



**care for the
carers**
East Sussex

2023 – 2024 Annual Review



Dr Neil Churchill, OBE
Chair of the Board of Trustees

A message from the Chair...

Listening to carers, it is clear that many more people are struggling and too many are reaching a crisis point. We've sought to make careful investments from our reserves to improve the services we offer over the next few years. This has included extending our presence across the county, bringing information, advice and companionship to local carers centres and more diverse groups, as well as helping the NHS better meet our needs. We've also explored how to improve our digital services, so that more information and advice will be at hand around the clock, as and when carers need it. Of course, we've also ensured that

carers voices are heard by those making decisions which affect our lives. We know our work makes a difference and with your help, more people can achieve a sustainable balance between life and care.



Jennifer Twist
Chief Executive

...and the Chief Executive

This year, so many local carers have told us that caring is becoming harder and more complex. Pressure on the NHS and social care remains high, and all too often unpaid carers find themselves plugging the gap. This takes its toll. Most carers tell us they feel stressed as a result. Many constantly juggle multiple commitments; for others the financial pressure is stark. But overwhelmingly the shared experience is that of feeling very alone with the responsibility of caring.

We firmly believe that no one should be left to care alone. Care for the Carers is here for anyone in East Sussex looking after someone who couldn't manage without their help.

It is a privilege to share our work in 2023-24, and my heartfelt thanks go to everyone who made it possible: our amazing team of volunteers and staff, our funders and supporters, and the carers whose care and support enriches the lives of so many people and communities. Thank you.



Volunteering

It was a busy year for our wonderful volunteers. We continue to develop the volunteering offer at Care for the Carers focusing on the growth of services such as Young Carers and Carers in Touch, and ensuring we offer volunteers increased opportunities to meet one another, access additional training and share best practice. It is a priority for us to ensure that volunteers receive a high quality of support and enjoy their volunteering experience with Care for the Carers.

28 Time to Talk volunteers
6 Carers in touch volunteers
5 Young Carers volunteers
3 Wellbeing Group volunteers

Time to Talk, our counselling service, now has a full team of 28 volunteer counsellors, and we maintained the Carers in Touch project as a volunteer delivered service,



providing support to 110 of the most isolated carers.

We also recruited and trained additional young carer volunteers to meet the demand for a new club in Bexhill from April 2024.

Overall, we worked with 363 volunteers including ambassadors and champions, event supporters, young carers and adult carers volunteers and counsellors.

We are incredibly fortunate to have a wonderful and dedicated team of volunteers who we will continue to celebrate and support in their roles, to ensure carers continue to receive a high quality and varied service.

Thank You!

Fundraising

We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has supported local carers over the last year, including individuals, challenge event participants, local businesses, community groups, local statutory funders and local and national Trusts and Foundations. Every penny raised and donated makes a real difference to the lives of local carers.

We have received wonderful support from the local community this year including benefiting from a gaming fundraiser held by students at East Sussex College.

The Overwatch 2 online tournament allowed spectators to donate for students to play the game in an 'Over the Top' way. For every donation received, students spun a wheel for a player to take on a challenge – playing with gloves, sitting on the floor, fingers taped together, and a bucket on their heads! Donors were able to watch the tournament unfold live and donate on the Twitch streaming site.

Young carer Luke spoke about his experience of caring and of the support he receives from Care for the Carers on the Twitch channel:

"It lessens the stress, provides me with an escape... coming here knowing a lot of people are dealing with the same things, it puts you at ease because you're not being judged, because everyone knows, it's familiar for everyone."

The fundraiser was supported by local games developer, Alex Downham of Default Interactive, who offered his time pro bono, and was attended by College Principal Rebecca Conroy and Lewes Mayor Matthew Bird. A big thank you to everyone for their support.





Groups and activities

A range of groups and regular activities across the county provide adult carers with highly valued opportunities to come together, get support, and take some time out.

