



care for the
carers
East Sussex

2024 – 2025 Annual Review



Dr Neil Churchill, OBE
Chair of the Board of Trustees

A message from the Chair...

Most of us will care for another person at some point in our lives but every caring experience is different. Some try to juggle work and care; others may still be at school. Some look after a spouse with dementia, even though they are frail themselves; others may be supporting a child with a disability. Increasingly, carers may be supporting a parent and a child at the same time.

Care for the Carers recognises that everyone is unique and we tailor our support to individual needs. At the same time, we have many things in common and there is much

to learn from each other's experience. I know many people value being part of the wider community of carers in our county. Thank you for being part of our charity and for helping ensure that no-one has to care alone.



Jennifer Twist
Chief Executive

...and the Chief Executive

Care for the Carers is here for anyone in East Sussex who looks after somebody who couldn't manage without their help. At the core of our work is the support, advice and guidance that our specialist team provides, along with peer support groups, counselling, and a range of activities.

We work hard to reach people early in their caring journey, as this is when we can best help carers to take steps to prevent their caring role from becoming overwhelming. In 2024-25, we once again saw the number of carers

reaching out for support going up, with 11,786 carers accessing our services. We have been pleased to adapt our services, enabling us to offer more intensive support to carers in crisis, and offer more wellbeing opportunities. We were also delighted to launch a new Carer Money Matters project this year, supporting carers experiencing financial hardship to access grants totalling £18,000 in just its first three months.

The charity is fortunate to be surrounded by a wonderful community of carers, partners, volunteers, staff, funders and supporters – thank you all for making our work possible this year.



Volunteering

It has been another busy year for our amazing volunteer team, as we continue to develop the volunteering offer. We have focused on the growth of Young Carers and Carers in Touch teams, and increased opportunities for volunteers to meet, access additional training and share best practice.

We have prioritised embedding volunteering into our work which has culminated in the development of a 5-year Volunteering Strategy.

20 Time to Talk volunteers
9 Carers in Touch volunteers
9 Young Carers volunteers
3 Wellbeing Group volunteers
1 Mental Health group volunteer
5 Events/Fundraising volunteers
6 Trustees
328 Carer Champions

Time to Talk, our counselling service, is currently a team of 20 volunteer counsellors. We are looking to recruit additional volunteers. Carers in Touch is a volunteer led service, provided support to 128 of the most isolated carers.



We are grateful for funding from The Hobson's Charity that provided our Carers in Touch volunteers with a laptop, new mobile phone, and the crucial support of an IT team, on hand to help with any issues while they are making calls to carers, helping us support more people.

*"The new equipment has added to the professionalism of volunteering with Care for the Carers."
- A Carers in Touch volunteer*

Overall, we worked with 373 volunteers including champions. We are incredibly lucky to have a dedicated team of wonderful volunteers. We continue to celebrate and support them, to ensure carers continue to receive a high quality and varied service. We could not provide the support to carers without the help of volunteers.

Fundraising

Thank you to all our generous donors over the last year. We were delighted to raise £34,761 from donations and gifts – every penny raised goes to support local carers.

We are grateful for the support of local businesses, community groups and Trusts including Tesco in Crowborough, Bexhill, Eastbourne and Uckfield, Waitrose Lewes, Crane Garden Buildings, Haulaway Ltd, Sussex Community Foundation and the National Lottery Community Fund, Isfield Fete and Eastbourne Carnival.

We were lucky to be nominated as one of the three charities at Eastbourne Airbourne. Over 20 volunteers joined us and raised a fantastic £1,973 for local carers.



"It was great to be a part of this event; I had a lovely day in sunshine. I really enjoyed meeting people and helping a worthy cause." John, local supporter

Donations from Airbourne have enabled carers to enjoy a range of local activities over the last year. Local carer Annie talks about the difference these activities have made to her...

"I just wanted to say how much I enjoyed the cinema trip this morning. It's such a long time since I've been, and it was lovely to lose myself in the film and forget about my worries for a bit. I also really enjoyed the mindfulness walks, another chance to take some time out & relax, which I really need at the moment. It's been lovely meeting some other carers too. I really appreciate Care for the Carers offering these activities. It has helped me to get out and feel part of the world again for a couple of hours!"

