

Caring Matters

September-December 2025

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



Supporting you
to Keep Warm
& Well

Grants and
Bursaries for
Carers
See page 7

Charity
Night, Crook
Golf Club
See page 11

Join our
Care & Share
Lottery
See page 10

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.

Because Carers Care About Carers

Could you help someone get the support they deserve?

Caring doesn't come with a uniform, a job title or even a payslip. It's the mum who pops over daily to help her elderly neighbour. It's the teenager checking in on their brother with additional needs. It's the husband staying home every night to care for his wife after her diagnosis.

And too often, Carers don't even realise they are Carers. They see it as "just helping out" or "what anyone would do." But here's the truth: caring is life-changing, exhausting, and inspiring work. Carers deserve support. That's where you come in.

Why we need you

At Durham County Carers Support, we're on a mission to find the hidden Carers living in County Durham & Darlington – and we know the best people to help us are other Carers.

Why? Because you understand. You've felt the highs and lows of caring. You know how isolating it can be. You know the relief of a listening ear, a bit of advice, or a place where someone finally says: "You matter too."

Right now, there are thousands of people caring in silence. Many don't know support is out there. You can help change that.

Real Life:

"Someone saw me when I didn't see myself"

For years, Anita* never thought of herself as a Carer.

"I was just looking after Mum," she says. "She'd had a stroke, and I was popping in before and after work. Then I stopped working to be with her full time. It felt like what any daughter would do."

It wasn't until a neighbour mentioned Anita might qualify for support that she heard the word "Carer" applied to her.

"I laughed at first. I thought Carers were professionals – nurses, care workers. But when I registered, it opened doors I didn't know existed. I got help to navigate services, a small grant for some tech equipment, and – most importantly – I found people who understood."

Anita's neighbour changed her life with just a conversation.

How to recognise a hidden Carer

You might already know one:

- A neighbour who's always "popping in" to check on an elderly friend.
- A parent juggling work and caring for a disabled child.
- A friend who's constantly helping their partner manage a long-term illness.

If someone's giving regular, unpaid help to a loved one because of illness, disability, or frailty – they're a Carer. And they deserve support.

Recognise, reach out, register

Here's how you can help:

1. **Spot a Carer** – Think about your family, friends, neighbours, or colleagues.
2. **Reach out** – Let them know support is available. Share your own experience if you feel comfortable.
3. **Register them** – Encourage them to get in touch with us or refer them through our quick online form at www.dccarers.org 'sign up for support' or call 0300 005 1213.

It takes just a moment, but it could change their life.

Carers Rights Day 2025

Supporting Carers Across County Durham

Week commencing 17th November 2025

Location: Local community venues across County Durham

Durham County Carers Support will be marking Carers Rights Day 2025 with a series of local events focused on maximising income and minimising expenditure, equipping Carers with the knowledge and tools to take control of their financial wellbeing.

What to Expect:

We will be working with trusted local organisations to deliver information, guidance and practical support, including:

- **Energy Efficiency Advice** - tips and tools to reduce energy usage at home.
- **Free Benefits Checks** - make sure you're receiving everything you're entitled to.
- **Money-Saving Resources** - explore the full range of support available across the County.
- **Free Energy Packs for Carers** - practical items to help lower bills and stay warm this winter.

These events are a great opportunity to connect with other Carers, access expert advice, and learn more about your rights and entitlements.

More details, including **dates, venues and times** will be released shortly. If you are a Carer and want to be kept informed, please get in touch with us or check our website and social media channels regularly.

Together, let's make sure Carers across County Durham get the support and recognition they deserve.



Thank You for Supporting Carers Week

We want to say a heartfelt thank you to all our colleagues, partner organisations and the wider community who have taken the time to plan, host, or support events for Carers Week.

Your efforts, whether large or small, have made a real difference in helping unpaid Carers feel recognised, valued, and supported. From drop-ins and awareness stands to creative sessions and thoughtful conversations, each activity has played a part in reaching Carers who might otherwise go unseen. We directly spoke with over 400 Carers in County Durham and through promotion we will have reached so many more.

We are truly grateful for your continued dedication and collaboration. This Carers Week was a huge success because of your support and we look forward to continuing this important work together.

We are also really pleased to share that over £500 was raised thanks to the fundraising through raffles and cake stalls and this money will be used to support our Counselling for Carers Project.



