Leicestershire County Council

ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2 MARCH 2026

DRAFT LEICESTERSHIRE CARERS STRATEGY 2026-2030

JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR OF ADULTS AND COMMUNITIES AND CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES

Purpose of report

1. The purpose of this report is to seek the comments of the Committee on the draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030, attached as an Appendix to this report. The report will also explain the development of the strategy and the priorities for delivery.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

2. The Adults and Communities Strategy 'Delivering Wellbeing and Opportunity in Leicestershire' details the ambitions, aims and goals of the Department over the next four years (2025– 2029). It reflects the ambitions of the Council's overall strategic plan.

3. The Joint Carers Strategy Refresh 2022-2025, Recognising, Valuing and Supporting Carers in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland outlines eight key priorities: carer identification, valuing carers, keeping carers informed, developing carer friendly communities, ensuring carers have a life alongside caring, utilising technology to support caring**,** accessing the right support at the right time and recognising young carers.

4. The Care Act 2014 gives unpaid adult carers in England the legal right to a support assessment, placing them on an equal footing with the people they care for. If the assessment identifies eligible needs, local authorities have a duty to meet them, such as through respite care or direct payments. Local authorities must focus on the carer's wellbeing, including their physical, mental, and emotional health, as well as their ability to work and have a life outside of caring.

5. The Children and Families Act 2014 was introduced to set out what the support local authorities may offer for carers, as well as the cared for person for young people and their families.

6. The Carers Leave Act 2023 came into effect in April 2024 to support carers to balance their work with their unpaid caring responsibilities. This Act gives full time employees the right to take one week (of up to five days) of unpaid leave per year to allow carers to provide or arrange care for a dependent.

7. On 3 December 2025, a meeting of the County Council resolved to:

   a) Formally recognise carers as a group requiring particular consideration and support, specifically:
      - To ensure carers are consulted and involved in shaping services;
      - To review service delivery to remove barriers for carers.

   b) Assess future decisions, services and policies made and adopted by the Council to determine the impact of changes on carers.

   c) Ensure that these commitments are incorporated into the refresh of the LLR Carers Strategy and any other relevant policies and strategies.

Background

8. The Joint Carers Strategy Refresh 2022-2025, Recognising, Valuing and Supporting Carers in Leicester, Leicestershire and Rutland, was approved by the Cabinet in November 2022**.**

9. In the future, it is intended that each authority develop individual carers' strategies tailored to the unique needs and requirements of its respective area. Having a specific Leicestershire Carers Strategy will be reflective of Leicestershire carers and will highlight what they need and how the Council can help carers continue with their caring role. The new strategy will be aligned with the Council's values and priorities whilst working in partnership with Health (Integrated Care Board, University Hospitals of Leicester NHS Trust and Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust) to ensure that the overall approach to support carers in Leicestershire remains a joint arrangement.

10. The new Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030 will address the areas to improve and strengthen support to carers. This will include actions resulting from the Care Quality Commission's (CQC), Leicestershire County Council: local authority assessment, published in September 2025. The report highlighted areas of good practice and also some areas where improvements can be made.

11. The Census 2021 data indicates a total of 61,300 of Leicestershire respondents, aged five years and above, declaring that they provided unpaid care (9% of population). The highest rate of caring in the population was among those aged 45 to 64 (15%), followed by those 65 to 84 (11.3%), with women predominating in all but the eldest (aged 85 years and above) group of carers.

12. There is some geographical variation amongst carers in Leicestershire with the highest rate being in Oadby and Wigston (9.8%) and lowest in Harborough (8.3%), unadjusted for age. The rate of employment among carers is slightly higher in Leicestershire compared to the national average, with slightly lower unemployment rate (2% versus 3%).

13. In 2024/25, 1,455 carers assessments were completed in Leicestershire. So far for 2025/26, 1,398 have been completed with 15% of these being joint assessments with the cared-for person.

14. There are currently 2,304 carers in receipt of a service from the Council of whom, 1,581 people have a weekly carers direct payment, 716 people have a one-off carers

direct payment. In addition, around 2,500 carers are supported by the commissioned carers service per year.

15. In 2025, a total of 116 assessment referrals were received, with 69 full assessments being completed by the young carer team. In addition, 94 young carers passports were issued and a total of 341 have been issued since the scheme was launched in 2022. The school census data recorded 289 young carers in 2025.

Key engagement activities

16. During the period of October to December 2025, a number of key engagement activities have been undertaken across the county. Carers have been offered a variety of ways to get involved and have their say and help shape the new Leicestershire Carers Strategy.

17. The engagement methods have included:

- *face to face group-based engagement* - this took place at commissioned provider carers groups, community groups and a Carers Rights Day event.
- *online via Microsoft Teams* - from previous engagement, carers have fed back to say they prefer having an option to meet virtually as they do not have to worry about transport and getting back for their loved ones.
- online survey.
- one-to-one engagement with carers.

