

Caring Matters

May-August 2026

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



*Family Fun Day
and Wellbeing Walks*
See page 3

Devices to help make caring easier
See page 5

FREE access to digital books
See page 14



Building Carer Friendly Communities



Your local charity supporting carers



County Durham & Darlington carers support



DARLINGTON
Borough Council



North East and North Cumbria

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

Contents

Meet the Team	2
Carers Week 2026	3
Virtual Support	4
Digital Support	5
Mental Health Awareness	6
Green Investors Award	7
Fundraising	8
The Care and Support Group	9
Carer Training	10-11
Parent Carer Support	12
Support Groups	13
Volunteering opportunities	14
Hospital Discharge Support	15
Keep us updated	16

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.

Meet the Team



Adele Blair, Carer Support Coordinator

I've been working for Durham County Carers as a Carer Support Coordinator for over three years now. I live locally with my husband Mark, son Jack, and our Cockapoo Fletcher. I love spending quality time with family and friends and enjoy walking the dog in the woods near to my home. I feel very proud and privileged to be working with the amazing Carers we support.

As a Carer myself, I understand how caring can bring many positives, but it can also be very challenging. Seeing the positive difference that a bit of help and support can make to Carers lives is very rewarding for me and hope to be doing this job for many years to come.



Karen Dixon, Carer Support Coordinator

I am a dedicated and compassionate person who has spent all my working life supporting others, both professionally and personally. After a long and impactful career in youth justice, where I worked tirelessly to guide and support young people through challenging times, I transitioned into a deep and meaningful role supporting unpaid Carers. For the past four years, I've brought empathy, resilience, and a wealth of experience to this vital area of work, advocating for those who care selflessly for others.

Outside my working life, I find balance and calm through walking, swimming and yoga – activities that nourish body and mind. I live with my husband and our two beloved cocker spaniels, Mabel and Wilf, who add a lot of joy and character to our home. I'm also a proud parent of two grown up children, now in their early forties, whose lives I've helped shape with strength and love.

My life reflects a deep sense of care, service, and connection – to people, to community, and to my own well-being.

Celebrating

Violet's 90th Birthday

We would like to send our warmest congratulations to Violet who has celebrated her 90th Birthday in March. Both Violet and her daughter Carole are registered with Darlington Carers Support as they care for each other and are active members of our monthly Carers group. Their support for one another is truly inspiring and reflects the spirit of our community.

Violet is like a breath of fresh air—always smiling, full of warmth, and bringing happiness to those around her. Her positive energy brightens every gathering, and she is a much-loved member of the group.

Wishing Violet a very happy 90th birthday and many more joyful celebrations ahead!



L-R Violet and Carole

Carers Week 2026:

Recognising, Supporting and Valuing Those Who Care

Carers Week 2026 takes place from the 8th to 14th June which offers an important opportunity to shine a light on the millions of unpaid Carers who support family members, friends, and neighbours every day. This year's theme focuses on Building Carer Friendly Communities. This will highlight the impact Carer friendly communities can have in making a real and lasting difference to the lives of Carers everywhere.

Across the UK, Carers play a vital role in society, often balancing employment, education, and personal responsibilities alongside their caring duties. Yet many remain unseen and under-supported. Carers Week is a time to change that, to ensure carers are recognised not just in words, but through meaningful action.

To celebrate Carers Week 2026, we are offering the following activities for our registered Carers.



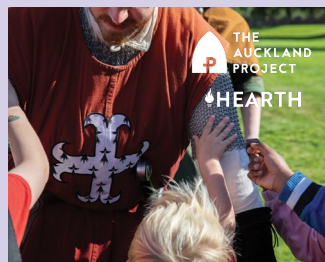
**Building
Carer Friendly
Communities**



Mini Medieval Mayhem Family Fun Day

A Special Day for Carers and their families in partnership with The Auckland Project

Join us for a 'Mini Medieval Mayhem', created especially for our registered Carers on **Saturday 13th June 2026 from 10.30am – 4pm**. This is a chance for Carers and their families to spend time together and enjoy a day of medieval-themed activities at your own pace.