For more information on events, resources, and ways to help visit www.dccarers.org

#CarersWeek2025 #CaringAboutEquality #SupportCarers

Carers Money Matters

CARERS TRUST

We are proud to be delivering our Carers Money Matters Project thanks to funding from the Carers Trust. This initiative is dedicated to helping unpaid Carers across County Durham and Darlington gain confidence in managing their money, securing financial stability, and accessing the support they are rightly entitled to.

Why Carers Money Matters

Caring for someone can often be challenging and can come at personal cost. Many Carers give up work or reduce their hours, face higher household expenses such as food and utilities, and navigate a complex and often confusing welfare system. Financial stress can quietly build up, compounding the emotional and physical strain of caring.

Carers Money Matters exists to change by providing practical help, giving Carers the tools they need to feel in control of their finances.

What the Project Offers

Carers Money Matters provides free, tailored support in the following areas:

- **Welfare Benefits Checks & Applications**
Carers receive one-to-one advice to ensure they're receiving all the benefits and entitlements available to them. From Carer's Allowance to Universal Credit, we simplify the process and offer hands-on support.
- **Energy & Utility Support**
With rising energy prices, we help Carers access government schemes, negotiate with suppliers, and apply for grants to reduce bills and manage energy debt.
- **Budgeting & Money Management Guidance**
Our trained advisors offer practical advice on day-to-day money management, setting budgets, and dealing with unexpected expenses.
- **Debt Support**
Many Carers quietly carry the weight of debt—often the result of reduced income, unexpected expenses, or the hidden costs of caring. Our team provides a safe, non-judgemental space to talk about money worries. We offer practical guidance to help Carers take the first steps toward managing or reducing debt and refer to specialist debt advice services when appropriate. No one should feel ashamed of asking for help.
- **Signposting to Trusted Partners**
When more specialist help is needed—such as debt advice, legal support, or employment services—we connect Carers to trusted local and national organisations.

- **Workshops & Information Sessions**

Regular events across the region bring Carers together to learn about financial topics in a friendly, relaxed setting—reinforcing that they are not alone.

Proven Impact, Real Change

Since launching, Carers Money Matters has supported a number of Carers in navigating financial difficulties. Many have successfully secured additional income in unclaimed benefits, resolved long-standing issues with bills, and restored a sense of security and control in their households.

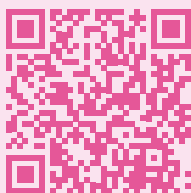


smokefree Countydurham

Quitting smoking is the best thing you can do for your health! Smokefree County Durham are here to support people who live or work in County Durham to stop smoking tobacco for good, with 12 weeks of support from a Specialist Practitioner and multiple options to help you quit, such as free Nicotine Replacement Therapy, free vape kits, or stop-smoking medications.

You may also be eligible to earn up to £120 when you quit smoking with us, for example, if you are a Routine & Manual worker or live in social housing! Please see our website for further details - www.smokefreecountydurham.co.uk/120-for-manual-workers

Whether this is your first attempt, or you've tried before, our dedicated team is here to help you succeed. You don't have to do it alone. Book your appointment today by calling Smokefree County Durham on **0800 772 0565**, or sign up on our website www.smokefreecountydurham.co.uk/sign-up or scan the QR code below.



Help shape our future together!

Let's Talk County Durham is Durham County Council's new online consultation and engagement platform where you can have your say on the things that matter to your community.

Most activities allow you to take part without registering, however people visiting the site also have the option to create their own account, making it easier for them to get involved, see the feedback and comments they have made and follow the progress of projects that interest them.

Since the platform launched in January this year, over 21,000 visitors have explored the site, many of whom have taken part in surveys or signed up for events for topics ranging from social housing allocation to community health and wellbeing, regeneration projects to the future of adult social care, satisfaction with family hubs to shaping the council's overarching strategic plan.

Activity is not all online – the council will continue to provide printed materials, such as surveys, at libraries and Customer Access Points, as well as carrying out face-to-face work in communities.

New projects are added regularly, so don't miss out!

