

# All-Age Carers Strategy 2022



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## Foreword

Whether you are an adult supporting a friend or loved one, a parent looking after a child who has additional needs, or a young person who spends a lot of time looking after members of your family, we are committed to ensuring your own needs are looked after.

We have worked closely with you in the development of this strategy. You have told us that, despite the demands caring for someone can have on your own lives, it is a privilege to be caring for someone you love and care about. Our job is to help you to do that by ensuring that, when you need a little bit of help to look after your own interests and needs, that help is at hand.

This All-Age Carers Strategy sets out **six commitments**, informed by you, that outline how we aim to give you the support you need when you need it; promote the inspirational care you give; and promote your rights as an unpaid carer. We look forward to working alongside you, and the other organisations with whom you come into contact, to ensure the commitments turn into actions that make a real difference to you, and in turn to those for whom you care.



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## Introduction

This strategy has been developed to ensure **we support you** if you spend time looking after someone else and it has an impact on your personal wellbeing. You might be a child, young person or adult. You could be looking after someone who is a family member, partner or friend, and you might be providing that support because of their illness, long-term health conditions, frailty, physical or learning disability, mental health or an addiction, and because they cannot cope without your support. You may also be in receipt of Carers Allowance and could be receiving care yourself.

Taking on a caring role can come about unexpectedly or can develop gradually over time, and we know that the support you give is unpaid, underestimated and often undervalued because of the lack of formal recognition of the contributions your unpaid caring makes to society.

**“13.6 million<sup>1</sup> unpaid carers in the UK”**


In 2020, Carers UK estimated that there are around 13.6 million unpaid carers in the UK, 4.5 million of whom became unpaid carers during 2020 as a result of the pandemic. It is estimated that this unpaid care contributes £193 billion annually to the national economy, outstripping the total value of the National Health Service.

<sup>1</sup> Facts and figures – **Carers UK**



It is likely that every one of us will have caring responsibilities at some time in our lives and the challenges can be multifaceted. Juggling caring responsibilities with education, work, and other family commitments means your own health, relationships and finances can be adversely affected, and your own personal needs can often go unmet.

Adopting the role of an unpaid carer often isn't a choice and whilst looking after someone else can be rewarding, it can also be challenging, and you may find yourself putting your own life on hold to provide care and support for someone close to you. Many of you won't associate or identify with the term 'carer' and most of you won't seek help until you are facing a crisis.



“Looking after someone else can be **rewarding**, it can also be **challenging**”

The challenge for the council and all our partners is to create a supportive culture so, when necessary, you are confident and comfortable to get the information, advice, guidance and support you need to be your healthy, happy and fulfilled self.

This All-Age Carers Strategy has been developed from insights gathered with you. We value the fact you are all unique individuals in your own right, but you do have one thing in common, and that is spending some of your time looking after someone else without pay, and so for ease of reference and the purpose of this strategy we will be using the collective term 'carers'.

## Our duties to unpaid carers

Your rights as a carer are driven by law which outlines the way in which the council and other organisations such as for example, the National Health Service, employers and schools should support you.

“Your rights as a carer are **driven by law**”

The **Care Act 2014** sets out the responsibilities that Essex County Council (ECC) has for adult carers. We have a duty to offer you an assessment of your unpaid caring role and provide you with the financial and practical support you might need. You can be an adult carer if you are over 18 and care for another adult such as a spouse, parent, partner, friend, neighbour, relative or adult child. However, you might also have caring responsibilities for different generations such as children and parents and/or you may even be receiving some care for yourself.

The **Children and Families Act 2014** sets out the responsibilities of Essex County Council to assess parent carers of disabled children under 18. You are a parent carer if you are spending more time caring than would normally be expected in a parenting role. This act also sets out the responsibilities for Essex County Council to carry out an assessment if you are an under 18 young carer who looks after another person; this could be one of your siblings and/or parents. The assessment will look at the impact caring for someone else has on you, and if this is appropriate for you to be doing that and what support you might need. There are a range of other Acts that protect carers, including the **Human Rights Act 1998**, the **2010 Equality Act** and in particular the **Work and Families Act 2006** which gives unpaid carers the right to request flexible working and the right to take unpaid time off during emergencies without affecting your employment.

