

South Tyneside Partnership

Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: 22nd July 2026

Carers Strategy: 12 Month Progress Update (2025/26)

Report of Victoria Pattinson, Director of Adult Social Care and Commissioning

Why Has this Report Come to the Health and Wellbeing Board?

1. To provide the Health and Wellbeing Board with an update on progress over the last 12 months in delivering the Carers Strategy 2022–2027, including key achievements in identification, engagement, workforce development, co-production, and partner delivery, alongside emerging regional developments.
2. The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to:
 - Note the progress made over the last 12 months in delivering the Carers Strategy
 - Support continued focus on:
 - Early identification
 - Preventative and wellbeing support
 - Reducing inequalities
 - Support the co-produced refresh of the Carers Strategy
 - Recognise and endorse the Regional Commitment to Carers, supporting its adoption as a shared framework to strengthen collaboration and improve outcomes for carers, and to progress towards formal signatory status.

Which Outcome is this Linked to Within the Health and Wellbeing Strategy and How?

3. This report contributes most strongly to the following outcomes:
 - Good Mental Wellbeing and Social Connectivity Across the Life Course
 - Financial Security to Lead Healthy, Fulfilling Lives
 - Safe and Healthy Places to Live, Learn and Work

How:

Improves identification, access to support and wellbeing outcomes for carers, reduces isolation, strengthens financial resilience, and supports carers across health, education and community settings.

How Does This Report Contribute to the Cross Cutting Theme(s)?

4. This report contributes to the following cross-cutting themes:

- Public Involvement and Community Engagement
- Fair Delivery of Services

How:

Strong co-production with carers informs service design and delivery, with a focus on reducing inequalities and improving access for hidden and underserved carers.

Overview of Progress

5. Over the past 12 months, significant progress has been made in strengthening the local carers system, with a focus on:

- Improving **identification and early engagement**
- Increasing **carer assessments and access to support**
- Strengthening **workforce awareness and capability**
- Enhancing **partnership working and co-production**
- Contributing to **regional developments through the Commitment to Carers**

6. This progress builds on wider system improvements, including increased demand, complexity, and rising engagement with services.

Identification and Carers Conversations

7. Over the past 12 months, there has been strong progress in embedding a proactive, preventative approach to identifying carers, alongside improving the quality of carers conversations and assessments.

Key Achievements

- Carer-related contacts increased from 206 to 362, indicating rising demand
- 74.3% of contacts now result in referrals, indicating greater complexity
- Strong shift toward information and advice (67%) as a primary outcome, reflecting a preventative model
- Implementation of a new carers conversation and assessment model
- Embedding of “Think Carer” approaches across frontline services
- Sustained increase in carer assessments and engagement, reflecting improved identification and demand.

Impact

For Carers:

- Improved quality and relevance of assessments, co-produced with carers to reflect lived experience
- Increased recognition, confidence and wellbeing through more meaningful conversations and support

For Staff:

- Greater confidence in delivering strengths-based, outcome-focused conversations
- Improved awareness of carers' rights, support pathways and the wellbeing duty

For Partners:

- Increased awareness of carers' entitlement to assessments
- Improved early identification and signposting
- Greater focus on preventative support

Co-Production and Engagement

8. The carers assessment was co-produced with carers, informed by:
 - Working Together Group (lived experience)
 - Carers Strategy partner engagement
 - Feedback from almost 100 carers
9. Workforce training was co-developed with carers, including lived experience video resources, this was launched at an event during Carers Week 2025 where carers played an integral role.
10. The Carers Skills and Learning Pilot was shaped directly by carers through engagement at groups, forums and drop-ins.

Summary

11. This work has led to:
 - More consistent identification and earlier intervention
 - Higher quality, person-centred conversations and assessments
 - A stronger preventative and strengths-based approach
 - Embedded co-production across delivery

Impact of Commissioned Services and Partners

12. Commissioned services and partners continue to play a critical role in delivering the Carers Strategy, significantly increasing reach, engagement and preventative support.