Across the day, you can take part in a range of hands-on experiences and creative crafts. There will be opportunities to explore, try something new, and simply enjoy time together in a supportive environment. There is a Walworth Birds of Prey experience at 12.30pm. Picnics are welcome, no alcohol please.



To apply for tickets, please use the link below <https://tickets.aucklandproject.org/event-tickets/76704?branches.branchID=2536> or scan the QR code.

Please note: Tickets must be booked using the name and address of the Carer or volunteer registered with Durham County

Carers Support. Each household may make one booking, for up to six tickets. At least one person in the group must present a valid Carer Friendly Card when entering with the tickets. By making a booking, you consent to your name and address being shared with Durham County Carers Support for eligibility verification. If you have any questions, please email andrea.maughan@dccarers.org



Carer Wellbeing Walks

We're pleased to be partnering with Durham County Council Thrive Leisure to offer a series of Carer Wellbeing Walks during Carers Week 2026, details below. Each walk will last around 60 minutes and offers a relaxed opportunity to connect with other Carers, enjoy some fresh air, and share experiences. Afterwards, you're warmly invited to join us at the leisure centre for tea or coffee, where you can also have a chat with our support workers.

If you're unable to take part in the walk, you're still very welcome to pop into the leisure centre for a friendly chat. Places are limited to 20 per walk, and those you care for are very welcome to join you, limited to one guest per Carer. We kindly ask that dogs are not brought along.

To help us plan, please register your interest using the link below or by scanning the QR code—we'd love to see you there! No booking is required if you are just coming along to the leisure centre for a chat.



Register your interest here <https://forms.office.com/e/kfY3yXTETk> or scan the QR code. If you have any questions, please email emma.thompson@dccarers.org

Date	Meeting Venue	Time
Mon 8th June	Teesdale Leisure Centre, Barnard Castle, DL12 8DS	10am-12 noon
Wed 10th June	Louisa Centre, Stanley, DH9 0TE	10am-12 noon
Thurs 11th June	Peterlee Leisure Centre, St Cuthberts Road, Peterlee, SR8 1AF	10am-12 noon
Fri 12th June	Freemans Quay Leisure Centre, Durham, DH1 1SW	12.30pm-2.30pm

Keep an eye on our social media pages to see what we have going on in the community during Carers Week.



Try our New Virtual Carers Centre

We are pleased to introduce our Virtual Carers Centre, a new online space designed to make it easier for Carers in County Durham and Darlington to access information, support and resources whenever they need it.

We know that caring responsibilities can make it difficult to attend events or access support during normal working hours. The Virtual Carers Centre has been developed to provide you with flexible access to helpful information and guidance, all in one place and available at a time that suits you.

Through the Virtual Carers Centre, you can explore a range of resources including information about Carers' rights, financial support, health and wellbeing, and practical advice for managing the challenges that can come with caring. It also offers guidance on how to access local services and the support available through Durham County Carers Support.

The platform has been designed to complement our existing services, ensuring Carers can still receive personalised support when needed, while also having the option to explore information independently.

Our aim is to make support more accessible and responsive, recognising that every caring situation is different and that Carers may need help at different times and in different ways. We will continue to develop the Virtual Carers Centre over time, adding new resources and responding to feedback to ensure it meets your needs.



If you would like to explore the Virtual Carers Centre, you can access it here:
<https://virtualcarerscentre.org/>

As always, if you would prefer to speak with someone directly, our team remains here to help.

Coming Soon - Digital Support Portal

We are pleased to let you know that we are launching Bridgit Care, a new digital support portal designed to support unpaid adult carers across County Durham. Bridgit Care provides Carers with 24/7 access to clear, consistent information and practical guidance.

Carers can:

- Understand their rights and entitlements
- Get help with benefits, finances, work and wellbeing
- Create simple action or support plans
- Access ideas, reassurance and practical guidance when things feel overwhelming

Some Carers may also choose to use AI coaches within the platform to help them think things through, set goals, and explore options at their own pace.