The council cannot deliver these duties alone and the law says that each partner of the council must co-operate generally to improve outcomes for unpaid carers. The National Health Service is a particularly important partner of the council and we will work closely with colleagues in the newly established Integrated Care Systems and Alliances in Essex to ensure we deliver the best outcomes possible for you.

## National and local policies that underpin and support this carers strategy



## Carers matter in Essex

In addition to carrying out our lawful duties, there is more we want to do for carers in Essex. One of the council commitments to residents set out in our Everyone's Essex plan states that we will **“help carers of all ages whose caring duties are impacting most on their wellbeing by achieving a step change in the advice, guidance and support we provide to enable wellbeing and independence by targeting it to those who need it most”** (Everyone's Essex)

In order to do this, all the organisations that support you, for example health, social care, schools, colleges, voluntary sector organisations and others have promised to work together to ensure we understand your personal needs. Then we can provide good information, advice and guidance, and when necessary, support early into your caring role and prevent your need to access specialist services.

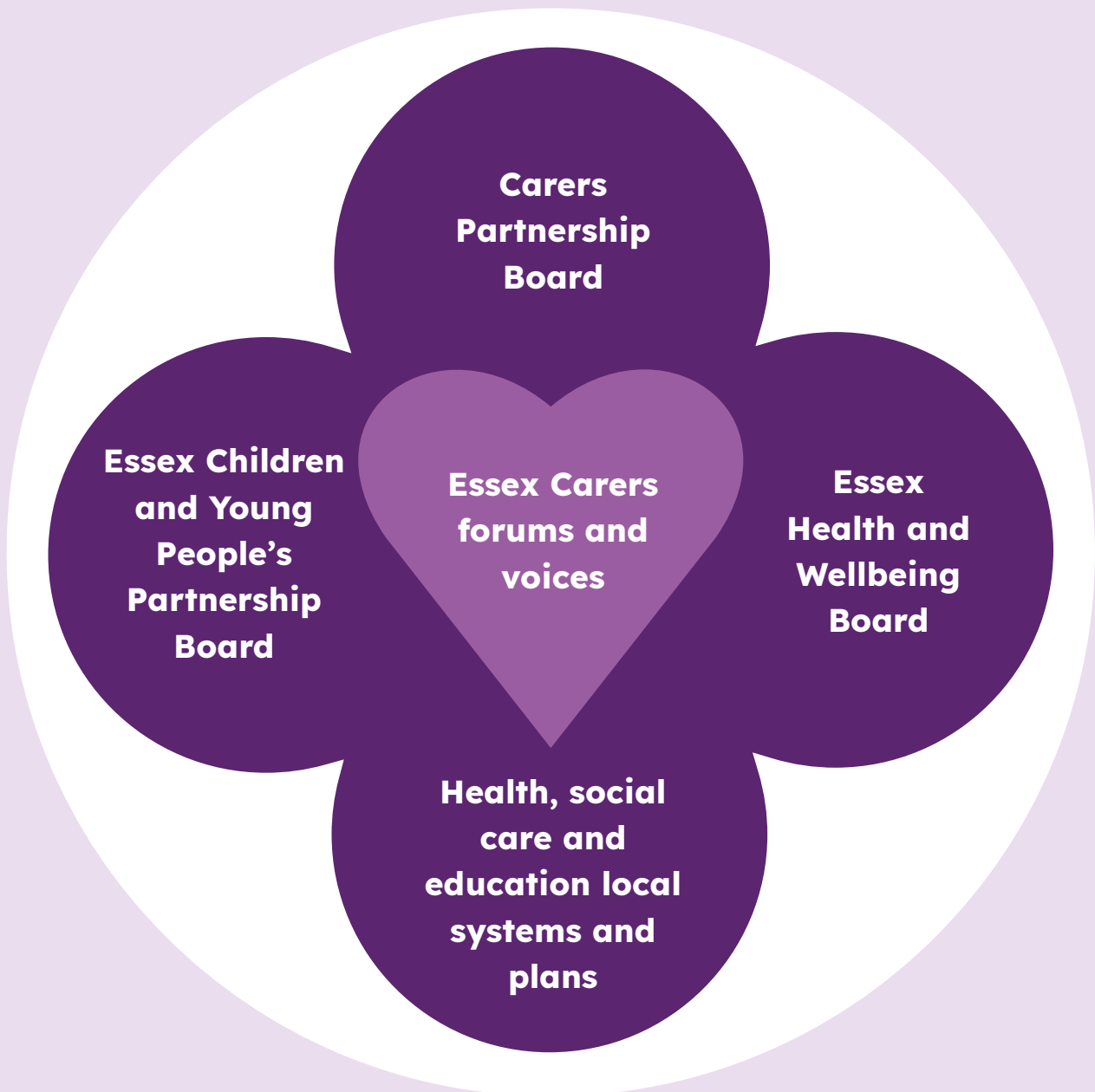
We have a few meetings that bring organisations around the table to work on key priority issues together. Whilst they are important to making sure we can make the improvements needed we cannot do this without you, as you are the experts in your own lives. This is why it has been so important to us to develop this strategy and the 6 commitments by listening to you and why you will be at the centre of those groups able to hold us to account for what we have committed to do.

