



ONE HALTON CARERS STRATEGY 2024 - 2027 and DELIVERY PLAN

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Foreword

Following on from the success of the previous All-Age Carers Strategy in Halton, this updated 2023-2026 Strategy continues to identify progress towards more joined-up and holistic approaches to supporting Carers.

Carers are a valued part of our community and Halton Borough Council (HBC), NHS Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board (ICB) and partners working together across One share a commitment to improve the lives and opportunities for children, young people and adults who are carers in Halton.

Every year, across the country, more and more people take on a caring role. The enormous contribution of our carers not only makes an invaluable difference to the people they support, but it is an integral part of our health and social care system.

This Strategy and the Delivery Plan set out our current position, the areas for improvement that we need to focus on over the next three years and the outcomes for individuals that we want to achieve.

The Delivery Plan has been developed in conjunction with children and adult carers, along with the key providers of services within Halton. We would like to thank everyone who has been involved with the development of this Strategy and Delivery Plan.

1. Introduction

The aim of this strategy

This strategy aims to identify a set of local priorities for those people who have caring responsibilities in Halton.

It intends to celebrate people's experiences of caring in Halton, including what's working well for them. It will also look to pinpoint some areas for improvement, where there are perhaps some gaps in the system which can be closed. By working in collaboration across One Halton we aim to improve the lives of people who provide informal care.

The strategy is set in the context of national legislation, policy and guidance which sets out the rights of carers and recognises their contribution to the health and social care system and wider society.

1.1 Who is A Carer?

A carer is someone who provides unpaid support to a family member or friend who, due to illness, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction, cannot cope without their support. Each carer's experience is unique to their own circumstances. Carers can be any age, from children to older people, and from every community and culture. Some carers may be disabled or have care needs themselves.

The Care Act's definition of an adult carer is "... someone who helps another person, usually a relative or friend, in their day-to-day life. This is not the same as someone who provides care professionally, or through a voluntary organisation."

The Carers Trust¹ definition of a Young Carer is "...someone under 18 who helps look after someone in their family, or a friend, who is ill, disabled or misuses drugs or alcohol."

Many people with caring responsibilities don't see themselves as carers, but rather as a parent, spouse, son, daughter, partner, friend or neighbour. They support their family and do not think of themselves as "carers" or are not recognised as Carers by professionals and/or the community. Many carers would never use the term carer, even if they are one, as it's not how they wish to view their role and it positions the cared-for person in the role of a dependent person, which they might not want to be viewed as.

¹ <https://carers.org/about-us/about-young-carers>

1.2 National Context

There are two main pieces of legislation that define how support is provided by carers, namely The Care Act 2014² and The Children and Families Act 2014³.

Carers rights have been embedded into statute and carers have been put on the same legal footing as those with care and support needs when it comes to their own wellbeing. This main body for identifying carers support needs is the Local Authority but this is backed by a wider system-based approach. This means that children's and adults' services must have arrangements in place to assess carers, including young carers to ensure that no young person's life is unnecessarily restricted because they are providing significant care to an adult.

The Children and Families Act ensures that all children, young people and their families are able to access the right support and provision to meet their needs.

Under The Care Act, any carer can request an assessment, they will however be subject to eligibility criteria in respect of accessing publicly funded services.

The Care Act places a duty on local authorities to:

- Prevent, reduce and delay the need for support, including the needs of carers.
- Provide information and advice to carers in relation to their caring role and their own needs; and
- Work together with NHS partners and others in delivering the Care Act functions.

The Department of Health and Social Care's ['Next Steps to put People at the Heart of Care – A plan for adult social care system reform 2023 to 2024 and 2024 to 2025'](#) acknowledges: "There are key gaps in the evidence base surrounding the circumstances, experiences and needs of unpaid carers in England. We are taking steps towards implementing a new survey of unpaid carers which would capture the data and evidence needed to address these gaps."

The [NHS Long Term Plan](#) (LTP) makes a clear commitment to identify and support unpaid carers. There are clear metrics associated with supporting young carers and ensuring professionals can access carer contingency plans when they need to.