Support, advice and guidance



Our services, including information, practical and emotional support, were accessed by over 11,500 unpaid carers – children, young people and adults who look after someone who could not manage without their help. Over 3,100 were new to their caring role or had not received support before.

Carers Hub is our single point of contact for carers, accessible by phone, email or online. Our Carer Support staff responded to enquiries from 4,856 carers, providing direct support, onward signposting and referrals to services across the county.

884 carers benefited from a Coaching session, or a longer Directions appointment, allowing time to talk through any concerns, and discuss tailored support for their caring role.

In Hastings and Havens GP practices we supported 734 carers with complex needs. 297 newly identified carers were supported with hospital discharge. We provided specialist support to 607 carers of people with severe mental health and through Carers Reviews. Our counselling service Time to Talk supported 132 carers.

Carers in Touch provided invaluable support to 128 carers via regular phone calls, alleviating loneliness and helping carers feel valued.

Carer Money Matters launched in January 2025. In 3 months, 218 carers benefited from an estimated average of £350 financial saving. We supported 95 carers to access nearly £18,000 in grants through the Household Support Fund.

"Nice to know there's someone to listen and suggest and point in the right direction. That means everything."

Tools and resources

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

The East Sussex Carers Card is available to all carers including young carers and parent carers of children. It helps to identify carers in an emergency and entitles them to discounts from a range of businesses. 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.



We are grateful to all the businesses that continue to be part of the Carers Card scheme.

We continue to administer the Healthcare Appointments Respite Grant (HARG) on behalf of East Sussex County Council. These grants enabled 16 carers to attend healthcare appointments, training courses or engagement opportunities, by funding replacement care for the person they support.

We supported a further 132 carers to access other grants including Carers Trust grants, to access a break, essential equipment or financial support.

The 'Small Grants for Carers Groups' helped to seed fund community peer support groups for carers.

2,254
carers signed up for the
Carers Card during the year

148
grants for carers

£34,307
in grant payments
to carers

"Thank you so much for applying for the grant for me. It really is appreciated and reassures me that somebody does still care about us."



Groups and activities

We run monthly groups and social and wellbeing activities, available in different locations across the county, providing adult carers with highly valued opportunities to come together, get support and crucially, take a break.

249 carers attended one of our 17 carers groups. These offer highly sought after peer support as well as information from specialist Carer Support Workers and guest speakers. An evening and on-line group offers an alternative option to carers who can't attend during the daytime or in person.

We also offer Mental Health carers' groups for carers of people with a severe mental illness and Young Adult Carer groups and activities for carers aged 17-25 years.

We have been able to make 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.

249
carers attended our regular
carers' groups, and

285
carers benefited from 61 social
and wellbeing activities

The Adult Carers Activities Programme is funded through the kind support of the local community via donations and grants and enable carers to take a hugely valued short break from their caring role.

285 carers benefited from taking a break and attending one of 61 wellbeing or social activities; almost double the number of sessions we provided last year.

Our programme for carers included spa breaks, hand massage, mindfulness classes, creative courses, art sessions, days out, Christmas activities, meals and theatre and cinema visits.

We are grateful to 3H Foundation and South Downs National Park Authority for our ongoing partnerships, allowing us to support carers with spa days and days out. We are also celebrating our ongoing relationship with 'A Touch of Gentleness'. We are grateful for the time and kindness of their volunteers who provide hand massages to carers at Hastings Local Centre, at events and group meetings.

"Taking a break is a necessity not a luxury. I can't imagine not being able to take a break, I would be in a terrible state without. Carers' fatigue they call it. It can catch up with you, even if you are getting other help."

Counselling

We offer free counselling to carers to help them with the emotional aspect of their caring role. Counselling can enable carers to enhance their mental wellbeing, which in turn can prevent carer breakdown.

This year 132 carers completed a total of 1,325 counselling sessions, with 10 to 12 sessions each.

At Care for the Carers, we have a dedicated team of 20 volunteer counsellors who give their time to help carers. Many of our counsellors are students at an advanced stage of their training, and we have a few qualified counsellors volunteering for us long term.

Our counselling service is accredited by the BACP, which demonstrates that we offer an accountable, ethical, professional and responsive service to clients. We are one of only a handful of accredited services in East Sussex.

"The counsellor was invaluable support at a time when I felt so alone in all I was dealing with. He helped me realise I could manage and gave me confidence to be able to speak up when I needed to."