Carers' Information and Advice groups, facilitated by Carer Support Workers, offer anyone new to caring or carers services an opportunity to meet others, build confidence and resilience, access information, advice, and support. A monthly evening group enables working carers easier access to support at a convenient time.

Carers' Wellbeing groups are for those carers who have attended a Carers' Information and Advice group, who may have been caring for a while and are already connected with services. They are led by carers for carers, with volunteer hosts supported by a Carer Support Worker. The groups focus on improving carers' wellbeing, and can involve activities such as walking, arts and crafts or meeting for coffee.

Based on feedback from carers with shared areas of interest or identity we run additional groups, such as monthly Mental Health carers' groups for carers of people with a mental health illness, and monthly Young Adult Carer groups for carers aged 17-25 years.

"The group has stopped me feeling isolated, reassured me that I'm doing a good job, that what I'm feeling is normal and understandable..."



248
carers attended our
regular carers' groups
252
carers benefited from
39 social and wellbeing
activities

In addition to the monthly groups, Care for the Carers has made use of specific funding from generous donors to undertake additional work with Young Adult Carers. This has included providing vocational support, involving the Young Adult Carers in influencing how services are run and offering social activities, which their caring role prevents them from accessing.

Thanks to generous donations from local trusts, we were also able to respond to carers requests to continue providing our hugely popular Activities Programme. Offering social and wellbeing activities and events which give carers a break, to engage with something fun and/or enable them to socialise with other carers.

We are grateful to 3H Fund for our ongoing partnership, which enables us to offer regular spa days and afternoon teas at the Ashdown Park Hotel, Forest Row. These are extremely popular, and we have a large waiting list for those wishing to attend. This year we developed a new partnership with the South Downs National Park Authority with quarterly mindful walk and craft days hosted at Seven Sisters. Other adult carers activities this year included a day trip to Charleston House and Charleston Art Gallery, theatre, Eastbourne International Tennis, mindfulness, festive wreath making and two specific activities for our Young Adult Carers.

We have continued to work with local partner organisation, Diversity Resource International (DRI), and now regularly welcome carers from diverse backgrounds onto our activities.



Support, advice and guidance



We provided practical and emotional support to over 5,000 unpaid carers – children, young people, and adults who look after someone who could not manage without their help in East Sussex. The Carers Hub is the single point of contact for carers, accessible by phone, online, or by dropping in to a Local Carers Centre. Specialist staff responded to enquiries from 4,991 carers, providing direct support, onward signposting, and referrals to the range of services across the county.

695 carers benefited from a Coaching session, or a longer Directions appointment, with a Carer Support Worker, allowing time to talk through any worries or concerns, and discuss tailored support for their caring role.

Our specialist counselling service, Time to Talk, provides emotional support to carers, helping to reduce feelings of social isolation and improving carers’ health and wellbeing. Carers have a dedicated time to talk, with 12 free counselling sessions with a volunteer counsellor. 264 carers accessed Time to Talk counselling.

We provided specialist support to carers of people with severe mental health illness, carers in primary care (working with 12 GP surgeries), those supporting people in hospital and at point of discharge at the Conquest Hospital, and through undertaking Carers Reviews.

“I don’t know how I would have managed without your support, advice, referrals, respite events and meet ups, and counselling.”

Tools and resources

Care for the Carers offers a range of tools and resources aimed at helping carers in their caring role. This includes the East Sussex Carers Card.

The East Sussex Carers Card has several functions. It helps to identify carers, offers discounts from a wide range of local businesses across East Sussex, and alerts the emergency services that cardholders are carers. The card is available to all carers including young carers and parent carers of children. We have seen a significant rise in the number of carers signed up to Carers Card during the year, with a total of 2,674. Adult carers of another adult can also link their Carers Card to a backup emergency care plan through East Sussex County Council’s Carers Respite Emergency Support Scheme (CRESS).



