

**CABINET - 8 SEPTEMBER 2026****LEICESTERSHIRE CARERS STRATEGY 2026-2030****JOINT REPORT OF THE DIRECTORS OF ADULT AND CULTURAL SERVICES AND CHILDREN AND FAMILY SERVICES****PART A****Purpose of the Report**

1. The purpose of this report is to advise the Cabinet of feedback from the consultation on the draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy and to seek the Cabinet's approval of the final Strategy, attached as Appendix A to this report.

Recommendations

2. It is recommended that
 - a) The feedback from the consultation exercise be noted;
 - b) The Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030 be approved.

Reasons for Recommendation

3. Following Cabinet's approval to eight-week public consultation, carers, people who use the service, professionals and other interested parties have provided their feedback on the priorities of the new Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030. The Strategy has been further developed and updated to reflect the consultation feedback and its priorities demonstrate the Council's commitment to supporting carers.

Timetable for Decisions (including Scrutiny)

4. The Adults and Cultural Services Overview and Scrutiny Committee will consider a report at its meeting on 7 September 2026 and its comments will be reported to the Cabinet.
5. Subject to the Cabinet's approval the Strategy will be published and launched at Carers Rights Day, Thursday 20 November 2026.

Policy Framework and Previous Decisions

6. The County Council's Adults and Communities Strategy details the ambitions, aims and goals of the (now Adults and Cultural Services) Department over the

next four years (2025 - 2029). It reflects the ambitions of the Council's overall strategic plan.

7. The Care Act (2014) and accompanying statutory guidance set out that where an individual provides or intends to provide care for another adult and it appears that the carer may have any level of needs for support, local authorities must carry out a carer's assessment. The local authority must also identify any children who are involved in providing care.
8. The Children and Families Act (2014) gives young carers and parent carers in England a right to an assessment of their own needs, as well as the cared for person.
9. The Carers Leave Act 2023: 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.
10. NHS 10 Year Health Plan: the latest NHS 10-year plan was published in 2025 and sets out the next 10 years plan (until 2035) how health and care services in England is going to change. There is a focus on prevention services so support can be in place before situations escalate.
11. On 3 December 2025 the Council resolved to formally recognise carers as a group requiring consideration and support, specifically:
 - To ensure carers are consulted and involved in shaping services.
 - To review service delivery to remove barriers for carers.
 - Assess future decisions, services and policies made and adopted by the Council to determine the impact of changes on carers.
 - Ensure that these commitments are incorporated into the refresh of the Leicestershire Carers Strategy and any other relevant policies and strategies.
12. In March 2026 the Cabinet agreed to launch a public consultation on the draft Carers Strategy.

Resource Implications

13. There are no resources implications directly arising from the recommendations in this report.
14. The Adults and Communities Department spent circa £3.5m in 2025/2026 on the provision of direct services to carers. The majority of this spend was delivered via Direct Payments enabling carers to have choice and control over their support. In addition the Council spends many millions of pounds on services to people drawing on care and support in order to support carers
15. 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 31st March 2028. Any new

commissioned services will be developed to deliver the priorities in the strategy once finalised with funding agreed as services are developed. (see also paragraph 50 of this report below).

16. The Support at Home service commenced in October 2026 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.
17. The carers resource allocation system used during an assessment to establish an indicative support budget has not been updated for many years and it is proposed to include it in any development work resulting from the Strategy.
18. There is a specific Carers Team located within the Adults and Cultural Services department to support carers assessments, and this team work closely alongside VASL in relation to completion of assessments.

