

**HEREFORDSHIRE  
CARERS PARTNERSHIP  
BOARD  
ANNUAL REPORT  
2025**



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Author	John Burgess
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**Welcome from the Chair**

The Carers Partnership Board came together formally at the start of 2025, following planning discussions in late 2024. One of the most important developments early on was the involvement of unpaid carers, who joined us after Carers Rights Day in November 2024. Their presence has helped shape a more collaborative and grounded approach throughout the year.

Working alongside our unpaid carer members has strengthened the Board’s work. Their lived experience adds a practical viewpoint that complements the professional knowledge from the council, health services, the NHS and the voluntary sector. Before our first meeting in February 2025, I met informally with our carer representatives to outline how the Board operates, helping to establish a shared understanding from the outset.

Overall, 2025 has been a strong first year. We have built positive relationships, clarified our ways of working, and ensured that carers’ perspectives are central to our discussions. However, there is still much more to do. As we move into 2026, we remain committed to strengthening joint working, and continuing to develop a more coordinated and responsive system for unpaid carers in Herefordshire.

Finally, I would like to extend my gratitude to all members of the Partnership Board for their support over the past twelve months. I am especially grateful to those members who are carers themselves and generously give their time to support the board’s work.

**Sylvia Nichols (Chair)**

**Introduction**



The Carers Partnership Board brings together unpaid carers, community organisations and professionals from across Herefordshire to share insights, spot gaps, and work collectively to improve support for carers of all ages. Officially launched in January 2025, shortly after the publication of the [Carers Strategy for Herefordshire](#) and its accompanying Action Plan, the Board was created to turn the ambitions of the strategy into real, practical change. Although it isn’t a decision-making body, the Board plays an important role in listening, learning and coordinating action so that services feel more joined-up and responsive to what carers need. Its purpose is to make sure carers are recognised, valued and heard, and that progress against the strategy is kept on track.

Carers' voices sit at the heart of the Board's work. Their lived experiences shape priorities, influence discussions and guide the development of action plans. This feedback comes through Board meetings, informal conversations and pre-meeting questionnaires, ensuring carers' perspectives genuinely shape the direction of travel.

Membership is broad and reflects the wide range of people involved in supporting carers. Alongside unpaid carers themselves, representatives come from Adults' and Children's Social Care, Education, the NHS Integrated Care Board, and a range of local organisations including Taurus Healthcare, Healthwatch and other VCSE partners. Bringing these perspectives together helps create a fuller picture of what carers experience and what needs to improve. Overall, the Board provides a shared space for organisations and carers to work together, strengthening relationships and helping to build and steer a coordinated and supportive system for unpaid carers across the county.

The **Young Carers Support Squad** is a dedicated sub-group of the Carers Partnership Board, bringing together colleagues from Early Help, education, commissioning, the VCSE sector and young carer organisations to focus specifically on the needs and experiences of young carers across Herefordshire. Working collectively, the group aims to raise awareness of young and young adult carers, strengthen relationships with schools, coordinate awareness activity, and support national campaigns such as **Young Carers Action Day**.

#### Membership

We wish to thank all member organisations for their continued commitment and collaborative working throughout the year. The breadth of experience across the partnership has supported progress against shared priorities and helped ensure the Carers Partnership Board remains focused on practical improvement and carers' voices.

The Board is made up of representatives from the following organisations:

- ❖ Herefordshire Council – Community Wellbeing
- ❖ Herefordshire Council – Children's and Young People
- ❖ Herefordshire and Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB)
- ❖ Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust
- ❖ Wye Valley NHS Trust
- ❖ Herefordshire Disability United
- ❖ Taurus Healthcare
- ❖ Herefordshire Carer Links
- ❖ Herefordshire Talk Community
- ❖ Carers of Herefordshire
- ❖ Herefordshire Young and Young Adult Carer CIC
- ❖ Dementia Matters Hereford
- ❖ Healthwatch

The Board would also like to acknowledge the contribution of members who are experts by experience and who have supported the work of the Partnership Board over the past year. Their lived experience provides essential insight and constructive challenge, helping to ensure the Board's work remains focused on the real priorities and experiences of unpaid carers.

- ❖ Heather Gyenge
- ❖ Martin Gilleland
- ❖ Jayne McGlone-Wright

## ❖ Cherry Newton

## Our Year at a Glance

In the period January 2025 – December 2025, key actions from the action plan have been achieved.