While caring is not a protected characteristic under the [Equality Act 2010](#) it is, to some extent, covered under Section 13 which looks at 'discrimination by association'. There are currently campaigns asking for caring to become the 10th protected characteristic under the law.

² <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/care-act-2014-part-1-factsheets/care-act-factsheets#factsheet-8-the-law-for-carers>

³ <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

National charities set up to support and campaign for the continued rights of carers across the UK communicate the value of the role and its impact those who undertake it.

[The Carers Trust](#) state that: “Although for many carers, caring can have positive and rewarding aspects, there are lots of reasons why caring can also leave you needing support.

“Caring can have an impact on many aspects of your life.”

[Carers UK](#) maintain that: “Carers are holding families together, enabling those they care for to get the most out of life, making an enormous contribution to society and saving the economy billions of pounds.

“Yet many are stretched to the limit – juggling care with work and family life, struggling to make ends meet and often battling with poor health themselves. “

1.3 Local Context

Halton has a number of local strategies and policy documents that are key drivers in areas of priority for health and social care. [Public Health evidence and intelligence reports and data](#) for the borough indicate a wide range of inequalities and impactors on the local population, including communities with high levels of deprivation and lower than national average life expectancy, dependant of where people live.

The population of Halton (128,432 in 2018⁴) is predominantly homogeneous in relation to protected characteristics such as ethnicity, faith and sexual orientation, though it is recognised that there are key minority groups within Halton.

Halton is an industrial and logistics hub with a higher proportion of people working in manufacturing (particularly chemicals and advanced manufacturing), wholesale and retail, and transport and storage compared to the average for England. Less than 60% of the working age population of Halton are economically active⁵.

⁴ [Local Area Profiles and data for Runcorn and Widnes \(halton.gov.uk\)](#)

⁵ [Local Area Profiles and data for Runcorn and Widnes \(halton.gov.uk\)](#)

2. One Halton

One Halton is the place-based partnership between the local authority, NHS organisations and the voluntary and community sector. The aim of One Halton is to fulfil a commitment to whole 'system' working for the benefit of the people of the borough.

In developing a shared strategy for the carers across Halton we have a mutual understanding of the needs and ambitions of carers and can work collectively to achieve common goals.

One Halton Vision

"To improve the health and wellbeing of the population of Halton by empowering and supporting local people from the start to the end of their lives by preventing ill health, promoting self-care and independence, arranging local, community-based support and ensuring high quality services for those who need them."

Halton Borough Council is responsible, through legislation, for assessing and supporting the needs of carers, through its social care functions. In Halton it is recognised that caring responsibilities affect people across all aspects of their lives and a partnership approach to supporting carers is key to maintaining their wellbeing. All partners within One Halton have a responsibility to consider the needs and rights of carers as part of their services and functions.

3. Halton Carers Centre

[Halton Carers Centre](#), as the primary voluntary sector organisation offering support to carers in the borough, receives pooled funding from Halton Borough Council and Cheshire and Merseyside Integrated Care Board to maintain services. Halton Carers Centre is a network partner of the Carers Trust. It also manages other funding streams for targeted activity.

Halton Carers Centre works alongside a range of other partners to identify carers, assess their needs and provide support and timely interventions. They work with unpaid carers of all ages to help them manage their caring role, have some time to themselves and stay well.

For more information about Halton Carers Centre and its holistic service offer visit:

www.haltoncarers.co.uk

Myth buster - If I reach out for support or register as a carer, the person I care for could get taken away by social services/or I could get taken into care?

This is the biggest concern we hear from carers wanting to reach out for support. **The truth is** these situations rarely happen. We want to support the carer and the person they care for to be safe and supported in their own home.

Once you register as a carer, the most likely thing to happen is you could access things you may not have realised are out there for you or the person you care for. It really is better to reach out, even just to talk things through with one of our lovely team members at the Carers Centre.

'I am thankful that I interacted with the Halton Carers Centre as I know they will always do their best to help me.'

'I really enjoy the holistic treatments I have in the centre and feel like the hour for myself does benefit me so much for my week ahead.'

4. What do we know about Carers in Halton?

In 2021, 4.6 per cent of Halton residents (aged five years and over) reported providing up to 19 hours of unpaid care each week. This figure decreased from 6.8 per cent in 2011. However, Halton were in the top five authorities in England of those aged 5 years and over providing unpaid care.

