

# Annual Report

*April 2022 – March 2023*



*Your local charity  
supporting Carers*

Charity Number: 1069278  
Company Number: 3534933

## Introduction from the CEO and Chair of Trustees

Looking back to April 2022, was the beginning of the recovery from the pandemic. Many areas of home and work life were still being impacted but as a charity we began to resume more normal ways of working. Referrals steadily rose to the highest we have ever received, 4065 between County Durham and Darlington compared to 2845 in the previous year.

Following a survey to gauge demand we reopened face to face support groups, events and returned to home visits for Carers who found this preferable. We continued to use online methods for support, some groups and training for those Carers who find this enables them to



Jenni Wood.

engage without the challenges of transport and time away from home.

This report showcases the variety and breadth of support offered to Carers during the year and the passion of the staff, volunteers and trustees who work tirelessly to deliver it.

During 2022 our Core Contract for Carer Support in County

*“Our service is shaped by the Carers we support and the amazing hard work and commitment of the whole team and our partners who support us.”*

Durham was reviewed by Durham County Council (DCC) and a very positive report was presented to the County Durham Health and Wellbeing Board. Following this we submitted a tender and we are very happy to say we began a new three-year contract on 1st June 2023.

Carers UK State of Caring report was published in November 2022. 13,400 Carers took part, the largest sample yet. Not surprisingly 77% felt the rising cost of living was their main challenge, 63% were extremely worried about monthly costs and 25% were cutting back on essentials such as food and heating. 30%



Janet and her Dad

said their mental health was bad or very bad and 75% of working Carers were worried about continuing to juggle work with their caring role.

This research coupled with feedback from local Carers and the demand for our service reassured us that our focus on financial and digital support was the right direction of travel.

Our service is shaped by the Carers we support and the amazing hard work and commitment of the whole team and our partners who support us. A huge thank you to everyone who has contributed to these fantastic achievements during the year.

*Jenni Wood - Chief Executive  
Janet Potts - Chair of Trustees*

## Fundraising and donations during the year

This year has been our best yet, raising funds to run our Counselling service and topping up our Carer Wellbeing fund. Highlights include:



### Great North Run

In September 2022, a record 15 runners supported us and raised an amazing £6,353 between them.



### 50/50 Lottery Club

This is run by volunteer Roy Angus and raised £5,827 which directly supports our Counselling service and ensures it can keep going.

### 10K for 10 years

To celebrate our 10th anniversary, we decided to aim high and ambitiously raise



“Share the Love” Fundraising Team

£10,000. This culminated in January and February 2022 in 5 amazing staff teams competing to raise as much as they could from a £20 stake. Giving up their own time and utilising friends and family they raised money from raffles, online auctions, hampers and many other ideas. The “Share the Love” fundraising challenges contributed to a fantastic total of £10,159.

### Carer Wellbeing Fund

Our inhouse fund enables us to support Carers in urgent need of help. 28 Carers accessed items such as transport, food, oil filled radiators, bathroom equipment and energy top ups.

The funding enabled us to

run our own Making Sense of Caring courses, events and re-start our Carer groups. It also supported marketing costs and helped us buy additional noticeboards.

### Donations

A huge thanks goes to our regular supporters who donate monthly. Norma Jewitt, Sydney Welford, Sheila Gibson, Daphne Bowman, Mr and Mrs Johnston, Mrs McGoay, Julie Shead, TM White and J Metters.

We also received very welcome donations from Durham County Council, Bishop Auckland Keep Fit and the Methodist Church.



# Reaching more Carers



This year has seen us reach more Carers than ever before. An increase of 42% from 2021-22. This is hugely impressive considering we have not had any increase in resources. How did we reach more Carers?

Self-referrals by Carers recommended by family and friends accounted for 1044 from a total of 3537 referrals in Durham and 143 from a total of 516 in Darlington.



Carers Rights Day - Cornerstones, Chester le Street



Carers Rights Day - Glenroyd House, Consett

Through our new website we gained 694 professional referrals and 1025 Carer referrals.