Mobilise (Digital Support)

- 2,355 carers registered, with 1,497 actively engaged
- 84% new to support, demonstrating strong reach to hidden carers
- 65% engagement outside standard hours, including weekends
- 77% provide 35+ hours of care

Impact:

- Extends reach to hidden carers
- Provides flexible, preventative support
- Acts as a gateway into wider services

Connected Caring (Adult Carers Service)

- 2,489 carers registered, with 1,427 actively engaged
- Delivered 483 hours of respite (Q4)

Impact:

- Delivers practical and preventative support (1:1, groups, respite)
- Supports carers with complex needs
- Contributes to improved wellbeing and reduced isolation

Young Carers Service

- Over 1,030 young carers registered
- 360+ ID cards issued
- School identification increased from 230 to 360
- 70+ referrals and assessments completed per quarter

Impact:

- Improved visibility and recognition in schools
- Strengthened support for education, wellbeing and transitions
- Earlier identification of young carers

Overall System Impact

- Increased reach, including hidden and underserved carers
- Strengthened early help and prevention
- Improved multi-agency working and coordination
- Greater ability to respond to rising demand and complexity

Workforce Development and Professional Engagement

13. Building workforce awareness has been a priority over the past year:

Activity

- Delivery of a multi-agency carers event for professionals
- Awareness and delivery of Think Carer training
- Integration into workforce development and e-learning

Impact

- Improved recognition of carers across services
- Increased awareness of support pathways
- Stronger multi-agency collaboration

Co-Production and Strategy Refresh

14. Work is underway to refresh the Carers Strategy through a co-produced approach.

Activity

- Engagement with carers, professionals and VCSE partners
- Identification of priorities, gaps and inequalities

Emerging Themes

- Strengthening early identification
- Increasing complexity and demand
- Ongoing pressures on wellbeing and financial resilience

Impact

- Ensures the refreshed strategy reflects lived experience and system learning
- Strengthens shared ownership across partners

Regional Commitment to Unpaid Carers

15. There has been increasing regional focus on the North East and North Cumbria Commitment to Carers.

Overview

- Co-produced with carers and involving around 30 organisations
- Focus on recognition, inequalities, co-production and joined-up support
- Provides a shared regional framework

Local Position

- Strong alignment with existing priorities and approach
- Supports strategy refresh and partnership working

Engagement with Carers

- Discussion at local carer groups, forums and drop-ins
- Engagement with regional carers and the North East Mayor

Feedback highlights:

- Positive step in raising profile of carers
- Seen as a tool for accountability
- Emphasis on ongoing co-production and involvement

Next Steps

- Continued engagement
- Consideration of formal sign-up
- Alignment with strategy refresh

Summary and Key Messages

16. Over the last 12 months, the Carers Strategy has delivered:
 - Improved identification and engagement
 - Increased assessments and access to support
 - Strong partner delivery and system reach
 - Embedded co-production across services
 - Alignment with regional priorities
17. This is alongside:
 - Increasing demand and complexity
 - Ongoing identification challenges
 - Continued pressures on carer wellbeing and finances

Next Steps

18. Over the final year of the Carers Strategy (2026/27), the focus will be on consolidating progress and strengthening delivery against key priorities, including:
 - improving early identification of carers across all settings, particularly primary care and education;
 - enhancing preventative and wellbeing support;
 - addressing inequalities in access and experience;
 - continuing to embed flexible, digital and community-based models of support;
 - continued focus on system-wide coordination, consistency, and data-driven improvement
19. Alongside this, the co-production phase for the Carers Strategy refresh will be completed. This will include continued engagement with carers, partners and stakeholders, a multi-agency development session with professionals and VCSE partners, and further evidence gathering and analysis to ensure the strategy reflects both lived experience and system learning.
20. This work will culminate in a fully co-produced, evidence-based strategy, with the aim of launching the refreshed Carers Strategy in April 2027, ensuring it is responsive, sustainable and aligned with future system priorities.