18. As of January 2026, over 300 adult carers have been involved in the development of the strategy.

19. The County Council's Young Carers Team have also engaged with young carers via the online survey. A total of 19 young carers provided feedback on what is important to them and how they would like to be supported.

20. Feedback from upcoming scheduled engagement activities due to take place will be added to any future reports and evidence. It is not expected to significantly change the themes already identified or the new Leicestershire priorities.

21. Over 20 people have completed the professionals survey on the carer's strategy. Professionals who participated include County Council staff, key partners including Leicestershire Partnership NHS Trust, GPs and local charities who work closely with carers.

Key themes from the engagement activities

22. The following themes have been identified through analysis of the survey and verbal feedback.

    a) Recognition of the caring role - Carers want to be recognised and feel valued and appreciated for what they do for their loved ones on a day-to-day basis. Carers are not always recognised. They want to be listened to by all professionals working with them. At times, carers feel their voices are not always heard or professionals do not always understand their caring situation and feel

professionals know better than them. They do not want to keep repeating their story.

b) Respite from caring responsibilities - When caring for someone daily, it can be overwhelming and lead to carer strain and breakdown. To reduce the impact carers need time for themselves to take a break and take their minds away from their daily caring responsibilities. Where informal carers can access paid support for a couple of hours during the week, it has helped to allow them to have a break; but not all carers are able to get support in place to take a break. Some carers want long respite for their loved ones at a care home.

c) Tackling loneliness and isolation of carers - Caring can be very lonely and isolating, especially when there are no family members living locally and no one to turn to. Carers would like someone to call and check in with them occasionally to make sure they are okay and have an opportunity for them to talk to somebody. Sometimes carers do not talk to anyone all day apart from their loved one they are caring for.

d) Information and advice - Carers are not all aware of the range of support available to them or know what to look for. The information available can be overwhelming and information can be hard to process, especially when the content is not easy read and contains jargon and acronyms. Some carers feel they are provided with an overload of information/leaflets/booklets which they do not have time to read and understand. Sometimes carers are given information by professionals and expected to get on with caring for their loved ones. Carers want to be included with all information and advice that is available to them. Sometimes they feel excluded especially with a digital format because not all carers can access online materials.

e) Easier access to services outside of working hours - It would be helpful to carers, to have support where they can find all information and advice in one location. Carers have expressed how difficult and how long it takes them to get through to speak to someone. Carers feel they would like a service which supports carers beyond the working hours. Often working carers work during normal office hours and by the time they have finished work, the telephone lines are closed thus unable to follow things up.

f) Carers support groups - Carers have found attending carers groups, both commissioned and non-commissioned support groups have been a lifeline for them, as they allow carers to be part of a community and to be able to connect with other carers who are in similar situations to them. It has also given carers the opportunity to speak to others to provide mutual support, share information and advice and what has worked for them. This has been particularly useful for carers who do not have a good support network around them.

g) Cost of support - The direct payment provided to carers, does not always cover the cost of all the support they require, for example, support from a cleaner or a gardener. Which means carers have to provide the top up for the service/support.

h) Access to health service - Carers have struggled at times to get through to their GPs to get an appointment for either themselves or for their cared for person. They have also experienced difficulties with getting repeat prescriptions. There

also appears to be some inconsistencies with whether carers are being registered as a carer with their GP.

i) Young carers often find it difficult balancing their education and caring for their family member. It is important young carers are supported in the right way to ensure they have a bright future ahead of them. Young carers have expressed they would like a break from their caring responsibilities. A way to connect with other carers who are in similar situations and have benefited from attending youth groups. Young carers said they would like to have support with their mental health, especially when they find times difficult.

Proposals

23. As a direct result of the engagement activities, the following priorities have been generated.

Priority	Description
Priority one	Carers are recognised, valued, listened to, and supported to continue caring
Priority two	Carers are provided with accurate, timely and relevant information and advice
Priority three	Carers are supported with their wellbeing and access services when needed

24. The actions to implement the priorities are detailed in the draft strategy.

Proposed Consultation and engagement

25. A report will be presented to the Cabinet 24 March 2026 meeting, seeking approval to commence a public consultation on the on the draft strategy. The following questions will be asked to determine the reach and impact of the proposed strategy and where it can be improved.

a) How well, if at all, do you think the draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy accurately reflects carers issues?
   - Very well
   - Fairly well
   - Not very well
   - Not at all
   - Don't know
     - Why do you say this? Is there anything you would like to add?

b) How important, if at all, are the following priorities to you?
   - Carers are recognised, valued and listened to and supported to continue caring
   - Carers are provided with accurate, timely and relevant information and advice
   - Carers are supported with their wellbeing
   - Carers can access social care and wellbeing services when needed

c) To what extent do you agree or disagree that these are the right priorities?
- Strongly agree
- Tend to agree
- Neither agree nor disagree
- Tend to disagree
- Strongly disagree
- Don't know

d) Why do you say this? Are there any other priorities that should be included in the strategy?

e) Is there anything you particularly like about the draft strategy?

f) Is there anything you particularly don't like about the draft strategy?

g) What would make the most difference to your life as a carer?

h) Do you have any other comments?

