

Carers Centre Tower Hamlets

Review & Impact Report



When you are looking after someone....
Who is looking after you?
We are here to help you.

www.ccth.org.uk

Carers Centre Tower Hamlets provides support services to unpaid adult carers who care for someone living in Tower Hamlets.

To improve and enrich carer's lives,
our key services are:

Support, advice, advocacy, information
and signposting, including advice surgeries
and a quarterly newsletter called
'We Care Together.'

Improving & enriching the lives of unpaid carers

Funded by:



Carers in Tower Hamlets

- There are around **20,000** unpaid carers (Census 2011 figures) – meaning that **one in 12 people** in the borough are carers – there are almost 6 million carers in the UK, and this projected to rise to 9 million in the next 20 years
- **3 in 5 people will be carers at some point in their lives** – carers services are vital to ensure they are supported in their caring roles
- 67% of those we support provide more than 50 hours of unpaid care a week – Tower Hamlets has a higher proportion of residents providing more than 50 hours than elsewhere in London. **A quarter of local carers are providing more than 50 hours of care per week!**
- Tower Hamlets has an increasing younger population, and **39%** of carers in the borough providing care are aged 16 to 34 years old (almost three times the country's average of just 14%!) – **a quarter of all carers in the borough are aged between 25-34 years old**
- 45% of carers say that their poorer financial circumstances due to caring is affecting their health, and a third of carers report cutting back on essentials like food and heating – **One in 10 carers in Tower Hamlets describe their health as bad or very bad**
- 43% of carers are Bangladeshi and 33% White British
- Fewer local carers are working - 48% of carers are in employment in Tower Hamlets, compared to 56% across London.

Messages of support

John Biggs, Executive Mayor of Tower Hamlets

“Carers make such a valuable contribution to community and family life in Tower Hamlets by looking after those who are ill, frail or disabled.

“Carers deserve to feel valued and supported, and that’s why I signed the Carers’ Dignity Charter to commit to a set of standards for thousands of unpaid carers in the borough.

“I’m very grateful for the work the Carers Centre does, and the Council works closely with them to fund retreats and breaks for carers, and also support the centre to provide information, advice and advocacy services for carers.”



Jim Fitzpatrick, Member of Parliament for Poplar & Limehouse

“ Whilst in one way it’s good that the work and lives of carers is far more highlighted and discussed these days, on the other hand it is surely an indication of the ongoing and considerable challenges faced by the UK’s many carers.

As a Member of Parliament, I try to speak up for carers within my constituency, and involve myself in initiatives such as the National Carers Week, to increase awareness of their issues and concerns. In Tower Hamlets, the Carers Centre is the focal point for these activities.

At a time when services and benefits are being cut, it’s heartening to learn of Carers Centre’s focus on new ways to reach out to new carers in the borough, alongside continuing support for those who have been carers for some time. I hope this report will bring home to people the bearing that the Carers Centre continues to have on those who need and value its many and varied services. It’s a story that deserves to be told.”

Rushanara Ali, Member of Parliament for Bethnal Green & Bow

“As funding for adult social care has been cut over the last seven years, it is unpaid carers that have picked up much of the vital work abandoned by the Government.

Their tireless work means that some of the most vulnerable people in Tower Hamlets and across the country receive the care and support they desperately need.

These carers often take on emotionally and physically exhausting unpaid work. Therefore, the support and help that the Carers Centre offers is absolutely essential.

The activities, training and advice they supply are indispensable to ensuring that carers have their health and well being safeguarded. The opportunities for support from the Carers Centre allows carers to be looked after themselves and not become isolated while they care for a loved one.

After years of public sector cuts, the Government has overlooked the vital contribution carers make and it is the Carers Centre which plays a crucial role in ensuring some of the most vulnerable in society are properly cared for.”

Improving & enriching the lives of unpaid carers



What we have done to support carers in Tower Hamlets

In 2016-17 our main achievements in addressing the many challenges faced by **1,473 unpaid carers** who directly accessed our services have been:

- Alleviation of the mental and physical distress they experienced with the comprehensive provision of practical help, support, advocacy, advice and information
- Strengthening of the Carers Centre’s position as the **first port of call** for all adult carers and other professionals who come into contact with them
- Development of a new Carers Independent Advocacy service to support any carer caring for an adult in Tower Hamlets as a result of the implementation of the Care Act 2014 and ensuring a carer accesses a better quality of care and support
- Given carers a break from their caring through occasional short carers breaks including among many others: Christmas party, Eid party, a monthly Relaxation day where carers can access a range of complementary therapies, Pamper day, Relaxation Day therapies; plus additional Therapy Days for those under severe pressure from their caring role and other social activities to help those carers who due to their circumstances would have no or very limited social lives without our interventions
- Worked in partnership with other service providers to offer training, personal development and other vocational opportunities to carers
- Organised regular carer-led Carers Forums to further influence improvements in overall service provision - and vitally act as “the voice” of carers in the borough
- Helped carers to avoid becoming socially isolated through partnership projects with an arts therapy charity and local businesses to run workshops for carers in filmmaking, painting and photography (with more similar activities in the pipeline).

