

Caring Matters

January-April 2026

Durham Tel: 0300 005 1213
Darlington Tel: 0300 030 1215
www.dccarers.org



The King's Award
for Voluntary Service
The MBE for volunteer groups

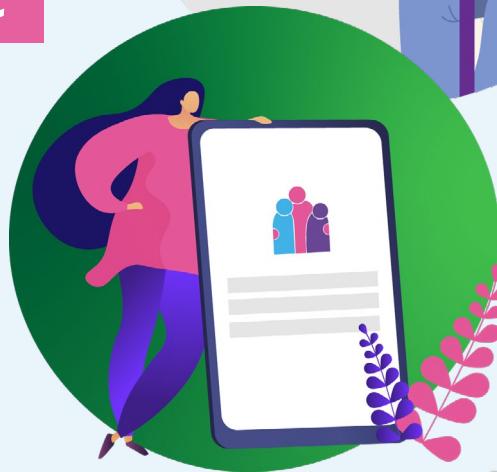


Supporting Carers Anytime. Anywhere

See page 3

Carer
Wellness
Sessions
See page 5

Cooking
on a
budget
See page 7



your local charity supporting carers



County Durham
& Darlington
carers support



DARLINGTON
Borough Council

NHS

North East and
North Cumbria

FINANCIAL SUPPORT | HINTS AND TIPS | COURSES | AND MUCH MORE INSIDE...

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We would love to hear from you:
If you have any ideas/topics, share your caring story or top tips for future editions of Caring Matters that you would like us to include, please email Sophie Johnson at sophie.johnson@dccarers.org

How to access our services and refer to us:

- Call or email the office using the details below.
- For Carer Support visit: dccarers.org/sign-up-for-support/
- Ask your GP or social worker to refer you.

Contact us

Durham County Carers Support
The Old Methodist Church
Durham Street
Spennymoor
County Durham
DL16 7AT
T: 0300 005 1213
E: admin@dccarers.org
W: www.dccarers.org
Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and LinkedIn.

Darlington Carers Support
St Teresa's Hospice
91 Woodland Road
Darlington
DL3 7UA
T: 0300 030 1215
E: admin@darlingtoncarers.org
W: www.dccarers.org
Follow us on Facebook, Instagram, YouTube, TikTok and LinkedIn.

Are you a Carer?

A Carer is someone who, without payment, provides care and support to a partner, disabled child, relative, friend or neighbour who could not manage without your help. You may help with their personal care, provide emotional or practical support or just ensure they are safe and coping.



If this sounds familiar, then we are here to help. Call us on 0300 005 1213 to register for support or do it online <https://dccarers.org/sign-up-for-support/>

Meet the Team

Alison Donoghue – Project Lead, Darlington Carers Support

I'm proudly from East Durham, you can take the girl out of the village, but never the village out of the girl! I've been with Durham County Carers for nearly ten years, bringing experience from both the civil service and managing a charity for disabled young people.



I started as a Carer Support Coordinator, then became a Parent Carer Development Worker, and for the past eight years I've led the Darlington Carers Support team. As a Carer myself, I really understand the highs, challenges and small wins. That personal experience makes the work deeply meaningful, and I honestly love my job. No two days are the same, and seeing the difference we make keeps me passionate about what we do.

Away from work, I'm mum to two grown-up children and a very proud grandmother. Life is busy, full, and exactly how I like it. I've built brilliant partnerships over the years, and I truly wouldn't want to work anywhere else.

Andrea Maughan – Carer Programme & Volunteer Project Lead

My journey here began in 2007 with the old Durham and Chester-le-Street Carers, and 18 years on I still feel lucky to be part of this organisation. I've been involved in almost everything, finance, project management, supporting volunteers, organising events, new systems, and even a few office moves! A real highlight was going to Buckingham Palace to receive the King's Award for Voluntary Services, an unforgettable moment for all of us.



I've also been a Carer throughout my adult life, which helps me understand the pressures unpaid Carers face and drives my commitment to supporting them.

Outside work, I live near Beamish Museum with my family and Ruby, my much-loved (and sometimes grumpy) dog. And whenever I can, I'm off following Newcastle United – home, away, or abroad. Ole ole!

Introducing

Our New Virtual Carers Centre

We're delighted to announce the launch of our Virtual Carers Centre, a new way for unpaid carers to access support and services from Durham County Carers Support anytime, anywhere.

We understand that caring responsibilities don't stop when the working day ends. That's why we've created this online platform to make it easier for carers to connect with us and get the help they need at a time that suits them best.

By creating an account on the Virtual Carers Centre, you'll be able to:

- Request support or referrals outside of office hours
- Access tailored information and guidance relevant to your caring role

- Stay informed about upcoming events, training opportunities, and wellbeing resources
- Stay connected with our team in a simple, secure way

Our commitment remains the same, to be there for every Carer in County Durham and Darlington. The Virtual Carers Centre simply gives you another way to reach us.

Visit <https://virtualcarerscentre.org/> to create your account today.

