

Somerset's Commitment to Carers 2024

Valuing and supporting
unpaid carers

Summary report: March 2024



Introduction

Somerset's Commitment to Carers 2024 is a statement, aligned with the 2015 and 2022 Care Acts, acknowledging the invaluable contribution and challenges faced by unpaid carers. It outlines the values, principles and actions that health and social care services should adopt to ensure effective support for unpaid carers.

It was presented to the Somerset Board for their endorsement and will influence health and social care strategies, service commissioning and development. The Somerset Carers Strategic Partnership Board (SCSPB) will oversee ongoing review and development of this work.

The Commitment aims to enhance the quality of life for carers and those they care for, by improving their experience of health and social care, and supporting them to access information and opportunities to keep healthy and live well while they carry out their vital caring roles. It reflects priorities identified through consultation and co-production with carers and those who work with and support carers.

Priorities for unpaid carers

To enhance the lives of unpaid carers in Somerset, those who commission, provide and support health and social care services should embed the following priorities into all aspects of their work.

Enable, support and empower unpaid carers, including young carers, to:

- Recognise and address their own health and wellbeing needs.
- Take adequate breaks from caring roles and, if needed, let go of their caring responsibilities by choice.
- Easily access information, education, training, health and care support.
- Have an active role in decisions that affect their lives, including service development.

Develop and embed new approaches

- Build carer aware, friendly and inclusive cultures and environments, including employment and decision-making.
- Establish and require diverse and inclusive partnership working between the health and social care system and unpaid carers.
- Facilitate and implement joined up working practices recognising and supporting unpaid carers as experts by experience. For example, 'People Who Matter' in mental health, 'Making It Real' carers and social services and 'No Wrong Door' with young carers.

Create and facilitate social opportunities

- Build a strong, resilient and sustainable social network for unpaid carers.
- Develop and support access to diverse social opportunities.
- Enable and support carers' opportunities for learning and training.
- Develop choice and access to social prescribing activities for unpaid carers.

Recommended actions

To embed the Commitment to Carers priorities into working practices, health and social care services should adopt the following principles and actions.

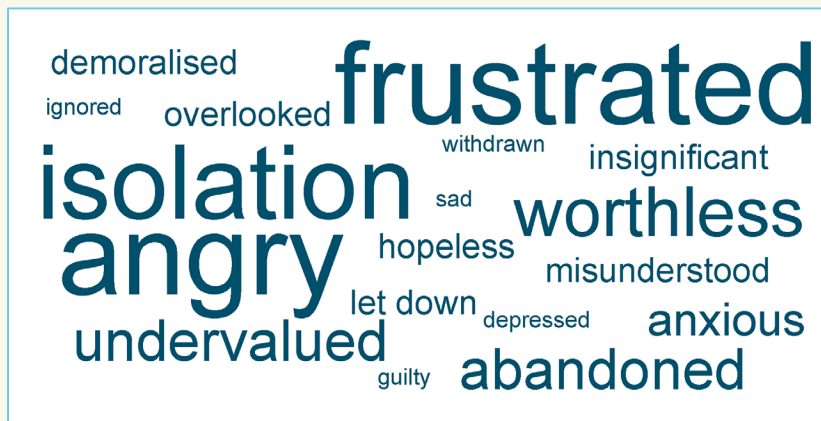
- ◆ **Respect and value carers:** Treat carers with respect and compassion, value their contribution and include them in the Triangle of Care conversations.
- ◆ **Ensure quality support:** Make sure unpaid carers receive great support and take prompt action to address terrible support, putting things right and ensuring positive changes for all carers in the future.