Watch this space for further information.

YOUR ONLINE SUPPORT PLATFORM FOR UNPAID CARERS

Access personalised guidance and practical resources whenever you need them, all from the interactive platform

bridgit



Connecting Carers Digital Support for Carers Service Relaunch

Darlington Carers Support is pleased to announce that our Digital Support for Carers service is relaunching.

After spending the past year and a half working in a different role within the organisation, I'm really pleased to be returning to my original post and restarting the Connecting Carers project for Carers in Darlington.

The aim of the service is to help unpaid Carers build the skills and confidence to use digital technology in their everyday lives. Technology can help Carers access information, services, training and support, as well as stay connected with others and reduce isolation.

Through the project, Carers can receive friendly and practical support to learn how to use devices such as smartphones, tablets and laptops. This may include one-to-one support, small group sessions and simple step-by-step guides.

For me, one of the most rewarding parts of this role is seeing Carers gain confidence with technology and realise how it can make everyday tasks easier. Carers who have used the service previously valued the relaxed, supportive environment and the chance to learn at their own pace.

I'm really looking forward to reconnecting with Carers and supporting more people to feel confident, connected and less isolated through digital technology.



To find out more or access support, please contact me at Darlington Carers Support.

Johnny Toas
Connecting Carers
Telephone: 01388 418327 |
0300 030 1215
johnny.toas@darlingtoncarers.org

Tech for Carers

technology that can help make caring easier

Technology can make a real difference to Carers, helping to improve safety at home, support daily routines and provide reassurance. Thanks to support from Durham County Council and Darlington Borough Council we may be able to provide Carers with simple devices and equipment that can make caring a little easier.

Depending on individual circumstances, we may be able to provide items such as Alexa devices, cameras, sensor lights, door chimes, smart plugs and pill boxes with reminders.

These devices can be helpful in a number of ways. For example:

- **Alexa devices** can be used to set reminders for medication, appointments or daily routines, play music or relaxation content, and provide hands-free access to information.
- **Cameras** can offer reassurance by allowing Carers to check in on a loved one in another room or when briefly away from home.
- **Sensor lights** can make moving around the home safer, particularly at night, helping to reduce the risk of trips or falls.

- **Door chimes or alerts** can notify Carers when a door has been opened, which can be especially helpful for people who may wander or require supervision.
- **Smart plugs** can allow appliances such as lamps or kettles to be controlled remotely or set on timers.
- **Pill boxes with reminders** can help people remember when to take their medication, supporting independence and reducing the stress of managing complex routines.

There are also many other ways that technology can support Carers. Apps can help manage appointments and medication, online communities can provide peer support, and digital tools can help Carers stay connected with family, friends and support services.

Sometimes small pieces of technology can make a big difference — improving safety, supporting independence and giving Carers greater peace of mind.

If you would like to find out more about Tech for Carers, please contact our team to discuss what might be available and suitable for your situation.



Mental Health Awareness

Reasons to Stay

Reasons to Stay is a global suicide prevention project reaching people at difficult moments through anonymous letters written by volunteers from all over the world.

Each letter on this site was written by a real person and delivered at random when someone who feels low visits this page. This space exists as a reminder that we are not alone, even when it feels that way. There is someone, somewhere who wrote you a letter because they care.

If you're struggling right now, reaching out to a support service or someone you trust could really help. If you'd like to, you can write your own letter to a stranger, offering warmth, hope and connection to someone when they need it most.

<https://reasonstostay.co.uk/>

A Letter to a Stranger

"Hey,

I know things feel heavy right now, but you matter.

Take a breath, hold on a little longer, and remember even small moments of hope can carry you through today. Take things one step at a time and that will really help.

I once was where you are now, so I know that better is possible.

Thank you for being a part of this world.

From someone that cares x"

Here is an example of a letter:

Small Steps

That Can Help You Feel Better

Everyone has difficult days, but there may be ways to make managing your mental health a little easier.