Get involved today at www.letstalkcountydurham.co.uk



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



Darlington

Carers Support



Darlington
carers support

Livingwell Darlington

The Livingwell Directory is being updated. Livingwell Darlington is a service that provides information and signposting to a wide range of services, activities and organisations in Darlington, to help everyone find the support they need to live healthy independent lives. Search the directory for information on services, activities and organisations who can give advice or practical support, help at home, health conditions, childcare information, leisure information and much more. To view all of the services in Darlington, follow this link livingwell.darlington.gov.uk

Empowering Parent Carers: First Aid Training Success in Darlington

Darlington Carers Support, in partnership with Fane Ltd, recently delivered a successful Emergency Paediatric First Aid course for Parent Carers at St Teresa's Hospice in Darlington. Nine attendees took part in the hands-on training, gaining essential life-saving skills in a warm, welcoming environment. The venue was praised as "clean, spacious, and accessible," helping create a positive and supportive atmosphere.

Feedback was overwhelmingly positive, with participants calling the session "brilliant," "very helpful," and the facilitators "approachable and informative." Parent Carer Support Coordinator Paula Stinson highlighted the value of the day, noting how it combined learning with meaningful connection and socialising. Darlington Carers Support are thrilled with the outcome and look forward to providing more opportunities to empower and support Parent Carers in the community.



Carers Afternoon Tea

Wednesday 15th October 2025

12pm-2pm at Hotel Bannatyne

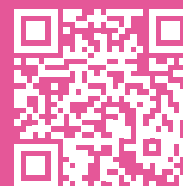
Due to the recent success from our previous events, Darlington Carers Support would like to invite registered Carers to join them for afternoon tea on Wednesday 15th October 2025, at the Bannatyne Hotel, Southend Ave, Darlington, DL3 7HZ, from 12pm to 2pm. Tickets are priced at £5 each.



Places are limited and unfortunately will not be available to Carers who have attended our previous Afternoon Tea events.

To register your interest, please complete the forms link forms.office.com/e/vJ5aGZfWJJ

Scan the QR code or call
0300 030 1215.



Benefits Updates

Carer's Allowance – 7th April 2025 changes

The earnings limit increased from £151 to £196 weekly after possible deductions of tax, National Insurance, half pension contributions, and certain care costs, giving an extra £2,340 a year earnings potential for many Carers. Carer's Allowance payments rose from £81.90 to £83.30/week.

Carers allowance overpayments review is ongoing. Over 43,000 Carers were affected, many facing large debts and were not made aware of the issue until large overpayments had occurred. Campaigners want a pause on new overpayment debts until the system is fixed.

Benefit Cuts Put on Hold

Planned stricter rules for PIP and Carer's Allowance are put on hold until at least Autumn 2026.

Travelling Abroad? Tell the DWP

If you're away for more than 4 weeks and don't report it your payments could stop, and you may have to repay money or be fined up to £5,000.

If someone is in hospital?

Many benefits are affected by hospital stays of 28 days or over. It's best to inform DWP when someone goes into hospital and then they will make the adjustments at the 28-day point. But make sure you remember to tell them when they are discharged to restart them or not to make adjustments.

September 2025

Legacy benefits are ending. All managed migration notices are expected to be sent out by the DWP by the end of September 2025. Working parents of children under the age of five will be entitled to Government support of 30 hours free childcare per week from September 2025.

December 2025

The DWP aims to make the transfer of people on income-related ESA to Universal Credit complete.

For individual advice contact our Carer Support team on 0300 005 1213 or for a benefit check use the Turn2us calculator on our website [dcarers.org/benefits-and-grants/](https://dccarers.org/benefits-and-grants/)

To access support from our Money Matters Project Worker including help with fuel/energy advice and money saving tips contact Johnny Toas on johnny.toas@darlingtoncarers.org or call 01388 418327.

Support when it's most needed:

Grants and Bursaries for Carers

At Durham County Carers Support, we understand the sacrifices that unpaid Carers make to support their loved ones. Sometimes, these sacrifices lead to financial hardship—especially when unexpected household costs arise.

Financial relief for Carers in crisis

We have access to grants and bursaries that can help Carers who are experiencing financial difficulty or who may find themselves getting into debt due to the need to replace vital household items. These funds can be used to purchase or replace essential items that contribute to a safe and functional home environment.

We know how difficult it can be to ask for help, but no one should have to go without basic household necessities. If you're a Carer and are facing these challenges, we encourage you to get in touch.

Who can apply?