In the last year we recorded a total of **17,905** contacts with or on behalf of carers in Tower Hamlets; and this included:

- Carrying out **412** Carers Assessments and enabling carers to then access a variety of local services
- Providing **6,130** hours of direct one-to-one casework, advocacy, advice & information and individual support services to **1,473** adult unpaid carers
- Providing a total of **1,125** short breaks for carers ensuring they have some respite from their caring roles.

For carers we organised:

- A Christmas party which was attended by 52 carers
- 11 special Relaxation days attracting 359 attendees
- 354 therapy sessions (acupuncture, reflexology & massage)
- A Pamper day during Carers Week which attracted 16 attendees
- An Eid party attended by 40 carers and some of the people they care for
- Coach trip to Brighton for 44 carers
- 23 social events, including Carers Forums, Former Carers coffee mornings, consultation meetings, an Information Fun Day, workshops for carers to help them with getting job ready
- There are **1,940** unpaid carers currently registered with us.

Improving & enriching the lives of unpaid carers

Carer Success Stories – Pen Pictures

The carer and the challenges faced

The carer was 79-year old and cares for her only daughter who suffers from a brain injury. The carer and the cared-for experienced huge problems with getting their benefits, ending up with large rent arrears (£3,000) and owing nearly £2,000 in council tax. They had a court summons for eviction.

What we did at the Carers Centre to help

The team stopped the eviction by negotiating for the carer with Swan Housing Association, and then sorted out the housing benefit and council tax debts by ensuring that they were claiming properly. A claim was made for Attendance Allowance for the carer and PIP for the daughter.

What we achieved for the carer

The carer and the cared-for remained safely in their home! All their benefits were re-stated, and rent arrears have been reduced right down to £300. There is no council tax owed.

The carer and the challenges faced

A carer aged 67 cares for her son who has a learning difficulty and experiences anxiety and panic attacks (resulting from an assault). The carer found it very stressful caring for her soon due to his erratic behaviour and her emotional health was deteriorating.

What we did at the Carers Centre to help

We started off by providing a listening and understanding ear, and then referred her to professional counselling. We encouraged her to attend support sessions at the centre including Caring with Compassion workshops to help boost her self-esteem.

What we achieved for the carer

The carer is a much better place emotionally. She has participated in a special Photography course we organised. She is now participating in the Working for Carers employability project, and eager to move her life forward.

Letter to the Carers Centre, from Carol

" Just a short letter to say how thankful I am that we have actually got an organisation like the carers centre, where Tony and his whole team actually really really do care. I have been and here many times in tears, not knowing which way to turn or where I would be able to get support, and Tony gets on his computer and sorts the problem - sorted within minutes, and gets the ball rolling with emails or letters to the appropriate people that previously have failed to help. Maybe because of cuts or they are not caring in their jobs.

I sometimes come here broken and because of this team I can overcome emotional breakdowns. I am attending this confidence-building and CV-building session today because I am preparing for a voluntary role - to be trained up to support women in unfortunate and difficult circumstances. Tony has forwarded me on to recommended long term counseling which I go to. I receive acupuncture once a week. I attend monthly massages. I have just completed the Photography course at Carers Centre.

I myself have five children - one of them has mild learning difficulties, and I have been worn down. So this team is helping me to change my life around again and I feel ready to support people with loving kindness the way I have been treated here.

I don't know what I would have done without this great place, and so many lovely people I have met since coming here. Wow! Thank you for helping me to help myself again.

Carol "



Message from the Director, Neil Hardy

" I am immensely proud of the ongoing fantastic work that the staff and trustees at the Carers Centre have accomplished in supporting unpaid carers in Tower Hamlets. I never tire of talking about how whilst being so rewarding, a caring role can simultaneously often be a very demanding, emotionally and physically exhausting experience. Carers risk becoming socially excluded and isolated by their caring role and they often tend to be so busy caring that they lose confidence in themselves as individuals and forget that they need to look after themselves too.