1. Talk about what helps

If certain treatments or coping strategies have helped you in the past, tell your doctor. It's also helpful to let friends and family know how they can support you. This might mean listening when you need to talk, helping you stay on top of your needs, or understanding the situations or feelings that make things harder for you.

2. Notice early warning signs

Try to pay attention to changes in how you feel. Many people experience early signs when they are starting to feel unwell. These signs are different for everyone but recognising them can help you get support sooner.

3. Keep a mood diary

Writing down how you feel each day can help you spot patterns. You might notice what improves your mood and what makes things more difficult. This can help you prepare for challenging situations or make changes that support your wellbeing and you can seek help sooner.

4. Build your self-esteem

Taking small steps to improve your self-esteem can make a big difference. When you feel more confident in yourself, it can become easier to handle life's challenges and take care of your mental health.

5. Can we Help?

Your Carer Support Coordinator can help you if your caring role is overwhelming, you are worried about your finances, need information or a break.



We've Achieved the

Green Investors in the Environment Award!

We're delighted to share that Durham County Carers Support has achieved the Green Award.

This recognises the practical steps we've taken to reduce our environmental impact and operate more sustainably. Caring for people and caring for the planet go hand in hand – and we're committed to doing both responsibly.

Over the past year, we've reviewed how we work and made meaningful changes, including:

- Reducing energy use across our premises
- Cutting paper by moving more processes online
- Encouraging greener travel and virtual meetings
- Improving recycling and reviewing suppliers with sustainability in mind

These changes haven't just helped the environment – they've also made us more efficient and cost-effective. A proper win-win.

This award isn't the finish line. It's a marker that we're on the right path. We'll continue looking for practical ways to reduce waste, improve efficiency and embed environmental thinking into everyday decisions.

Thank you to our staff and supporters who've helped make this happen. Small changes, consistently applied, really do add up.

We're proud of the progress – and we're just getting started.



CONGRATULATIONS FOR
ACHIEVING *Green*



Carer Discount Card

Did you know that when you register with us as a Carer, you receive a Carer Discount Card? This card can be used at a range of businesses across County Durham that offer special discounts and deals when you show it.

When you're out and about, it's always worth asking retailers if they offer a discount for Carers. Even if they're not part of our Card scheme, some businesses may still be happy to provide a small discount.

Latest businesses to join the scheme:

- **Raby Castle Estates** – 10% off entry to the Castle, Park and Gardens
- **Kosmic Kingdom, Bishop Auckland (Soft Play)** – 1 adult entry free with a Carer Discount Card
- **Eggleston Hall Gardens** – Adults 2 for 1 on the garden trail
- **Washington Wetland Centre** – 50% discount on admission for Carers



You can find a full list of participating businesses and the offers available in the **directory on our website**. Simply click the link or scan the QR code to view the directory or to request your card today. Alternatively call our friendly team on **0300 005 1213** to request your card.

Support Our Great North Run Heroes



This September, a team of incredible runners will be taking on the **Great North Run** to raise funds for **Durham County Carers Support** — and you can help make every mile count.

The Great North Run is the world's largest half marathon, stretching from Newcastle to South Shields. It's an amazing challenge, and our runners are stepping up to the start line not just for the personal achievement, but to raise vital funds for unpaid Carers across County Durham & Darlington.

Every day, thousands of Carers quietly support family members or friends who are ill, disabled, elderly, or struggling with mental health. Their dedication keeps families together and relieves huge pressure on health and social care services. But Carers often need support too.

Our runners are training hard, putting in the miles, and giving their time to support Carers in our community. Now they need your support.

How you can help

You can support our runners by making a donation.


- Scan the QR code to donate quickly and securely
- Or visit our website: www.dccarers.org



Every donation, big or small, helps us continue supporting Carers across County Durham & Darlington.

Good luck to all of our Great North Run runners and thank you to everyone who supports them.



The Care and Support Group 

Durham County Carers Support is delighted to have been chosen as **Charity of the Year by The Care & Support Group**.