You may be eligible for a grant or bursary if:

- You are an unpaid Carer supporting someone in County Durham or Darlington and registered with us
- You are experiencing financial hardship
- You need to replace or purchase an essential household item

PLEASE NOTE EACH GRANT MAKER HAS IT'S OWN SET OF ELIGIBILITY CRITERIA that has to be met before applying.

How to access support

To enquire about eligibility and begin an application:

- Call us on 0300 005 1213
- Or email us at admin@dccarers.org
- You can also speak with your Carer Support Coordinator for guidance

A hand up, not a handout

If you or someone you know could benefit from this assistance, please don't hesitate to reach out.

Carer Training

Training/Workshop	When	Where
<i>Creative Writing</i>	Wed 24th September 2025	Shotton community Centre, DH6 2PQ
	Wed 23rd October 2025	Four Clocks, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7EH
<i>Making Sense of Caring for Parent Carers</i>	Tues 30th September 2025	Online via Teams
	Wed 12th November 2025	St Teresa's Hospice, Darlington, DL3 7UA.
	Wed 26th November 2025	DCCS, The Old Methodist Church, Spennymoor, DL16 7AT
<i>Mental Health Awareness Workshop</i>	Wed 1st October 2025	DCCS, The Old Methodist Church, Middlestone Moor, DL16 7AT
<i>Making Sense of Caring</i>	Wed 15th October 2025	Crook Community Centre, DL15 8NE
	Wed 12th November 2025	Shotton Community Centre, DH6 2PQ
	Wed 3rd December 2025	The Venue, Stanley, DH9 6AH
<i>Emotional Resilience</i>	Tues 7th October 2025	Four Clocks, Bishop Auckland, DL14 7EH
<i>Paediatric First Aid</i>	Thurs 2nd October 2025	Shotton community Centre, DH6 2PQ
<i>POA, Wills and Trusts</i>	Mon 20th October 2025	Online via Zoom
<i>Yoga (6 weekly sessions)</i>	Friday 31st October 2025 - Friday 5th December 2025	Online via Zoom
<i>First Aid Training</i>	Mon 17th November 2025	DCCS, The Old Methodist Church, Middlestone Moor, DL16 7AT
	Thurs 20th November 2025	The Venue, Stanley, DH9 6AH
	Wed 26th November 2025	St Teresa's Hospice, Darlington, DL3 7UA.

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.”

If you receive your Caring Matters via email and would like to attend any of the sessions simply click on the link provided below. If you receive it by post, you can call Alison Dixon on 0191 500 6031 or email alison.dixon@dccarers.org

<i>Time</i>	<i>Booking link</i>	<i>Area</i>
1pm - 3pm	https://forms.office.com/e/DCe3Rm4AGC	Durham Carers
1.30pm – 3.30pm		
6pm-7pm	https://forms.office.com/e/Uvx4yjt9QQ	Durham & Darlington Carers
10am – 12noon	https://forms.office.com/e/qX5Pbqwwh3	Darlington Carers Only
10am – 12noon	https://forms.office.com/e/Uvx4yjt9QQ	Darlington Carers
10.00am - 1.30pm	https://forms.office.com/e/dbJujP9dWa	Durham Carers
10am – 12noon	https://forms.office.com/e/7GFUnmS4YK	Durham & Darlington Carers
10am-1pm	https://forms.office.com/e/XAcdmk422K	Durham Carers
10am– 1pm	https://forms.office.com/e/RAWUV77Xky	Durham Carers
6pm – 7pm	https://forms.office.com/e/29VjNmwe4f	Durham & Darlington Carers
9.15am - 10.15am	https://forms.office.com/e/u5kUXvLF5A	Durham & Darlington Carers
10am – 1pm	https://forms.office.com/e/nRfxwYemdC	Durham Carers
	https://forms.office.com/e/GfLJgScs8N	Darlington Carers Only

Running for Carers:

How You Can Support Our Amazing Fundraisers

This September, five determined and passionate individuals will be lacing up their trainers, braving the crowds, and pounding the pavements in this year's Great North Run – all to raise vital funds for Carers in County Durham and Darlington.

Meet our incredible running team:

- **Ken Thomas** – a long-time supporter, always up for a challenge
- **Isla Ballard** – running the Great North Run with fierce determination
- **Zoe Ballard** – Isla's fundraising partner-in-crime
- **Chris Park** – passionate about support for Carers
- **Claire Wilkinson** – running the GNR for the 9th time and still smiling!

