



# Carers, Family and Friends Strategy 2025- 2030





# Contents

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1. Foreword	2
2. Glossary	3
3. Introduction	4
4. Background	5
5. How this strategy was produced	6
6. What we've heard	8
7. Our commitments	9
8. Implementation	14
9. Thanks	19
10. Appendix	20

# 1. Foreword

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**by Dr Vincent Kirchner, Chief Medical Officer  
North London NHS Foundation Trust**

At North London NHS Foundation Trust, we recognise that carers, families, and friends are not just supporters—they are essential partners in the care and recovery of those living with mental health needs. This Carers Strategy 2025–2030 is our commitment to ensuring that their voices are heard, their contributions are valued, and their wellbeing is prioritised.



This strategy is rooted in the lived experiences of carers across Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington. It reflects what they have told us they need: to be better informed, more involved, and more supported. It also reflects our belief that when carers are empowered, outcomes improve — not only for the people they care for, but for the wider community.

We are proud that this strategy has been co-produced with carers and staff, and that it aligns with our broader vision of compassionate, inclusive, and person-centred care. It does not replace local authority strategies, but complements them with a specific focus on mental health and the unique role our Trust plays in this space.

We are committed to making this strategy a living document—one that evolves through ongoing engagement, shared learning, and continuous improvement. Together, we will build a culture where carers are respected, supported, and recognised as equal partners in care.

Thank you to everyone who has contributed to shaping this strategy. Your insights and dedication are helping us build a more inclusive and responsive mental health service for all.

## 2. Glossary

Below is a glossary to take out some of the guess work with the acronyms you will come across in this strategy.

Abbreviation	Terminology	Explanation
<b>NLFT</b>	North London NHS Foundation Trust	The NHS Trust that was formed on November 1st 2024 as the result of the merging of Camden and Islington Trust, and Barnet Enfield and Haringey Trust.
<b>ToC</b>	Triangle of Care	The Triangle of Care is a therapeutic alliance between carers, service users and health professionals. It aims to promote safety and recovery and to sustain mental wellbeing by including and supporting carers.
<b>PCREF</b>	Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework	First NHS anti-racism framework for all NHS mental health trusts and mental health service providers to embed across England
<b>AIS</b>	Accessible Information Standards	All organisations that provide NHS care and/or publicly funded adult social care are legally required to follow the Accessible Information Standard. The Standard sets out a specific, consistent approach to identifying, recording, flagging, sharing and meeting the information and communication support needs of patients, service users, carers and parents with a disability, impairment or sensory loss
<b>NCL</b>	North Central London	An area of north central London that comprises of Camden, Islington, Barnet, Enfield, Haringey
<b>BEH</b>	Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS Trust	Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS Trust
<b>C&amp;I</b>	Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust	Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust
<b>CoP</b>	Community of Practice	A space for people, organisations and staff who have an interest in helping carers to come together and share best practice, learn, or discuss gaps in learning.
<b>CQC</b>	Care Quality Commission	The independent regulator of health and social care in England

# 3. Introduction

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This strategy builds on the North London NHS Foundation Trust's (NLFT) purpose to work with our communities to improve mental health and our vision for: Better Mental Health. Better Lives. Better Communities.

Carers play an essential role within our North London communities; the NHS and social care couldn't manage without them. We know the pressures of caring can have a negative impact on the health of carers, but despite this they are not always given the correct support, advice and information; or opportunities that will empower and enable them to advocate better for the person for whom they are caring.

This Strategy outlines our commitment to improving the experiences of all our carers, recognising and valuing their expertise, and demonstrates how we will actively support their health and wellbeing.

Our Commitments are:

1. Improving the identification and recognition of carers, family & friends.
2. Connecting carers, family & friends to support and resources.
3. The ongoing and meaningful involvement of family and friends in the care of their person.
4. Understanding the barriers that carers, family & friends experience to being an equal partner in care and working together to overcome them.
5. Demonstrating accountability through effective and responsive feedback, reporting and wider participation.

