

Vision 2025

Our five year direction of travel

Executive summary

This document sets out a clear direction of travel for Carers UK's five-year strategy, **Vision 2025**. The coronavirus pandemic has meant that creating a detailed five-year strategy would be almost impossible given the fast-moving situation, changing political landscape and the shifting status of carers' situations. This situation is sector wide and many charities are moving towards a shorter term twelve month rolling programme as funding challenges and beneficiary needs dictate. Nevertheless, Carers UK wanted to set out our broad ambitions and goals for the next five years which will then have a detailed annual business plan beneath it.

We have developed an overarching three pillared approach to tackle the issues carers face. *Equality, Support and Recognition* – these are underpinned by our income generation and our impact collection and reporting and overseen by our new values.

Our Vision:

To create a society that **recognises, values** and **supports** carers

Our Mission:

To make life better for carers

Our Values:

ATTENTIVE

We welcome everyone and are always supportive and ready to help

We listen carefully and respond with expertise and understanding

AMBITIOUS

We're courageous and innovative, aiming high and seeking out new ideas and opportunities that take us forward

We are always learning and improving, pushing boundaries to increase our impact

ACHIEVERS

We are passionate about what we do and tenacious in our pursuit of change

We adapt to new challenges and are always striving for excellence

We love to collaborate and enjoy working with others to reach our goals

Overview

In 1965 Reverend Mary Webster created the Council for the Single Woman and Her Dependents which became Carers UK in 1988. In the intervening 56 years much has changed and yet much has not. Many steps have been made in policy and indeed in law and yet there remains a gender imbalance in caring and a lack of understanding and lack of value of carers, and yet the numbers are growing exponentially.

The purpose of Vision 2025 is to set an ambitious direction of travel for Carers UK with significant objectives to achieve by our 60th anniversary in 2025, which will be a year of celebration of carers in every form. This will enable us to make a step change for carers, to take advantage of the burning platform presented to us by both circumstance and our own action, and to fundamentally change carers lives through policy and practice for the better.

The coronavirus pandemic which began in 2020 has changed how we work, has provided opportunities to react quickly to circumstance, and has shown more than ever that Carers UK is the leading voice for carers. Even more evident is that we are the go to place for individual carers, for employers, opinion formers and leaders in Government and the NHS – our influence is significant and far reaching. We must seize upon the opportunities that have presented themselves and learn from our adaptability and our louder voice and influence. And whilst we should have a strategic direction of travel (Vision 2025) we must not be harnessed to it in a way that it holds back our ambition, adaptability and opportunism.

At the same time, it has been the most challenging time ever for carers because of the increased pressure put on them by lockdown, shielding, closure of services and the financial challenges of an economy rapidly falling deeper into recession. Numbers of carers have increased significantly and we need to galvanise them into a true movement for carers and use the influence that a quarter of the electorate should bring with it.

It can perhaps be assumed that the 4.5 million people who were new to caring overnight, as a consequence of the coronavirus, may not remain carers long term as services reopen, paid support returns or shielding of the most vulnerable ends and overall figures could decrease. It is vital that we harness their experience and energy, perhaps even their outrage, at the experience of caring having had their eyes opened to the reality of it during this period. Many of them may become carers again at other stages of their life – we should strive to speak to them as a bespoke cohort and galvanise their anger and knowledge while it is fresh in their minds – we need to find a way of maintaining the urgency.

In many ways the coronavirus pandemic has simply exacerbated what happens ordinarily in terms of the number of people who start caring versus the number who stop (historically circa 2 million of each) – we will revisit our earlier research on this in order to better understand and capture these groups of carers.

To do this, of course, we need carers to recognise that they are a carer sooner so we can help them at the outset of their journey, we need to breakdown the ‘hierarchy’ of caring and we need to be there for them at the end of their caring journey. We need to be bold and brave. In short, we need to be more assertive and robust in our demands for carers.