We care that **you** care

Supporting Carers in County Durham and Darlington

We are a registered charity, here to support carers across County Durham and Darlington. Our mission is simple: to make life better for carers by ensuring they feel recognised, valued, and fully supported.

Welcome to our Virtual Carers Centre – an easy way to find the information, advice, and support you need, wherever you are. We know caring can be challenging, and this page is designed to give you guidance and resources at your fingertips.

Alongside our online support, our dedicated team is always here if you'd prefer to speak to someone directly. If you can't find what you're looking for, or just want a friendly voice at the other end of the phone, please call us on 0300 005 1213.



The Bread and Butter Thing

Helping Carers Make Life a Little Easier

We know how hard you work caring for others – and how tricky it can be to find time (and money) to look after yourself too. That's where The Bread and Butter Thing can help.

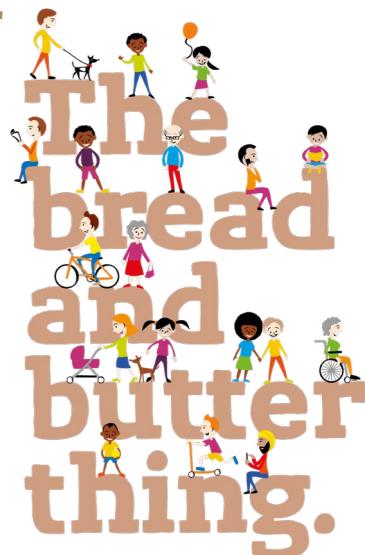
Members can get around £35 worth of food for just £8.50 – including fresh fruit, veg, fridge favourites and cupboard staples. It's free to join, with no commitment. Each week, you'll get a text asking if you'd like an order. Collect from your local hub – or ask someone to pick it up for you if you can't make it. Healthy Start vouchers are also accepted.

Our food comes from surplus stock from supermarkets, manufacturers, and farmers – saving you money and helping to reduce food waste. Every week's bag is a surprise, but it's always full of good food that goes a long way.

Join today and make your weekly shop a little lighter:

Visit breadandbutterthing.org to find your local hub.

Text 0750 723 7311 with your full name, postcode, and the name of the hub to join!



Self-Care Tips

Caring for others is meaningful work, but it can also drain you if you don't build habits that keep you upright. Here are practical, grounded self-care tips:

1. Protect your energy like it's part of the job

You can't pour from an empty cup.

- Schedule downtime: timed breaks, short outdoor walks, even 10-minute breaks can help reset your mind.
- Use alarms or calendar blocks: external structure helps when your day revolves around someone else.

2. Let "good enough" be enough

Carers often slip into perfectionism. That's a fast track to burnout.

- Ask yourself: What must get done today, and what can slide without real harm?
- Give yourself credit for the hard things you do that nobody sees.

3. Stay connected to people who refill you

Isolation is common for Carers.

- Keep one or two "anchor" people you can text or call regularly.
- If you can, join a support group (See back page). Talking with others who "get it" can be incredibly validating.

4. Take your body seriously

Your body is the tool you work with.

- Prioritise sleep where possible. If nights are interrupted, use short naps strategically.
- Keep easy, grab-and-go food around so you don't rely on adrenaline all day.
- Gentle movement counts - stretching, a slow walk, even 3 minutes of breathing.
- **Stay hydrated** - dehydration can worsen fatigue and irritability.



5. Share the load without guilt

You don't earn medals for doing everything alone.

- Accept help when offered. Ask when it's not.
- Look into respite services - even short ones give your nervous system a reset.
- Use a planner or app to track appointments and medications.

6. Protect your mental health

- **Talk about how you feel** - reach out to friends, family, or a support group for Carers, it helps to share the load emotionally.
- **Try mindfulness or relaxation techniques** - apps like Calm or Headspace, or simple deep-breathing exercises, can reduce stress.
- **Accept that you can't do everything** - recognising limits isn't failure, it's self-preservation.

7. Seek professional help when needed

- Talk to your GP if you feel persistently exhausted, anxious, or low.
- Many areas have **Carer support services** that offer counselling, respite, or practical advice.



Carer Wellness Sessions in County Durham

Join us for rejuvenating Wellness Sessions throughout County Durham, designed to enhance your well-being and provide a blissful escape from daily stresses. Each session accommodates up to 15 participants, ensuring a personalised and intimate experience. We are expecting a lot of interest in these sessions, so places may need to be allocated at random. If you're offered a place, a £5 booking fee will apply.

10:30am - Aromatherapy with Ann

Start your day with a soothing aromatherapy session. Ann will guide you in creating a bespoke blend tailored to support your personal well-being goals. This hands-on experience allows you to explore the calming and healing properties of essential oils.

12:15pm - Buffet Lunch

Enjoy a delicious buffet lunch, offering a variety of healthy and nourishing options. This is a perfect opportunity to relax, socialise, and refuel your body.

1pm - Sound Therapy with Noreen

Immerse yourself in the tranquil world of sound therapy. Noreen will lead you through a sound bath experience, using a range of instruments to promote deep relaxation and emotional balance. The positive effects of sound healing can enhance your mental well-being and offer a serene escape.