The Care & Support Group provides high-quality, person-centred care to people across the region. As trusted providers for local authorities and the NHS, they support adults, older people, and individuals with learning disabilities or mental health needs through services including **domiciliary care, outreach and supported living**. They also provide specialist care for people with complex needs, dementia, and end-of-life support, as well as reablement services to help people regain independence after illness, injury, or hospitalisation.

To support Durham County Carers Support throughout the year, The Care & Support Group has planned a fantastic range of fundraising activities. Team members will be taking part in the **Great North Run**, while during **Carers Week** they will complete the **Tyne to Tees Coast Walk, a challenging 28-mile sponsored walk**.

The fundraising will continue with summer **BBQ events**, before finishing the year with a **Christmas fundraising event**.

We are incredibly grateful to The Care & Support Group for their support. The funds raised will help Durham County Carers Support continue providing vital information, advice and support to unpaid carers across County Durham.

Join Our Care and Share Lottery

Make a real difference for Carers in our community for just £12 a year.

Every number helps fund FREE Counselling for Carers, and every month there's the chance you could win a cash prize.

Where your £12 goes

- 50% supports our free counselling service for Carers
- 50% is paid out as cash prizes

How it works

- Each number costs £1 per month (£12 per year)
- Have as many numbers as you like
- Draws take place on the 1st Thursday of every month.
- Winners are notified by email or letter and shared in our newsletter, website and social media

Name:

Mobile Number:

Address:

Postcode:

Email:

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



PAST WINNERS

December 2025

1st Keith Rushforth
2nd Sarah Whitaker
3rd Paul Lamb

January 2026

1st Julie Howe
2nd Debbie Allinson
3rd Florence Hunter

February 2026

1st Maureen Brighthouse
2nd Val Dawson
3rd Margaret Gilley

March 2026

1st Emma Crawford
2nd Yvonne Edwards
3rd Rebecca Williams

AVE 1st PRIZE **£150**

AVE 2nd PRIZE **£100**

AVE 3rd PRIZE **£80**

RECRUITING NOW!



 FULL + PART TIME WORK AVAILABLE

 CARERS + SUPPORT WORKER NEEDED

 £13.45 PER HOUR!



At The Care and Support Group, we're looking for people who genuinely care. No experience? No problem. We provide all the training you need – what matters most is the right attitude, kindness, and a willingness to make a difference in someone's day.



APPLY HERE!

CSG

The Care and Support Group



Please note - we can not currently provide sponsorship



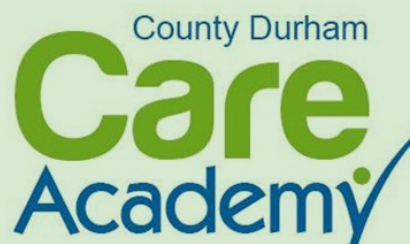
Carer **Training**

At Durham County Carers Support, we are dedicated to empowering Carers in their vital roles by providing support and resources. We aim to assist Carers in navigating their responsibilities while prioritising their own health and wellbeing.

We offer **FREE training sessions** for all registered Carers. These sessions are designed to equip Carers with the necessary skills and knowledge to manage their roles more effectively. Our training covers a wide range of topics, ensuring that Carers have access to valuable information and expertise.

To expand our reach and enhance the support we provide, we collaborate with other training providers. Two of our key partners are **Durham Learn** and **Durham Care Academy**, which offers a vast array of courses.