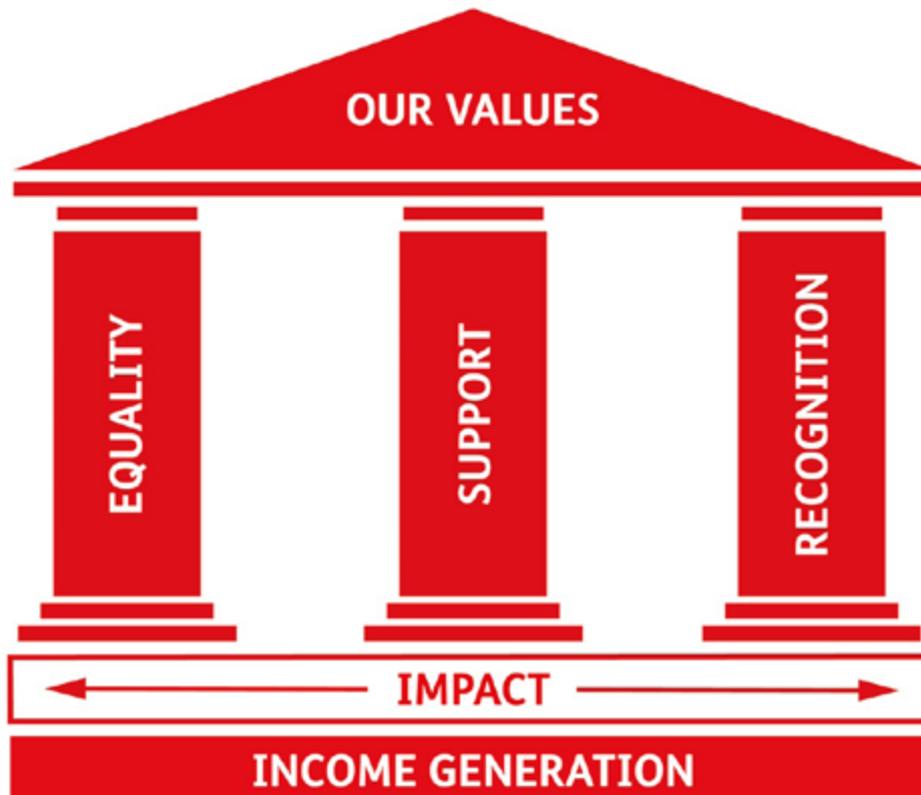
Vision 2025 - Our Goals:

- To create a society that requires carers to be treated equally in all aspects of their lives
- To connect carers so that no one has to care alone
- To halve the time it takes for carers to recognise themselves as carers and get the support they need

Core objectives

Our core objectives over this five-year period will be split into three pillars underpinned by two core requirements and overseen by our new values and ways of working.

These are depicted in the diagram below – Equality, Support and Recognition – all driven and measured by Impact, and can only be achieved if our Income Generation and funding model continues to develop and mature.



Equality

Under the equality pillar we will focus on policy and legal change. Here we state our overarching ambition to achieve the 10th protected characteristic for unpaid carers. Whilst this is a considerable ambition by setting our sights high we believe it will enable us to achieve much en-route to the final goal including addressing the longstanding issue of gender imbalance.

Carers leave will be a key ask for working carers, it was a Conservative party manifesto commitment, the consultation has ended and (at the time of writing) we eagerly await the outcome. Whilst we remain optimistic that this will be achieved we recognise that this is only part of the battle as this will be unpaid leave, we are determined in our ambition to get paid carers leave within this strategic plan period.

An increase in, and reform of, Carer's Allowance both short (during and coming out of the pandemic) and long term is essential and we intend to expand our *Fairer for Carers* campaign with an even more robust line.

“With the cost of living going up now, the Carer's Allowance just doesn't cover what it needs to cover. During the pandemic and the lockdowns, we actually went into arrears with our bills and our rent, so that we could pay for food.”

- Unpaid carer testimonial for the *Fairer for Carers* campaign, 2021

We believe that as part of the long-term plan there should be NHS legislation requiring a duty to consult carers, not just patients and the public. This includes upscaling the requirement of GP practices to identify carers to include a new goal for the whole of the NHS to consider carers' roles and needs. As caring has now been identified as a social determinant of health, this recognition of the inequalities carers face which leads to poorer health outcomes provides an opportunity to tailor support to improve carers' lives.

There are critical differences in nation government policy for carers that need to be considered and key asks developed – our goal must be to have equity for carers, and secure the best deal for carers, across all four nations.

Support

We provide support in a variety of ways: Our campaign and policy work ensures carers have the support they need provided by Government, the direct support we provide to carers and our research underpins both to ensure we are providing and campaigning for what carers need/want at that moment in time. In addition, there is our indirect support through our partnerships.

Very clearly the immediate ask is fundamental reform of Social Care. Ensuring that we remain aligned to work in the NHS to deliver the carers element of the long-term plan and to ensure that NHSE/I remain members of Employers for Carers (EfC). Some form of carers identification should remain an ask of government to better enable carers to gain the support they need.