Healthcare Appointments Respite Grants, administered on behalf of East Sussex County Council (ESCC), can help to cover the cost of respite services allowing carers to attend healthcare appointments, engagement or training courses that can help them in their caring role. This opportunity is available for carers who have no care provision in place or pay for care themselves.

We provided the ‘Small Grants for Carers Groups’ fund on behalf of ESCC, that supports set up costs for new community groups offering peer support for carers.

Care for the Carers and our partners produce and promote fact sheets and online materials on various subjects including Lasting Power of Attorney, what is involved in having a Carer’s Assessment and Cost of Living support.

We are grateful to all the businesses that continue to be part of the Carers Card scheme and are proud to support so many local partners to publicly pledge their recognition of carers.

2,674
carers signed up for the Carers Card during the year

107
grants to carers

£26,359
in grant payments to carers

Making Carers Count

The Making Carers Count project ran from March 2020 to March 2024 resulting in much needed support for carers from ethnically and culturally diverse communities across East Sussex.



Care for the Carers undertook research, produced materials and delivered activities to carers who find it more difficult to engage with carer organisations, because of their ethnic or cultural background.

- One-to-one support for carers was made available, delivered with cultural sensitivity so carers can understand what support options are available for their caring roles.
- A Sussex Directory signposts carers and professionals working with them towards support organisations, faith groups, services and gatherings where people can peer-to-peer share their experiences or access additional culturally relevant support.
- Local carer awareness events and activities in collaboration with local community partners, helped to make more people aware of the support available. Work with these partners is ongoing, providing support to more carers from diverse backgrounds.
- Carer events and activities allowed carers some respite from their caring responsibilities, to connect with others facing similar situations. The events were co-produced, making them inclusive and culturally appropriate.
- A Sussex Carers Reference Group of carers from diverse backgrounds input into online Carer Awareness Training aimed at health professionals and Adult Social Care workers. This training gives professionals a much better understanding of the challenges faced by carers from diverse communities, in addition to those of white British carers.



The progress made by the project is lasting, and Care for the Carers is committed to ensuring that its work is inclusive and supportive of unpaid carers from all ethnic and culturally diverse backgrounds.

Carer's Story: Linda

"I became a carer when James, my partner, had an accident in 2002 on his way to work. Although I became his carer then, it was about three or four years later that I finally realised and acknowledged this. James was still very young when he had the accident and I've now been his carer for over 20 years.

I help with his medication including morphine patches. He is mobile, but I have to drive him anywhere he needs to go. He has a condition that means he can't remember things so well. It's for this reason that I need to be with him at appointments. Sometimes people think that I'm his paid carer rather than his partner!

Being of Nigerian heritage doesn't impact on me in my caring role, but I am interested in meeting others from diverse cultures. Often people from different cultures just don't think of themselves as carers and don't realise they can get help.

Being involved with Care for the Carers gives me a chance to meet other people in similar situations, people who are also caring for their loved ones for however long that may be. It's important to know that you're not the only one and you can relate to and support each other because you have similar issues.

It's good to know that there is someone out there who thinks about you. Caring can change your life completely, so being with other people in a similar situation does change your outlook on life."





Awareness, information and communication

Care for the Carers utilises many avenues to support carers with information helpful in their caring roles. Our communications include quarterly CareLine magazine, distributed to around 8,000 carers by email, online and by post. Our monthly e-newsletter is sent to over 6,000 recipients, focusing on Carers Voices opportunities, policy updates, events and activities. Our active social media platforms are Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, and YouTube, where we share information and aim to reach as many carers as possible from diverse groups.

Our website is often first port of call for carers and professionals who wish to know more about the support available. This now includes resources for those whose caring role has ended due to bereavement. We will continue to make improvements to the website to ensure it remains a useful, interactive and accessible resource.

Care for the Carers believes businesses and organisations can play a major part in improving the lives of carers, by being supportive and carer friendly for their customers, clients, staff and volunteers who are carers. We work to build a Carer Friendly Community, where carers feel supported to look after their family or friends and are recognised as individuals with needs of their own.