**Strategic Progress & Governance**

- Launched the Carers Partnership Board and agreed the first co-produced Action Plan.
- Established five<sup>1</sup> priority themes to guide activity throughout the year.
- Put forward recommendations to strengthen the organisation's commitment to being carer-friendly.

**Partnerships & System Working**

- During 2025, the Carers Partnership Board strengthened its work with VCSE partners—such as Carers of Herefordshire, HYACC CIC and TuVida—by widening shared communication channels, collaborating on local and national carer events, and using voluntary-sector expertise to improve the information and guidance available to carers across the county.
- Worked closely with the Early Help services to progress the Young Carers Memorandum of Understanding. Representatives from the partnership board presented to Herefordshire schools' Designated Safeguarding Leads about the Memorandum of Understanding and encouraging better understanding and recognition of young carers.

**Learning Sessions & Guest Speakers**

- Highlighted the role of technology in supporting independence through a focused session on Technology Enabled Care to the Carers Partnership Board, as well as attending two unpaid carer focussed events at the Kindle Centre in June and November 2025.
- A presentation by Headway to the partnership board members about the support they provide to people with acquired brain injuries and their carers.
- Enhanced knowledge Carers about carers' benefits through a dedicated briefing from the Department for Work and Pensions (DWP).

**Carer Events & Awareness**

- Marked Young Carers Day with the theme "Give Me A Break", emphasising the need for respite.
- Celebrated Carers Week, 9<sup>th</sup> to 13<sup>th</sup> June 2025 supporting events and activities promoted by CPB member organisations including an event for Carers that took place at the Kindle Centre, organised by Hereford Carer Links (TuVida).
- Carers Rights Day – Herefordshire Disability United organised an event in Hereford to celebrate unpaid carers with a focus on dementia care.

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<sup>1</sup> The Herefordshire All-Age Carers Strategy identifies six key priority areas: Value and Recognition, Young Carers, Assessments and Support, Staying Healthy, Information and Guidance, and Technology Enabled Care (TEC). When developing the Carers Partnership Board Action Plan, it was agreed that, because the council already has a dedicated TEC Team, TEC would not be included as a standalone action. Instead, the TEC Team would attend the CPB at regular intervals to provide updates on progress, share innovations, and highlight how technology can support the cared-for person and, in turn, benefit carers.

- Supported a ~~well-attended~~ Carers Rights Day event attended by over 80 people featuring a wide range of speakers and practical advice sessions organised by Herefordshire Disability United.

## What We Focused on This Year

### **Improving Access to Carer Assessments**

The Carers Partnership Board recognised a key part of supporting unpaid carers is making sure they can easily access a Carer's Assessment. This is a chance for carers to talk about how caring affects their day-to-day life, what they feel able to manage, and what support might make things easier. It's also an important way for the council to recognise carers' contributions and make sure they're not carrying too much on their own.

As the Carers Partnership Board began to look at this area, it became clear that then current system was not working as well as it should. Many carers were included within a 'joint assessment' alongside the person they care for. Although this was intended to streamline the process, it often meant the carer's own needs were overshadowed or missed entirely. It also meant Carers could not talk openly about the impact of caring for a family member was having on them and the support they might need to continue providing support.



To address this, colleagues from Adult Social Care, the Social Care Performance Team, and the Carers Partnership Board worked together to review and improve the carer assessment process. As a result, from December 2025, the council has a stand-alone Carer's Assessment which must always be completed.

This is a positive step forward. Carers now have a more focused opportunity to talk about their situation, and the council will have clearer, more reliable information about unpaid carers across Herefordshire, which will help shape better support in the future.

### **No Wrong Door for Young Carers**

The Carers Partnership Board wanted to prioritise how young carers are supported. The Young Carers Support Squad is working with partners across Children's Services, Adult Social Care, health, and the voluntary sector to introduce the No Wrong Door for Young Carers Memorandum of Understanding (MoU) in Herefordshire. The aim of the MoU is simple: wherever a young carer comes into contact with services, whether that's at school, through a GP, Early Help, or a community organisation, they should be recognised, listened to, and directed towards the right support without being bounced between agencies.

The working group has been collaborating with Leeds, who have already fully implemented the No Wrong Door MoU, to draw on their experience, learning and best practice as we develop our own approach in Herefordshire.

As a group, we are focused on creating a joined-up, whole-family approach. This includes looking at how young carers are identified, how information is shared about them, and how different professionals can work together more effectively. The Support Squad is also exploring practical

tools used in other areas, such as screening questions and referral pathways, and adapting them so they work well for Herefordshire.

