

Kent Adult Carers' Strategy 2022 to 2027

April 2022



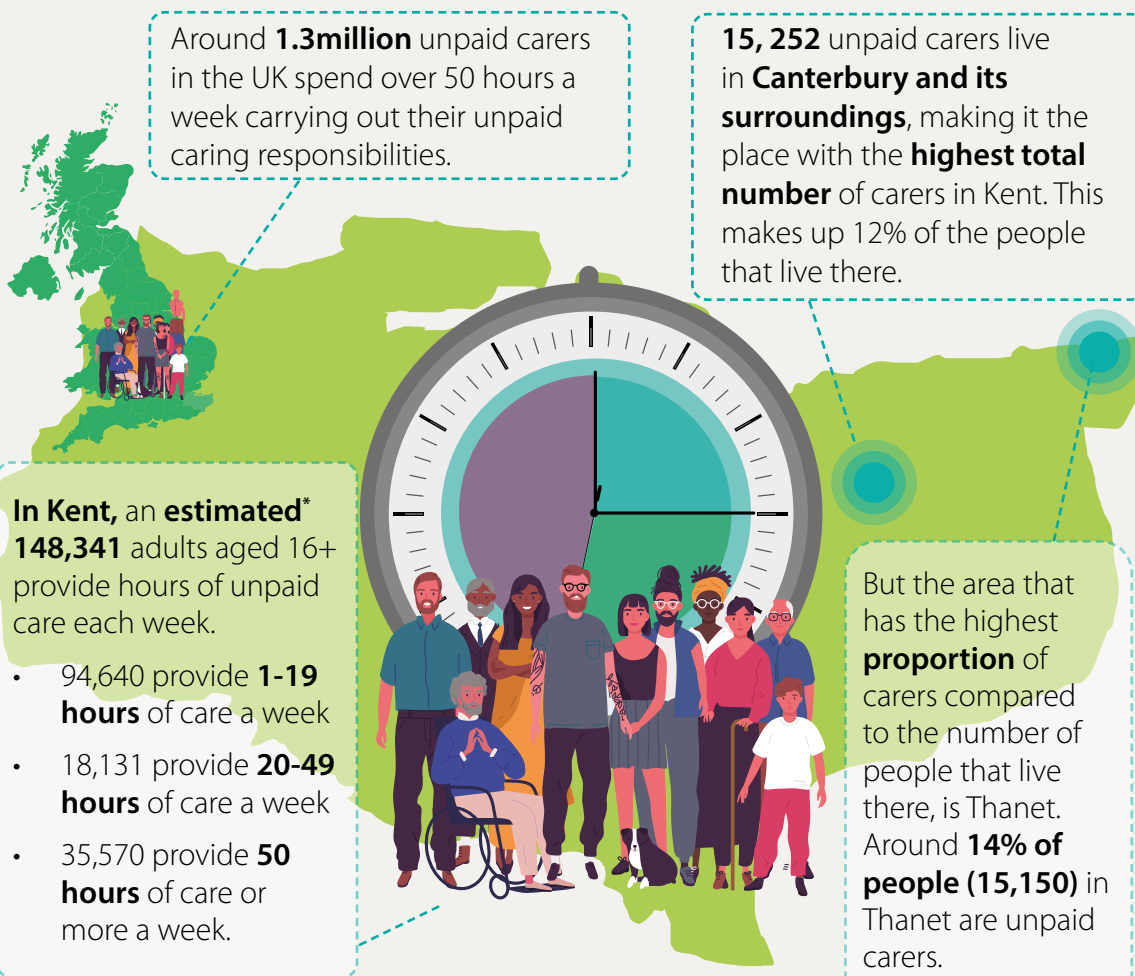
Our strategy

Our new 'Kent Adult Carers' strategy 2022 to 2027' describes how we plan to work with all our partners to make welcomed changes towards improving the experiences of unpaid adult carers in Kent.

This plan does not sit on its own - it is closely lined up with 'Making a difference every day: Our strategy for Adult Social Care, 2022 to 2027'. The information in this document has been partly informed by the 'People at the Heart of Care, White Paper 2021'. It is important to us that, in working to deliver change for carers, we also build strong and meaningful connections with other relevant local strategies such as the 'Young Carers' strategy', 'Autism and Learning Disability strategy' and 'Dementia strategy' that cover the county of Kent.

About carers in Kent

There are many different reasons why people may have to take on caring responsibilities, and this can happen at any stage in their lives. Becoming an unpaid carer can often be sudden, making people ill-prepared for the role that they take on. A carer's role can make paid work, study, maintaining social connections and getting involved in leisure activities difficult and sometimes almost impossible. Carers are more likely to suffer with physical, emotional and mental health problems and we are committed to working with the NHS and others to help improve this.