The Carers Centre is committed to supporting unpaid carers in meeting their own needs, alleviating mental and physical distress amongst carers through the dedicated provision of practical help, advocacy and information and simply to feel valued as a carer.

As well as working very hard to minimise the difficulties of being an unpaid carer as far as we are able, the Carers Centre has sought to highlight the positives and rewards of the caring role. We have been diligent in encouraging carers to believe in themselves, to regain their confidence and to recognise that they are incredible people who make a valuable contribution to the community in Tower Hamlets by looking after those who are unable to care for themselves.

Our role also included working in partnership with professionals and other organisations to improve consistency in how unpaid carers are treated by professionals. They have been at best treated as co-experts in the needs of the person they care for and sadly at worst, an irrelevance and a nuisance.

The Carers Centre has a vital role raising awareness of unpaid carers and strives towards the development of wider support services that acknowledges and values carers with the ultimate goal of achieving an enhanced quality of life as a carer."



Interview with Mohammad Rahman, Carers Support Advocate

Mohammad loves his work at the Carers Centre helping carers to lead fuller lives. He has worked at the Carers Centre for the best part of a decade, working full-time, and he lives locally in Stepney with his family. In our interview he explained more about what the Carers Centre is doing to help and support the most vulnerable carers and what he believes the Cares Centre is aiming to achieve.

" **We really want to offer carers that come to us a more streamlined and accessible way of finding out the key information that they need to care, and reassure them that there are people here ready, willing and able to listen to their concerns.** For us as a team this means having a holistic approach and linking them with a wide range of local professional organisations working in the health, social care and voluntary sector support sector. Everything we do as a team is centred on the carer and the person they're caring for – it's all about maximising their quality of life, wellbeing and lessening social isolation.

And we offer so many different kinds of support and help. In the team I specialise in helping carers organise the vitally important Power of Attorney so they can best provide care for a relative, or friend.

We focus on independent advocacy support helping a carer with setting up their care package, attending meetings with other professionals, dealing with bills, debts, carer's legal rights etc. **We also make home visits to those carers that are housebound and not able to get to the Centre.** Our team member **Abdul Abdullahi** specialises in detailed Welfare Benefits Advice, and of course this involves helping with filling up benefit forms and attending appeal tribunals.

Housing support is also top of the list and the difficulties faced by carers in accessing the right housing support is a reoccurring problem. We prioritise crisis intervention especially when caring role is breaking down, and often this is sadly as the cared-for is at the end of their life. We help with dealing with bereavement – providing emotional support and then referring carers if required to specialist bereavement services.

We do a lot of liaison with GPs, District Nurses, Hospitals and other health care providers, Social care teams and relevant service providers to ensure that health and wellbeing needs are addressed. The Carers Centre team is often making countless onward referrals of carers and those cared-for to the Council's Social Services team, Occupational Therapists (for walk-in shower, bath adjustment, grab rails, stair lift etc), Telecare, Carers retreat, Carers relief, Mobility Support Services, counseling service etc. And then there is the routine help provided to carers to tackle mobility issues – with their Disabled Parking Bay applications, Blue Badges, Taxicards, Carers Discounted Rail Cards and Freedom Passes.

My colleague **Rukshana Begum** organises the monthly Relaxation Days: which includes all sorts of complementary therapies (reflexologies, massage, Acupuncture), and is very popular with carers, giving their some respite from caring and time to concentrate on their own needs for a change.

There are also plenty of opportunities to meet other carers in a similar position, social activities and to share their caring experiences on these Relaxation Days. **Increasingly we are able, with extra funding, to put on arts and crafts activities and other support designed to support carers in meeting their training needs including life and computer skills. We have plans to do more to help them with getting more skills and getting a job."**



Message from the Carers Centre team

We know that for many unpaid carers fulfilling their caring roles can often be a highly stressful time – and one which is fraught with worry and frustration. It can be an emotionally and physically exhausting experience with the pressures on the long-term carer building up over time. Carers should not be financially disadvantaged. We are always here to listen to each and every carer's experience and do everything we can to lighten the stress, getting you the right benefits and other financial support - and putting the carer first.

Carers become socially excluded and isolated by their caring role and they often tend to be so busy caring that they overlook the importance of actually looking after themselves as well as those they are caring for. We prioritise carer's health and wellbeing, give them a break and some respite so that they enjoy a life outside caring - and then help to make sure carers can continue in their caring role.