26. The public consultation documentation will include a summary and explanation of the strategy, along with appropriate and proportionate monitoring information of protected characteristics.

27. Consultation will take place through online surveys, online meetings and face to face sessions.

28. As part of the consultation, it is proposed that engagement with Parent Carers is undertaken to ensure that the new strategy works to include Parent Carers' needs and roles as carers.

29. In addition to this, key engagement with Health partners will continue to establish those areas to support carers that are deliverable by Health, either solely or jointly with the Council, are integrated within the strategy and action plan.

Resource Implications

30. In 2024/25 the Council spent £3,547,094 on direct payments services for adult carers and the hospital discharge grant.

31. The majority of this spend was delivered via direct payments enabling carers to have choice and control over their support.

32. Inclusive of the above spend is the contract with Voluntary Action South Leicestershire (VASL) which is commissioned to provide advice and support to carers at an annual cost of £181,260. The existing carers support service that is operated by VASL has been extended until 31 March 2027. Any new commissioned services will be developed to deliver the priorities in the strategy once finalised. It is expected that some procurement will be necessary.

33. The Support at Home service commenced in October 2025 and has acted as a managed service for carers where a direct payment was not wanted or suitable. Support at Home supports people with eligible social care needs who need

assistance with non-personal care tasks such as cleaning, grocery shopping and befriending. The service has proved to be very popular amongst carers. The service is a pilot and contracted for a year with an option to extend for a further year.

34. There is a specific Carers Team located within the Customer Service Centre to support carers assessments, and this team work closely alongside VASL in relation to completion of assessments.

35. The Director of Corporate Resources and Director of Law and Governance have been consulted on the content of this report.

Key risks

36. There is a risk that without appropriate commissioned services carers may not be able to continue in their caring role. This may lead to a deterioration in wellbeing of carers and the cared for person, and financial cost to the Authority.

37. The draft strategy has been written with the support and assistance of carers in Leicestershire, however a risk remains that a proportional amount of carers have not been consulted and this can be mitigated by conducting a public consultation to further reach carers and interested parties.

Timetable for Decisions

38. A report will be presented to the Cabinet on 24 March 2026, seeking approval to consult on the on the draft strategy.

39. The outcome of the consultation will be reported back to this Committee in September 2026, with a view to the final Strategy being approved by the Cabinet in September 2026.

40. Subject to the Cabinet's approval the Strategy will then be published.

Conclusions

41. The Committee are asked to comment on the draft strategy for the care and support of Leicestershire carers and to support the commencement of a public consultation to further engage with carers and interested parties.

Background papers

- Delivering Wellbeing and opportunity in Leicestershire – Adults and Communities Strategy 2025-29 – https://resources.leicestershire.gov.uk/adult-social-care-and-health/our-approach/policies-and-strategies
- Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland (LLR) Carers Strategy 2022-2025 https://www.leicestershire.gov.uk/sites/default/files/2023-01/Leicestershire-County-Leicester-City-and-Rutland-Carers-Strategy.pdf
- County Council – 3 December 2025 – Support for Family Carers - https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?MId=7861 – item 48 a)**I**
- Report to the Cabinet: 25 November 2022 - LLR Carers Strategy 2022-2025 - https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=6751&Ver=4

- CQC Assessment of Leicestershire's Social Care Department - https://www.cqc.org.uk/care-services/local-authority-assessment-reports/leicestershire-0925 -

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

42. A copy of this report will be circulated to all members of the County Council

Equality Implications

43. An Equalities Impact Assessment (EIA) has been conducted for the Carers Strategy. This will be updated if a public consultation takes place. The EIA has been approved by the Adults and Communities Departmental Equality Group.

Human Rights Implications

44. There are no human rights implications arising from the recommendations in this report.

Other Relevant Impact Assessments

45. A health impact assessment has been conducted on the draft strategy and this will be updated if a public consultation takes place.

46. Although it is proposed that the strategy focuses on Leicestershire a formal group will continue to have an important role in ensuring that partnership working across the geographical system is in place. The group represents both adult and young carers groups with representatives from both adults and children's services across key partners (Integrated Care Board/Council's, NHS community services). The impact on partnership working is therefore considered to be positive.

47. A new Leicestershire governance will be developed to oversee the specific deliverables of the strategy and actions with associated Key Performance Indicators and metrics in place and informed by carers throughout the duration of the strategy.

Appendix

Draft Carers Strategy for Leicestershire 2026-2030

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