## 4. Background

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A carer is a person, either adult or child, who looks after a family member, partner or friend who requires help due to their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support<sup>1</sup>.

The most recent Census data found there are 5.8 million unpaid carers in the UK and Centre for Care estimates the value of unpaid care at £184 billion<sup>2</sup>, however, this number is likely to be higher as many people do not recognise themselves, or the help they provide, with the name 'carer'. Social Services and the NHS rely on carers' willingness and ability to provide care. Without the support of unpaid carers, these systems would collapse.

According to the State of Caring 2023 report a significant proportion of carers said their mental health has been affected by caring. Over three quarters (79%) of carers feel stressed or anxious, half of carers (49%) feel depressed, and half of carers (50%) feel lonely. 42% of carers saying they needed more support from the NHS or healthcare professionals, and 42% saying they needed better recognition from the NHS of their needs as a carer<sup>3</sup>. This message has been echoed by the carers who play a significant and important role within the communities that the Trust serves in North London.

The North London NHS Foundation Trust (NLFT) was formed on 1 November 2024 following the merger of Barnet, Enfield and Haringey Mental Health NHS Trust (BEH) and Camden and Islington NHS Foundation Trust (C&I), thus creating a larger voice for mental health within our North London footprint. Our strategy pulls together the common themes and commitments from our local authorities' carers strategies and supports us to achieve our vision<sup>4</sup>, as well as helping us to meet our legislative requirements. More importantly it demonstrates the Trust's values<sup>5</sup> and commitment to improving the experiences of our carers, recognising the expertise and knowledge they bring, and to undertake a role in supporting their health and wellbeing.

1 <https://www.england.nhs.uk/commissioning/comm-carers/carers/>

2 Key facts and figures | Carers UK

3 State of caring 2023 soc23-health-report\_web.pdf

4 & 5 Our vision, values and strategy - North London NHS Foundation Trust | North London NHS Foundation Trust

## 5. How this strategy was produced

This Carers strategy has been developed through the review of existing policies, frameworks, legislation and carer feedback. As well as engagement via meetings, co-production and listening events with:

- Unpaid carers from across North London
- Carers centres for Barnet, Camden, Enfield, Haringey and Islington
- Representatives from nine Local Authority departments across North London
- Over 20 voluntary and community sector partners
- NHS England
- Carers Trust
- Staff and Governors within the North London NHS Foundation Trust

**Please see the appendix for a list of strategies that this North London NHS Foundation Trust Carers' Strategy will align with.**



# Carer Strategy Timeline



**Pre  
2023**

Barnet, Enfield and Haringey NHS Trust works to identify priorities. Camden & Islington NHS Foundation Trust join Triangle of Care. Recovery Lead and Patient and Carer Experience and Engagement Lead in post end of 2022.

Camden & Islington engage carers with Brilliant Basics Quality Improvement program

**Dec 2023 -  
Feb 2024**

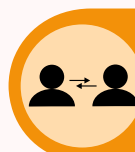


**Mar  
2024**

Mental Health Carers Engagement Best Practice post appointed by Healthwatch Islington  
Development of a skeleton strategy  
Review of existing frameworks

Connect with Carers Hubs & support services. Engagement with Patient & Carer Race Equality Framework & Equality Diversity and Inclusion teams about reasonable access, and how to engage carers from diverse backgrounds

**Apr  
2024**



**May - Jun  
2024**

Enfield Mental Health Carers Conference  
Attendance at carers week events to hear from carers

Connection made with potential collaborators  
Meetings with Local Authority leads, Trust and Healthwatch colleagues to discuss opportunities.

