

Dear Family Friends and Carer

The long hot bright days of summer begin to soften into the beginning of autumn.

Whether you are navigating the chaotic rush of the back-to-school season, adjusting to changing routines, or simply noticing the nights drawing in—this shift of adapting again can be both beautiful and uniquely demanding.

Press pause, make yourself a cuppa and have a read of our Carer Support Newsletter. We have packed this edition with practical updates and resources to help you navigation your life as a Carer.

Thank you for your ongoing support of your loved one.

We as the Carer Support Team Maidstone are here for you to support you in your Carer journey!

Jutta and our Cygnets Hospital Maidstone Carer Support Team



The big news this summer for carers was the publishing of the **Carers Action Plan in July 26.**

It is a step in the right direction. The UK Government has launched an action plan **Recognise Refer Reach** to support unpaid carers, this includes improved recognition, referrals to services and support accessing health services, employment and education support.

Published on GOV.UK website

- **Unpaid carers will be identified earlier and connected to support sooner under a new action plan**
- **Cross-government plan will improve recognition of unpaid carers, referring them to services and helping them access health services and employment and education support**
- **The government is building a system that recognises and supports unpaid carers, as a crucial part of its plans for a national care service**

Millions of unpaid carers in England will be better recognised, referred to support and helped to reach their full potential, under a new cross-government action plan published today (14 July 2026).

Nearly one in 10 people in England is an unpaid carer - providing an invaluable service in society looking after family members, friends or loved ones.

However, unpaid carers can experience challenges with keeping up careers or education, looking after their own health - including loneliness and isolation - and difficulties in taking breaks away from caring.

Nothing has changed yet that requires action from you, but it's worth requesting a free Carer's Assessment from your council and double-checking your Universal Credit, Pension Credit or Carer's Allowance entitlement in the meantime.

Unpaid carers action plan: recognise, refer, reach

The action plan is underpinned by 3 central pillars:

- **recognising** our carers
 - **referring** them to services
 - helping them **reach** their potential
- Recognising includes making sure they are identified early, particularly young carers.

Key takeaway

- is a set of 42 measures rolling out over 2026–27
- flagging unpaid carers on the NHS App so they can be involved in care planning and referred to the right support
- an unpaid carers landing page on GOV.UK from this summer offering health, social care, employment and benefits guidance
- a Carers' Charter to be published, setting out rights and entitlements
- requiring employers with over 250 workers to improve support for unpaid carers from spring 2027
- carers to be central to hospital discharge planning, under reforms to the Better Care Fund
- identifying young carers quicker and providing better so they can stay in education without falling behind at school.
- Unpaid carers can then be referred to the support they need whether it's financial (such as the Carer's Allowance), employment support (such as Carer's Leave and flexible working) or health and social care service
- Support also includes helping carers to reach their potential or remain in work or education, so they can have fulfilling lives beyond their caring responsibilities.

For more information:

<https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/unpaid-carers-action-plan-recognise-refer-reach/unpaid-carers-action-plan-recognise-refer-reach#refer-1>

Millions of unpaid carers to get recognition and earlier support

First ever cross-government action plan to support unpaid carers published.

July 2026 marked a significant milestone in the national direction for supporting unpaid carers. The **Government** published its **Action Plan for Unpaid Carers**, setting out a clear expectation that organisations identify carers earlier, recognise their contribution and connect them with support before they reach crisis.

On the same day, **NHS England** published its new **Quality Strategy for NHS-funded care**, setting the direction for quality improvement over the next ten years. The strategy reinforces that high-quality care includes working in partnership with unpaid carers and using meaningful data to demonstrate continuous improvement.

Carer Support in the community

Kent Adult Carers' Strategy

Carers come from all walks of life, ages, ethnicities and backgrounds - anyone can find themselves in a caring role at some point in their life.

We aim to work in partnership to achieve this ambition, by focusing on the following areas that need to 'wrap around' the carer:

- Supporting you to be you - to live a full life, carers have told us they need the right support so they can make time to get everyday tasks done.
- Providing the best support possible. We are committed to listening and learning from people's experiences, so this can inform the way we provide and commission support in the future.
- Positive outcomes. Everything we do alongside providers and partner organisations should focus on what makes a real difference and leads to positive change in carers' experiences.
- Key moments - as well as the need for ongoing advice and contact, carers have identified specific times when support is particularly important for them, starting with the first conversation they have about their new caring role. These have been emphasised, so that in partnership, we can shape how and when support should be offered.



Kent County Council (KCC) and the **NHS Kent and Medway Integrated Care Board (ICB)** needed to put new contracts in place because the current contracts were ending in July 2026.

From 1 August 2026, a **new Adult Carer Support Service for people aged 16+ caring for an adult** across Kent was launched. The new contract brings together Community Navigation for Carers, including carers' assessments, and Carers Short Break service.

The new providers are:



- **Involve Kent Ltd – covering East Kent**
0330 320 4444
carers@involvekent.org.uk/make-a-referral
carers@involve.org.uk
- **Imago Community – covering West Kent**
0300 011 1965
kentcarers@imago.community
www.imago.community/kent-carers



World Mental Health Day 9th October 2026

"Connecting Our Community"

Kent and Medway Talking Therapies is proud to hold a series of events in collaboration with Mental Health Matters, Live Well and the NHS Kent & Medway Health Trust to support World Mental Health Day 2026.

Who is this event for?

Anyone who wants to meet local mental health services, find out what support is available, and gain information and advice. Whether you are seeking support for yourself, supporting others, or working within health and social care, this event offers a valuable opportunity to discover the wide range of mental health resources available across Kent and Medway.