So in broad terms we aim to:

- Keep carers well-informed
- Support carers to look after their health and wellbeing
- Offer carers a break from caring
- Raise awareness of the role of carers in the borough.

Tony Collins-Moore | Danielle Walker-Hudson | Neil Hardy | Mohammed Rahman, Rukshana Begum | Alaya Bibi | Abdul Abdullahi | Rashmina Bibi | Maxie Syma



Case Study

Sebie

“ I first met Sebie four years when I was asked to do a home visit due to her being unwell and unable to come to the Carers Centre. The carer was suffering from an aggressive form of breast cancer, which was becoming increasingly resilient to chemotherapy and her prognosis was deemed terminal.

I formed a close relationship with the carer and her family. The carer had three adult children, twin girls and a son with autism. The carer was becoming increasingly concerned about her son’s future. Would he be happy? Would he meet someone? Would he be able to manage a full life? The carer and her family were living in a property that was not suitable for her medical needs and I sought to get the family rehoused on health grounds. I worked with the local authority to identify more suitable ground floor property that had benefitted from some adaptations as the carer’s mobility was deteriorating.

Eventually, a suitable property was found and after some delays, the family moved in. I worked with the health authority to provide the required medical equipment such as a hospital bed, a chair that could elevate Sebie into a standing position and equipment for the bathroom. I liaised with the local learning disability team to sanction a care package for the carer’s son that included a weekly support worker who would take him out to the cinema, restaurants and develop a robust social life.

As the carer’s health deteriorated, I worked with my colleagues at the Carers Centre in supporting Sebie in deciding her end of life requirements and wishes. I worked closely with the hospice that had begun to provide palliative care and support.

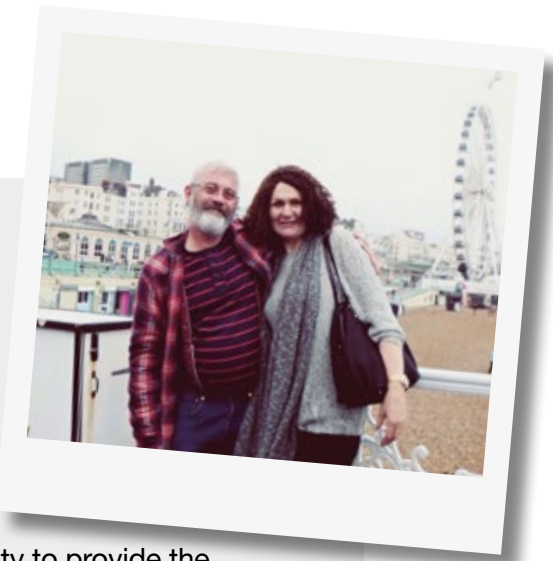
Suddenly and out of the blue the carer’s son came home with woman who he introduced as his girlfriend; she was eight months pregnant with Sebie’s grandson. It was a shock to Sebie but a wonderful one. The carer became a grandmother and she was ecstatic with happiness, love and pride. Sebie disclosed that this was a dream come true and she was now feeling less anxious about her son’s future.

Sadly, Sebie died having only known her grandson for three months and I attended her funeral to say goodbye to an incredible brave lady who had single-handily smuggled her children out of Serbia during the Balkan conflict and in doing so saved herself and her children.

I supported one of her daughters during her grief and helped her take over the caring role for her brother, which had now turned into a multiple caring role as her brother’s partner also had mild learning and emotional difficulties as well as her young nephew.

I have assisted the brother’s partner with her leave to remain in the UK and supported the family in processing the loss of their mother and to face the future as a new family.”

Tony Collins-Moore
Carer Support Advocate



Statement from the Board of Trustees

The Board of Trustees feels that the Carers Centre should be proud of its continued work during the current and ongoing difficult economic times and budgetary pressures. Each year the work it does is invaluable to upwards of 2,000 carers in the community.

The majority of trustees are current and former carers and have received help and support from the Carers Centre over the years. Through the Carers Centre, many carers have developed valuable long lasting friendships with other carers helping to reduce isolation.

The majority of carers are people with a tremendous sense of compassion for those that they care for, or have cared for and the Carers Centre truly understands the pressures they experience and the crucial support it provides to carers who have felt that that they had nowhere else to go. This sense of compassion and understanding is reflected by the employees at the Centre towards those who use its services and these same sentiments are those of the Board of Trustees who in the future will only build on this.

Moving forward, the Carers Centre faces challenges in securing and increasing future funding, increasing its profile in Tower Hamlets as the first place of call for carers and professionals as well as working with young carers.