“Carers need to be at the **heart** of strategies and programmes”





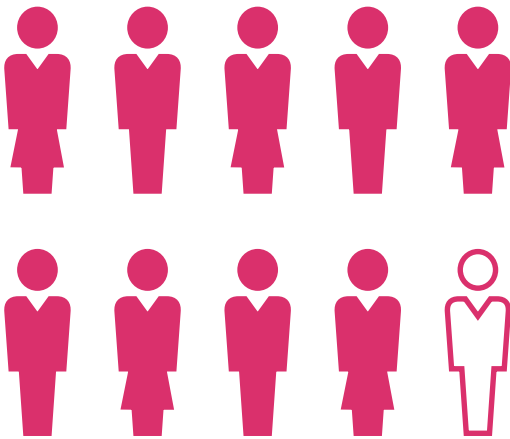
## The system that supports Essex carers



## The Essex picture

The UK Census data for 2011 identified the number of adults providing **unpaid care in Essex was 146,211**. However, in 2015 Carers UK said in its 'Valuing Carers' report that it estimates there are now probably 153,926 of you in Essex.

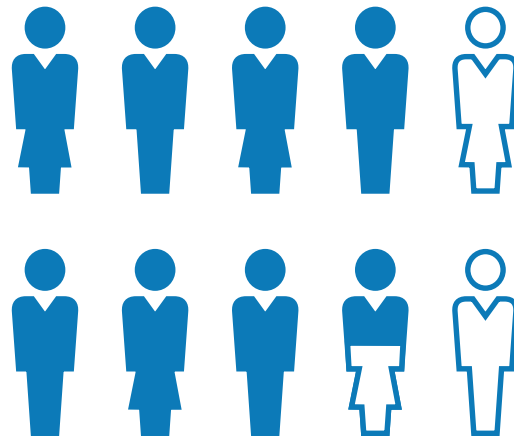
Nationally the estimate of **young carers in the UK is 1 in 12**; that equates to an average of 2 children or young people in every classroom across the country. It is estimated there are more than 10,000 of you in Essex who are under 18 and providing care to a family member.



Estimated approx 11%

● **153,926 carers**

○ **17,184 known carers**



Estimated approx 25%

● **10,000 young carers**

○ **2,570 known young carers**

Given that many of you would not identify with a formal 'carer' label, it is inevitable that the numbers in Essex are much higher than those reported. In fact, it can take an average of two years for people to acknowledge they are in a caring role. Young carers in particular remain hidden for several reasons, including your loyalty to family, fear of stigma and bullying, and not knowing who to turn to or where to go for support.

We are also aware that data recording and reporting is not as robust as it should be, and we recognise the challenge across the system and aim to make improvements over the lifespan of this strategy.