Our counselling service is hugely sought after and carers regularly share with us the difference it makes.

"I felt able to articulate freely my thoughts and feelings. I felt listened to without being judged. Throughout each session I felt comfortable, relaxed and not rushed. My counsellor showed compassion and empathy."

"Counselling has helped me to realise that my welfare is also important, it has helped me to set boundaries so that people don't put more pressure on me than I can deal with. It has helped me not feel guilty about saying no. It has also helped me with my self-confidence, giving me a safe, non-judgemental space to express myself and the reassurance that it's okay to feel the way that I do."

Volunteer's story: Mike

Mike became a Carers in Touch volunteer in June 2024.

"I had recently retired and wanted to use some of my time to keep in touch with people who needed support. I had always enjoyed this aspect of my full-time work and was keen to continue it.

My first contact was with the Volunteer Co-ordinator, who could not have been more helpful, confirming all the things that I'd hoped the role would encompass... I received interesting and informative details about the support that Care for the Carers offers, followed by comprehensive training and discussions with the Carers Centre Team Leader, who really helped me feel part of the team.

We only start when comfortable to be able to make calls and log them. There is always someone contactable during the shift for a chat and debrief if needed. The carers we talk to are invariably happy to hear from us and it really does serve a hugely worthwhile purpose."



When asked what he gets out of this volunteer role, Mike says, "I have gained great satisfaction in this role knowing it can be invaluable to people who really appreciate a call. It's also good to be able to work with like-minded volunteers who are all, as you might guess, lovely caring people! Volunteering in a role we are happy with is excellent for giving meaningful focus, and for our mental health. I would recommend it to everyone who is able to spare some time."

If you feel inspired to volunteer with us, please contact us. We have different roles available and can discuss how best you can work with us to support carers.



Awareness, information and communication

Raising awareness of carers' needs helps identify carers early, helping to access support before circumstances potentially escalate. We achieve this through our communications and media work. Carer Friendly Community programme and provision of "Think Carer" training to employers and health, social care and community service providers.

In 2024 Carer Friendly Scheme status was awarded to East Sussex MSK Community Partnership (ESMSK) with five patient and staff sites across East Sussex. A new partnership secured at the end of 2024 between Horder Healthcare and East Sussex Healthcare NHS Trust means that further sites are now delivering their service with "Think Carer" firmly at the forefront of their delivery. Patients with MSK (musculoskeletal issues) account for around 30% of GP consultations, and with ESMSK receiving over 150,000 referrals a year, this partnership can reach many carers.

Two further organisations were recognised as Carer Friendly – Sussex Support Service (Uckfield) and Friends of Bishopstone (FOBs), a local community organisation run by and for residents of Bishopstone in the Havens area.

Think Carer training was delivered to 270 health, social care and voluntary sector professionals.

"I feel everything was covered and the awareness of carers was at the front of the training. It was clear the trainer was passionate about carers and the service delivered."

We actively celebrated Carers Week and Carers Rights Day campaigns offering carers events, launching two new podcasts and raising awareness with local MPs and media.

Care for the Carers uses many avenues to support carers with information helpful in their caring role. CareLine Magazine went out to 3,300 recipients by post, mainly carers, with 7,000 people receiving it electronically, while our monthly e-newsletter reaches on average 7,300 carers and professionals.

Our website is a popular first stop for carers and professionals to find out more about support available. It received 40,000 unique visitors last year.



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 e-newsletter and regular invites. This helps our charity to keep Carers Voices at the heart of everything we do and to advocate for local carers within health, social care and voluntary sector strategic planning.



Annual Carers Voices Conference (June 2024) was attended by 136 carers and professionals making it the biggest carers event in the county, bringing together carers with decision makers shaping local services. A Carers Week Wellbeing and Celebration event at the local carers centre in Uckfield was attended by 50 people, including 32 carers. Insight shared by carers contributed to the East Sussex Carers Partnership Plan and Annual Carers Voices Report.

Young and adult carers met with the Eastbourne MP during the party conference in September last year, sharing their caring journey and highlighting areas that politicians can help improve. Carers who shared their stories of how severely caring can impact their finances helped us secure funding for an 18-month project, Carer Money Matters, supporting carers in East Sussex. Two carers from Eastbourne and Rye, spoke directly with MPs and ministers in Parliament, as part of our work with the Carers Poverty Coalition.