The 2021 Census was undertaken during the coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic. This may have influenced how people perceived and managed their provision of unpaid care, and therefore may have affected how people chose to respond. However, Halton Carers Centre have also been proactive in identifying carers and encouraging them to identify themselves as a carer. In this sense, the figures may represent invaluable insight into the extent of caring in Halton.

Indicator	Percentage - Halton 2021 Census	Number - Halton 2021 Census
Provides 1 – 19 hours unpaid care a week	4.6%	5,660
Provides 20-49 hours unpaid care a week	2.7%	3,322
Provides 50 or more hours unpaid care a week	4.0%	4,747

In Halton there are currently 5,566 carers who are registered with Halton Carers Centre and receive support from them. This shows that there are many more carers out there who have not identified themselves as a carer or have not registered with the Carers Centre.

The Carers Centre collate information on a regular basis and the information below is a snapshot of their data, based on a few different categories, to give an overview of what we know about Halton's carers. Below is a breakdown of all carers in Halton (registered with the Carers Centre) covering gender, ethnicity and age of carers in Halton as of February 2023. The data shows us that although the majority of carers in Halton are from a White British background, there are at least 12 other ethnicities of carers, and cultural differences and intersectionality need to be considered when working with carers.

Gender	
Male Carers	1,749
Female Carers	3,811
Non-Binary	1
Prefer not to say	5
Total	5,566

Age	
0 – 17 years old	899
18 – 64 years old	3,374
65 plus	1,293
Total	5,566

Ethnicity			
Asian Indian	5	Asian Pakistani	1
Asian Bangladeshi	3	Asian Chinese	1
Asian Other	4	Black Caribbean	3
Black African	6	Black Other	29
White Black Caribbean	2	White Asian	13
Any Other Mixed	14	White English	5262
White Irish	26	White Other	48
Not Stated	152		
Total			5,566

Case Study from Halton Carers Centre

I have been supporting a single mother who cares for her 9-year-old son with ASD & ADHD. Mum accesses our parent carer support groups and activities and also works for a large well-known company which she has done for over 10 years.

Recently the contracts in work were changed to incorporate new working hours due to the amalgamation of 2 other companies. This left Mum with no childcare for the hours she was being asked to do.

Her son struggles with new routines and mum finds that if he is left with childminders his anxiety reaches a high level which cause him to have meltdowns and his behaviour becomes erratic. This can lead to self-harm and other destructive behaviours.

I chatted with Mum, listened to her concerns and worries and encouraged her to speak to her line manager as soon as possible to ensure maximum communication between her and her employer. After speaking with her team leader to come back to me to tell me that this conversation had not gone well. Her team leader had told her that she needed to accept the new hours and that they could not change work patterns to accommodate her childcare needs.

I subsequently sent an employment support letter to her line manager, explaining that she is an unpaid carer, outlining carer rights in the workplace and explaining some details behind her sons' condition and why it is important to them as a family to have consistent working hours. This led to a meeting with mum and the HR team at which point she was returned to her original working hours.

After this mum was delighted, she could continue working whilst knowing her son wasn't going to be put in a situation that would cause him additional stress and anxiety.

Myth buster - Is it true that if I register as a carer, I won't be able to stay employed or continue studying?

Caring can of course be hard and time-consuming, so often people find it hard to continue working or studying. But the truth is, registering as a carer means you can get access to the support you need to enable you to continue working, studying and caring, if that is something you wish to continue. Carers often tell us they want to stay in employment or continue their academic or career paths, and the support and advice we offer can help you achieve this.

Quote from former carers:

Halton Carers Centre continue to support carers for a further 12 months following the loss of their loved ones, giving them chance to readjust as their caring role end and their new circumstances develop.

'I look forward to meeting my friends at the group each month, we arrange to go on days out and holidays during the year, we are there if anyone needs to talk about

'I appreciate the support I get from the group; it is a friendly atmosphere where you can have tea & cakes and feel fully supported.'

'I enjoy our once-a-month meeting groups and our days out; we have food and chat. It really is a lovely group to be part of.'