Meditation Practice

Conclude your wellness journey with a guided meditation session. Noreen will provide expert guidance and support, helping you deepen your understanding of meditation, spiritual principles, and mindfulness practices. Her wisdom will leave you feeling centered and rejuvenated.

Dates, times and Venues.

All sessions are 10:15am – 2.30pm

Thursday 12th February 2026 -
TCR Hub, Shaw bank, Barnard Castle, DL12 8TD

Friday 6th March 2026 -
Parish Centre, Chester le Street, DH3 3QB

Wednesday 15th April 2026 - Shotton Community Hub, Bridge Road, Shotton Colliery, DH6 2PQ

Thursday 7th May 2026 -
Hett Village Hall, Hett, near Spennymoor, DH6 5LN

Virtual Aromatherapy on Teams

Tuesday 24th February 2026 10am – 12.00 noon

Thursday 19th March 2026 6pm – 8pm

Learn all about Aromatherapy which has been proven to support physical, emotional and mental health in many ways, for example, for stress and anxiety or aches and pains. Increase your confidence in choosing and using essential oils, to reap their benefits. No previous knowledge or experience is needed – this will be a fun interactive event. All required equipment will be forwarded to your address prior to the event.



To register your interest in either the face-to-face sessions or the virtual aromatherapy sessions, please click on the link below or scan the QR code. If you're offered a place, a £5 booking fee will apply.

<https://forms.office.com/e/yc6NN8Nmjd>

Keeping Warm & Managing Energy Costs This Winter

With energy costs still high, it's important for Carers to know what support is available. You may be entitled to help such as the Warm Home Discount (£150 off your electricity bill), the Winter Fuel Payment if you were born before 25 September 1958, and the Cold Weather Payment if you receive certain benefits during freezing weather. The local Household Support Fund may also help with essentials, and you can contact Durham County Carers Support for current availability.

If you're struggling with bills, speak to your energy supplier early. They must offer reasonable payment plans and may have hardship funds. It's also worth joining the Priority Services Register (PSR), which provides extra support during outages and with meter issues for people who may be more vulnerable.

Small changes can reduce energy use, such as turning your thermostat down by one degree, draught-proofing windows and doors, switching to LED bulbs, and closing curtains at dusk. Always follow safety guidance if using electric blankets or portable heaters.

You may also qualify for grants to improve energy efficiency. Schemes like ECO4, the Boiler Upgrade Scheme and local support from Durham County Council can help with insulation or heating upgrades.

Staying warm is vital for health, especially for older people or those with long-term conditions. Keep rooms at least 18°C and ensure good ventilation to prevent damp. Being energy efficient shouldn't mean being cold.

For personalised advice, contact Durham County Carers Support on 0300 005 1213 or visit www.dccarers.org.



Northumbrian Water Support

If you receive Pension Credit, you may be eligible for Northumbrian Water's Low Income Pensioner Discount, which can reduce your water bill. More details are available at nwl.co.uk.

Priority Services Register (PSR)

The Priority Services Register is a free service for people who may struggle during a power cut or need extra support due to age, disability, medical equipment or sensory impairment. Joining the PSR can provide advance notice of planned outages, priority help during emergencies, accessible communication options, support with meter readings and the option to nominate someone to manage communications. To register, contact your gas and electricity suppliers; you may need to join both

Fantastic News: Additional funding for Counselling Service

Demand for our volunteer-led counselling service has risen by 40% in recent years. We know just how much this support means to Carers: it helps them manage day-to-day challenges, build on their existing strengths, and boost confidence and resilience. Last year, 435 Carers accessed counselling, and demand continues to increase.



Until now, we have covered most of the service costs through fundraising and donations, including the Care and Share Lottery, the Great North Run, and a wide range of staff and volunteer events. In addition, we previously secured funding to employ a part time member of staff to administer the project from Ballinger Trust and this continues until March 2027. However, to keep pace with growing need, we required significant additional funding this year.

We are delighted to share that we have secured new funding from two key sources, ensuring this vital service can continue at its current level for the next two years. This funding will support essential costs such as professional supervision and room hire.