Our free 'Think Carer' Training was delivered to 393 staff and volunteers in health, social care, and voluntary sector.

"I enjoyed the training and found the delivery to be excellent, really engaging and food for thought."

We support businesses and organisations to review what is in place, and to consider how they can make positive changes and promote tangible ways to become Carer Friendly. This year Isabel Blackman Centre, the health, leisure and wellbeing centre for over 50s in Hastings, and Hastings Voluntary Action were formally recognised as Carer Friendly.

We actively reach out to local businesses, growing the number signing up to the East Sussex Carers Card and offering discounts to carers.



Engagement and representation



Carers who are part of the Carers Voices Network contribute to consultations, focus groups and campaigns. We aim to make this as accessible as possible, and keep the Network informed via a monthly e-newsletter and targeted communications. This helps the charity to keep carers' voices at the heart of everything we do, and to speak with and for local carers and advocate for them within health, social care and voluntary sector strategic planning.



The 2023 Annual Carers Voices Conference took place during Carers Week in June, and we welcomed over 75 carers and professionals from a range of organisations. Attendees had the opportunity to hear from, and put questions to, speakers from Carers Trust, Adult Social Care and local NHS, and to learn about and discuss issues related to hospital care, social care and technology enabled care.

Last year saw our second Annual East Sussex Carers Voices Report publication which comprehensively brings together carers feedback and views across services in East Sussex, presenting a consistent picture of what is important to carers.

"Thank you for this opportunity. It's been very helpful and encouraging, it's nice to know you are not alone. We need to learn to shout louder."



The report highlighted key challenges carers face locally, areas carers need support with the most, as well as sharing local data about carers' experience of caring and its impact on health, wellbeing and finances.

A few key findings in the report:

- 99% of carers feel stressed
- 96% feel that their wellbeing has been affected as a result of the caring role
- 94% feel alone or isolated

In summer 2023, carers took part in our Annual Carers Survey and several focus groups discussing carers' experience of hospital discharge, support for carers for people with severe mental illness and carers experience of accessing respite and a taking a break, with a view to feeding into new service development and awareness raising campaigns.

This year we also increased community outreach, attending 107 networking events (with almost 3,000 people reached) and 56 public events (attended by over 7,500 people) which resulted in directly speaking with 402 new carers.

270 CARERS
are part of the
Carers Voices Network

75 CARERS
took part in our
Annual Carers Survey

Local Carers Centres

Reflecting on what we sought to achieve through the project, it is clear that we have made some great progress in embedding the centres in their local communities, meeting the needs of local carers and in beginning to reach new and underrepresented groups of carers.

In figures:

- Over 300 carers have accessed services
- Offered 16 carer groups and activities in Uckfield and 12 in Hastings
- Working with 14 organisations in Uckfield and 9 in Hastings to offer range of services to carers
- 32 Carers Wellbeing and Activity Passes provided (for gym, fitness and leisure classes at the Isabel Blackman Centre)
- 26 free social lunches provided for carers
- Carers Week celebration event in Hastings attended by 60 carers and professionals
- Strong relationship with the local MPs in the two locations, raising profile and awareness of caring
- An 'Exceptional Partnership to Support Carers' award presented to Sussex Support Service in Uckfield

Uckfield

"The Victoria Pavilion has become like a second home to me! There is so much going on here for us carers. I come to the Carers O' Clock arts group, Carers Group and the Amaze group for parent carers as well. I feel so fortunate that there is so much going on in Uckfield on my doorstep to meet my needs as a carer."

Hastings

"It's been my total lifeline from caring for my husband and son. I have met lovely people there and I enjoy the wonderful food, coffee and a chat after my classes. I can't imagine how life would be without the centre to attend."



Development of the centres has been made possible through funding generously provided by the National Lottery Community Fund.