**Jul - Sept  
2024**



**Oct - Nov  
2024**

Carers Voice co-production events  
Formation of NLFT

First draft strategy completed  
Governance in discussions  
Community of Practice structure in discussion

**Dec 2024 -  
Feb 2025**



**Mar - Apr  
2025**

Staff Survey  
Strategy revision

Review survey feedback  
Carers week  
Strategy launch

**May - Jun  
2025**





## 6. What we've heard

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### **Speaking to carers, family & friends**

Some carers, family and friends have expressed frustration with information flow, feeling that they are not treated as equal partners in care, and that at times their insights and concerns go unheard. We have also heard that when we do involve carers this has a highly positive impact on both them and the person they care for. When talking to our carers, communication, carer education, and promotion of carer awareness have been areas that they have been keen to work on within the Trust as experts by experience.

### **Learnings from reports**

Recent Care Quality Commission (CQC) reports highlight consistent evidence of the Trust's proactive engagement with families, friends and carers. However, we know this is not the experience of all carers and some have had negative experiences with the Trust. We are sorry for where this has occurred. We recognise that carers, families, and friends often identify early signs of concern, and their involvement is essential in preventing harm. We believe that carers are vital partners in care, whose contributions must be heard, valued, and integrated into service improvement to prevent avoidable harm and support safer, more responsive care delivery.

### **Connections with support services**

Organisations across North Central London (NCL) have told us how important carers awareness training for staff is in order to identify carers, family, and friends earlier, and that more joined up solutions (including digital) are needed so that services work together for the good of carers.

### **Listening to our staff**

We've heard from staff that although they feel confident in identifying carers, family and friends, staff would like more training so that they can feel confident to speak to carers and direct them to the right help in a variety of situations.

## 7. Our commitments

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### Commitment one:



### Improving the identification and recognition of carers, family & friends

**We commit to implementing digital and governance systems that reflect their essential role in delivering care.**

This will include:

- Digital solutions and electronic patient record systems will be reviewed to incorporate carer roles.
- Promotion of high quality formal and informal communication with carers.
- Education and training (e.g. on subjects such as consent and carers awareness training for staff) that includes ways of better identifying carers and their needs.

“It took me more than a year to actually call myself a carer, but when I did, I realised there were so many services that could help me and my family. I wish more people were aware of just how much support there is available.”

## Commitment two:



### Connecting carers, family and friends to support and resources

**We are committed to making sure carers, family & friends know how to access the most helpful support and resources for them.**

This will include:

- Increasing staff understanding of issues carers, family & friends face and around support with issues commonly faced by carers, family & friends.
- Trust staff being aware of carer support opportunities and communicating these to carers regularly in a variety of formats.
- Ensuring Trust information for carers is consistent, visible, accessible and up to date.
- Developing collaborative relationships with specialist carer organisations and communities to facilitate the effective flow of information to carers and the availability of carers assessments.
- Ensuring people who work for the Trust, who are also carers, are well supported i.e. they are aware of the carers network and managers within the Trust are aware of carer rights to unpaid leave and flexible working.

“

Staff need to be helped to understand the benefits carers bring.

”

## Commitment three:



### The ongoing and meaningful involvement of family and friends in the care of their person

**We commit to making sure carers, family & friends have the opportunity to be involved in conversations that will affect their person.**

This will include:

- Staff recognising and enlisting carers as partners in care planning.
- Staff using skills to understand and recognise the level of carer, family & friend involvement to individual circumstances.
- Staff will demonstrate awareness of carer, family & friend needs by providing relevant information on services and pathways for their person.
- Electronic patient records will show up to date information about carer, family & friend involvement in their person's life.
- Carer, family & friend satisfaction will be formally monitored as part of service and Trust delivery.

“  
You don't get the best out  
of a service when you  
leave people outside of it.  
”

## Commitment four:



### Understanding and overcoming the barriers that carers, family and friends experience

**We are committed to working together to actively overcome barriers to being equal partners in care.**

This will include:

- Reviewing carer feedback, taking relevant action and informing them of actions taken.
- Establish collaborative and learning relationships with Voluntary and Community Sector partners to better understand carer experiences in the communities we serve.
- Facilitating opportunities for carers to get skills and knowledge related to advocacy and rights.
- Making maximum use of our own mental health expertise to facilitate new opportunities for carer, family & friend wellbeing support.
- Ensuring that our staff keep carers aware of pathways of care and crisis support.