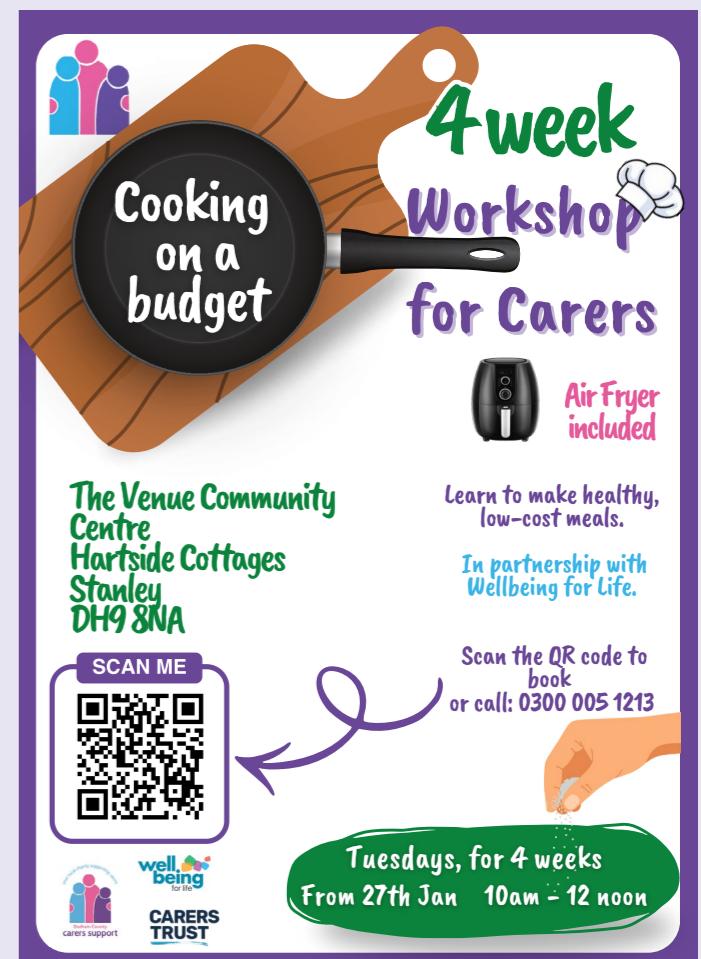
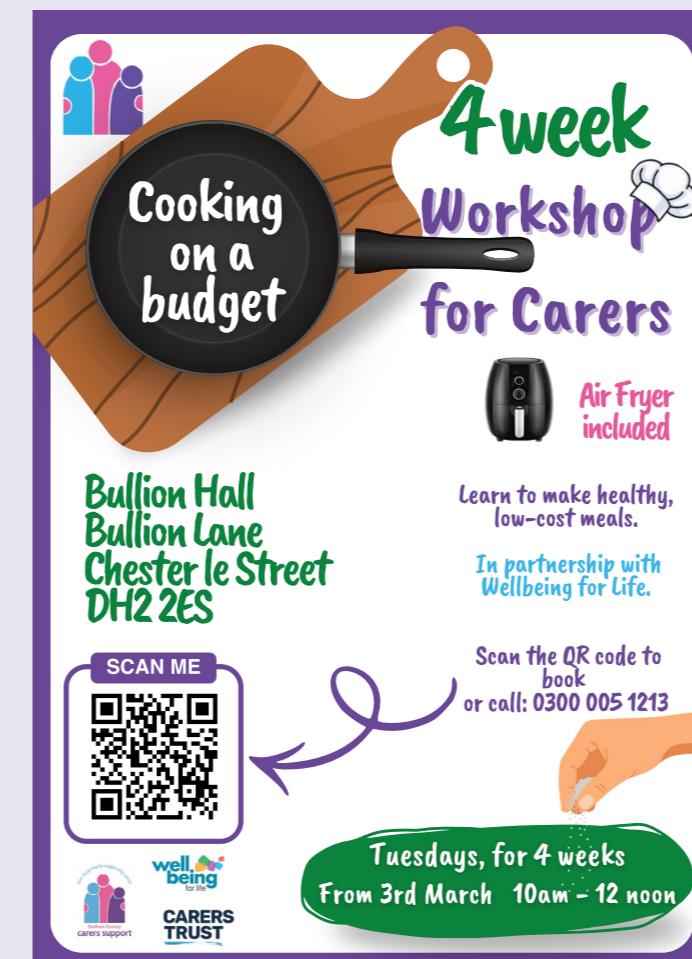
- Point North – NHS Improvement Fund has awarded £7,500 from September 2025 for one year.
- National Lottery – Awards for All has allocated £8,650 per year for two years from January 2026.

Combined with our ongoing fundraising efforts and the Ballinger Trust funding, this support means we can continue developing the service and strengthening Carers' mental health and wellbeing.

Proudly supported by
COMMUNITY FUND

Point North

BALLINGER
CHARITABLE TRUST



Run for Carers

Great North Run - Sunday 13th September 2026

The countdown is on! The 2026 Great North Run is fast approaching, and this is your chance to take part in one of the world's most iconic half marathons, while making a real difference for unpaid Carers across County Durham and Darlington.

Durham County Carers Support has a limited number of charity places available for this incredible event. By running for us, you'll not only experience the unforgettable buzz of the Great North Run, the cheers, the music, the sea of determination from Newcastle to South Shields, but you'll also be helping us continue our vital Counselling Service supporting local Carers.

Every mile you run helps fund emotional support, practical advice, and life-changing help for people who dedicate their lives to caring for others. Your fundraising ensures that no Carer in County Durham and Darlington has to face the journey alone.



Whether you're a seasoned runner or lacing up for your first big challenge, we'll be with you every step of the way, from training tips to fundraising support and plenty of encouragement. Places are limited, so don't miss your chance to be part of something unforgettable. To secure your charity place or find out more, contact Jacqui.coulson@dccarers.org 01833 600575.



Charity Night Success!

Every day, thousands of unpaid Carers across County Durham and Darlington give their time, energy, and love to support someone they care about, often without ever asking for help themselves. At Durham County Carers Support, we're here to make sure those Carers are never alone.