These five legends aren't just running 13.1 miles – they're running to keep our **counselling service for Carers** going strong.



Why It Matters

Caring for someone can be incredibly rewarding – but also isolating, exhausting, and emotionally overwhelming. Our counselling service, funded entirely by donations and fundraising, gives Carers a safe, confidential space to talk, reflect and recharge.

Every counselling session costs money – and every step taken by our runners helps ensure that no Carer has to face their mental health struggles alone.

How You Can Help

Feeling inspired? Here's how you can support our runners and make a real difference:

Donate Today

Head to www.dccarers.org and make a donation. Big or small, your support helps fund our counselling sessions – a lifeline for many Carers who are simply worn out from giving so much of themselves.

Join Our Care and Share Lottery

Fancy supporting Carers and having a chance to win some cash yourself? Join our **Care and Share Lottery** today by visiting <https://give.dccarers.org>

It's simple, fun, and a brilliant way to make your support go even further – with a sprinkle of luck thrown in!

Whether you're cheering our runners on, donating online, or taking a chance on the lottery, you're part of something bigger. You're helping Carers in County Durham and Darlington feel less alone, more supported, and a little more hopeful.



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

May 2025

1st Elizabeth Conlon
2nd Thomas McElhone
3rd Amy Garside

June 2025

1st Vicky Kirkup
2nd Marilyn Sadler
3rd Wendy Cook

July 2025

1st Claire Walton
2nd Karen Prior

3rd Annie Robinson

August 2025

1st Pamela Harries
2nd Hayley Mason
3rd Ms Theresa White

Average
1st PRIZE
£113

Average
2nd PRIZE
£75

Average
3rd PRIZE
£37

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 dccarers.org/product/i-am-a-carer-metal-pin-badge or scan the QR code.



Join us for our Charity Night

We have an evening of entertainment planned to help raise much-needed funds for our Counselling Service.

*Join us for: **Motown music from the Tamla All Stars***



Raffle • Bingo • Quiz

Venue: Crook Golf Club, Low Jobs Hill, Crook, DL15 9AA

Date: Saturday 18th October 2025

Bar Opens: 6pm | **Closes:** 11pm

Tickets are limited and are £10 each. Available online by following the link dccarers.org/product/charity-night/ or scanning the QR code



**Durham County
Carers Support**

*Come along to
support our Charity.*

Huge thanks to Maureen Gilbert!

Maureen has been busy growing and selling plants on our behalf – and she's raised an incredible **£160**! She's also donated a lovely collection of plants for Carer Support Co-ordinator Adele, to bring into the office. She must have known that we have two empty hanging baskets that now look fabulous.



Support **Groups**

You're Not Alone — Join a Carers Group

Caring for someone can be incredibly rewarding – but it can also be isolating, exhausting and emotionally overwhelming. At Durham County Carers Support, we understand the challenges you face every day. That's why we run friendly, welcoming Carer Groups across County Durham and Darlington and we would love to see you there

What is a Carer Group?

A safe, relaxed space where you can:

- Take time for yourself
- Connect with others who 'just get it'
- Share experiences, tips, and laughs
- Hear from guest speakers and local services

- Access support and information that could make life easier

Whether it's over a cuppa or a chat about what's going well (or not so well), our groups are a place where you can feel understood – not judged. Alan said "It's the only place I feel truly understood."

Carer groups can help you:

- Feel less isolated
- Share and learn from others
- Boost your wellbeing
- Leave feeling lighter

Not sure if it's for you? That's okay. You're welcome to come along and just listen.

Our groups are free and held in local venues, see below:

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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.

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

- 1st October – social – refreshments & a chat
- 5th November - speaker Abbey Lax from Darlington Healthwatch
- 3rd December – Christmas Social Special

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



Parent Carer Support

Join us in making a difference one poster at a time!

Have you seen our poster displayed in your child's school? We are trying to reach all schools in County Durham and Darlington.

If your child's school is displaying this poster then you can nominate them to win a mystery bundle of gardening equipment worth £50.00! To enter, send us a photo of the poster displayed and tell us which school it's in by Friday 9th January 2026. Each photo is one entry for the school. Please go to our closed Parent Carer Facebook group and add your photo to the thread. If you're not on Facebook, please send it by email to one of our Parent Carer team listed below. The winning school will be announced by Friday 30th January 2026.