Young Carers

The Young Carers Service goes from strength to strength. The service now has over 300 young carers registered. This year we ran 43 outings, activities and clubs, including the annual theme park trip to Chessington World of Adventures, and an array of other fun activities.



We found our third club venue in Bexhill which opened in early April 2024, so there is now a dedicated club for the east, west and north of the county.

Thanks to funding from NHS Sussex the Young Carers Service continued its successful partnership with Culture Shift to explore and share carers voices, resulting in a film 'Young Carers – What We Want'. This premiered at a Young Carers Action Day 2024 event, attended by national partners from Carers Trust, the Eastbourne Mayor and Lead Members for East Sussex County Council, as well as the stars of the show, the young carers themselves.



You can watch the powerful video here: bit.ly/YCWhatWeNeed

An evaluation of the service found that:

- 91% of young carers rated the service 4 or 5 stars
- 92% of young carers thought the service ran fun activities
- 92% said the service had helped them make friends
- 88% said it had helped them manage their caring role

Special thanks go to Saffron Fireworks, Paradise Park, Waitrose Lewes, Active Hastings and Crane Garden Buildings for their generous support to the Service.



"(The young carers club) helps when we can't cope... and it is a place to talk."
Young carer

"These events are like gold dust for families like us."
Parent of two young carers



Partnerships

Our partnerships with voluntary and statutory sector colleagues are an important way that we collaborate to identify carers early. We value highly the learning and support our partners bring to Care for the Carers, as well as their help in steering carers to support. As the Carers Centre, we act as Strategic Partner to the Council and NHS Sussex, putting us in a unique position to influence statutory support to carers. We are also privileged to work closely with:

- East Sussex Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Carers Network – over 20 charities working with carers
- Sussex Carers Partnership – working together for carers across Sussex, with Carers Support West Sussex and the Carers Centre for Brighton and Hove
- East Sussex Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) Alliance – the VCSE sector coming together to speak as one voice in support of the communities we serve, proudly chaired by our Chief Executive, Jennifer
- Our national partners Carers Trust and Carers UK

We are also proud that local carers centres and offices are co-sited with some of our key voluntary sector partners: Sussex Support Services at Victoria Pavilion in Uckfield, Age UK East Sussex at the Isabel Blackman Centre in Hastings, and Southdown in Lewes.

Carers Story: Cathy

Cathy cares for her mother and her son, who has mental ill health.

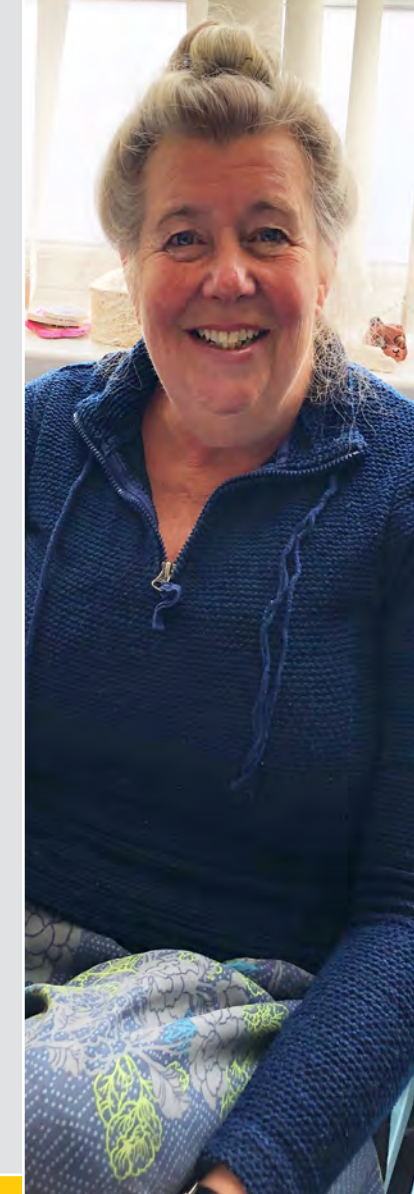
She is pulled in several directions in her caring role, as are many carers. Since joining the mental health project in 2023, she has been actively engaged, joining in with things across the county, and always with a smile on her face!