One meaningful way you can help ensure that support continues long into the future is by **leaving a gift in your Will**. It's a simple act of kindness that creates a legacy of care, one that keeps on giving to the people who give so much. Big or small, every gift helps us provide vital advice, emotional support, and practical help for Carers. It helps us be there when someone needs a listening ear, guidance through complex systems, or simply a reminder that what they do matters.

After taking care of your loved ones, a gift in your Will to Durham County Carers Support is a powerful way to make sure that future generations of Carers have the same support, understanding, and respect that you value today. If you'd like to find out more about how to include Durham County Carers Support in your Will, or to talk confidentially about your options, please contact us **0300 005 1213** or email admin@dccarers.org For more information please visit our website www.dccarers.org

Your legacy could change lives – one Carer at a time.

You spend, brands donate to us!

Joining Easy Fundraising is one of the simplest and most impactful ways you can support our charity, without spending an extra penny. By signing up and doing your everyday online shopping through Easy Fundraising, a small donation is made on your behalf each time you purchase from over 8,000 participating retailers. It's quick, free, and makes a real difference, helping us continue the vital work we do.

How to get started

1. Sign up via the Easy Fundraising website and choose Durham County Carers Support (you can also download the easy fundraising app)
2. Download the browser extension- the donation reminder plug-in pops up automatically when you shop to let you know when a donation is available.
3. Track your donations- you'll be able to see how much you've raised in your account, and they will send updates on when we get paid.



For more info and to sign up go to www.easyfundraising.org.uk

Join Our Care and Share Lottery



I would like _____ numbers at £12.00 per year and enclose a cheque made payable to: Durham County Carers Support.

I would like _____ numbers and would like to pay by Standing Order (we will send you a form to complete).



Please cut out and send this completed form to: Freepost RUGZ-GUYX-BZYA, Durham County Carers Support, The Old Methodist Church, Durham Street, Spennymoor, DL16 7AT

Name: _____
Mobile Number: _____
Address: _____
Postcode: _____
Email: _____



PAST WINNERS

September 2025

1st Carley Price
2nd Janice Stephenson
3rd Joan Craigs

October 2025

1st Patricia Allen
2nd Melanie Parkin
3rd Anita Ferry

November 2025

1st Mrs V Iceton
2nd Wendy Henderson
3rd Margaret Gilley



I am a Carer Pin Badge

Did you know you can show your support for Durham County Carers Support and Darlington Carers Support by wearing our "I am a Carer" metal pin badge. These metal pin badges are available to purchase on our website for £3.50. Head over to our website to purchase yours www.dccarers.org/product/i-am-a-carer-metal-pin-badge or scan the QR code.



JOIN THE CARE & SHARE *LOTTERY!

Support Carers Win cash prizes!

Sign up today



Carer Training

Taking time out for self-care is equally important, especially considering the demands of the caring role.

Carers often neglect their own well-being while caring for others, so try to prioritise "me time." To register your interest, click on the link or scan the QR code below. For further information, call Alison Dixon on 0191 500 6031 or email alison.dixon@dccarers.org

Course	When	Where	Time	Booking link	QR Code
Mental Health Awareness Workshop	Tuesday 17th February 2026	DCCS, The Old Methodist Church, Middlestone Moor, DL16 7AT	10am - 1pm	https://forms.office.com/e/dbJuP9dWa	
Power of attorney, Wills and Trusts	Monday 23rd February 2026	Online via Zoom	6pm - 7pm	https://forms.office.com/e/29VjNmwE4f	
Internet safety and safeguarding you and your child online	Thursday 26th February 2026	DCCS, The Old Methodist Church, Middlestone Moor, DL16 7AT	10am - 12 noon	https://forms.office.com/e/msCyZS5bxz	
Positive Approach to Care (support for Carers of someone with dementia)	Friday 27th Feb, Friday 6th March and Friday 13th March 2026	Eastlea Community Centre, Stockton Rd, Seaham, SR7 8DX	10am - 12.30pm	https://forms.office.com/e/6wzXkZSCWE	
First Aid Training	Wed 4th March 2026	Bullion Hall, Chester le Street, DH2 2ES	10am - 1pm	https://forms.office.com/e/nRfxwYemdC	
How can Healthy Eating improve your Mental Wellbeing?	Wed 18th March 2026	DCCS, The Old Methodist Church, Middlestone Moor, DL16 7AT	1pm - 3pm	https://forms.office.com/e/1t3RLdQ5Ut	



Greener Pages Brighter Future

Durham County Carers Support is on a determined path to achieve the highest Investors in the Environment Award – the Green Award 2026. Since May 2021, our dedicated Green Champions have been driving meaningful change to help us get there.

One of our biggest success stories has been transforming how we share our Carers Matters newsletter. By switching from printed copies to digital delivery, we're cutting down on paper use, postage emissions, and overall environmental impact, while keeping Carers just as connected and informed.