- Rainham Healthy Living Centre, ME8 8AA, 09:30 - 14:00
- Dartford Safe Haven, DA1 1BX, 11:00 to 16:00
- Tunbridge Wells Safe Haven, TN4 9FB, 11:00 to 16:00
- Folkestone Safe Haven, CT20 1EY, 11:00 to 16:00
- Ramsgate Safe Haven, CT11 9AG, 11:00 to 16:00
- Canterbury Safe Haven, CT2 7EE, 11:00 to 16:00
- Maidstone Safe Haven, ME15 6LU, 11:00 to 16:00
- Gillingham Sunlight Centre, ME7 1LX, 09:30 to 14:00
- Balmoral Gardens Cafe, ME7 4PN, 09:30 to 14:00
- Ashford Safe Haven, TN24 0LZ, 11:00 to 16:00
- Thanet Safe Haven, CT4 4BF, 11:00 to 16:00

Carer Allowance is 50 years old

First introduced as Invalid Care Allowance in 1976 (it was thankfully renamed Carers Allowance in 2003), Carers Allowance has been a cornerstone of financial support for carers. At the time, it was ground breaking; the first time the role of carers was acknowledged within the welfare state and the impact that carers have.

It's estimated that carers save the UK economy around £184 billion per year. For context, that is only a little less than the entire NHS budget.

Carers Allowance is worth a rate of **£86.45 per week**. Given that one of its criteria is to be caring 35 hours per week, it works out as an hourly rate of just £2.47. You can earn up to £204 per week after tax, National Insurance, and specific deductions.

Unpaid carers provide vital support to families, communities and public services across the UK, yet too many face poverty and financial hardship as a direct result of caring. The current system fails to fully recognise the value of unpaid care, the challenges of combining work and caring, and the financial penalties carers face when trying to remain in employment.

The **Carer Poverty Coalition** is clear that a comprehensive review must examine how caring intersects with employment, social security, poverty and long-term financial security. A modernised system would reduce poverty among carers and contribute to wider Government goals such as economic growth by supporting participation in paid work and reduced reliance on social security.

After 50 years, Carer's Allowance needs a fundamental rethink for today's realities.

Carers UK made collectively since years a series of recommendations for how the benefit system could be immediately improved, including:

- Increasing the level of Carer's Allowance
- Scrapping the 21-hour study rule
- Mirroring Scotland's Carer Additional Person Payment, which provides £10 per week for each additional person cared for
- Including a new payment for carers who reach state pension age but are unable to combine with Carer's Allowance due to the overlapping benefits rule.

Carers UK calls on the 50th anniversary on Government to commission a comprehensive review of Carer's Allowance and related carers' benefits.



Petitions

UK Parliament and UK Government

Reform Carer's Allowance rules so carers can earn more without losing support

<https://petition.parliament.uk/petitions/765364#main-content>

Created by Mary Carmel Porter
Closes on 24 October 2026

Many unpaid carers balance demanding caring responsibilities with the need to remain financially secure. We believe the current limit allowable for carers to earn is set way too low. It makes it difficult for carers to work, take on a second job, or rent out property to supplement their income. Reforming the rules by increasing the earnings limit and reviewing how different types of income (including modest rental income) are assessed would, we believe, allow carers to maintain stability, stay connected to the workforce and support themselves while continuing their essential caring work. Updating these rules would help prevent carers from falling into poverty, improve their financial resilience and recognise the vital contribution that carers make to society.

In and around our Hospital

If it matters to you it matters to us!

Do you have a complaint, comment, compliment, concern...?

Please don't hesitate to reach out to our **Carer Support Team** here at **Cygnnet Hospital Maidstone**!

Whether you need information, a moment to talk, or guidance on how to take care of your own wellbeing.

Supporting **YOU** is at the heart of what we do!

We welcome feedback by email, phone or in person. It helps to improve and deliver high-quality care.

Your views show us what is working and where we need to do better.

Our Commitment to Resolving Concerns If you raise a concern or complaint, we aim to respond and resolve it quickly. Some issues may take longer if they are complex, but we will always ensure they are handled fairly and thoroughly.

Please have a look at enclosed leaflet.

Feedback and compliments

Sometimes people just want to give us feedback or compliments on how we are doing or tell us about something they think we should know. This can be done through our 'contact us' form at <https://www.cygnnetgroup.com/contact/> or simply scan the QR code.

Scan me to raise a concern or complaint



Scan me to leave feedback or a compliment



Carer Section on our Website is coming soon!

On our Cygnnet Hospital Maidstone website you'll find soon a carer section. We are very thankful for the support of Matt O'Brian our Digital Marketing Director who supported us to get it up and running.

If you "google" us you will find the carer support information only a click away.:

<https://www.cygnnetgroup.com/locations/cygnnet-hospital-maidstone/>

We are proud of you our wonderful **Catering Team** who achieved a **5 star rating during the unannounced food hygiene inspection.**

Well done Catering Team and thank you for your hard work!



In and around the hospital



Our Recovery College offers a welcoming and supportive environment where service users (students) and staff collaborate to learn, explore, and develop new skills.

Our core goals are to help individuals feel valued, cultivate hope and confidence, and provide empowering educational pathways that support their recovery journey and future goals

We celebrated our students and their incredible achievements over the spring and summer!

Music 2 Empower at Cygnet Hospital Maidstone

We have opened our Music 2 Empower studio, creating a new space for service users to express themselves, develop their talents and support their recovery. The new studio was officially unveiled during a summer celebration at the service, with service users and staff coming together to enjoy live music and an indoor barbe-cue. Its development was co-produced by staff and patients, ensuring the finished space reflects the interests, ideas and aspirations of the people who will use it.



Music 2 Empower studios are designed to offer the same high-quality environment found in community recording facilities. The wider programme recognises that recovery is not only about clinical treatment, but also about giving people opportunities to discover their strengths, maintain their identity and develop hope for the future.

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