For more information about the courses available, please visit: <https://www.durham.gov.uk/careacademy> and <https://www.durham.gov.uk/durhamlearncourses>



Course	When	Where	Time	Booking link	QR Code	Extra Info
Making Sense of Caring for Parent Carers	Wed 3rd June 2026	Belmont Community Centre, Gilesgate Moor, DH1 2LL	10am - 12noon	26/27 Making Sense of Caring for Parent Carers. – Fill in form		
Positive Approach to Care (support for Carers of someone with dementia)	Fri 5th June, Fri 12th June, Fri 19th June	Newton Aycliffe Youth and Community Centre, Burn Lane, DL5 4HT	10am - 12.30pm	26/27 Positive Approach to Care. – Fill in form		3 Weekly Sessions
Online Yoga (6 weekly sessions)	Fri 5th June to Fri 10th July	Online via Zoom	9.15am - 10.15am	26/27 - Virtual Yoga with Julie Metcalfe – Fill in form		6 Weekly Sessions £10 Booking Fee Applies
First Aid Training	Thurs 11th June	St Mary & St Cuthbert Parish Centre, Chester le Street, DH3 3QB	10am - 1pm	26/27 - First Aid Courses for Carers – Fill in form		Room is upstairs
Moving and Assisting	Tues 16th June	Fane Ltd, Unit 12-13 Derwentside Business Centre, Consett, DH8 6BP	10am - 1pm	26/27 - Moving and Assisting 3-hour Course. – Fill in form		
Making Sense of Caring (Adult Carers)	Wed 17th June	Belmont Community Centre, Gilesgate Moor, DH1 2LL	10am - 12 noon	26/27 Making Sense of Caring. – Fill in form		
Creative Writing	Wed 24th June	Belmont Community Centre, Gilesgate Moor, DH1 2LL	1pm - 3pm	26/27 Creative Writing with Steve Urwin. – Fill in form		
Power of Attorney, Wills and Trusts	Mon 13th July	Online via Teams	6pm - 7pm	26/27 Power of Attorney, Wills and Trusts. – Fill in form		
Online Pilates (6 weekly sessions)	Tues 28th July to Tues 1st Sept	Online Via Zoom	6pm - 7pm	26/27 - Virtual Pilates – Fill in form		£10 Booking Fee Applies

Parent Carer Support

Information, Activities and Helpful Resources

We know that being a parent carer can sometimes feel overwhelming, particularly when navigating education, health and support services. We've pulled together a range of **useful information, support and local opportunities** that may help you and your family.

Support with School and Education

If your child is experiencing anxiety around school or is struggling to attend, there is support available:

- **Durham Special Educational Needs and Disability Information Advice and Support Service (SENDIASS)** is a statutory service supporting parents/carers of children with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) and children and young people with SEND. Darlington Borough Council also has a special educational needs service. <https://livingwell.darlington.gov.uk/Services/340/SEND-Information-Ad>
- **YoungMinds** offer helpful guidance for parents on supporting children with school anxiety and refusal.
- Durham County Council also provide **CAMHS training for parent carers**, including sessions on understanding and responding to anxious thoughts and feelings about school.
- For independent advice on Education, Health and Care Plans (EHCPs), **IPSEA (Independent Provider of Special Education Advice)** offers clear, trusted guidance to help you understand your rights and options.

These resources can help you feel more confident in supporting your child and navigating the education system.

Financial Support and Grants

- **Family Fund** offers grants to families raising disabled or seriously ill children. They can support with items such as days out, short breaks, or activities and hobbies. Families can usually apply every two years.

Local Activities and Opportunities

There are a range of local opportunities for children and families to get involved in:

- **Fun and Food (Durham & Darlington)** – Activities taking place over school holidays, including Easter. These are updated regularly via their website and Facebook pages.
- **Darlington Town Centre Events** – A variety of family-friendly events taking place throughout the year.

Specialist Support and Community Organisations

- **Daisy Chain** offers support for young people (16+) with neurodivergent needs, providing a range of services and opportunities to build confidence and independence.
- **Kane's World Foundation (Darlington)** is a fantastic local charity supporting children and young people with SEND and their families. They provide inclusive activities, events and a safe, welcoming space where children can thrive and families can connect with others.

You Are Not Alone

Many parent carers tell us that one of the hardest parts of their role is feeling unsure where to turn. These resources and organisations are here to help, whether you need advice, practical support, or simply opportunities for your child to take part in inclusive activities.

If you would like any help accessing these services or would like to talk things through, please get in touch with our team – we are here to support you.