The highest numbers of referrals came through our excellent partnerships with NHS staff from primary, secondary and mental health services, local authority social care children and adult services. Alongside our partners from the voluntary and community sector.



Carers Rights Day - St Teresa's Hospice, Darlington

During Carers Rights Day we held 10 events



Information Stand



NHS Melissa Bus, Barnard Castle

During Carers Rights Day we held 10 events across the County with our partner organisations. We used the NHS Melissa Bus to visit Barnard Castle along with Durham County Council, Young Carers and Alzheimer's Society. Overall, we identified another 50 Carers and supported over 200 more.

Our new website and development of our social media presence has really paid off. In addition to the increase in direct referrals, we now have over 5,000 followers on Facebook for County Durham and 793 for Darlington. Twitter has 1366 followers and Instagram is fast growing and now has 232 followers. The website has a reach of 3,600 per month and is growing.





## Knowledge- Choice- Learning

# Our Mission is to “Improve Carers Lives”.

The first stage of this is to assess Carers needs during the registration process and put in place a support plan with them around the areas they identify they want help with. We work with Carers and share our knowledge and specialist experience, empowering them to make informed choices through understanding the options available. Our front-line Carer Support Coordinators offer one to one support through face-to-face contact as well as phone, email and other digital methods.

**3537 new Carers registered in Durham**

**516 new Carers registered in Darlington**

*“I would just like to thank you so very much for the support and help you gave us with filling in forms and other advice you gave us, I really do appreciate it, it was very nice meeting you and I enjoyed the chat as well as the help. Nice to deal with someone who knows their job and dealt with my lack of confidence and anxiety.”*

*“I am so grateful for the support I have received from DCCS over the years. It has made huge positive difference to my caring role and I couldn't have got through the last few years without your help and support.”*

*“To have the time to sit down face to face and talk about the issues that concern us also to be listened to and prompt action in response. Out of the other organisations we have been involved with DCCS have offered most, have time for us, and really want to help, together with the school.”*

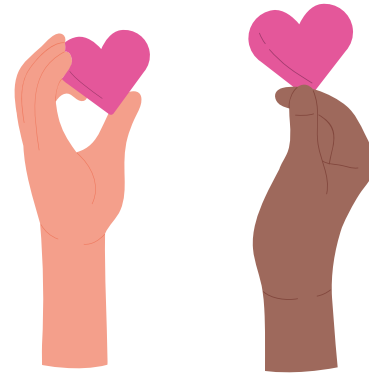
In County Durham, we offer a wide range of training and learning opportunities, many of which are funded through our partnership with Durham County Council Care Academy. In the last year these included:

### Positive Behaviour Support

Parent feedback included *“I have learnt better ways to manage situations which have helped all of us”*

*“I have learned tolerance and more understanding of my son”*

*“It made me feel more positive and confident to discuss my concerns.”*



### First Aid

Delivered across 5 locations on 8 days and covering the most common accidents and medical emergencies unpaid Carers are likely to have to deal with. 84 Carers took part.

*“The course was really interesting, everyone was friendly and helpful, it taught me a lifelong skill.”*

### Moving and Assisting workshop

Designed to demonstrate how Carers can protect their backs, the benefits of lifting correctly and the use of equipment. 30 Carers took part across 3 locations.

*“The course was informative, well delivered and appropriate to my caring role.”*

### Anticipatory Grief

This was funded by Care Academy and developed collaboratively between Willowburn, St Cuthberts hospices and DCCS. Its aim is to identify what anticipatory grief is and understand its impact.

*“It made me think more clearly what I wanted and what Mam needed. It helped me to make some very difficult decisions.”*

### Making Sense of Caring

DCCS has developed our own “Making Sense of Caring” workshops. These are delivered locally by the Carer Support Coordinators and aim to demystify the complexities of the health and social care systems and the jargon used. We hosted 5 sessions across the county.