It is vital that service providers support both carers and the people they care for better. Whilst Carers UK is not a direct service provider we must lobby for improved service provision including respite care. We must seek to make explicit the parallels of seeing caring as a 'job' and therefore that it is vital carers get a holiday (respite/breaks) in the way an employer would be required to provide time away from work.

Direct provision of/for:

Working carers - this is essentially through our portfolio of support provided through EfC – our goal should be to continue to grow our membership and to use their collective voice to support our campaigns for better government support for working carers.

Peer support - this is through the expanding provision from our carer support and nation teams and post pandemic we should provide a hybrid version of virtual and face to face (local networks). Emotional support provision will be via the newly re-introduced Listening Support Service and the expanded Care for a Cuppa and Me Time sessions more broader support and learning through our Share and Learn sessions.

“This was my 1st ‘Chat & Cuppa’, I firstly found it very emotional as I am a sole carer for my 93yr old mom who is now bedridden. My ‘existence’ is isolating, restrictive & sometimes I feel lonely, so to be able to see or speak & hear other people it overwhelmed me.”

- Care for a Cuppa attendee, 2020

Practical - this is the support we provide via our helpline, both on the phone, email, and forum. We need to analyse where the greatest demand for support will come into longer term, what the impact of analogue switch off will be in 2025 and ensure that our model is developed with the same flexibility as our existing model showed during the coronavirus crisis. In addition, our website will be developed to support

both ‘pure’ information and incrementally online chat style support. This should be enhanced in terms of accessibility with our new website and we should strive to maintain our very clear position as the *go to place* for carers to be signposted to.

Our Digital Resources for Carers (DRC) are a fundamental part of our carer support and need to be better embedded into our carer support model. Our support model needs to remain mixed in order to be inclusive and include printed and audio as well as digital support. Membership – currently free – we will continue to grow organically and we need to make sure there is a reason for people to join us and stay with us and truly create the movement for change we seek to have from our members.

“I am so very grateful for your extremely helpful advice and guidance... which has been very re-assuring. The help I am going to get will be just wonderful and I will be for ever grateful for your immediate and positive response.”

- *Care for a Cuppa attendee, 2020*

We will continue to develop and enhance our contingency planning tools. We must research and create a plan for those who have been directly impacted by caring during the pandemic, who have lost someone they cared for during the pandemic and for those with long-Covid or caring for someone with it, the impact of these is likely to last throughout the five-year period in a constantly evolving way.

It is important that we develop a clear support programme for the end of caring and seek to engage people at the end of their caring journey to support carers at a different stage through peer support on the forum / listening support – and also to cultivate them as potential donors (legacy). Leading from this is the importance of enhancing our volunteer programme in part that which we have developed during the pandemic (i.e. virtual) and to evaluate our on the ground face to face model as well as our long-held ambition to develop a tangible paid for employee volunteering model that we could roll out across, for example, our EfC members.

Indirect support

Our support of carers isn’t just through our own interventions but also that which is provided through our partners on the ground and should be an area of growth to reach those we currently don’t reach. These include service providers such as local carer support groups, or condition specific charities who have carer strands to their work or the military charities (the ‘unusual suspects’ - seeking out carers wherever they are) alongside direct service provider carer organisations (specifically those that are our Affiliates).

Recognition

Recognition is the final pillar of the strategy and links all the themes together. We know that it takes two years on average for carers to identify as such. We also know that during that time their own health, wellbeing and financial stability suffers, that by putting their own needs last their ability to care is also impacted. We therefore know, as is so often the case, that early intervention is best. And we know with carers that early intervention has a double benefit, positively impacting both the carer and the person they care for. Put simply the sooner carers identify themselves as such, the sooner they can get much needed support.

“I was a bit surprised to be called a carer but I think I just wanted more support for my husband to start with. I’m not sure I had any concept of needing support for myself until quite recently. I feel I became a ‘non- person’; no rights to money, pension, private life, no place in society.”

- State of Caring survey respondent, 2019

But it’s not just down to the carer, we also want others to better recognise carers too. Primary care can do this; particularly GP’s, building on those registering as a carer for the COVID-19 vaccine. Pharmacists can do this. Carer friendly workplaces can do this. Schools can do this by introducing lessons about caring. (We want to explore how this could work, The Equality Act requires schools to have ‘due regard to the need to eliminate discrimination and other conduct that is prohibited by the Act. Schools must foster good relations between people who share a protected characteristic and people who do not’). The media can help to do this through the portrayal of carers.