Case Study from Age UK Mid-Mersey

Female Carer aged 88 lives in Runcorn cares for her husband 92, for many years her husband as suffered from prostate cancer and was diagnosed with Dementia/ Alzheimer's 9 months ago.

They have been married for over 66 years, they have two sons, one who lives in the South of England and one who lives more local but works fulltime, is married and has his own family.

The couple both worked all their lives and lived a comfortable lifestyle which included being part of many local social groups and being members of the golf club.

A couple of years ago her husband's health started to deteriorate due to memory issues, he started requiring support with everyday activities and needed to be prompted to complete simple personal tasks or to go out socially.

Caring for her husband had a detrimental effect on her health she started to suffer from severe anxiety, she stopped attending her social groups, playing golf, and meeting up with friends. Over time she became isolated.

She was referred to us via her GP. Within 5 days of referral, she was contacted by an adult carer support worker who completed the registration process over the phone. In this conversation we discussed how she was coping, her feelings and anxieties and what support she needed.

The Carer said she would feel very nervous about attending the centre to access services as she was nervous going somewhere new and joining an established group. We instead invited her to pop into the centre when she was next in the Old Town to meet the staff and have a look around the centre without any expectation of joining an activity. She subsequently did this and just asked if she could introduce herself to the worker she had talked to on the phoned. We gradually encouraged her to join in other activities and since then, she has felt confident to attend therapies, podiatry, had a full health check, attend carers forums and has applied for Carers Break Funding to help pay for a gardener. She also attends our dementia carers group and often calls in with her husband for a coffee and chat telling us she feels very welcome.

As well as accessing the therapies, podiatry and funding, since registering with the centre, carer has also been referred to Welfare Rights for support with applying for Attendance Allowance which was awarded. She recently told us she feels she has enough confidence to return to the golf club not to play but to visit the ladies there. Carer was offered a Carers Assessment to discuss any additional support available but declined, at present she feels confident in caring role and able to continue.

5. Progress since our last Carer's strategy

The last Carers Strategy covered the period 2020-2023. Through partnership work and planned development activity some valuable outcomes have been achieved to better the lives of carers across Halton.

You said	We did	What are the outcomes for carers?
Improved joint working across partners	Regular Carer's Strategy Group meetings with Voluntary Sector Organisations, Halton Carers Centre, Halton Borough Council and Health are held to share information and address the needs of carers.	Joint working supports timely and appropriate access to services to meet carers needs. Service pathways and referrals routes are identified and the right help can be better determined at the right time for individuals.
Working in schools to promote awareness of young carers	Halton Carer Centre now employ three young carer support workers who are actively involved in outreach in schools, to identify and support young carers.	Halton Carers Centre offer a range of services for young carers aged 5-17. A key priority is to provide a space for young carers to have fun and to meet other young carers as realising that other people are in similar circumstances to yourself is key to reducing isolation.
Information sharing and raising awareness of carers within GP Surgeries	Halton Carer Centre have GP Link Worker in all but one GP surgeries across Halton; however, they do promote the work of the Centre. Regular outreach sessions are held in surgeries and flu session completed during the winter months.	Having a regular presence within GP surgeries enables better identification of carers, giving them access to service they weren't previously aware of. Targeted sessions help specific groups of carers to recognise their own needs.
Publicity around carers to be more widespread- including the following areas: Bus Stops Social Media Local Radio Taxi's Community Transport	Halton Carers Centre and Halton Borough Council have good social media platforms, including Facebook, twitter and Instagram. Halton Carer Centre also have leaflets with Apec Taxi service.	Increased public knowledge of services and recognition of carers needs.