*“This session provided very useful advice and information on where to go for further help. It was also a chance to chat with like-minded people.”*

### Positive Approach to Care

This course was originally developed by Teepa Snow and is locally delivered by Amy Smith, Senior Occupational Therapist working for TEWV. It supports those caring for someone with dementia to understand what is happening to their loved one and develop coping strategies. During the year we ran courses via Zoom and Face to Face in Seaham.

The feedback was fantastic. *“Knowing the workings in the brain helping to explain why dad was displaying certain behaviours and the discrepancies with his speech and language. Explaining about the physical changes and impact on sight and hearing, helped me understand and appreciate what my dad is going through.”*



First Aid Course,  
St Teresa's Hospice



### Darlington Carers Support

We are funded through our core contract with the local authority and NHS to provide at least two workshops during the year. We ran two First Aid courses which were shaped around the needs of those attending. 22 Carers attended over the two sessions and the training included how to resuscitate, keep people safe during recovery and dealing with choking as well as other issues raised on the day.

*“This enabled me to have some quality time for myself, mixing with new people and learning a new skill.”*

*“Great to have a refresh and actually participate in the CPR activity.”*

*“I have learnt a lot and it has built up my confidence.”*



Lantern Making



Seated Yoga

### Wellbeing event 18th October 31, 2022

18 registered Carers attended the event which included Lantern making along with seated yoga. The feedback from the event was very positive.



# Durham Connecting Carers Project



## Our Aim

To focus on increasing access to those Carers who currently do not have access due to affordability, disability, lack of understanding and confidence to use IT and online services.

## How we help Carers

The Connecting Carers Project has been running for 27 months. We have achieved some excellent outcomes.

**388** Carers

Supported **123** Carers with equipment.

**4** workshops held within County Durham.

**24** Carers laptops have been repaired.



# Darlington Connecting Carers Project



67 Carers have been supported by the following ways:

- One to one personalised service
- Tea and Tech workshops
- Online courses
- Home visits
- Guides and handouts
- Drop-ins.
- Technical repairs through our volunteer

Grants allow us to purchase equipment for Carers who are unable to afford laptops, modems, mobile phones, tablets. We are fortunate to be able to lend equipment to Carers to try before they buy.

15 items of equipment secured for Carers. We are registered with the National Data bank to provide SIM cards to Carers who are unable to afford Data.

In January 2023, Carers UK research into older Carers digitally excluded, interviewed Ruth Sykes and from this, Darlington Carers Support is used as an example of best practice in the report.



## Clive is “over the moon”

Clive brought his laptop into our Computer Repair and Recycle workshop. Our expert IT volunteer, Alan, completed a thorough check of the laptop, but unfortunately, the device was beyond repair. Clive had important hundreds of photos onto the laptop and

was saddened to think that they were lost forever. Alan was able to use his expertise to remove the hard drive from the laptop and transfer the photos onto a USB memory drive, which we were able to pass on to Clive. Clive explained that the laptop

had contained hundreds of photos documenting the history of Quarrington Hill. Keen historian Clive said he was “over the moon” with the repair shop. “I got all my photos back. If it wasn’t for the service, a lot of local history would have been lost.”



# Improving Health and Wellbeing

Everything we do is focused on improving Carers health and wellbeing.

Carers often neglect themselves in order to focus all their energies on the person they care for. This is not sustainable and the adage “You can’t pour from an empty cup” is a message we promote. We promote all aspects of self-care which include the following:

## Carer Breaks

Offering Carer Break funding to those who need it, see page 12 for further information.

## Peer Support

Organising online and face to face peer support opportunities such as our Support Groups, Carers Week and Carers Rights events, Theatre trips, Fishing trips, Cricket days and many others.