How We Can Support You

Our team offers **specialist one-to-one support** for parent carers, tailored to your individual situation. We can help with:

- Understanding and navigating education, health and social care systems
- Support in understanding the process of EHCP's and attending meetings
- Accessing grants, benefits and financial support
- Emotional support and someone to talk things through with
- Access to breaks and wellbeing opportunities

We're here to make things feel clearer, more manageable and to ensure you feel supported in your caring role.

We also have a dedicated **Parent Carer Facebook page**, where we regularly share:

- Local activities and opportunities
- Useful information and resources
- Updates on support and services
- Events and sessions you can access

It's a great way to stay informed and connected with what's happening locally. Find it here <https://www.facebook.com/groups/1050338081741386>

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.

Dates: 6th May - Mental Health chat with TEVV
3rd June - Herbert Protocols - (Dementia Safety)

Easington 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.

New Group

healthwatch
County Durham

Esh Winning Carers Support Group in conjunction with Healthwatch County Durham

Where: Hamsteels Community Centre, Western Avenue, Esh Winning, DH7 9LS

When: Every Other month, 10.30am - 12.30pm

Dates (Wednesdays): 6th May, 1st July, 2nd September, 4th November, 6th January 2027

Contact: Karon Anderson on 0191 300 6507 or email karon.anderson@dccarers.org

Time For You

Taking some Time for you is essential if you have a caring role. 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 alternatively if you are already registered you can apply through our Virtual Carers Centre <https://virtualcarerscentre.org/>

Celebrating

Our Volunteer Team

At Durham County Carers Support, we see every day how much unpaid Carers give. Behind the scenes, our dedicated volunteers play a vital role in supporting them - from running support groups and providing counselling, to offering guidance on caring roles and helping Carers access the benefits they're entitled to.

We are incredibly proud of what we achieve together. Every conversation, every form completed, and every listening ear helps build a stronger, more supported community of Carers across County Durham and Darlington.

A heartfelt thank you - we couldn't do this without you.

Could you help us?

We currently need additional support in our Benefits Support Team. Volunteers help ensure Carers don't miss out on essential emotional, practical, and financial support. Many Carers find the benefits system overwhelming, but with your guidance, they feel more confident, informed, and supported. The impact you can make is truly life-changing.

Other Volunteer Opportunities

Keeping in Touch Volunteer

Help unpaid Carers feel supported and connected through one-off, friendly phone calls using guided questions. You'll check on their wellbeing, offer a listening ear, and help identify if further support is needed. This role is especially valuable for Carers who may feel isolated.

Office Telephone Support Volunteer (Spennymoor)

Support our busy office by answering calls and providing a warm, professional first point of contact. You'll listen with empathy, direct enquiries, take messages, and assist with light admin tasks while maintaining confidentiality (training and support provided).

All roles include full training, an enhanced DBS check, and ongoing support from our friendly team.

To find out more, contact Jessica at Jessica.howarth@dccarers.org or call 0300 005 1213, or visit www.dccarers.org and follow the volunteering link.

Free Access to Ebooks, Eaudiobooks, Emagazines and Enewspapers



Are you finding it difficult to visit the library due to ill health or your caring role. Worry not, as borrowing books has never been easier, and you can now do it from the comfort of your own home.

Free Digital Copies

All Durham County Libraries and Darlington Libraries offer free digital copies of a wide range of books, magazines, and newspapers. Whether you're looking for the latest bestseller or an interesting magazine, you'll find it all in their digital library.

How to Access

To access these resources, you need to be a member of a Durham County Library or Darlington Libraries. Simply download the Borrow Box app, enter your member details, and you'll have access to thousands of books, magazines, and newspapers at your fingertips. For further information in the Durham area click here <https://www.durham.gov.uk/ebooks> or for the Darlington area click here <https://www2.darlington.gov.uk/digital-library>

Book on Wheels Service – Durham Area

For those who find it challenging to visit the library due to illness or mobility issues, libraries in County Durham provide a service called Book on Wheels. This is a free home delivery service, ensuring that everyone has access to reading materials, regardless of their circumstances.