“It is so important to have an opportunity to meet with other carers. The chance to engage with people who share your experience and understand it is invaluable, and the mental health project has given me so many opportunities.

Time spent doing activities and having support from the project can equip you to deal with the complex situations you find yourself in. It has been a wonderful advocate for me (and you can have a good laugh).

I am so grateful that Care for the Carers runs a whole host of initiatives. It gives everyone an opportunity and to share your own skills and knowledge.

What Care for the Carers offer allows you to meet others and recognise that it's ok to feel like you're failing, we didn't choose this, but we are just doing our best.”



The Mental Health Project is carer led, reflecting evidence that carers want to improve their caring role and have time for themselves as a priority. 80 groups supported the health and wellbeing of carers, providing peer support, improving health literacy and mental health education.

Carers Health Projects

Care for the Carers have been working collaboratively with Primary Care since 2019, when our original project began in the Hastings and St. Leonards Primary Care Network (PCN), supporting unpaid family carers with complex situations. Leading on from the success of our original project, in 2023 we received additional funding to replicate our support and began our work with The Havens Primary Care Network.

Through these projects, support workers have offered immediate crisis support, one to one advice and enhanced longer-term support to carers with multiple and complex needs, to over 3000 carers registered with GPs in the two localities. We have enabled carers to navigate housing related issues, financial difficulties, and their own health concerns, whilst managing challenging caring roles, and tackled isolation through our dedicated carers groups and wellbeing activities.

2023 saw Care for the Carers adding an additional project to our Health portfolio. Part of a pan Sussex approach, our hospital project supports work through the Sussex Carers Partnership to develop a consistent approach to carers within the hospital setting, levelling up support for carers across Sussex. We now have support workers within the Conquest Hospital in Hastings and Eastbourne District General Hospital supporting carers from admission to discharge. In tandem with our support to carers, we aim to raise and embed awareness of the challenges many carers face.

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Governance and management

All members of our Board of Trustees act as volunteers. The Board sets our overall strategic direction, delegating day to day management to our Chief Executive and senior management team comprised of the Head of Resources, Head of Services and Head of Communities.



2023-2024

Dr Neil Churchill
Jake Jay (to Nov 2023)
Richard Pearson
Alan Botterill, Polly Evans,
Jane Lawrence, Mary Barnes, Natasha
Burrows, Geoffrey Munn, Graham Turner

Most of our Trustees, including the Chair, are carers or former carers, as well as bringing a wide range of professional skills and expertise from their careers and voluntary work. As well as skills, the Board is focused on building the diversity of experience and representation. We are particularly proud of Natasha Burrows' contribution to the Board, as a young trustee and young adult carer. Tash is a fantastic spokesperson for young and young adult carers and helps us to ensure that their needs and views are always at the heart of our governance.