Back in 2021, our newsletter reached **19,897 readers**, with **71% receiving it through the post** and just **29% by email**. Fast forward to today, and this issue is being shared with **27,646 readers**, an incredible **77% of whom now receive it electronically**, with only **23% still opting for a printed version**. That's progress worth celebrating, fewer envelopes, less paper, and a much lighter carbon footprint.

A huge thank-you to all our **Carers and supporters** who have embraced this change and helped us take another confident step toward a greener, more sustainable future.

Bringing Joy at Christmas: The Salvation Army Toy Appeal

Every year, thanks to the generosity of supporters, The Salvation Army ensures that Christmas gifts are lovingly shared with children across the UK and Ireland. Because every child deserves the joy of receiving a new gift at Christmas, this appeal brings hope, happiness, and a sense of magic to families during the festive season.

For several years, Darlington Carers Support has proudly partnered with The Salvation Army in distributing these gifts to unpaid carers and their children. This year, we were able to share toys with 17 families, brightening their Christmas and providing a much-needed moment of cheer during a time of rising living costs.

World Earth Hour
Shine a light by switching it off



Saturday 28th March 2026 8:30pm – 9:30pm

Every year, millions of people across the globe join together for **World Earth Hour**, a simple yet powerful act that reminds us that we all have a role to play in protecting our planet. For just one hour, lights are switched off in homes, workplaces, and famous landmarks around the world, creating a wave of darkness that speaks louder than any words.

This year, **World Earth Hour** takes place on the last **Saturday in March**, from **8:30pm to 9:30pm**, and it's about more than saving electricity. It's about connection with the planet, with our community, and with the choices we make every day.

At Durham County Carers Support, our Green Champions encourage everyone to take part. Whether you're lighting candles, enjoying a quiet walk, or talking with family about small ways to live more sustainably, your hour counts. Turning off the lights is just the start, every action adds up to something brighter for the future.

So, mark your calendars, unplug, and take that one symbolic step with us. Let's join the world in showing that even a small act, like flicking a switch, can make a big difference.

Because when we all go dark for an hour, the planet shines a little brighter.

Through partnership working, the impact of these gifts has been tremendous. Families have expressed how receiving these toys has lifted spirits, eased financial pressures, and created precious memories during the holiday season.

A few examples of the gifts we were able to distribute include:



We are incredibly grateful to everyone who has contributed to the Salvation Army Christmas Toy Appeal. Together, we are making a real difference to families and showing the power of community and kindness during the festive season.

Information and Support for Parent Carers

We know caring for a child or young person with additional needs brings many daily challenges. Below is a round-up of useful information, services, and opportunities available this season to support you and your family.

Practical Help and Advice

- Family Hubs:** Family Hubs offer free activities, classes and support for families from pregnancy up to the age of 19, or 25 for children with special educational needs and disabilities - <https://www.durham.gov.uk/FamilyHubs>
- Benefits and Financial Support:** The government's Carer's Allowance, Disability Living Allowance (DLA) for children, and Universal Credit can provide extra help — contact us at Carers Support if you need a benefits check, grant, energy or food support 0300 005 1213.
- Cost of Living Support:** Durham County Council's Help with your money page offers advice on grants, energy costs, and local food or clothing schemes.
- Family Fund:** Family Fund believes that families raising disabled or seriously ill children and young people should have the same choices, quality of life, opportunities and aspirations as wider families - www.familyfund.org.uk

Peer Support

- Closed Parent Carer Facebook page:** Keep up to date with current information, training and events. Search Parent Carer Support (Co Durham) Parent Carer Support (Co Durham) | Facebook
- Durham County Carers Support website:** Keep up to date with training and events - dccarers.org
- Parent Carer Support Groups:** Local groups continue to meet across County Durham and Darlington. They offer a relaxed space to share experiences and get advice from others who understand. Autism Central - [What we offer to families | Autism Central](#) Waves Waves parent and carer support group - Tees Esk and Wear Valley NHS Foundation Trust and MCT www.mctdurham.co.uk/
- Wellbeing Activities:** Watch out for upcoming sessions including mindfulness, crafts, and walks — ideal for taking time for yourself and meeting others - [Ramblers Wellbeing Walks County Durham and Man Up Durham | Facebook](#).
- Young Carer Sibling Support:** If your child has siblings who help in caring, we can connect them with local Young Carer activities for peer connection and confidence building - [The Bridge Young Carers Service - Family Action and Home - Sibs.](#)

County Durham and Darlington – WINTER 2025 UPDATE

DURHAM SEND iASS

NHS North East and North Cumbria

Durham County Council

Free drop-in sessions for parents of children with neurodiverse needs.