Employer support for Working Carers in organisations within Halton	Halton Carers Centre provides advocacy for working carers, this need is raised through the review process or through our info, advice and guidance drop in	Improved recognition of the wellbeing needs of carers and support to keep the economically active.
More support with Direct Payments	Carers can access Direct Payments if they are eligible following a Carers Assessment of need.	Greater autonomy for carers to choose how their own wellbeing needs are met and managed.
Availability and range of Respite Care especially in terms of pre-booking	Halton Borough Council had devised a new Adults Directorate Respite policy which brings all respite opportunities, and how to access them, into one place.	Increased access to clear and concise information.
Increased support for older carers	Older carers have access to all aspects of support through the Carer's Centre. Age UK Mid-Mersey work with older people to identify caring responsibilities and encourage registration with the carers centre.	Increased numbers of older people identify as carers and have access to support and resources in relation to their own wellbeing needs resulting from their caring role.
More support for dementia carers	Halton Carers Centre has a range of interventions devised for dementia carers, including Information and advice, training and Dementia Carers Groups. Dementia Advisory Service available to carers, through Alzheimer's Society. A number of community-based Dementia Cafes have been set up for both carers and the cared for to access. Halton Borough Council has adopted a Council-wide Dementia Friendly Halton action plan.	Dementia carers have access to resources and support and feel less isolated.
NHS Services not being fully up to date on situation.	NHS Cheshire and Merseyside have worked with Halton Carers Centre to increase the profile of local carers and the Carers Centre offer. This was done through wide circulation of Halton Carers Centre literature and reports, briefing sessions for NHS staff, Going forward we are planning protected learning time for GPs and reports in the Primary Care Bulletin.	NHS professionals are more aware of the levels and needs of carers, and the services available to support them.

Publicise access to leisure facilities – such as Halton Leisure Card	Carers Centre has been provided with an initial run of 100 leisure cards.	Carers have access to HBC leisure services, providing an opportunity to look after their own wellbeing.
Carer lists at GP Surgeries for priority appointments	Unfortunately, it was found that it is not possible to prioritise appointments for carers, appointments have to be based on clinical need. Carers can, however, inform their practice that they are a Carer as it is useful to be logged on the system, and may help with access to additional support.	Carers are identified by the practice and can then be directed to additional support such as social prescribing or VCFSE partners.
Podiatry appointments are over subscribed	NHS Cheshire and Merseyside have worked with the service provider, Bridgewater Community Healthcare NHS Foundation Trust, to review the service. The emphasis of the review is to ensure timely access for those most in need. Additional appointments are now being made available and Podiatry features on the Trusts Service Development Improvement Plan for 2024/25.	Increased access to appointments and a more accessible service will be beneficial to carers.
Young adults, people who have physical illnesses, not enough support	Halton Borough Council have commission a range of activities to take place across Halton during school breaks. The Holiday Activity Fund is aimed at young people who would otherwise not get a break, such as young carers. Activities are free, accessible and a meal is provided.	Young carers who may not be able to leave their parent for long periods, can have a break and socialise with peers.

6. One Halton Carers Deliver Plan 2024-2027

The delivery plan for this strategy has been devised in partnership across One Halton and represents feedback gained from carers themselves (see Section 7)

Where are the gaps in support for Carers?	Action to be undertaken	Responsible Service Area
Identifying 'hidden' carers; we know there are over 13,000 carers in Halton, around over 8,000 of those are not known to services.	Further promotional activities across all partner agencies to encourage carers to recognise their contribution and register to have their own wellbeing needs supported. Work with known carers to coproduce activity and campaigns to recognise carers.	All
Lack of awareness from Social Care Teams as to the role of Halton Carers Centre and support available to unpaid Carers.	Recognition of opportunities for presentations to be delivered to workers and information shared – ongoing in consideration of staffing changes. Targeted work with i-Cart to discuss issues with referrals and how these can be progressed.	Halton Carers Centre / Halton Borough Council – Adults Directorate and Children and Families Directorate
Support with access to financial information	Benefits maximisation – referrals made to Welfare Benefits teams made through all partner agencies. Maintain capacity to support with benefits claim forms - voluntary sector organisations. Targeted carers promotion for additional funds accessible to the public to support the cost of living.	All
Not all schools are engaging with young carer worker outreach sessions to identify and support young carers.	Halton Carer Centre to meet with Jill Farrell, OD for education, inclusion and provision, to look at improvements in engagement for all schools.	Halton Carers Centre / Halton Borough Council (Education)