Working in partnership

We have developed this strategy in partnership with carers, people we support, carer organisations, staff, and county councillors but it's just the beginning of the work we need to do together. Kent County Council and other public sector partners including the NHS and district councils, recognise the enormous contribution that carers make as 'care partners'. The support that unpaid carers give directly benefits the people they look after and society as a whole. Most of us will become a carer at some point in our lives – and through our shared vision for Kent, we hope to raise awareness of the valuable work carers do - and promote the support that might help them live a full life whilst caring for others.

*Estimates taken from 2011 Census.

Our core role



There are many different types of carer and they come from all walks of life, ages, ethnicities, and backgrounds - anyone can find themselves in a caring role at some point in their life. In this strategy, we use the Care Act 2014 legal framework and therefore, we define a carer as someone in an unpaid role who provides or intends to provide care and/or support to another adult. They may be mums and dads, husbands, wives, partners, brothers, sisters, friends, and neighbours. Some carers, such as those that are veterans, carers that look after people with dementia or people that provide over 50 hours of unpaid care a week, face particular challenges.

Our core purpose as an adult social care organisation is to carry out our duties according to the law by supporting carers. This means helping them feel empowered to lead the lives they want to live in a place they call home - essentially, putting carers at the heart of everything we do.

This includes, planning and funding carers' support, promoting carers' wellbeing, preventing, reducing, or delaying the development of the need for support. Understanding the carer's needs for support, identifying whether the carer is willing and is likely to continue to be willing to give support, the outcomes that the carer wishes to achieve in day-to-day life, for example to take part in education, training, or leisure, or access practical or emotional support.

Our approach to supporting carers

Our vision: 'Making a difference every day by supporting and empowering you to live a fulfilling life whilst being a carer, as long as you are willing and able'

We aim to work in partnership to achieve this ambition, by focusing on the following areas.



Supporting you to be you - to live a full life, carers have told us that they need the right support so they can make time to get everyday tasks done. Support also needs to allow time for doing what contributes to someone's own identity - including help to participate in employment, education and social activities.



Providing the best support possible - carers have been clear that they, and the people they look after, need to be treated with respect and supported through every stage of their journey - not just during a crisis. We are committed to listening and learning from people's experiences, so that this can inform the way we provide and commission support in the future.



Positive outcomes - the ten areas that make up this principle have been influenced by carers' stories. Everything we do alongside providers and partner organisations should focus on what makes a real difference and leads to positive change in carers' experiences. By monitoring these outcomes, we will know when our shared vision is being delivered.

Key moments

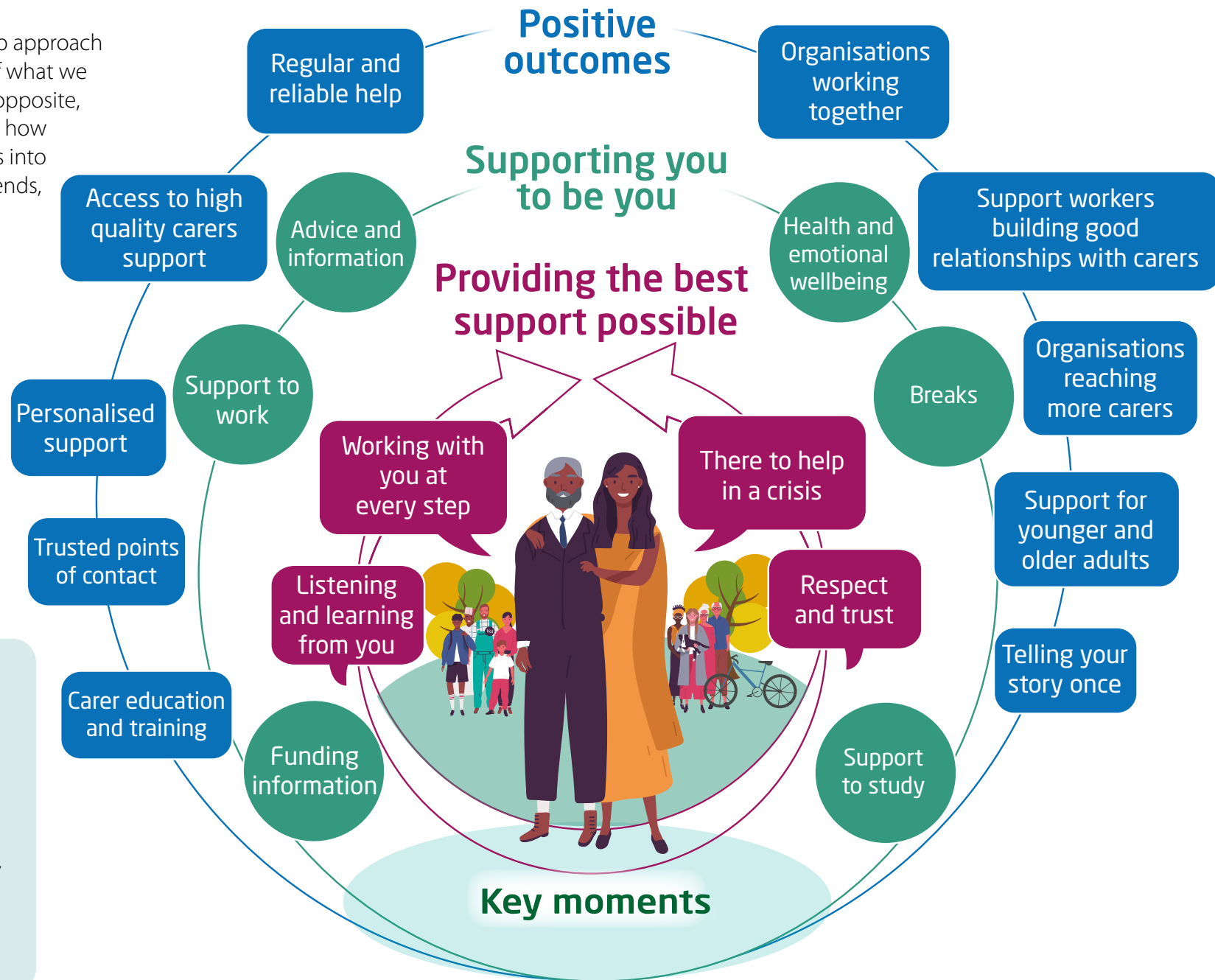
As well as the need for ongoing advice and contact, carers have identified specific times when support is particularly important for them, starting with the first conversation they have about their new caring role. These have been emphasised, so that in partnership, we can shape how and when support should be offered.