278 CARERS
are part of the
Carers Voices Network

164 CARERS
took part in our
Annual Carers Survey

We developed a range of partnerships, specifically focusing on reaching out to hidden carers and those unrepresented among our clients. We have been present in areas of financial disadvantage in Newhaven, and in the rural village of Isfield, where following funding received from the local community group, we have started a regular lunchtime meet-up for carers. We proudly took part in Eastbourne Pride, gave talks at LGBTQ+ groups and are members of the Sussex-wide LGBTQ+ Community Research group.

We attended 80 networking events, reaching 1,086 professionals and members of the community and run stalls at 82 public events, attended by over 40,000 people allowing us to engage with many carers, including 268 carers new to our services.

"A huge thank you for giving me the platform to speak up and share my experience – it has brought so many positives; you have no idea."

Young Carers Story: Oliver

Oliver, aged 15 from Eastbourne, cares for his mum Wendy, who lives with significant cardiac issues and the long-term effects of a stroke and brain injury. "Oliver saved my life at just 8 years old when I collapsed in the night. I went on to have open heart surgery and Oliver has been a young carer ever since. Life then changed again 3 years ago when I had a stroke and this caused hemiplegia on my right side, so my right hand and foot still don't work correctly, and I don't have feeling in them. I get stroke fatigue and Oliver has stepped up and helped me more day to day since then.

What amazes me about him is that he doesn't just help me with daily practical tasks, he motivates me daily to help me with my physio and challenges me to push myself to improve my physical and mental health. And he never complains about being a young carer."

We want to congratulate Oliver on winning a BBC Make a Difference Award in 2024, for his role as a young carer. We are very proud and impressed with everything Oliver does.

Oliver says, "I enjoy making somebody else's life better other than my own. It's not something that I can change, so I just take it day by day, see what happens and take it from there. I think it's very important to make a difference, not only to yourself but in others. I'm really honoured to have been nominated, and it feels great to have won this award."



"The charities I work with have made me feel proud to be a young carer and have helped me understand my role. They really see and understand how hard caring can be, especially the responsibility and effect it can have on your mental health some days. It helps knowing I'm not alone and they help me to improve the lives for other young carers by inviting me to meetings and by listening to me."

Young Carers

The service has 472 young carers registered with over a hundred new referrals received throughout the year. A total of 79 clubs, outings and activities were delivered throughout this period, including three young carers clubs, in Eastbourne, Uckfield and Bexhill and a residential trip.



With support from Seaford Town Council, we were able to develop targeted work to raise awareness, identify and support more local young carers. We delivered training to teaching and support staff and established a weekly lunchtime young carer club at Seaford Head School and ran events at the Mercread Youth Club.

Extended funding from NHS Sussex allowed us to continue our Young Carers Voices work with Culture Shift, with the finale being a trip to see Robin Hood, and going on stage after the show to practice projecting their voices with the help of the cast.



We were delighted to work with the Youth Hostel Association to hold a residential in March 2025, giving young carers a break from their caring roles. We took ten young carers who were either high level carers and/or home educated, away for two nights to the South Downs hostel where they took part in games and local activities. The group was asking to go back before they had even left!

Special thanks for their support to:

Saffron Fireworks, Paradise Park, Waitrose Lewes, Seaford Town Council, Crane Garden Buildings, Sussex Support Service, Pebsham Community Hub, Willingdon Trees Community Centre, Culture Shift, Community Chef, Active Hastings, Seaford Head School, YHA, NHS Sussex



Partnerships

Our partnerships with other charities are an important way that we collaborate to identify carers early and support carers in the most comprehensive way.

- We support East Sussex Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) Carers Network. We commission 13 local organisations, on behalf of ESCC, funding grassroot activities for carers.
- Our local carers centres are co-sited with Sussex Support Service at Victoria Pavilion in Uckfield, Age UK East Sussex at the Isabel Blackman Centre in Hastings, and Southdown in Lewes.
- We work together for carers across Sussex, as part of the Sussex Carers Partnership – securing funding and services which would not be available for local charities.
- We influence commissioning and decision making through East Sussex Voluntary, Community and Social Enterprise sector (VCSE) – the VCSE sector coming together to speak as one voice in support of the communities we serve.
- As the Carers Centre, Care for the Carers acts as Strategic Partner to the Council and NHS Sussex, putting us in a unique position to influence statutory support to carers.