- ◆ **Enhance communication for joined-up working:** Improve communication and information sharing across the health and social care system, to ensure joined-up working and provision for carers (including co-ordination of the different types of carers assessments).
- ◆ **Identify carers in primary care:** Use standardised SNOMED codes in primary care services, including GP practices, to identify unpaid carers, and have proactive Carers Champions.
- ◆ **Develop opportunities to integrate support:** Use the introduction of universal personalised care and social prescribing link workers to find ways to join up health and wellbeing frameworks (including Green Care, Active Health and Wellbeing, Creative Health and Culture Frameworks) with existing community, NHS and social care partnerships, to increase capacity and improve prevention and treatment of negative health and wellbeing outcomes.
- ◆ **Focus on young carers:** Provide special focus and additional resources to support young carers who are overlooked and consider implementing the No Wrong Door policy or approach.
- ◆ **Build awareness and access to support:** Improve communication with carers to raise awareness of the support that's available and to encourage and help them to access that support. (The new recommendations from 'Preparing to care' can inform this future development.)
- ◆ **Provide accessible information:** Make information and communication accessible for disadvantaged, under-served and diverse communities, adopting the Accessible Information Standard to include people with a disability, impairment or sensory loss, those whose first language is not English, and those who are unable to use digital options.
- ◆ **Involve unpaid carers in service improvement:** Seed fund and resource pilot projects for unpaid carers, including young carers, to contribute to health and social care service improvement.
- ◆ **Preserve and use local knowledge:** Ensure digital data driven projects complement and do not discount or override, local knowledge which is one of the most valuable resources for gaining insight about carers.
- ◆ **Extend social opportunities for carers:** Develop, promote and support a rich and varied menu of in person and online social opportunities for Somerset's diverse community of carers.
- ◆ **Create a joint governance framework:** The Integrated Care Board (ICB), Integrated Care System (ICS) and SCSPB should create a joint governance framework, structure and process, based on the Maturity Matrix and the CQC quality markers - requiring partnership and joint working between the NHS, social care, Somerset Council, community and voluntary organisations and unpaid carers. Impact should be documented and used to make a business case for ongoing support for unpaid carers.
- ◆ **Oversight and reporting:** The SCSPB should oversee delivery of the Commitment to Carers, establishing an annual reporting mechanism and biannual review to evaluate progress and impact and guide development.
- ◆ **Establish a carer aware culture:** Embed a 'Think Carer' approach in discussions and decisions at all levels, championed by individual members of the Somerset Board and ICB/ICS and ensure carer representation throughout the system.
- ◆ **Professional development:** Service providers and commissioners should adopt professional development and quality improvement practices to support and drive the Commitment to Carers.
- ◆ **Promote the Commitment to Carers:** The Commitment to Carers should be widely promoted and used throughout the health and care system as a model for best practice in supporting unpaid carers.

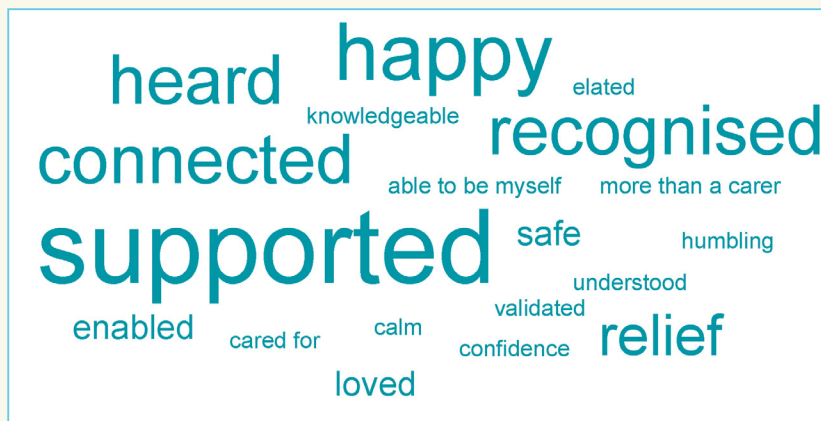
What carers told us

[Source: Based on responses from the co-production workshop, September 2023]

What does terrible support feel like?



What does great support feel like?



For more information

To find out more about Somerset's Commitment to Carers and to request a copy of the full report, contact:

- **Somerset Council Adults Commissioning Team**
Email commissioningteammailbox@somerset.gov.uk or phone 0300 123 2224
- **Somerset Carers Strategic Partnership Board**
Email info@healthwatchsomerset.co.uk or online healthwatchsomerset.co.uk
- **Somerset Carers Service**
Email: carers@somersetccc.org.uk or online somersetcarers.org

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Somerset's Commitment to Carers 2024 was co-produced and created through the Somerset Carers Engagement Project, which was delivered by Evolving Communities - a Community Interest Company that specialises in stakeholder engagement and insight to drive improvements in health and social care. We achieve this at a national, regional and local level by delivering local Healthwatch services, community engagement partnerships and consultancy services

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