Over the page you can see how all these elements work together to 'wrap around' the carer.

Focusing on what's important to carers

We want to take a more joined-up approach and keep the carer at the heart of what we do. This is shown in the diagram opposite, which also contains details about how we plan to put the core principles into action. It reflects how families, friends, communities and organisations link together as a valued support network and which key moments stand out for people with caring responsibilities.

The strategy is a guide that focuses on what we need to achieve in the coming years - but we will rely on the support of our workforce, both within the council and in the wider care sector, to bring it to life.



Key moments

- First conversation with social care
- Life events (carer and loved one)
- After a hospital stay
- When someone moves away
- New diagnosis
- At the end of life
- After your caring role ends

These examples, based on our approach to supporting carers, give an idea of how our strategy should make a difference to carers' lives in the future.

Susan: Regular and reliable support

It has been a long road for me and my husband Gordon. We've been married for 40 years and have two adult children that live far away.

Gordon was diagnosed with Parkinson's ten years ago but his condition has got much worse over the past six years. I love my husband and we've been through so much together, but I'm so exhausted. I look after him for over 50 hours a week as he is unable to eat, wash and dress himself alone. I'm not getting any younger and have my own health problems to deal with. I used to drive, but can't do that now, so it feels as though I've lost my freedom. I don't want to

go out anywhere special - just regular support at home, giving me time for me to do the essentials and have some time to think would be of real help to me and my family.



Lucy: Emotional wellbeing

"I've always been involved with looking out for people. I'm a social worker and caring is part of my life – wouldn't have it any other way.

Because of my background, for the last few years I've been regularly helping a family friend who has mental health needs and depression. She finds it difficult to open up to professionals and manage her affairs, but she trusts me. I've juggled things well in the past – my job, my caring responsibility and my life. But this year has been especially difficult - as my fiancé was made redundant during the pandemic.

I knew I wanted to carry on caring for my friend but I had to seek help with my own emotional wellbeing. I got in touch with someone at work, who told me to get a carer's assessment. I didn't need full support, but it meant that a local charity was able to give me coaching and practical help so I can keep being a carer. I also use a wellbeing app, and I feel much more resilient now."



Kemi: Trusted points of contact

"My younger sister suffered a stroke a few months ago and she lives in a different area, so I've moved to her house while she recovers.

She needs my help with washing, dressing and getting to her medical appointments. She has had community equipment and enablement support to help her to start moving around at home. Hopefully soon she will be able to do more as she has the right professionals around her. But it's been hard getting to know who to contact. I've had carers' training now, which has been invaluable.

I was pleased when the GP told me about care navigators. They were a good source of information on all sorts of issues. Having a trusted point of contact has meant that I didn't have to keep explaining myself. They really listen to me, and they've arranged for me to connect with other carers that live nearby through online forums."