Local Centres

Our local carers centres have become vibrant and bustling locations that carers and their families very much identify with as ‘their places’, helping to meet the needs of a diverse range of carers, of all ages and from all backgrounds and walks of life.

In figures:

- 200 carers supported this year
- Working with 22 partner organisations, 46 services provided for carers, including 1:1, group support and activities
- 33 Carers Wellbeing and Activity Passes provided (for gym, fitness and leisure classes at the Isabel Blackman Centre)
- 23 carers and those with care and support needs have accessed our ‘Fun and Active Together’ class
- Carers Week event at the Victoria Pavilion in Uckfield attended by 32 local carers, Deputy Mayor and local partners, including the Chamber of Commerce

Uckfield

“Thank you so much for looking after us all so well and for a lovely creative evening. It was just what I needed.”



Hastings

“This has been my lifeline. It has given me a positive reason to get up in the morning and have something to look forward to that is for me. I have reconnected with old friends and other carers...”



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

Hospital Carer Support Project

In 2023, Care for the Carers expanded its services with a new initiative supporting carers in hospital settings across Eastbourne and Hastings. Delivered as part of the **Sussex Carers Partnership**, the project aims to improve and standardise carer support during hospital stays and develop consistent carer-inclusive hospital practices.

Direct support in hospitals

Support workers were based at **Conquest Hospital** and **Eastbourne District General Hospital**, providing tailored advice, emotional support, and practical guidance to carers from admission through to discharge. Over the past year, **123 carers** received direct support, many facing complex discharge-related challenges.

Raising awareness among hospital staff

Our **Hospital Awareness Training Programme** developed a health-focused e-learning module, now embedded in the ESHT intranet and accessible to all hospital staff. This training helps raise awareness of carers’ needs and promotes carer-inclusive practices.

Outreach and resources

A targeted publicity campaign was delivered across both hospitals, reaching out to all wards and distributing over **200 Carer Information Packs** via Discharge Hubs and the Dementia Care Team.

“I felt so supported by what you did for me – it changed how I was feeling and what I could do for my husband.”

Referrals from ESHT staff have doubled, and self-referrals continue to rise. Over half of all cases required intensive, multi-agency support to prevent carer breakdown, hospital readmission, and address safeguarding concerns. Our work supported avoiding or mitigating inadequate care packages delaying discharge, communication issues between hospital services and carers and supported carers who were not involved in discharge planning.

Governance and management

All Care for the Carers Trustees are volunteers. The Board sets the strategic direction for the charity, with day-to-day management delegated to our Chief Executive and senior management team.



Officers of the Board 2024–2025

Chair of the Board of Trustees:
Neil Churchill OBE

Chair of Finance Sub-Committee:
Richard Pearson

The Trustees also bring a range of professional skills from their careers and voluntary work, along with a diversity of experience that is also crucial to their governance role. Importantly, most of our Board – including the Chair – have experience of caring, helping us to ensure that carers’ needs and views are always at the heart of our governance.