## Our progress since 2014

The previous **Carers Strategy (2015-2020)** has delivered some positive outcomes for carers in Essex.

### 2015

The Care Act 2014 requirements implemented across ECC Social Care

- **3593 Adult Social Care carer assessments and 1342 reviews carried out**

Supporting Carers in Essex (a consortium of local organisations) delivered support between 2015 and 2018

- **9,489 carers supported**

### 2016

Living Well website as a source of information for carers launched

- **14,732 page views**

GP Practices in Castle Point and Rochford carried out activity to include carers on registers and health checks for carers undertaken

- **3190 Adult Social Care carer assessments and 1603 reviews carried out**

### 2017

- **2396 Adult Social Care carer assessments and 1655 reviews carried out**

- **60 young carer assessments carried out**

Commissioned organisations to provide telephone and face to face support and to run peer support groups

- **7,479 carers supported**

### 2018

Essex County Youth Service launched the new key worker model of care for young carers

- **2387 Adult Social Care carer assessments and 1751 reviews carried out**

- **133 young carer assessments carried out**

2019

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Integrated pathways and better information and support for carers of those with dementia delivered across Mid Essex CCG with voluntary sector partners

- **3 Grants awarded**
- **2206 Adult Social Care carer assessments and 1649 reviews carried out**
- **860 young carer assessments carried out**

2020

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– **1703 Adult Social Care carer assessments and 1403 reviews carried out**

- **760 young carer assessments carried out**

2021

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Commissioned counselling for carers pilot

- **151 carers supported via 907 individual sessions**

Commissioned wrap around support and short breaks pilot

- **740 carers supported**
- **1709 Adult Social Care carer assessments and 1112 reviews carried out**
- **757 young carer assessments carried out**

On-going

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Carers Emergency Planning continues to provide support for carers who have access to support should a crisis occur

- **3390 plans completed and 2-3 plan activations per month**
- 

Progress with delivering the last strategy was impeded by the global pandemic and there is still a long way to go to do better. Many of our plans were not implemented well enough for the benefits to be felt by most of you. As we emerged from the height of the pandemic, we revisited you to hear about your lived experiences to understand how life has, if at all, changed and identify what more we need to do with you and for you.



## What you told us

**570 adult carers** and **92 young carers** have shared views with us about their lived experiences.

### Challenges

Adjusting to the role of carer and finding you have less time for yourself is seen as a big challenge, with the majority of adults spending more than 50 hours per week caring for someone and the majority of children and young people spending anything from 5 to 11 hours per week looking after parents/siblings.



“As carers we are **forgotten** about quite often”

Being tired, feeling isolated, feeling guilty and poor emotional wellbeing were common themes for you all. Most of you feel that others don't understand the responsibilities and pressures of caring. Many of you, in particular young carers, reported that even when you are at school or work you are worrying about the person you care for and that not being able to have friends home or missing out on social events has an impact on your lives. You are calling for more support from our doctors, improvement in social care assessments and reviews, and employers recognising your rights as carers.

## Positives

Despite all the challenges, concerns and impacts, those of you we have spoken with are positive about the amount of time you spend with those you care for. Examples include partners/spouses feel reassured that they are safe and well looked after; those caring for their parents feel positive to be able to pay back the support they have received; and parents caring for your children value seeing them grow and develop. Those young carers amongst you have told us that you feel positive about your caring role knowing that you are spending time with the person you care for and helping them.

“I enjoy being able to give my mum a safe loving space to be, where she is **content**”



## What makes the difference

Those of you who have engaged with us know what makes the difference for you; this includes having people to talk to and the support of others such as friends, family, peers, yet you also value speaking to people in similar situations.



“Having **time to myself** and going to my local yoga group”

Finding hobbies, going out for exercise and organised social activities are also valued and you said that having the opportunity to have a break to recover and relax and look after your own needs and interests is important.

You also said that interventions from voluntary sector organisations that understand your needs is valued and the information advice and guidance, along with specific services, such as counselling, are considered vital to your wellbeing.