The No Wrong Door MoU helps make things easier for young carers by ensuring every service takes responsibility for recognising and supporting them, sharing information and working together, so they receive joined-up, whole-family support without having to repeat their story. This is an important step towards building a more consistent and supportive system for young carers and their families.

There has been a great deal of planning and research to make sure the MoU can be embedded across all agencies, including schools. We expect the Herefordshire No Wrong Door for Young Carers MoU to be introduced in Spring 2026 and will be reviewed regularly throughout 2026 and beyond.

### **Young Carer ID Card**

A small multi-agency working group has been meeting regularly to develop a Young Carers ID Card for Herefordshire. The group has been exploring different models, including physical, digital and hybrid options, and has been gathering learning from areas such as Coventry, and Nottinghamshire, where ID and discount cards are already in use. Work so far has focused on scoping the purpose of the card, understanding production and administrative requirements, and identifying potential funding routes. The group is also seeking feedback from young carers themselves and engaging schools to support future promotion and verification. While still at an early stage, the working group is steadily shaping a clear proposal for how the ID card could be delivered locally.

### **Carers Rights Day event**

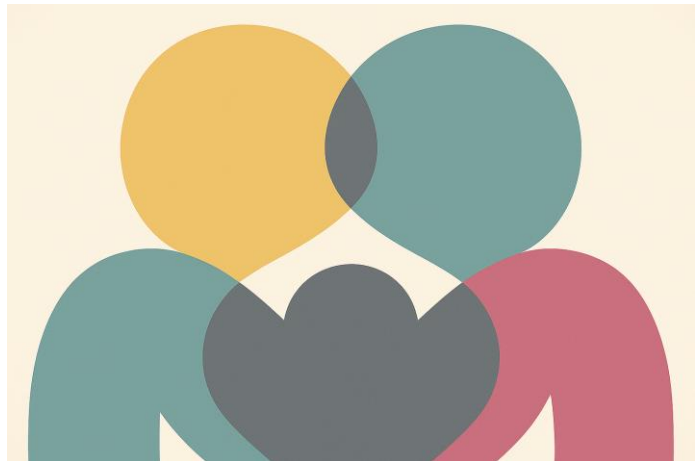
Following the success of the first Carers Rights Day in 2024, a second event was held on 21<sup>st</sup> November 2025. Even more carers attended this time, with the session focusing on Dementia. Speakers included NHS colleagues, local support services, and representatives from Herefordshire Council, along with 12 information stands offering advice and resources.

The event prompted some really useful conversations. A few examples of the feedback we received are below:

- *“Lasting Power of Attorney is difficult to put in place – communication with health and social care could be better.”*
- *“Really beneficial and informative.”*
- *“Excellent speakers, and I made some very useful new contacts.”*
- *“There’s so much knowledge in our communities. It would be helpful to see more examples of what support actually looks like in practice.”*

## Working Together

The Carers Partnership Board works closely with groups such as the Carers Oversight Group (COG) and the Carers Reference Group (CRG) to ensure carers' voices shape local priorities. These strong links help the Board draw on lived experience, share insight across the carer community, and keep its work focused on what matters most to carers in Herefordshire.



### **Carers Oversight Group (COG)**

The Carers Oversight Group (COG) is a regular meeting led by the Herefordshire and Worcestershire Health and Care Trust. Although its primary focus is on improving the ways Trust staff engage carers, the group also plays an important role in shaping wider carer support across the local health system.

COG brings together Trust colleagues, voluntary sector partners, and local authority representatives to look at how carers are identified, involved and supported when they come into contact with health services. This includes reviewing how carers are recorded in clinical systems, improving the information families receive, and making sure staff understand their responsibilities towards unpaid carers.

The group also oversees the Trust's work on carers more broadly — such as updating the Carers Policy, developing training and awareness materials, and coordinating campaigns to raise the profile of unpaid carers. It provides a helpful space for partners to share updates, highlight challenges, and work together on practical improvements.

The Carers Partnership Board works closely with COG, and updates are shared between the two groups so that activity is joined up across the system. COG has taken a particular interest in Herefordshire's young carers work, including the development of the No Wrong Door for Young Carers approach, and has invited colleagues from the Young Carers Support Squad to share progress.

### **Carers Reference Group**

The Carers Reference Group (CRG), co-ordinated by the Herefordshire & Worcestershire Integrated Care Board (ICB), is a bi-monthly forum that brings partners together to share updates, identify emerging issues, and keep unpaid carers firmly on the system's agenda. Chaired by Carole Cumino, the group includes colleagues from health, social care, primary care, the voluntary sector, and local carer support organisations.