There is no standardised procedure for registering unpaid carers with GP surgeries.	Cheshire and Merseyside ICB to work with GP networks to devise strategies to ensure carers are identified and registered.	Cheshire and Merseyside ICB / GP networks
Respite opportunities for carers. There is no pre-bookable respite available in the area.	Evaluate current provision and commissioning opportunities for respite models, working in coproduction with carers to listen to their needs.	Halton Borough Council / Cheshire and Merseyside ICB
Opportunities to reduce loneliness for carers and to improve well-being.	Halton Carers Centre to continue to offer a varied programme of activities aimed at improving carer well-being.	Halton Carers Centre / All
Raising awareness and promoting the needs of carers	Planned and coordinated activities and events for National Carers Week and other associated carers awareness days	Halton Carers Centre / All
Employer's understanding of carers needs and rights	Work across partnerships to raise awareness of carers needs and rights with a range of workplaces and organisations.	Halton Carers Centre / All

7. Involving and Listening to Carers

A number of different events have taken place during 2023 to capture the views of carers to feed into this strategy.

7.1 Carers Consultation Event



The theme of this event was: 'What carers feel is working or not in Halton. Carers felt they were given the opportunity to talk about their experiences of being a carer in Halton. Using 'a day in the life of Billy' they were able to express how being a carer affected their day-to-day lives.

Carers reported to feeling busy, tired and having little time to themselves, with poor emotional wellbeing and high levels of stress.

On 23rd May 2023 the Carer's Centre and Halton Borough Council organised a Carer's Forum which took place at the Foundry in Widnes. Carers known to the Carer's Centre were invited to the event, which saw a good turn out on the day, with the Mayor in attendance.

Following on from the previous strategy there was a focus on what was working for Carers and what improvements still need to be made.



From work since the last strategy, where are the remaining gaps?

Raise awareness with Employers in Halton to ensure carers rights are understood.

Not all schools are engaged with No standardised procedure for registering unpaid carers with all agencies involved in the partnership.

Not all schools are engaged with young carers needs.

There could be more utilisation of advertising, should funding be available.

Further information can be provided on access to support for carers across all partnership organisations.

More awareness needed amongst statutory teams regarding the role of Halton Carers Centre and the support it can give to carers. In the past when HCC refer to i-Card the process can be lengthy, would benefit from quicker processing.

What needs to improve for carers in Halton?

Carers were asked to prioritise what they wanted to improve.

1st - Listening to carers/carers voice

2nd - Access to information and advice

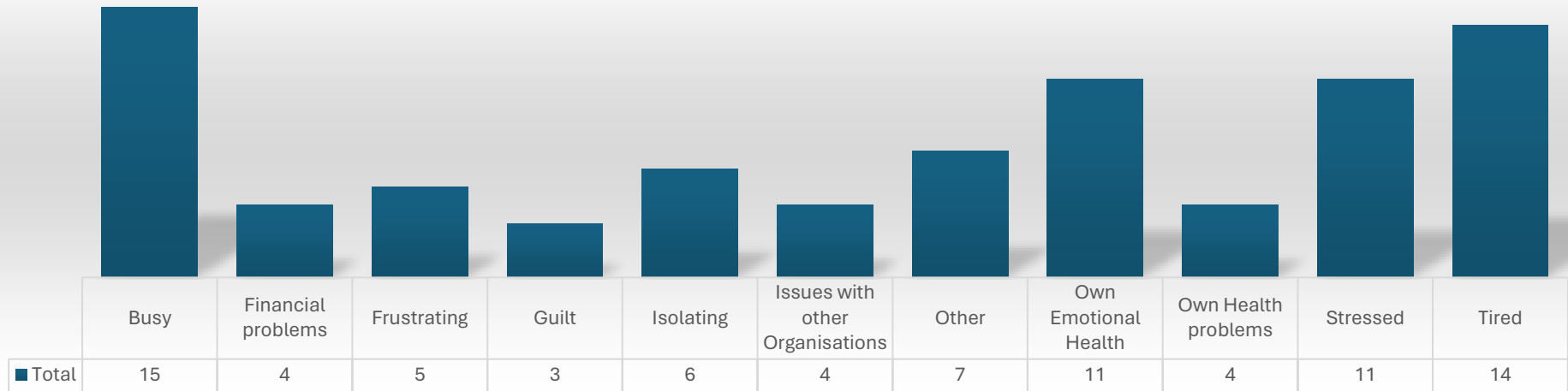
3rd - Information about and access to finances