Having supportive employers that encourage flexible hours, home working and time off when needed is important to you, and for those of you that are young carers you have said that the understanding and support from teachers at your schools and colleges is valued.

## Looking to the future

Many of you have said that you are still telling us the same things and that very little has changed or is making a difference to you in your caring role. We have been challenged, quite rightly, to make improvements where you will feel the positive impact.

The following Carers' Outcomes Framework developed as a result of feedback illustrates these changes and the improved outcomes for carers.

“People disappear into the ether, and you end up **repeating your story** over and over again”





## Carers outcomes framework

Outcome for carers	Physically healthy and safe	Emotionally healthy and happy	Connected to people and the community	Financial wellbeing	Stable and resilient
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ You will feel empowered</li> <li>✓ You will have increased confidence and good self-esteem</li> <li>✓ You will have good health, mental wellbeing and feel safe</li> <li>✓ You will feel cared for and respected</li> <li>✓ You will have time for yourself to do what you choose to</li> <li>✓ You will know about your rights and entitlements</li> <li>✓ You will know about the conditions of those you care for</li> <li>✓ You will know what is available for you and those you care for</li> <li>✓ You will have improved educational and employment outcomes</li> </ul>					

<p>The 5 A's of impacts for you</p>	<p>Be able to <b>Adopt</b> the role of carer</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Be happy to <b>Accept</b> the value of identifying as a carer</li> <li>✓ Be able to <b>Adapt</b> to your circumstances</li> <li>✓ Be <b>Alert</b> to your rights</li> <li>✓ Be able to <b>Adjust</b> to change through transitions</li> </ul>
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Having identified these outcomes, we have developed the following 6 commitments with you. By delivering these outcomes you can expect to maintain your independence, your quality of life and exercise choice and control in your role as a carer.

## Our 6 commitments to Essex carers

1



“There is some assistance available but it’s **very difficult** to get hold of”

Carers can **easily access the information, advice, guidance and support** when they need it and early into their caring role. We will ensure carers know how to access the right information, advice, guidance, and support at the right time, in the right place for their specific circumstances and needs.

We are doing this because you said you do not always know what is available or how to access support, information, advice and guidance, and where to access it.

### Our plan is to:

- **Address any gaps** in our early help offer to you by ensuring that relevant information, advice, guidance and support is available in a timely and accessible way
- **Improve pathways** to formal assessment should you need one so that you get the benefit of all the support you are entitled to
- **Work with our partners**, including health, education and voluntary and community sector organisations to build on existing, and develop more support networks for you in your local communities
- **Publicise** what is available to you in effective ways and in clear and accessible language

2



“I still need someone who is going to **fight my corner**”

**Develop professional practice and processes** to improve identification and support to carers. We will work with partners, commissioned services and community organisations to ensure people who are caring for others have access to support and/or assessment and are subsequently supported effectively by those who are there to help them in their caring role.

We are doing this because you have told us that the current system can be improved by increasing the skills of professionals and by working with a more joined up approach for early identification and tailored support just for you.

#### **Our plan is to:**

- **Work in partnership** to identify where we can improve professional knowledge, skills and confidence to enable those working with you to recognise you are carrying out a caring role
- Work with those professionals to embed '**Think Carers**' and make '**Every Contact Count**', so they can work with you to identify your needs, point you in the right direction for help and if you agree provide an in-depth assessment to access further help
- **Review our carers'** formal assessment and recording processes to capture good information that helps us plan the right information, advice, guidance, and support for you

3



“The **transition** from young carer to adult carer was absolutely terrifying”

**Improve transitions** for carers as they move through specific phases or life events in their caring role. We will improve support for carers at specific transition points in their caring journey, whether for young carers who become adult carers, as significant life events occur, or at the end of someone’s caring role.

We are doing this because you have told us that there are important times in your lives that can be challenging, and additional tailored support would be valuable in making life easier for you.