If you need a poster for your school, please email Suzanne, Michelle or Paula, our Parent Carer team.

suzanne.lanes@dccarers.org - Durham
michelle.wright@dccarers.org - Durham
paula.stinson@darlingtoncarers.org - Darlington



Here are some services who can support you in your Parent Carer role around educational needs:

Darlington SENDIASS - livingwell.darlington.gov.uk/Services/340

Durham SENDIASS - durhamsendiass.info

IPSEA - www.ipsea.org.uk

Family Hubs - www.durham.gov.uk/FamilyHubs

Getting Better Help - durham.gov.uk/article/31943/Support-sessions-for-parents-of-children-with-Special-Educational-Needs-and-or-Disabilities-SEND

Daisy Chain - daisychainproject.co.uk

Toby Henderson Trust - www.ttht.co.uk

Making Changes Together - www.mctdurham.co.uk/useful-links-organisations-support-groups

Darlington Parent Carer Forum - www.facebook.com/TogetherforBetterDarlington/?locale=en_GB

Please keep an eye on our social media pages for more information and support.

Parent Carer Case Study

Sadie is a single parent, who works part-time while caring for her 3-year-old son who has Autism, Sensory Processing Disorder, sleep difficulties, and asthma. After moving out of her parents' home into her own property, she was unaware she was entitled to the housing element of Universal Credit. For over a year, she paid her full rent and full council tax from her own income, leaving her struggling financially.

Our Parent Carer Specialist Support Coordinator, Michelle, completed a comprehensive benefit check and identified the missing housing element. Michelle supported Sadie to apply for this entitlement, resulting in backdated payments that eased her financial pressures. Alongside this, Michelle signposted Sadie to relevant services, including the Family Fund, to access further support for her caring role.

Sadie had been struggling emotionally with balancing work, finances and looking after her little boy with additional needs so we referred her to our counselling service and provided her with information on other local support and services tailored towards her needs.

Sadie also accessed a Kindle through our Carer Break funding and has since told us that through our intervention not only has her financial situation improved but her stress has reduced and she is now more able to focus on her son's needs and her own wellbeing,

“
Overcoming
Financial and
Emotional
Strain
”



Volunteers Support

Needed to Help Carers with Benefit Forms

We understand the crucial difference that access to the right benefits can make in the lives of unpaid Carers. Every week, we support Carers who are overwhelmed by the complexity of benefit forms—forms which, if completed correctly and in full, can unlock vital financial support and peace of mind.

We are seeking compassionate Volunteers to assist Parent Carers with the completion of Disability Living Allowance (DLA) forms.

Why your help matters

Carers often sacrifice their own financial security to support someone they love. By offering your time to help complete benefit forms, you will play a part in lifting a significant burden from their shoulders and enabling them to access the support they are entitled to.

What the role involves

- Supporting Carers one-to-one with form completion (in Office or by phone)
- Liaising with the Carer Support Team for guidance and updates

What we're looking for

- Good listening and communication skills
- Attention to detail
- A couple of hours per week or a few hours per month (flexible around your availability)
- Training will be provided —no previous benefits knowledge is needed

Full training and support

All volunteers will receive full induction and training in benefit processes, confidentiality, and safeguarding. You will also be fully supported by our experienced staff team throughout your volunteering.

Join us in making a difference

This is an opportunity to give back in a meaningful way, helping local Carers who are too often unseen and unsupported.

Complete this questionnaire to register your interest in becoming a volunteer
<https://forms.office.com/e/E4UFgV8qwV> or scan the QR code



Support Group Survey



Help Us Shape Our Carer Groups
We want to make our Carer groups better for you. Take our quick survey to share what you'd like to see more of.

We are currently reviewing our support groups to ensure they continue to meet the needs of the Carers who benefit from them most.

Your input is invaluable. By completing our short survey, you'll help us understand what's working well so we can offer the right support, in the right way, to those who need it most. It should take no longer than 5 minutes to complete - Thank you for your support.

To complete the survey, follow this link
<https://forms.office.com/e/dj4qHCznZq> or scan the QR code.



From Hospital to Home

Our team offer specific support to Carers when the person they care for is an inpatient in Hospital and in particular around the time of being discharge.

Jan Burden and Helen Olney attend University Hospital North Durham (UHND) 2 days a week and cover Afternoon and Evening visiting times. Look out for the 'Pop Up Stand' as seen in the photo or phone the main office number to arrange an appointment with them. They can also support you around discharge from one of the community hospitals around the County.