“

Carer training and education is so important for us in order to help our family and friends

”

## Commitment five:



### Demonstrating accountability

**We commit to effective and responsive feedback, reporting and wider participation.**

This will include:

- Working together with carers for effective and accessible engagement opportunities and reporting mechanisms.
- Facilitating and promoting opportunities for carers, family & friends to be involved in the work of the Trust.
- Using carer, family & friends expertise to improve quality and develop innovation.
- Staff will encourage genuine carer, family & friend involvement in quality improvement and Trust wide participation opportunities.
- Creating robust and transparent processes and systems for capturing and sharing learning.

“  
Having friends and family involved has helped immensely. Especially at times when family members and friends have been able to identify signs of myself becoming unwell. Often others can notice any slight change, sometimes before I've become aware myself  
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## 8. Implementation

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In order to fully realise the commitments set out and implement the strategy we have identified a number of initial key needs and actions. Some are overarching and some are linked to particular commitments.

Overarching key needs:

- Signing up to the Triangle of Care (ToC)
- Formation of a Community of Practice (CoP)
- Creation of a steering group
  - A Carers Champion in each division

The **Triangle of Care** is a partnership that sees carers, service users and health professionals working together for better outcomes for the service user. It aims to promote safety and recovery and to sustain mental wellbeing by including and supporting.

The **Carers Strategy steering group** will be responsible for overseeing and monitoring the implementation and progress of the strategy.

- The Director of Nursing will Chair this group (along with a carer co-chair) and report on progress to the Chief Nurse.
- Each Division will be responsible for ensuring that their Business Plans reflect the actions required to deliver the commitments and ambitions of this strategy.
- They will be expected to provide six monthly reports on progress on these plans.

**A Community of Practice** will be established for staff to come together to learn, develop and share knowledge and best practice.

**A Carers Champion in each division** to participate in the steering group, oversee and report on the work and actions to realise the Carers Strategy within their division.

Commitment focused needs and actions:

<p><b>1. Improve Identification &amp; Recognition of Carers</b></p>	<p>Digital solutions and electronic patient record systems will be reviewed to incorporate carer roles.</p> <p>Promotion of Excellent formal and informal communication with carers, family &amp; friends.</p> <p>Education and training that includes ways of better identifying carers, family &amp; friends and their needs.</p>	<p>1) Convening an expert group with a focus on digital solutions (including clinical users) to better identify opportunities to identify, track and support carers on electronic patient records and care planning tools</p> <p>2) Develop staff training modules &amp; collaboration with Local Authority, third sector organisations and carers to deliver training</p> <p>3) Rollout of a carer, family &amp; friends leaflet template to all services</p>
<p><b>2. Connect Carers to Support &amp; Resources</b></p>	<p>Increasing staff understanding of issues carers, family &amp; friends face and in particular around support with issues commonly faced by carers, family &amp; friends.</p> <p>Trust staff being aware of carer, family &amp; friends support opportunities and communicating these to carers regularly in a variety of formats.</p> <p>Ensuring Trust information for carers, family and friends is consistent, visible, accessible and up to date.</p>	<p>1) Convening a community of practice to formalise the relationship between carer organisations and champions and the Trust</p> <p>2) Communicating the stories and the narrative of carer experience across diverse communities and experiences</p> <p>3) Development of an internal resource and other sources that provides information on resources available</p>