Education and Transitions

- SENDIASS:** Durham SEND Information Advice and Support Service is a statutory service supporting parents/carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children and young people with SEND. They have some drop in sessions coming up soon - [Neurodevelopmental Family Support Information Drop ins.](#)
- IPSEA:** All children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) have a legal right to an education that meets their individual needs - [\(IPSEA\) Independent Provider of Special Education Advice.](#)
- Kooth:** Kooth's easy access support is critical to thousands of people, reducing the demand and cost of acute mental health care while helping to build a mentally healthier, happier and more productive society - [Supporting young people through times of transition.](#)
- Transition to secondary:** This short guide provides tips about how parents and carers can support children through the transition to secondary school - [Guidance for Parents on Transition to Secondary School | Anna Freud](#)
- Post-16 Options:** For families with young people moving to college or training. DurhamWorks is made up of professionals who help and support young people, providing them with careers information, advice, and guidance - [Durham Works](#). Durham Enable works 1:1 with jobseekers and employers, to break down the barriers to paid work faced by people with disabilities - [Home page - Durham Enable](#).

Stay Connected

If you'd like to receive updates on groups, training, and wellbeing opportunities tailored to Parent Carers, make sure your contact details and email preferences are up to date with us. Contact us admin@dccarers.org or 0300 005 1213.

NHS Carer Break Funding

If you're a Carer living in County Durham or Darlington, you may be eligible for support through the NHS Carer Break scheme. This funding is designed to give you a well-earned break and help improve your health and wellbeing.

You could receive funding towards activities and items such as:

- Complementary therapies or spa days
- Cinema or theatre vouchers
- Gardening tools or equipment
- Gym memberships or sports tickets
- Craft materials and much more!

To find out if you qualify, call 0300 005 1213 or email admin@dccarers.org



NHS Health Checks

The NHS Health Check is a free assessment of your overall health. It looks for early signs of conditions such as heart disease, stroke, diabetes, dementia and kidney disease.

It's offered every five years to adults aged 40–74 who aren't already being treated for these conditions.

Why it matters

Anyone can develop these illnesses, even without a family history. Many can be prevented, so if you're invited for a check, it's worth attending, even if you feel well.

What happens

The check takes 20–30 minutes. A health professional will:

- ask about your lifestyle and family history
- measure your height and weight
- take your blood pressure
- do a blood test

You'll get your results and personalised advice on lowering your risk. If you're over 65, you'll also be told key signs of dementia to watch for.

Advice on preventing health problems

An NHS Health Check not only measures your risk of certain conditions but also gives you advice on preventing them. Everyone has some risk of heart disease, stroke, type 2 diabetes, kidney disease and some dementias, and the check can spot problems early.

Contact your GP practice to see if you're eligible.

Keep us updated!

Have your details recently changed? Would you be happy to receive the newsletter by email? Would you like to be removed from our database?

Please let us know here or scan the QR code to complete the form online.

Current address details

Name:.....

Address:.....

Postcode:..... Telephone:..... Email:.....

Previous address:.....

Postcode:.....

Please tick as appropriate:

- I would like to receive all future "Caring Matters" via email
- I no longer wish to receive the "Caring Matters" newsletter.
- Please remove my details from your database as I'm no longer a Carer.

Return this form to: Freepost RUGZ-GUYX-BZYA, Durham County Carers Support, The Old Methodist Church, Durham Street, Spennymoor, Co Durham, DL16 7AT



Changes to Support within County Durham

Benefit Appeals supported by Karbon Homes

If you disagree with a benefit decision made by the DWP or Durham County Council, Karbon Homes can help. They offer:

- Free, impartial and confidential guidance to explain your rights and options.
- Help preparing appeals, including gathering evidence, completing forms and writing submissions.
- Representation and advocacy with the Courts and Tribunals Service, DWP and Local Authority.
- A dedicated caseworker for ongoing support throughout the appeals process.

Visit: <https://www.karbonhomes.co.uk/appeals-county-durham/>
Phone: 0191 2238 525
Email: moneymatters@karbonhomes.co.uk

Volunteer with us!

As we close one year and welcome the next, we want to wish all our incredible volunteers good health, happiness, and a fantastic year ahead. We're starting the year strong here at Durham County Carers Support and our volunteers are busy as ever, but we always need more wonderful people to join us!

We have a number of volunteer roles available, and we'd love your support if you could spare some time.

Volunteer Parent Carer Champions – at venues across County Durham and Darlington

Duties could include the following:

- To support our team at Coffee mornings and meetings.
- To represent DCCS at events.
- To share your experiences as a Carer to support other Carers.
- To help unidentified Carers understand that they are a Carer and can register with us.
- To help with admin of events if necessary.

All of our volunteer roles come with full training, ongoing support, and require an enhanced DBS check, which we arrange. For more information about any of these roles, please email Jessica.Howarth@dccarers.org

General Advice – Supported by Groundwork North East & Cumbria

Groundwork North East & Cumbria provides free, confidential and impartial advice across County Durham. They'll listen to your situation and help you take the next step.

Support includes:

- Benefit advice
- Debt & money management
- Consumer advice
- Housing issues
- Immigration guidance
- Energy support

Visit: <https://www.groundwork.org.uk/north-east-and-cumbria/get-support/advice-guidance-in-county-durham/>

Call: 0330 441 6515 (10am–2pm).

Have key documents, pen and paper ready.

Email: adviceline@groundwork.org.uk (responses within five working days; you may be invited to a local drop-in).

Both services have been commissioned by Durham County Council from 1 October 2025.

For more information, contact your Carer Support Coordinator.