Circulation under the Local Issues Alert Procedure

19. This report will be circulated to all members of the County Council.

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PART B

Background

20. The Leicestershire, Leicester City and Rutland (LLR) Carers Strategy 2022-2025 outlines the vision and how the County Council works collaboratively with partners including the Integrated Commissioning Board (ICB), Leicestershire Partnership Trust (LPT) and commissioned providers to achieve eight key priorities: carer identification, valuing carers, keeping carers informed, developing carer friendly communities, ensuring carers have a life alongside caring, accessing the right support at the right time and recognising young carers.
21. It is proposed that moving forward, Leicestershire County Council, Leicester City Council and Rutland County Council will now all have individual carers' strategies, specific to each local authority and the requirements of the respective area.
22. Having a specific Leicestershire Carers Strategy will be reflective of Leicestershire carers' voice and how the council can help carers continue with their caring role. The new strategy will also be aligned with the council's values and priorities.
23. The new Leicestershire Carers' Strategy 2026-2030 will address the areas for improvement to strengthen the Council's support to carers. This includes actions resulting from the Care Quality Commission's (CQC) assessment of the County Council published in 2025 which highlighted areas of good practice and also areas where improvements can be made including access to information and advice, support for carers in rural communities and timelines of assessment.
24. The Strategy also include actions to address the recommendations of a Peer Review carried out by Association of Directors of Adult Social Services in May 2026. The review recommended the Council launch a revised strategy, re-energise governance arrangements, plan and work with partners to redesign the offer to carers. The Peer Review final letter and recommendations are appended to this report (Appendix C).

Carers in Leicestershire

25. The Census 2021 data indicates a total of 61,300 of Leicestershire respondents, aged 5 years and above, declaring that they provided unpaid care (9% of population). The highest rate of caring 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. 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%).

26. In 2025/2026, 1923 carers assessments were completed in Leicestershire. So far for 2026/2027, 784 have been completed with 16% of these being joint assessments with the cared-for person.
27. There are currently 1482 carers in receipt of a service from the Council of whom, 1,328 people have a weekly direct payment. A weekly direct payment is a regular amount transferred to the persons payment account to pay for ongoing services, a one-off payment can be up to £250 per year to pay for a larger item such as a washing machine or to put towards several things that will enable the carer to continue caring. The Council does not require a financial contribution toward carer services, and they are not means tested.
28. In addition, around 2,500 carers are supported by the externally commissioned carers service per year.
29. In 2025, a total of 116 young carer 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.

Engagement

30. From October to December 2025, several key engagement activities were undertaken across the County. Carers have been offered a variety of ways to get involved and have their say and help shape the new Strategy.
31. The engagement methods have included face to face group-based engagement and online sessions and surveys.
32. Over 300 adult carers were involved in the development of the draft Strategy.
33. The County Council's young carers team in the Children and Family Services Department has 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.
34. Over 20 people completed the professionals survey on the Strategy including County Council staff, the Leicestershire Partnership Trust, GP's and local charities who work closely with carers.
35. The engagement activities helped to establish a first draft of the Strategy including establishing the following three priorities (previously set out in the report to the Cabinet in March) -

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.
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Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee

36. The Committee considered a report on the development of the Strategy at its meeting on 2 March 2026 and its comments were included in the report to the Cabinet later that month. The Committee will consider the revised Strategy at its meeting on 7 September. The Chairman and Spokespersons of the Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Committee attend the meeting in March and will be invited to the September meeting.

Consultation

37. Consultation on the draft Strategy took place from 20 April to 14 June 2026.
38. Consultation activities with Carers who receive a service from Leicestershire County Council or from a commissioned provider included online surveys, online meetings and face to face sessions, engagement with Parent Carers and health partners. Face to face consultation took place with carers who attended Carers Week event on 9 June 2026.
39. The online survey received a total of 160 responses from the following people, some of who categorised themselves in more than one area:
- Adult carer (122)
 - Parent carer (12)
 - Young carer (5)
 - Sandwich carer (providing support to two generations) (11)
 - Working carer (19)
 - Interested member of the public (5)
 - Professional: health/ social care (5)
 - Other (9) (this includes people who self-identified as previous carers)
40. Of these, 74% thought the draft Strategy 'accurately reflected carers issues in Leicestershire' either 'very well' or 'fairly well' and 18% stating the Strategy did not reflect carers issues 'very well'. The remaining 8% of responses stated they did not know.
41. A large majority, 94% of responders, said that the three priorities were 'very important'. Only 5% of responders thought the priorities were the wrong ones. They did not suggest alternatives.
42. Significant feedback was received in the free text area of the consultation where responders kindly took the time to detail what would make the caring experience better for them. This included areas such as:
- Further respite options
 - Focus on young carers
 - Better communication between services