For more information about the Book on Wheels service, you can call 03000 263 790. This dedicated service ensures that everyone in the community can enjoy the pleasures of reading, even when getting out is difficult. Visit <https://www.durham.gov.uk/article/2065/Library-services-to-your-door>

Book delivery in the Darlington Area

Darlington residents aged 60 and above are also eligible for book delivery, for more information call 01325 349610 or go to <https://www2.darlington.gov.uk/web/arena/home-delivery>

Carer Friendly Award

Supporting You During Hospital Stay and Discharge



Hospital Discharge Support

When you or someone you care for comes home from hospital, it can feel both a relief and a worry. You may be unsure how you will cope or what help is available and that is 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 will receive one-to-one help from our team for up to four weeks, followed by ongoing support from the wider service.

Introducing the Carer Friendly Award

As part of this work, we are introducing a **Carer Friendly Award** for wards and teams across the County Durham and Darlington NHS Foundation Trust. The Award recognises teams that actively identify, involve, and support unpaid carers, particularly when planning for someone to return home.

What Wards and Teams Commit To

Wards and teams that join the initiative promise to recognise and support Carers, include **them in discharge planning**, **attend Carer awareness training**, and **work towards becoming a Carer Friendly Ward**.

What Being Carer Friendly Means

Being a Carer Friendly Ward is about three main things: **understanding and identifying Carers**, **embedding Carer support into everyday care**, and **keeping Carers informed and involved**. Teams will receive training to identify Carers early, understand what support they need, involve them in care discussions, and give the right information and support before discharge. This helps make hospital stays and going home smoother and safer for everyone.

Where is it Happening?

We are currently developing two test and learn projects.

The **Care of the Elderly Team** plan to develop a simple screening tool to identify Carers and their support needs for use in four areas. They will also have **Carer Champions**, staff who lead on Carer awareness and act as a point of contact.

The **Richardson Hospital** are starting a trial of special **#CarersCount** lanyards so staff can easily recognise people who are Carers. This should help staff be more aware of them, involve them more in discharge decisions, and make it easier for carers to get the information and support they need.

Next Steps

Both pilots will check how these changes benefit Carers and the hospital. If successful, the initiatives will be rolled out to more wards and sites across the Trust.

Our Goal

To make sure Carers are seen, feel valued, involved and supported throughout a patient's hospital stay and discharge.



helping ward teams embed carer-friendly approaches into everyday care



A little help for the people who help others

County Durham Furniture Help Scheme (CDFHS) is a local charity offering a wide range of quality preloved furniture and white goods.

From sofas and beds to washing machines and fridges — all available through our easy-to-use online store, with delivery available across County Durham. As a Carer, your time and money are precious. That's why CDFHS is pleased to offer an exclusive 10% discount to carers in County Durham. Simply use your code at checkout to save on the items you need most.

Your discount code: **Carer10**



Browse our products and place your order at <https://cdfhs.org.uk/online/> or scan the QR code below to go straight to the store. You can also visit us in person at Avenue Three, Unit 19/20, Chilton, Ferryhill DL17 OPB — open Monday to Friday, 9am to 3pm.



Déjà Brew Companionship café

:Hosted by Home Instead Durham



We currently host 3 companionship cafés in Durham for older people living at home or with family.

Come along with a family member, carer or friend, (no need to book). You'll receive a warm welcome, a chance to socialise and reminisce. Meet new people and even take part in some fun activities, talk from guest speakers with relevant topics and a game of bingo.

For more information please contact us on: **0191 374 4041**

Each café is held between 1.30 - 3pm

- All saints Church, Newton Hall, DH1 5LT. Every 1st Friday of each month
- Framwellgate Moor Working Men's club. Every last Wednesday of each month
 - Belmont Community Centre, Sunderland Road, Durham. Every 3rd Friday of each month



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

Find us on Social Media



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