**Our plan is to:**

- **Work with you** to better understand what support is needed through transition and change, so that support can be tailored and targeted for you
- **Work with young carers** to co-produce appropriate transition resources and tools to prepare them for life as an adult carer
- **Provide meaningful contact and support** to those of you coming to the end of your caring role or who have recently come to the end of caring for someone



4



**“I need support** to get things done... assessments kept up to date... what was right for us 2 years ago isn’t now”

**Carers will have increased opportunity to access good quality support,** including opportunities for breaks to maintain their own wellbeing and those they care for. We will work with our partners and communities to create opportunities for carers to have breaks from their caring responsibilities.

We are doing this because you have told us you are unable to, or have difficulty in accessing, a regular break from caring, and this is impacting on your physical and emotional wellbeing.

#### **Our plan is to:**

- Work with you to **design good quality support,** including networks of peer support and advocacy in and across communities
- Work with you to **understand better** what a good opportunity for a break should be and develop a menu of opportunity with you
- **Work with our partners,** including the voluntary and community sector, to maximise access to existing clubs, activities, and groups so that you know where they are and how to access them either for yourselves or the person you care for

5



“I’m 22 years old, I’ve got a baby on the way, but I’m still a carer and still got **responsibilities**”

**Carers’ needs and rights will be understood and recognised** across Essex communities. We will raise the profile of carers and their needs across Essex communities including educational establishments, employers, professionals, and the public.

We are doing this because you have told us of a lack of awareness, recognition and understanding of the vital role carers play in society, and that this can have a detrimental effect on you.

**Our plan is to:**

- **Maintain and continue to develop links** with schools, colleges, health, employers, local voluntary organisations and residents to raise carer awareness and support for you
- Develop and deliver an **awareness training programme** so that the value and needs of carers are recognised and supported with compassion
- Design, promote and **support schemes** that raise carers’ awareness and recognition for the important role you play in society

6



“I know some carers that **haven’t been heard** and haven’t been listened to”

**Carers will be the experts that influence, shape and be involved** in the decisions that are intended to improve their support and wellbeing. We will put carers at the heart of developments, design and decision making on the things that are intended to support them in their role.

We are doing this because you have told us that things need to improve, and that you are the experts who can help us as professionals to do the right thing for you.

#### **Our plan is to:**

- **Stay connected** with you and continue to build our understanding of your lived experiences as we deliver the 6 commitments together
- Work with you to **co-produce the action plans** that will deliver the 6 commitments together
- Support you to be involved in the decisions that will **deliver the 6 commitments**

Through working in partnership across the system, we will work alongside you to turn these commitments into detailed action plans for which your partnership board will have oversight and assurance that these plans are being delivered.

## Knowing we've made a difference

We have a duty to you, our partners, to central government and ourselves to measure and report on the difference we are making for you as carers.

We will be using a range of methods and tools to collect important data and information that helps us evidence our progress in delivering the 6 commitments that will produce the desired outcomes. This includes for example; national and local surveys, adult social care and health data, feedback and case studies. This information will be organised to help us evidence:

- What we have done
- How much we have done
- How well we have done it
- How many of you as carers are better off because of what we have done
- What change there has been for you



We have a clear set of principles that will enable us to deliver our plans in the best way we can with you and our partners and those are to:



There is much to do over the coming 4 years. Not everything will happen at once and while there will be some quick wins along the way, big change will take longer and will only happen with everyone working together to make the change you as our valued Essex carers deserve.

We could not have developed this strategy without you, and we are now calling on you to be involved in its delivery and supporting positive change for carers in Essex. Please email us at [essex.carers@essex.gov.uk](mailto:essex.carers@essex.gov.uk) to find out about a range of ways to get involved.



## What to expect in the first 18 months

May  
2022

**Launch Strategy**

May  
2022

Inaugural Carers Partnership Board and Programme **delivery starts**

June  
2022

**Commence development** of carers' voices vehicles and methods for engagement

July  
2022

**Finalise detailed commitment** action plans with delivery times

July  
2022

**Commence commissioning** of the core Essex carers offer

Sept  
2022

**First quarterly reporting** to Carers Partnership Board on workplans

March  
2023

**First annual strategy progress report** to the Carers Partnership Board

Sept  
2023

**New Essex Carers** core offer commences

This information is issued by:  
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