4th - Opportunities to reduce loneliness

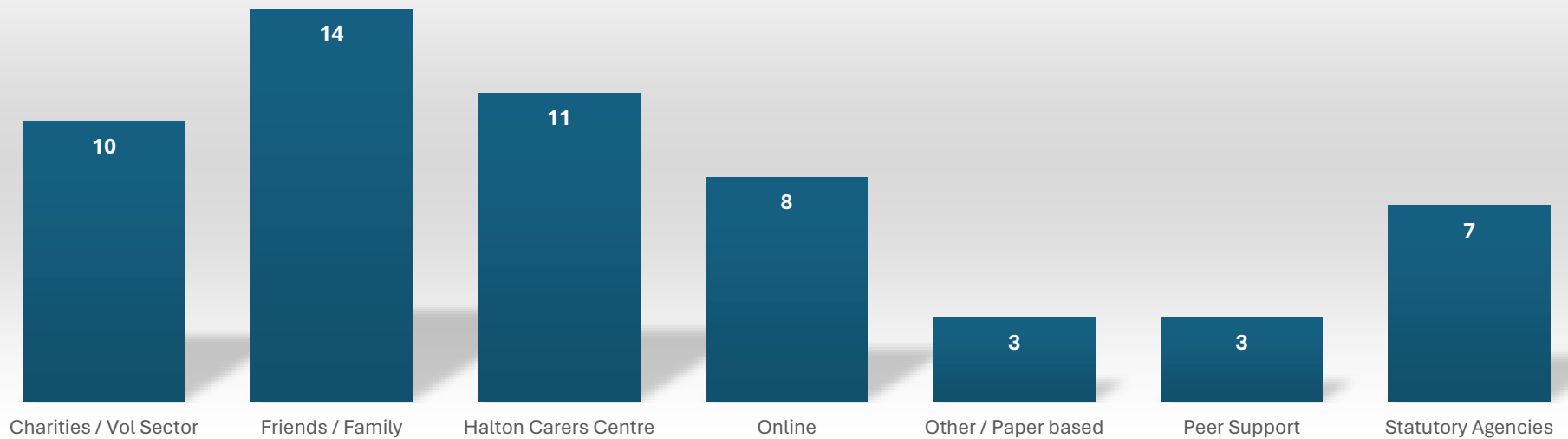
5th - More respite opportunities

6th - Opportunities to have fun and improve wellbeing

How did Billy feel?

