustion and overwhelm many carers regularly experience, so I thought it was worth exploring.

Although the term may not mean a specific medical condition, it does reflect that the role of a carer can have a negative physical and emotional impact on their health, which might lead to a condition, such as depression or anxiety or even a stroke or heart attack. Short, intense periods of stress are not harmful, in fact, they can often be helpful, but the constant emotional and physical demands of the caring role can result in consistently high levels of stress and that will eventually take its toll.



From research I conducted with carers, there are three aspects of the caring role that can, if left unchecked, negatively impact on mental and physical wellbeing.

Your identity

The first area relates to identity. Do you identify yourself as a carer? How does your role or activities as a carer impact on your other identities, such as being a friend, wife or partner? This is important to recognise, as not having an idea of the different roles you carry out and the different identities that contribute to them, can intensify negative emotions when conflicts arise between them, causing resentment, anger, guilt and even grief.

Your boundaries

The second area relates to boundaries around those identities, such as carer versus husband or carer versus parent, and how not having boundaries can negatively impact on your sense of who **you** are. The absence of any distinction between the caring identity/role and other identities/roles, can result in a masking of the self-identity by a stronger caring identity, which can lead to mental health issues.

Realistic expectations

The last area relates to the absence of realistic expectations about what the caring role really entails. Regardless of whether you are caring for a few hours a week or 24/7, we often try to 'do' and 'be' everything for that person, such as being their nurse, pharmacist, bank manager, etc. and it can often feel overwhelming, leading to high levels of anxiety and isolation.

Take positive steps

The first positive steps to reducing stress and anxiety is to find a quiet space, when you know you aren't going to be disturbed for 10-15 minutes and think about these questions.

There are no 'right or wrong' answers, they are just questions that are meant to help you to think differently about possible blocks in your life that may be stopping you from managing or seeking help to manage negative emotions, stress or anxiety.

- **What** one, practical thing could I change right now, that would make the most positive impact on how I feel emotionally/physically?
- **When** do I feel the most stressed or anxious? (e.g. before I start my day, or in the evenings when I am alone).
- **Where** might there be free resources available to help me?
- **Who** could I reach out to for support when I feel overwhelmed?
- **How** could I approach a situation that causes me to feel anxious, differently? (e.g. preparing questions before a hospital appointment).

Using 'opener' words such as "what, when, where, who and how" at the beginning of a question will help to illicit more information than by using closed words like "can" "do". For example, asking yourself "do I need to change something?", you might answer "yes" or "no" but you won't have learned anything more.

But if you ask "what can I change....?" this is often when the most useful information is revealed. So, try to use these five little words when you need information and it will also help you to feel more in control managing conversations.

The second activity is being more present in your life, particularly when you feel overwhelmed, such as developing self-awareness to identify and manage difficult emotions and feelings. By learning how to tune into your body and mind, when you start to experience negative thoughts and emotions, you can take positive action to manage them.

Recognising these physical responses is easy to learn and is a powerful way to start to address their negative impact on your health, and can help to reduce the symptoms of stress and anxiety. I will share a useful exercise I regularly use, which, with practice, will help you to develop an easy practical tool when you are feeling overwhelmed or anxious. You can find it online at www.cftc.org.uk or give them a call, or contact me by emailing: thrivingcarer@gmail.com

With thanks to Lynne for supporting carers and sharing her knowledge.

The East Sussex Carers Card

The card has three functions:

- Identifies you as a carer in an emergency
- Emergency respite plan
- A discount card



With an East Sussex Carers Card you can set up a CRESS (Carers Respite Emergency Support Service) plan as part of your carer's assessment. Care for the Carers can help you to set up a CRESS plan if you do not want a carer's assessment.

Discounts for carers

If you do not wish to put an emergency plan in place but would still like to benefit from discounts for carers, apply for a Carers Card directly from Care for the Carers: **Call 01323 738390, or visit www.cftc.org.uk/get-a-carers-card**

Show or mention the Carers Card with all offers and discounts. See terms and conditions.

This card is also available to parent carers. Older versions of the emergency alert card are still valid to be used for Carers Card discounts.

You can get hospital parking for £1.70 at the Conquest Hospital, Hastings, and Eastbourne District General Hospital by showing your Carers Card.

View the full directory of hundreds of services, local businesses, retail and leisure attractions at: **www.cftc.org.uk/get-a-carers-card** or call 01323 738390. See the latest offers below. Check full details, terms and conditions on the website directory, or get in touch with us.



Laughing Fish Pub, Isfield
www.laughingfishisfield.com
01825 750349
20% off food for up to 4 people dining together. Under new management.

Additional support with the Priority Services Register

South East Water, Southern Water and UK Power Networks (as well as other utility companies) hold a Priority Services Register to offer a range of help and services for electricity, gas and water customers who are vulnerable or who need additional long-term or short-term support. Subject to eligibility, you can register for free if you and/or the person you care for:

- are over 65
- have a disability, chronic or long-term illness
- are living with dementia
- have communication needs
- rely on medical equipment in your home
- have refrigerated medicines
- have a child or children under the age of five
- are experiencing life changes such as bereavement, a break-up or job loss
- are recovering from a hospital treatment
- are living independently for the first time

To make it easier, you and/or the person you care for can choose to give consent to share your data to be registered once for additional support without the need to contact several utility companies separately.

South East Water www.southeastwater.co.uk Phone: 0333 000 2468 (standard national rate)

Southern Water www.southernwater.co.uk
Freephone: 0800 027 0800

UK Power Networks www.ukpowernetworks.co.uk
Freephone: 0800 169 9970

Or contact your water, gas or electric utility provider and ask about their Priority Services Register and eligibility which covers a range of needs and circumstances.



Contact us

Name

Address

Postcode

Telephone

Email

I am a carer:

- ☐ Send me future editions of **CareLine** via email instead of post
- ☐ Send me **CareLine** by post
- ☐ Update my address
- ☐ Contact me about the help available
- ☐ I would like to be part of the **Carers Voices network**

I am no longer a carer:

- ☐ Reason _____
- ☐ Unsubscribe me from **CareLine**
- ☐ Send me **"After Caring"** information

Please complete. Post to Care for the Carers, **FREEPOST RTAC-GURC-XUJC** Highlight House, 8 St Leonards Road, Eastbourne, BN21 3UH