## Carers in East Durham

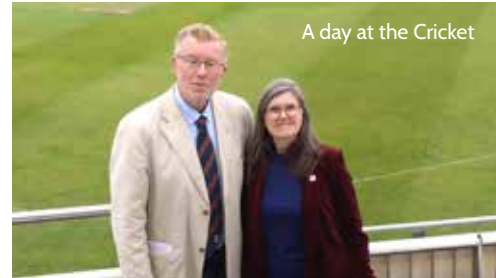
Specific events through projects such as “Planting Creativity” and “Time 4 U” events for Carers in East Durham caring for someone with mental ill health supported by the East Durham Mental Health funding from NHS. “Everything in its place” courses in partnership with St Cuthberts Hospice, looking at planning for the future and our inevitable passing.

## Exercise Courses

Facilitating year-round online Yoga and Pilates courses attended by 213 Carers last year. Ideal for those who couldn’t travel to a venue but could do this at home whilst supporting the person they care for.

*“Cath was great, and the Pilates offered me a chance to switch off for that short time and join with others in the same position as myself.”*

*“They are really beneficial to my mental well-being and to recharge my energy in order to continue my caring role.”*



A day at the Cricket



Consett Carers Group



Forest Yoga, Low Barns



Mamma Mia Theatre Trip



Carers Rights Day

## Partnership Working

Working closely with partners to promote and communicate their events, training and support. For example, our Parent Carer team promote courses through their Team Training project that are offered by Child and Adolescent Mental Health Services.

Promoting health and well-being messages in newsletters and social media posts such as why Covid and Flu Vaccinations are essential, encouraging all Carers to register with their GP and get regular health checks.

## How do our Volunteers directly support Carers Health and Wellbeing?

Over the last three years we have built up our Volunteer Counselling team to over 30. In the last year they dealt with 520 referrals and 4100 hours of sessions. These are delivered face to face at venues around the County and at St Teresa’s Hospice in Darlington. We also offer phone and digital methods which often work better for Carers who struggle to leave the home or who have transport issues.

We recently surveyed Carers who had received sessions and 205 responded. Out of those 88% found the service helpful or very helpful. Quotes included:

*“I found the counselling helpful. It made me more confident and allowed me not to feel*

*guilty about things I didn't cause and can't change. Thank you!!”*

*“She made me realise its ok to feel angry and walk away from bad situations and not feel depressed. She really was excellent.”*

*“They were very helpful and understanding and it does improve how you feel and helps you to get your confidence back to how you used to be.”*

*“I wouldn't have got through with life changing events without the counsellor very helpful.”*

Our volunteer Roy manages the 50/50 club which raises the funds to keep the Counselling service running. In the last year this raised £3,045.

The Keeping in Touch project has a team of 10 volunteers

## Following our support:

- > **62%** had improved taking time for themselves.
- > **64%** feel more valued in their caring role.
- > **36%** felt an improvement in their mental health.
- > **64%** are more able to manage stress.



who make phone calls to Carers who haven’t been in touch for over a year and are more likely to be vulnerable. In the last year, they spoke to 1100 Carers and ensured they were getting the support they needed. This included 98 Carers receiving a Carer Break, 14 receiving a new discount card, 41 getting help with benefits and 23 receiving digital support. The team are now able to make second calls to those who requested this, to keep Carers updated with news and maintain contact with DCCS.



## Durham County Council & NHS Personalised Carer Support Fund April 2022 – March 2023

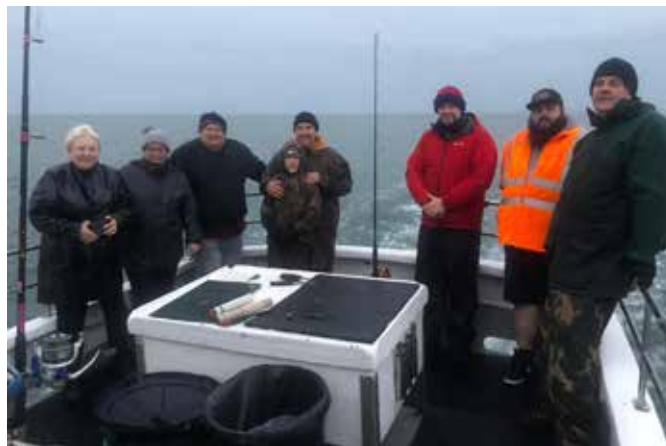


Time away from caring is vital and we want to ensure that more Carers get the breaks they need, by making the service flexible and ensuring personalisation.