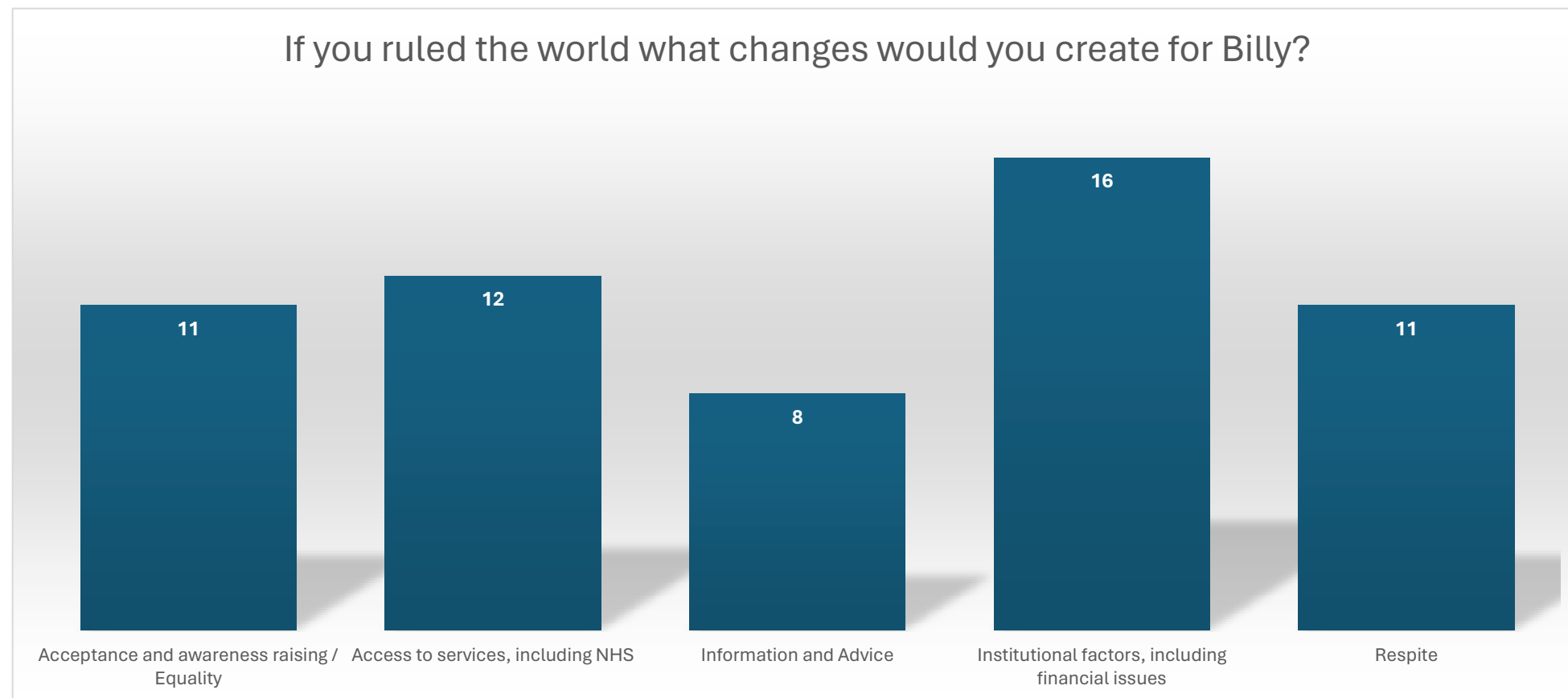


Where does Billy go for Support?



Support was sought in the main from family and friends, followed by Halton Carers Centre and voluntary sector organisations. Carers are less likely to contact statutory organisations for support and feel that they have issues with some of these organisations.

It was clear from all that finances were a concern when it came to caring, in particular issues around Carer's Allowance and other benefits affecting working carers. There were concerns that there was little or no information on these, particularly since the pandemic and more so since the 'cost of living crisis' began.



Carers want to be able to have access to services without long waiting times/lists. It was noted that there was little recognition that the carer has limited time when going to appointments for themselves. Alongside this access to respite for their cared for person so that should they need to be away for a longer period of time, they have the reassurance appropriate support is being provided in their absence; and when attending appointments with the person they care for, to be accepted that they have the knowledge and information about that person and have their voice heard – to be accepted as an equal partner in the caring profession.

7.2 Carers Week 2023

The impacts of caring can be profound and significant. It can affect health and wellbeing, ability to be in paid work, relationships, incomes and finances. It is something that most of us will experience at some point in our lives, however few of us are prepared for it and it's impossible to predict when we might have to provide care, according to the Carers Week 2022 report, [Make Caring Visible, Valued and Supported](#).

During the pandemic it was especially tough for unpaid carers, with services shutting down, carers being left to cope often alone and the added worry and risk of COVID and keeping the person they care for safe. While many people may feel that the world has 'opened up' and that they are 'living with COVID', for carers, the legacy of the pandemic is profound, and they feel they continue to face significant challenges. The added pressure of increased costs of living is making life harder for carers.

The Carers Week charities believe that everyone has a role to play in making sure that caring is Visible, Valued and Supported:

Visible:

To carers, this means the public understanding about caring and being recognised and identified as a carer.

Valued:

To carers, this means the public, services, other family members, community and the government of their country valuing what they do.

Supported:

To carers, this means that they get the information, advice, support and recognition to protect their health and wellbeing, support relationships, get breaks when they need them, continue working and be able to manage financially.

During Carers Week 2023, Halton Carers Centre facilitated a number of activities for carers:



Carers Strategy – Delivery Partners and acknowledgements