- Additional help to understand and apply for benefits
 - Further crisis support
 - Clear information for carers and the cared-for person
43. The written responses echoed the in-person and virtual feedback received through carers groups (covering adults, young people and parent carers). The attendance at groups enabled a further 300 carers to have their voices heard and contribute to the consultation. The groups attended were countywide and organised by commissioned services and independent voluntary sector groups. These were groups which were already arranged and were not specifically for this consultation. These were often emotional encounters with carers describing the daily experience and how isolating it can feel. Most carers praised the carers groups they attend with many requesting additional groups in their localities and help with transport to attend. Many groups include a place for the cared for person to receive safe support by paid carers so that the unpaid carers can interact with other carers. This model worked incredibly well to reassure the cared for persons and for the carers to feel confident to leave their loved one temporarily.
44. A series of events were held for young people with caring responsibilities and separately for parent carers. Whilst the priorities were relevant to these groups, they expressed a need to have better communication between adults and children services to ensure resilience in the transition of services. Young people specifically asked for better access to respite care and to enable schools to identify when young carers are struggling.
45. It has been difficult to engage with groups of people with protected characteristics under the Equalities Act 2010 such as sexuality and ethnicity. Around 93% of people who responded to the online survey identified as white with 6% being Asian and 1% Black. Many different approaches were tried to engage with people identifying as an ethnicity other than white. This included contacting Temples, Mosques and Churches in the Leicestershire area and promoting the consultation through VASL to community groups. Rural carers were further contacted through the Rural Community Council. Other disparities include 71% respondents being female and 52% of respondents being aged over 63. Of the total, 4% were under 18.
46. In summary, the consultation and engagement activities further highlighted that carers
- a) want to be recognised and feel valued and appreciated for what they do on a daily basis,
 - b) need further respite to enable them to work and have their own fulfilling life away from the caring responsibility,
 - c) often feel lonely and isolated and this affected their sense of wellbeing,
 - d) need better easy to understand information across the system,
 - e) need access to support outside of normal office hours to support working carers and also at times of crisis

- f) note that the carers indicative budget which they are allocated following their assessment has not been increased with inflation and consider this needs to be considered.
47. Feedback from the consultation has helped inform the revised Strategy (Appendix A).
48. Additions to the Strategy include: -
- A greater focus on working carers and parent carers and how the needs of these people may differ from other groups of carers.
 - Commitments from health partners to ensure the carers voice is heard when the health of the cared for person is being considered.
49. The Strategy is accompanied by an action plan (Appendix B) which will be the key document to monitor the Strategy's delivery. This action plan includes proposed commissioning intentions.
50. The draft action plan will be governed by a dedicated group within the Council with carer representatives invited. The action plan seeks to deliver the outlined priorities and details a timescale and owner. This will be regularly updated and held to account by the governance group. Actions include developing a targeted training offer for professionals working with carers, generating co-produced information and improving access and awareness of respite services.

Equality Implications

51. An equalities impact assessment has been conducted for the Strategy and is attached to this report as Appendix D.
52. The outcome of the assessment indicated a positive impact will be had on all vulnerable groups in Leicestershire that are affected by a caring role.

Human Rights Implications

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

Other Implications and Impact Assessments

54. A health impact assessment was conducted on the draft Strategy.
55. The outcome of the HIA indicated a positive impact on carers health and those that are cared for as the strategy aims to address any inequalities a carer may experience in accessing health and wellbeing services.

Background Papers

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

Report to the Adults and Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee - 2nd March 2026 “Draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030”
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=1040&MId=8355&Ver=4>

Report to the Cabinet - 24th March 2026 “Draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030”
<https://democracy.leics.gov.uk/ieListDocuments.aspx?CId=135&MId=8305&Ver=4>

Appendices

Appendix A - Updated Draft Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030
 Appendix B - Leicestershire Carers Strategy 2026-2030 Draft Action Plan
 Appendix C - EM ADASS Peer Review Letter
 Appendix D - Equality Impact Assessment

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