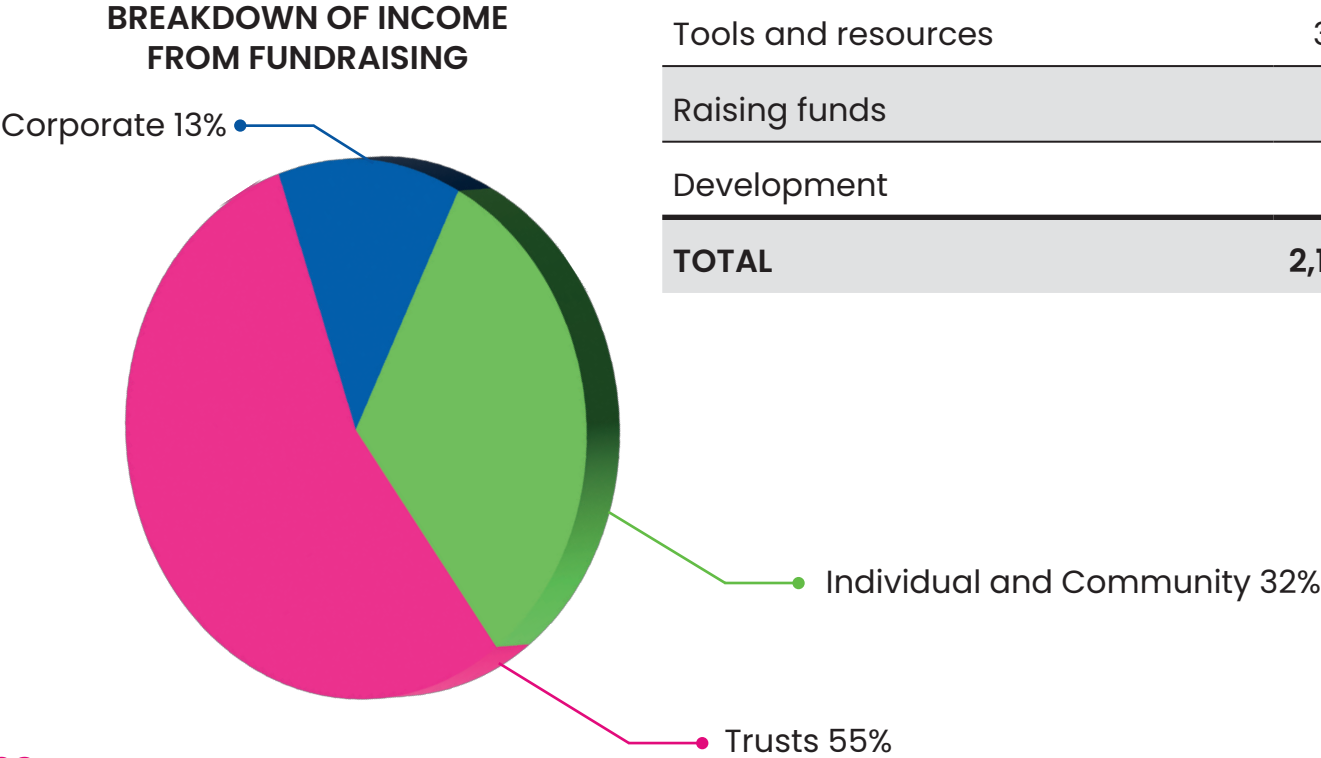
This year we said goodbye to Polly Evans, Mary Barnes, Jane Lawrence and Alan Botterill, who moved on to other commitments. We thank them and all our Trustees for their time and dedication to supporting carers. We are particularly grateful to Alan Botterill for his longstanding contribution to the charity.

Care for the Carers’ Strategic Plan concentrates on the following four priority goals:

- ✓ We will maintain & grow services for carers
- ✓ We will influence with & for carers
- ✓ We will reach more carers, especially who are hidden or in crisis
- ✓ We will build our capacity to support carers – sustainably

Our finances at a glance

INCOME	(£)	EXPENDITURE	(£)
Donations and gifts	34,761	Support and advice	964,934
Grants	1,656,561	Groups and activities	175,332
Investment (and other income)	41,385	Involvement (engagement & representation)	254,218
TOTAL	1,732,707	Carer awareness	205,681
		Information and communication	68,946
		Tools and resources	336,232
		Raising funds	65,372
		Development	67,864
		TOTAL	2,138,579



Care for the Carers is in a stable financial position at the end of 2024-25, with cash balances of £1,031,196 after a restructure of the investment and reserves of £1,946,263.

We continue to achieve our goal to draw funds down from our reserves to improve services for carers, as well as enhancing the charity’s ability to meet their needs. As planned, we used £299,937 of designated funds during 2024-25 to enable us to:

- maintain services introduced in 2023-24 responding to carers’ expressed needs (including seed funding a series of specialist, community and young carers’ services)
- continue to improve our digital offer to carers, and our internal systems to deliver services better
- train and support staff and volunteers



This year, our grant funding slightly decreased, by £38,502, to £1,656,561 – we are hugely grateful to our funders whose generous support has enabled us to provide additional services to support carers.

Our largest contract to deliver the East Sussex Carers Centre, jointly funded by ESCC and NHS Sussex, remains secure and has been extended until 2027. Our Fundraising strategy is developing growth and more diverse income streams, albeit at a slower rate than planned.

Looking forward to 2025-26, we have planned to continue using part of our reserves to maintain much needed support and services to carers.



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Think Carer e-newsletter.*

bit.ly/thinkcarernews or use the QR code



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