Guided by the H&W Commitment to Carers (see appendices), the CRG focuses on practical improvements for carers, including strengthening the consistency of information and staff training, and raising awareness through joint campaigns. The group also provides a collaborative space for partners to highlight challenges and work together to develop solutions.

Its collective approach helps ensure carers' voices and needs remain visible across health services, strengthening the support available to families wherever they access help.

## Priorities for Next Year – (January 2026 – December 2026)

As we look ahead to the coming year, our aim is simply to keep building on what's working and make steady, meaningful improvements for carers. We'll continue strengthening our partnerships, tackling the challenges that carers tell us about, and creating more joined-up support across services. Most importantly, we'll keep carers' experiences at the heart of what we do, shaping our priorities for the months ahead.

### **Some key areas that the Partnership Board will focus on for 2026:**

#### **Carers Passport – Looking Ahead**

Over the coming year, the Carers Partnership Board, working closely with Wye Valley NHS Trust, will be exploring the introduction of a Carers Passport for use within hospital settings. The aim is to make carers more visible, strengthen their involvement in their loved one's care, and provide simple but meaningful support during hospital stays. A Carers Passport would help staff quickly recognise a carer's role and could offer practical benefits such as clearer communication, flexible visiting, and better inclusion in care and discharge planning. Introducing this approach would mark an important step towards creating a more welcoming, informed and consistent experience for carers when someone they support is admitted to hospital.

#### **Young Carers – Strengthening Awareness in Schools**

In the year ahead, we will continue working with local schools to help them recognise and support young carers with greater confidence. Many young people take on caring roles without being identified, and we want to make sure they are seen, listened to, and given the understanding they need to thrive. By strengthening links between schools, families, and support organisations, we aim to improve early identification, raise awareness among staff, and ensure young carers receive the right help at the right time. This work will be an important part of the *No Wrong Door for Young Carers* Memorandum of Understanding (see Section 4 above).

#### **Carers ID Cards**

We will introduce an adult Carer's ID Card for Herefordshire. The Young Carers Support Squad is already developing a dedicated Young Carers ID Card, but the adult Carer's ID card will serve a different purpose and operate separately (see Section 4 above).

A Carer's ID Card offers a simple and recognised way for unpaid carers to identify themselves, helping them access support more easily without needing to repeatedly explain their circumstances. Over the coming year, we will look at whether Herefordshire should develop its own locally-designed card, building on existing good practice, or whether it would be more beneficial to adopt and promote a national Carer ID card solution. This work will include speaking with partners, reviewing existing schemes, and considering any practical benefits for carers across health and community settings.

The Carers partnership board will keep under review previous actions achieved, to ensure progress continues to be made. For example, we will request regular reports from the council's Performance Team to show the numbers of carer's assessments that have taken place.

### Dates for Your Diary in 2026

As with last year, the Carers Partnership Board will be supporting a range of events throughout 2026 that highlight the significant and often under-recognised contribution made by unpaid carers of all ages. These events provide important opportunities to raise awareness, celebrate carers' vital roles, and strengthen understanding across our communities.

**Young Carers Action Day – 11<sup>th</sup> March 2026**

**Carers Week – 8<sup>th</sup> to 14<sup>th</sup> June 2026**



### 9. Contact

To find out more about the Carers Partnership Board please see the councils website: [Herefordshire Carers Partnership Board - Herefordshire Council](#)

Or contact:

John Burgess, Commissioning Manager – [john.burgess3@herefordshire.gov.uk](mailto:john.burgess3@herefordshire.gov.uk)

## Appendix 1



## Herefordshire and Worcestershire Commitment to Carers

System partners have signed up to the Commitment to Carers – a series of statements that demonstrates how we will value and include carers in our work.

### As a Carer

1. My **experience is valued** when developing care plans for the person that I care for.
2. My **own physical and mental health** needs are recognised and met.
3. I can **access relevant information** in a format that suits me.
4. I can **access support** that meets my individual needs.
5. I am supported to **maintain a life of my own**, outside of my caring role.

### As an Organisation

1. We **proactively identify, register, support, and signpost** carers.
2. We **co-produce** our services and policies with carers to ensure our services meet their needs.
3. We **are flexible**, to ensure carers can continue to deliver their caring role.
4. We **actively involve carers** in decisions that may affect their own and/or the cared-for health and wellbeing.
5. We have a **carers lead** in our organisation who promotes a 'Carer Aware' culture.