Ruth Sykes is based at Darlington Memorial and is also available on Wednesday afternoons and evenings at Bishop Auckland Hospital.

They can advise on your rights, the processes, the language and who to talk to if you are worried.

Recent feedback includes:

'Thank you does not seem to be enough to say for all she has done for my husband and especially me. All I can really truly say is please do not give up this service, it is extremely hard to process, care and understand what is happening and people like Helen are a god send.'

Carer who also works for the NHS said she was grateful to the Hospital Discharge Project. She has relied upon the support. Her relative is now being cared for in a Care Home. She says the home and staff there have been amazing to her relative and to her entire family and her caring journey would have been very different had she not registered seven years ago.

A Carer who supported her husband from hospital to care home, explained 'You are always there, you listen and explain things to me, when you say you are going to do something you do it! I am ever so grateful to this service.'



Jan Burden outside the University Hospital of North Durham

Notice of Durham County Carers Support Annual General Meeting

Wednesday 5th November 2025, 11am – 12.30pm

Venue: Bishop Auckland Football Club, Heritage Park, Stadium Way, Bishop Auckland, Co Durham, DL14 9AE

Our AGM will include:

- Annual Report presentation
- Election of Trustees
- Presentation of financial accounts
- Celebration of achievements and future plans
- Refreshments



If you would like to attend, please scan the QR code opposite and complete your details online, alternatively contact Sophie Johnson on 0191 500 6035 or email: sophie.johnson@dccarers.org

A Greener way to stay connected:

How going digital is with our Green Commitment

Building on our achievement of attaining the Investors in the Environment Silver Award in 2024, we are now fully dedicated to our sustainability journey. With support from Business Durham and Genee Consulting Ltd, we are striving towards the Green Award in 2025.

From Paper to Progress: The Numbers Tell the Story

Back in **February 2022**, we were sending out Caring Matters to **19,897 Carers**. At that point, **56%** of readers received the magazine by post, with only **44%** choosing email delivery.

Fast forward to **April 2025**, and not only has our magazine circulation grown to a whopping **26,743 Carers** but **69%** now receive the magazine by **email**, and only **31%** by post.

That's a dramatic shift. In just over three years:

- The number of Carers receiving digital issues has **more than doubled**
- We've saved **thousands of printed copies**, envelopes, and delivery miles
- Our carbon footprint from distribution has dropped **significantly**

Why It Matters: Small Changes, Big Impact

Let's put it plainly. Every digital magazine sent:

- Saves trees
- Cuts down on emissions from delivery vehicles
- Reduces the energy used in printing and packaging
- Minimises waste (and the occasional soggy letterbox surprise)

This is not about denying the comfort of paper – we know some still prefer it and that's okay. But for those who can go digital, your simple choice has a meaningful ripple effect.

Help Us Keep the Momentum Going

We're incredibly proud of how far we've come – and we're aiming higher.

If you're still receiving *Caring Matters* by post and you have an email address, consider making the switch. It's:

- Quick and easy
- Better for the environment
- The same trusted content, just faster and lighter

Changing your preference is as simple as emailing us at admin@dccarers.org and put 'Switch me to magazine by email' then we will do the rest.

Caring for Carers. Caring for the Environment.

Thank you to every Carer who's already embraced the greener way. With your help, we're showing that sustainability and community support can go hand in hand – one inbox at a time.



Christmas Opening Hours

Our office opening times during the festive period are as follows:

Monday 22nd December 9am – 5pm

Tuesday 23rd December 9am- 5pm

Wednesday 24th December 9am-2pm

Thursday 25th December CLOSED

Friday 26th December CLOSED

Monday 29th December - phone lines open 9am – 5pm

Tuesday 30th December - phone lines open 9am – 5pm

Wednesday 31st December - phone lines open 9am – 2pm

Thursday 1st January 2026 CLOSED

Friday 2nd January 2026 Open as usual from 9am

Useful Contacts

If you need urgent support when we are closed, please call **Social Care Direct on 03000 267 979 (Durham) or 01325 406111 (Darlington)**. They can support you and the person you care for to get practical help for example through the Carers Emergency Service. For physical and mental health issues out of hours call **NHS 111** or in an **emergency 999**. For support around your mental health call the **Samaritans on 116123**.



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