	<p>Developing collaborative relationships with specialist carer organisations and communities to facilitate the effective flow of information to carers and the availability of carers assessments.</p> <p>Ensuring people who work for the Trust, who are also carers are well supported i.e. they are aware of the carers network and managers within the Trust are aware of carer rights to unpaid leave and flexible working</p>	<p>4) Promoting staff training and communication that includes an awareness of carers, family &amp; friends needs and circumstances</p> <p>5) To support the development of knowledge at a community level</p>
<p><b>3. The ongoing and meaningful involvement of family and friends in the care of their person</b></p>	<p>Staff recognising and enlisting carers, family &amp; friends as partners in care planning where possible.</p> <p>Staff using skills to understand and recognise the level of carer, family &amp; friends' involvement to individual circumstances.</p> <p>Staff will demonstrate awareness of carer, family &amp; friends needs by providing relevant information on services and pathways for their loved one.</p> <p>Electronic patient records will show up to date information about carers, family &amp; friends' involvement in their loved one's life.</p> <p>Carer, family &amp; friends' satisfaction will be formally monitored as part of service and Trust delivery.</p>	<p>1) To set a base line in relation to quality of carer, family &amp; friends involvement through the Triangle of Care processes</p> <p>2) Ongoing monitoring and auditing against the Triangle of Care</p> <p>3) The availability of staff skills training in relation to meaningful carer, family &amp; friends involvement</p> <p>4) Demonstrating that we are using feedback to inform the involvement of carers, family &amp; friends in excellent care planning</p> <p>5) The ongoing support for mechanisms of formal feedback from carers, family &amp; friends about their experience and satisfaction</p>

<p><b>4. Understanding and overcoming the barriers that carers experience</b></p>	<p>Reviewing carer, family &amp; friends feedback, taking relevant action and informing them of actions taken.</p> <p>Establish collaborative and learning relationships with voluntary and community Sector partners to better understand carer, family &amp; friends experiences in the communities we serve.</p> <p>Facilitating opportunities for carers, family &amp; friends to get skills and knowledge related to advocacy and rights.</p> <p>Making maximum use of our own mental health expertise to facilitate new opportunities for carer, family &amp; friends wellbeing support.</p> <p>Ensuring that our staff keep carers aware of pathways of care and crisis support.</p>	<p>1) Use feedback and quality improvement processes to co-design and implement improvements</p> <p>2) Use the Community of Practice to tap into the experience of caring within different communities</p> <p>3) Piloting innovative training opportunities for carers, family &amp; friends to meet needs identified e.g. advocacy training</p> <p>4) To communicate to carers, family &amp; friends the availability of wellbeing and mental health services</p> <p>5) To collaborate with carers, family &amp; friends and carer organisations to ensure carer opportunities for wellbeing are developed and communicated</p>
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<p><b>5. Demonstrate Accountability</b></p>	<p>Co-producing with carers effective and accessible engagement opportunities and reporting mechanisms.</p> <p>Facilitating and promoting opportunities for carers to be involved in the work of the Trust.</p> <p>Using carer expertise to improve quality and develop innovation.</p> <p>Staff will encourage genuine carer involvement in quality improvement and Trust wide participation opportunities.</p>	<p>1) Provide formal reporting on progress and activity via six monthly feedback and a yearly carers conference</p> <p>2) To promote the involvement register and opportunities for carers and staff to get involved</p> <p>3) To celebrate and highlight the benefit of carer representation in quality improvement efforts and service development</p> <p>4) Ensuring carer satisfaction efforts are co-produced and monitored by carers on the involvement register</p> <p>5) Convene an expert group who will monitor and evaluate carer satisfaction and experience</p>
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## 9. Measuring Success

The steering group will be responsible measuring the success of the Carers Strategy and will establish the best way of doing this. Some potential measures of success could include the following:

Outcomes - What could success look like?	Timeframe	Area	Related to Commitment/s
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carers Strategy Steering group with Carer representatives set up</li> </ul>	Dec 2026	Steering Group/ Governance	5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A 50% increase in number of carers joining the involvement register</li> <li>A 50 % increase in carer involvement activity and hours</li> <li>An increase in the diversity of those on the involvement register to better reflect our local communities</li> </ul>	Oct 2026 Oct 2026 Apr 2026	Involvement Register	4 & 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>An increase in carer responses to the Trust 'Your Experience' Survey</li> <li>An increase in positive carer experience reported over time.</li> <li>An increase in carers reporting they have been involved in decisions about their persons care or treatment.</li> <li>Both survey and data reviewed yearly with Carers.</li> </ul>	Jan 2026 Oct 2026 Jan 2027 Oct 2027	Carers – Your Experience Survey	1, 2, 3 ,4 & 5

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organisational sign up to Triangle of Care (ToC)</li> <li>• Divisional Carers Champions in place to drive work forward</li> <li>• Increase in percentage of services completing ToC self-assessment audits</li> </ul>	Dec 2025  Apr 2026  July 2026	Triangle of Care	1, 2, 3 ,4 & 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Staff Carer awareness training offered regularly</li> <li>• An increase in staff attending carer awareness training</li> <li>• Staff feedback on training monitored and positive</li> </ul>	Dec 2025  July 2026  July 2026	Carer Awareness Training for Staff	1, 2, 3 ,4 & 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Community of Practice set up</li> <li>• Representatives for all Divisions covered in the CoP</li> <li>• Two sessions focused on learning from diverse communities delivered yearly</li> </ul>	Dec 2025 June 2026  Dec 2026	Community of Practice (CoP)	1, 2, 3 ,4 & 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carers leaflet implemented and in use in 50% of services.</li> </ul>	June 2026	Carer Leaflet	1, 2, 3, 4 & 5
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Delivery of webinar on Carers Rights day open to both staff and NLFT carers</li> </ul>	Dec 2026	Carers Rights	1, 2 & 3
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Carers rights linked in relevant staff policies and management training</li> <li>• Increase in staff aware of Carers Staff Network</li> </ul>	Dec 2026  July 2026	NLFT staff carers support	1, 2 & 4

## 9. Thanks

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The North London NHS Foundation Trust would like to thank the carers, family & friends, and service users that have contributed their time, knowledge and experience in the creation of this strategy. We also recognise the continued support of Trust staff, local organisations, community groups, local authorities and individuals who have helped to develop this strategy.

Thank you to Healthwatch Islington for support to develop this strategy.

We understand that the context of the strategy is organic. This strategy will help us to face unexpected events, and respond and react to change, continuing our commitment to improve outcomes for patients and their carers, family and friends.

# 10. Appendix

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The following strategies across the five boroughs that the Trust serves impact carers, and this North London NHS Foundation Trust Carers' Strategy will align with:

## Barnet

- Barnet Carers Strategy 2023 - 2028
- Barnet Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2021 – 2025

## Enfield

- Enfield Supporting Independence: A Local Prevention Strategy 2023-2027

## Haringey

- Haringey Adult carers strategy 2020 - 2023
- Public Voice (2020): Living Through Lockdown, Lessons from Haringey's most vulnerable service users.

## Camden

- Camden Carers Action Plan

## Islington

- Islington Fairer Together – A strategy for early intervention and prevention in Islington
- Islington Adult Carers strategy 2024 - 2030

## Other

- Patient and Carer Race Equality Framework
- 'Carers at the heart of 21st-families and communities' – The National Carers Strategy
- The Operating Framework for the NHS in England 2012/13
- In addition to local documents, this strategy has been shaped by the Adult Social Care Reform White Paper, which identifies unpaid carers as a priority area
- The National Carers Action Plan (2018-2020)
- NHS Long Term Plan (2019)
- "The world shrinks": Carer loneliness research report
- ONS 2017 carers contribution
- NEF Consulting 2019 'NHS ENGLAND: THE SOCIOECONOMICS OF UNPAID CARE'
- Carers UK, 2019: 'Facts about carers'
- NLFT Clinical Strategy
- NHS England's Commitment to Carers
- Building strong integrated care systems everywhere guidance