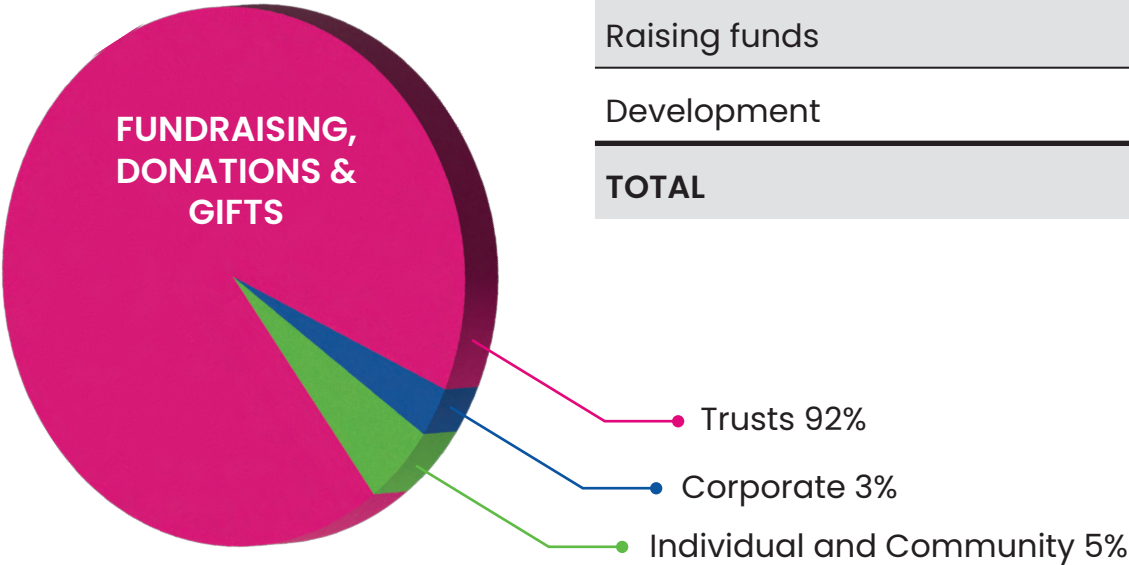
This year we said goodbye to Jake Jay. We thank him and all our Trustees for their support and dedication.

Care for the Carers' current Strategic Plan concentrates on the following four priority areas:

- ✓ Supporting carers – including more carers from less heard groups and those requiring more specialist support
- ✓ Creating a Carer Friendly East Sussex – supporting professionals to identify carers earlier
- ✓ Developing our charity to innovate and be impactful
- ✓ Speaking up with and for carers to improve services and shape decision making

Our finances at a glance

INCOME (£)	EXPENDITURE (£)
Donations and gifts19,598	Support and advice927,633
Grants1,695,063	Groups and activities148,552
Investment (and other income)70,416	Involvement (engagement & representation)269,918
Gain on investments35,967	Carer awareness182,031
TOTAL1,821,044	Information and communication73,351
	Tools and resources166,238
	Raising funds59,263
	Development46,198
	TOTAL1,873,544

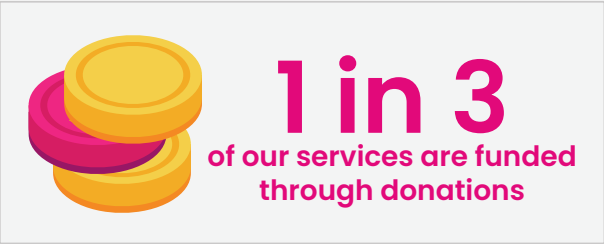


Care for the Carers is in a good financial position at the end of 2023-24, with cash balances of £796,183 and reserves of £2,352,135.

Our goal during the year was to draw funds down from our reserves to invest in improving services for carers, as well as enhancing the charity’s ability to meet their needs. To do this we designated funds to enable us to:

- develop new services responding to carers’ expressed needs (including seed funding a series of specialist, community and young carers’ services).
- improve our digital offer to carers, and our internal systems,
- train and support staff and volunteers,
- along with a capital reserve (invested in shares).

This year, our grant funding increased by £329,516 to £1,695,063 – we are hugely grateful to our funders whose generous support has enabled us to provide additional services to support carers.



Our fundraising strategy is achieving growth, as planned, in the number of funding streams in place, enabling Care for the Carers to begin to move away from reliance on one main funding source. The contract to deliver the East Sussex Carers Centre, jointly funded by ESCC and NHS Sussex, remains secure and the charity’s largest contract, and is now complemented by several additional multi-year contracts.

Looking forward to 2024-25, we are again planning significant investment from reserves in the coming year, to continue increasing available support to carers. We are proud to be investing in local carers, and to be able to give assurance to our funders and donors that we are doing all we can to maximise their support.



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Get exclusive access to the latest news, campaigns and ways to get involved.

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