Anjali: Organisations working together

“As I have a young family and work full time, it’s been a real struggle at times to give dad the attention he needs.

He’s been ill for a while and quite frail, so it’s down to me to keep him as well as possible and make sure he can still get out and about to socialise. Transport was an issue for us, as when I’m driving the kids to school I can’t take dad to morning appointments. But when I contacted the volunteer driver service, they were great.

To be able to get help with simple things through new technology has made a difference, but I know I’ll need more support when dad comes to the end of his

life. I hope my employer will be understanding – but I’m going to need financial support and advice to keep up my caring role.”



Aaron: Personalised support

“Dad was coping really well at home until mum died last year – then his dementia got much worse.

We asked him to live at our house so we could make sure he gets to see his grandchildren, who keep him on his toes and help keep that spark in him. What we found challenging was how to apply for funding - it felt quite daunting. We contacted social care, who did a carer’s assessment to understand our situation.

They told us that the house would need adjustments to be able to move in, and that carers support could help us manage things as a family. They called us

back when they said they would get things in place quickly. Dad has been with us for three weeks now. Someone visits every other week to give us some rest and to give dad peace and quiet away from all of us!”



David: Support for younger and older adults

“My worry was, what will happen to my son when I am no longer here to support him?

His transition from children’s to adult social care went well and he is independent to some extent, but he has learning disabilities and Autism, and can’t cope completely on his own. I have been there to care for him since the day he was born, so we need to seriously prepare for the fact that someone else will have to step in and help one day. He wants to live as independently as possible and continue working – so I have arranged support through carers’ breaks.

Because we have reached out, Ben can now get help to choose when he wants to meet his friends, decide what employment support he needs and generally feel freer to live his own life. If we didn’t have those trusted people to get in touch with, my mind wouldn’t be at rest.”



How we want to work together for positive change

Alongside carers, the people we support, support organisations, care partners and the public, we will aim to deliver our strategy by listening to carers to develop a detailed costed implementation plan to cover:

- how our social work teams will be more responsive
- how new and adapted technology will be used
- how we will work closely with partner organisations at the local level in supporting carers and
- how we involve carers and effectively commission flexible carer support services.

When we are getting things right, we want carers to be able to say the following things about their experiences:

"I understand the support that is available to me where I live to maintain my own **health and emotional wellbeing** and achieve the outcomes that matter to me."

"I only have to **tell my story once**, and the staff I talk to take the time to understand my needs and situation which makes things much easier for me."

"I know where to find **user-friendly information and advice** that takes account of my communication and accessibility needs to make informed and empowered decisions about my life – now and in the future."

"I have **received support** which is right for me throughout my caring journey, during times of crisis and after my caring role ends."

"I **feel respected** and I'm confident that my feedback has helped make changes to carer support services and how they are commissioned"

"I know what **my rights as a carer** are and can get timely information that is accurate, carer training and education and advice on all the possible options for my health and wellbeing, support needs, finance and housing."



A carer's view

"As carers, we are not always clear about or understand the role we're taking on. Support for unpaid carers is just as important as support for the people we care for. This should start as early as possible with good information, education and tools that help us to look after ourselves and others. That way, carers like me will know the places where they can get support and relief when they need it most and do the best they can."

We have set out what we think the future should look like for unpaid adult carers, but this is the start of the conversation and we still want to hear people's experiences as we implement these plans.

Why not sign up to our Your voice network?

We've worked with carers in developing this strategy. Why not join one of our focus groups, take part in upcoming surveys, be part of one of our interview panels or get involved in new innovations in adult social care. How much or how little you get involved is your choice.

Visit www.kent.gov.uk/yourvoice to find out more.

Get in touch with Kent Adult Social Care and Health

Email and website

You can email us with queries or questions about any of our services or information.

Email: social.services@kent.gov.uk or see our website at: www.kent.gov.uk/careandsupport

Kent Connect to Support

The Kent Connect to Support website provides you with information and advice to help you (or a relative or a friend) look after yourself, stay independent and connect with your local community.

www.kent.connecttosupport.org

Telephone our contact centre

For non-urgent telephone calls, please contact us Monday to Friday between 8.30am and 5.00pm.

The contact centre is based in Maidstone and is open for business 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Telephone: 03000 41 61 61

Text relay

A text relay service is available for Deaf, hard of hearing and speech impaired customers and is available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week.

Text Relay: 18001 03000 41 61 61

Out of hours service

Not every crisis occurs during office hours. Kent and Medway Social Services provide for these times with our out of hours service that can offer advice, support and help to ensure that vulnerable people are not left at risk.

Telephone 03000 41 91 91

This booklet is available in alternative formats and can be explained in other languages.

Telephone: 03000 41 61 61 or

Text Relay: 18001 03000 41 61 61