Board of Trustees:
Sharron Currie | Barbara Albert | David Barker | Yvonne Webster | Alex Harris

Carers Centre Tower Hamlets – our future plans

From our accessible Carers Centre in Stepney we now want to reach out to even more unpaid carers offering them support, advice, IT learning (to help them with job searches, CV preparation and gaining employment) and a range of other fun, enjoyable and creative activities (arts, crafts, photography).

There are 19,356 adult carers living in Tower Hamlets, and we now have almost 2,000 of them each year registered with us. **We aim to support even more with the help of various projects and our fundraising drive to raise £300,000 over the next three years.**

Our future plans include more active promotion and outreach, reaching out to ‘hidden’ or self-served carers and those with particular language needs, ensuring that as a Carers Centre we are able to offer the help and support required by the most disadvantaged and income-deprived carers and their families. Carers UK’s evidence indicates that many from minority ethnic and other diverse communities are less likely to be receiving practical and financial support with caring and more likely to miss out on accessing support for longer – often as a result of a lack of advice and information and struggling to access culturally appropriate services.

We want to help more young adult carers, as Tower Hamlets has a high proportion of younger people providing unpaid informal care. We know from national research (Carers UK), local consultations and evaluation that reaching carers aged between 18-40 years is a real challenge, and this is even more challenging when they are from minority ethnic or migrant communities where language barriers persist.



New activities and projects

From our recent internal organisational strengths exercise we identified a range of new activities and projects:

- Re-introduction of student social worker placements
- Dedicated project for young adult careers
- Volunteer recruitment project linked to carers personal development
- Carers Health checks – more health & wellbeing sessions e.g. exercise, yoga, Mindfulness, meditation, healthy living guidance
- Carers training – First Aid training, Manual Lifting etc
- Provision of Legal Help sessions – dealing with immigration, Lasting Power of Attorney, housing inheritance issues etc
- Debt advice sessions
- English Language Classes on a regular and structured basis with accreditation if possible
- Carers Job Club - working closely with Job Centres to arrange jobs for the carers, to equip them with expertise – so that the carers have job experience and they can continue their career if/when they become a former carer
- Carers IT Hub – with well- structured IT training classes with up to date computers and printers
- More positive activities, for example, activity based workshops i.e. cooking class, baking cakes etc, art, crafts, photography plus social activities, lunches, get together, business sponsorship
- Organise a Heritage project designed to highlight lives of carers
- Introduce evening and weekend activities; establish a better Carers drop-in facility
- Support sessions for creating online accounts for Universal Credit, as many carers don’t have an email address and have limited IT understanding.

Facts about caring – from Carers UK

Who do they care for?

- Most carers care for their parents – about 40%
- Over a quarter care for a spouse or partner
- People caring for a disabled child account for 8% of carers and 5% of carers are looking after their adult disabled children
- Whilst the majority care for relatives, one in 10 carers provide care for a friend or neighbour
- 58% of carers look after someone with a physical disability
- 20% look after someone with a sensory impairment
- 13% care for someone with a mental health problem, and 10% for someone with dementia

What kind of care for unpaid carers provide?

- 82% provide practical help such as preparing meals, doing laundry or shopping
- 68% keep them company
- 49% help the person they care with their financial matters
- 47% help the person they care for deal with care services, benefits and aspects of their personal care

How we help carers

CRISIS INTERVENTION SUPPORT/ WELFARE BENEFITS SERVICE AND HOUSING SUPPORT ADVICE / SHORT BREAKS FOR CARERS, AND A HOME VISITING SUPPORT SERVICE TO HOUSEBOUND CARERS / CARERS SUPPORT GROUPS AND REGULAR CARERS FORUM MEETINGS / HEALTH & WELLBEING ACTIVITIES INCLUDING MONTHLY RELAXATION DAYS AND COMPLEMENTARY THERAPIES – MASSAGE, REFLEXOLOGY & AROMATHERAPY / ARTS & CRAFTS GROUPS, PLUS OTHER SOCIAL AND LEARNING ACTIVITIES/ INDIVIDUAL COUNSELLING & EMOTIONAL SUPPORT (COMPASS WELLBEING)/ CARERS DROP-IN, CARERS IT HUB, AND BASIC COMPUTER TRAINING / TRAINING AND SELF-DEVELOPMENT SUPPORT DESIGNED TO STRENGTHEN CARER'S CONFIDENCE AND SKILLS, INCLUDING LATTERLY THE WORKING FOR CARERS PROJECT.



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