We want to increase awareness in three distinct ways:

1. Carers themselves
2. Professionals (including health settings and other workplaces)
3. Society

Through building on current awareness campaigns, Carers Week and Carers Rights Day, we will broaden the audiences, notably with Carers Week increasing ‘individual’ supporters and encouraging them to add their voice.

We will also develop a significant, generic awareness campaign that echoes our new more determined and resolute tone of voice. This will be a rolling campaign mindful that 6,000 people a day become carers.

The latest UK wide census was in March 2021 (2022 in Scotland), this provides us with an opportunity to speak to all the target audiences above. We campaigned pre-census to ensure maximum reporting from carers. We need to factor in time to change our statistics across all platforms (circa 2023) on the back of census data being released.

Our research is fundamental to and underpins our recognition pillar, the new value of unpaid caring (carers saved the state £530m a day throughout the pandemic) gives even greater clout to our demands. The State of Caring survey (in its 10th year in 2021) similarly gives us the evidence for policy development and practical intervention as well as painting a long-term picture of caring.

By raising awareness of caring the ultimate goal is for caring to be understood by individuals before it affects them personally.

“It’s reassuring to read there is all this support, I honestly didn’t realise I was a carer and the impact it was and is having on me until the pandemic started. Thank you very much for this.”

- A carer seeking support on Facebook, 2021

Cross sectional

The final section consists of those areas that provide the foundation for our work. *Income Generation* is by definition fundamental; without a stable financial model our ambitions are instantly stymied and we can't change carers' lives for the better. This covers both our earned income, EfC, consultancy, contract work and our fundraising income.

It is important that we maintain our current strategy of seeking multi-year income in our fundraising team to ensure we have the confidence in our forecasts which can fund our ambitions. We need to include fundraising for new key areas, e.g. support to achieve protected characteristic, support of the Helpline at its expanded level of 5 days a week beyond March 2021, and support for bespoke communications campaigns. We will review the costing model for EfC as part of a standard annual review and look to expand consultancy where it fits with our goals and ambitions. Contracts should only be entered into where the outcomes are of benefit to carers, where they are financially beneficial and / or 'politically' so e.g. joint work in the sector or for Government.

Historically we have not collected our undoubtedly significant *impact* across the organisation as consistently as we could have done. It is our ambition to do a review across the organisation of what can, should or could be collected, and in what format; where it would be useful and how we might most readily and easily collect it and set a benchmark from the start of this new strategic period. We will develop an impact framework alongside a new theory of change which will not only enable us to publish an annual impact report but provide simple access to detailed impact for funders and policy asks. We recognise this is transformational, and as such we need to invest in a new database as well as in people. This will also enable us to ensure we use consistent and robust statistics across the organisation.

Reactivity – It is a clear and stated ambition to factor in 'blank box' reactivity into our strategy and business plan, in order not to be tied to a rigid strategy that precludes us from taking golden opportunities which will benefit carers as they arise. We have shown during the pandemic that this is more significant than ever before, and we have proven that we have the ability to be nimble and flexible - to facilitate swift change in policy/practice/delivery as external factors require and not be tied by long term strategy. But if we do this we need to spend time each year to grade the business plan detailing what areas are 'non-negotiable' and cannot be dropped, what areas are of high importance, and what areas could be put on hold should something more impactful/important/time sensitive come across our radar.

Digital – is now so ubiquitous it should not require a bespoke strategy but it is something we are wholly dependent upon in all areas of our work and need to ensure that it is fit for purpose, joined up and developed on an ongoing basis. We should own the digital space by leading the charge for digital inclusion of unpaid carers and strive to bridge the digital divide.

Finally, our 60th Anniversary in 2025: a simple tool to set goals for all departments and nations of what we should aim to achieve by our 60th anniversary and how we plan for this year to be not just one of fundraising, but one of celebration of carers, of achievements for carers, and of fundamental policy change on behalf of carers.

Vision 2025



Across the UK today 6.5 million people are carers – supporting a loved one who is older, disabled or seriously ill.

Caring will touch each and every one of us in our lifetime, whether we become a carer or need care ourselves. Whilst caring can be a rewarding experience, it can also impact on a person's health, finances and relationships.

Carers UK is here to listen, to give carers expert information and tailored advice. We champion the rights of carers and support them in finding new ways to manage at home, at work, or in their community.

We're here to make life better for carers.

If you are a carer looking for information and guidance, please visit the help and advice section of our website carersuk.org/help or get in touch with our advice team by emailing advice@carersuk.org or phoning our Helpline on 0808 808 7777 Monday – Friday, 9am – 6pm.

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