Supporting you when someone you care for leaves hospital

When someone you care for comes home from hospital, it can feel both a relief and a worry. You may be unsure how you'll cope or what help is available and that's where our Hospital Discharge team comes in.

We work closely with hospital and community teams to make sure carers get the right support before, during and after discharge. You'll receive one-to-one help from our team for up to four weeks, followed by ongoing support from the wider service. We can help with benefits and grants, offer emotional support (including free counselling), and make sure you get time for yourself, all to help you continue caring safely at home.

Real impact

When Polly's loved one was being discharged, she felt overwhelmed by different professionals and unclear processes. Our team attended planning meetings with her, ensured her views were heard, helped with financial worries, supported form filling, and stayed in touch throughout the process. After discharge, we continued to help with questions about medication and follow-up appointments, giving Polly reassurance and space to focus on caring.

You're not alone

Support is available for anyone helping someone leave hospital. Even if you're not a carer yourself, sharing this information could make a real difference to someone you know. If a loved one is going into hospital soon, get in touch as early as possible so we can start helping straight away.

Contact us

Tel: 0300 005 1213
Text: 07800 005830
Email: admin@dccarers.org



NHS 111 now offers mental health text support

Since May 2024, people have been able to call NHS 111 for mental health crisis support and be connected to a local advisor, removing the need to find local crisis numbers. From 17 October 2025, callers will also have the option to receive support by text.

When selecting the mental health option on NHS 111, callers will hear a message offering text support by texting CALMER (C-A-L-M-E-R) to 85258.

By texting CALMER to 85258, anyone in the North East and North Cumbria experiencing anxiety, stress, loneliness, depression, self-harm or suicidal thoughts can access support.

The free service is funded by NHS North East and North Cumbria ICB and delivered by digital mental health provider Shout, with conversations handled by trained mental health professionals under clinical supervision. Adding text support aligns with NHS digital commitments and makes access to help easier.

The text service is not for emergencies. In cases of serious risk to life, people are advised to call 999.



Find out more at [nhs.uk/nhs-services/vaccination-and-booking-services/find-a-pharmacy-that-offers-free-flu-vaccination/#BeWiseImmunise](https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/vaccination-and-booking-services/find-a-pharmacy-that-offers-free-flu-vaccination/#BeWiseImmunise)

The risks of flu are still real. Protect yourself this winter with a free flu vaccination. Ask at your local pharmacy or visit Find a pharmacy and book an appointment at <https://www.nhs.uk/nhs-services/vaccination-and-booking-services/find-a-pharmacy-that-offers-free-flu-vaccination/#BeWiseImmunise>

Support Groups

Pop along to one of our Carer support groups below where you can meet with other Carers in your community in a safe and supportive environment.

Bishop Auckland Carers Support Group

Where: Four Clocks, 154a Newgate Street, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL14 7EH

When: 3rd Thursday of the month, 10.30am - 12noon

Contact: Louisa Collin on **0191 500 6030** or email louisa.collin@dccarers.org for more information.

Chester-le-Street Carers Support Group

Where: Bullion Hall, South Approach, Bullion Lane, Chester- le-Street, Co Durham, DH2 2DW

When: 1st Friday of the month, 10am - 12noon

Contact: Steve Gillgallon on **0191 500 6013** or email steve.gillgallon@dccarers.org for more information.

Consett Carers Support Group

Where: Masonic Hall, John Street, Consett, DH8 5AS

When: 2nd Tuesday of the month, 10.30am - 12noon

Contact: Grace Stewart on **01388 418321** or email grace.stewart@dccarers.org for more information.

Darlington Carers Support Group

Where: Well-Being Hub at St Teresa's Hospice, Woodland Road, Darlington, DL3 7UA

When: 1st Wednesday of the month, 1pm - 2.30pm

Contact: **0300 030 1215** or email us at admin@darlingtoncarers.org for further information.

Easington District Carers Support Group

Where: Shotton Community Hub, Bridge Road, Shotton Colliery, DH6 2PQ

When: 2nd Friday of the month, 10am - 12noon

Contact: Adele Blair on **01388 439748** or email adele.blair@dccarers.org for more information.

Stanley Carers Support Group

Where: The Venue, Community Centre, Wear Road, Stanley, DH9 6AH

When: 2nd Wednesday of the month, 10.30am - 12noon

Contact: Janice Coulson on **01833 600577** or email janice.coulson@dccarers.org for more information.

Teesdale Carers Support Group

Where: Woodleigh (Council Offices), Flatts Road, Barnard Castle, DL12 8AA

When: last Thursday of each month, 10am - 12noon.

Contact: Gill Taylor on **0191 917 4708** or email gill.taylor@dccarers.org for more information.

Check us out on social media. We love to share.



www.facebook.com/durhamcountycarerssupport
www.facebook.com/darlingtoncarerssupport



www.instagram.com/durhamcountycarers



[@carerssupport](https://www.tiktok.com/@carerssupport)

Tips to make sure you always see our posts: Like our page & posts, comment or share. That's just the way social media works. It knows what you like, if you like it



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**County
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