During this period 2645 Carer Breaks 167 Residential & Opportunities were arranged.

Examples of breaks applied for:

- Gardening services & equipment
- Kindles, tablets & laptops
- Gym, Golf & Fishing memberships
- Craft items, sewing machines, books & jigsaws
- Spa Days & therapy vouchers
- Cinema and theatre vouchers
- Respite and Cleaning services
- National Trust, English Heritage & Beamish memberships
- Driving lessons
- UK holidays
- Fishing & Cricket Trips



### Feedback received shows:

96% felt improved health; 92% felt better in their caring role; 89% felt reduced levels of stress; 50% felt less isolated; 52% felt it helped depression levels; 93% felt more relaxed.

### Carers feedback:

*'Treatment was amazing. I had become depressed carrying out my Carers role. Thank you for making this possible. It really has helped.'*

*'So much time is spent thinking about helping or physically caring for my son. This forces me to take some time out in a good way.'*

*'I felt much better after talking to Carer Support and realised I was not alone.'*

*'This funding has enabled me to attend reflexology sessions at my local clinic, normally I could not afford. This benefits me with anxiety & stress, but also having time to myself. Many thanks for considering me for the vouchers.'*

*'My pass to Beamish was greatly welcomed it gets us both out and about to reduce isolation and helps me relax.'*

*'Just to say a massive thank you to everyone involved in this scheme because it really makes a huge difference. Since the break I have been able to refocus and manage with the issues with my family a bit easier because I had that time away relaxing.'*

*'I was lucky and grateful to receive the support. My son his sister and I have all benefited greatly from a break from routine. Walking on the beach was particularly beneficial for my son. Thank you.'*

In Darlington, we arranged 246 Carer breaks some of which include, Spa breaks, walking boots, garden equipment, book tokens and a sewing machine.

*"I was very grateful for the voucher for some books, it was very welcome and reading helps me relax, thank you very much."*

## DCCS Environmental Commitment

As part of our work to become a more sustainable Charity we continue to develop our website to offer downloadable versions of all publications, online referring or registering for support and we have been actively encouraging Carers to move to the digital world by receiving our interactive quarterly Caring Matters magazine by email rather than post.

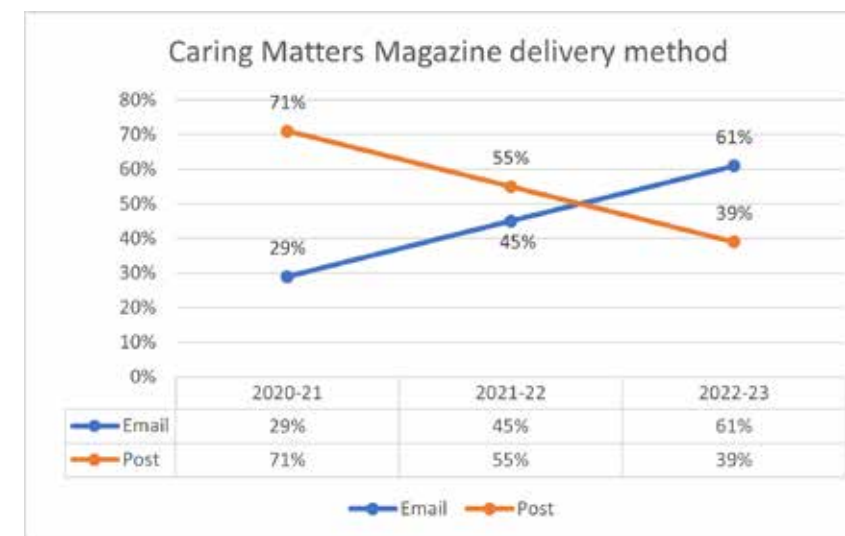
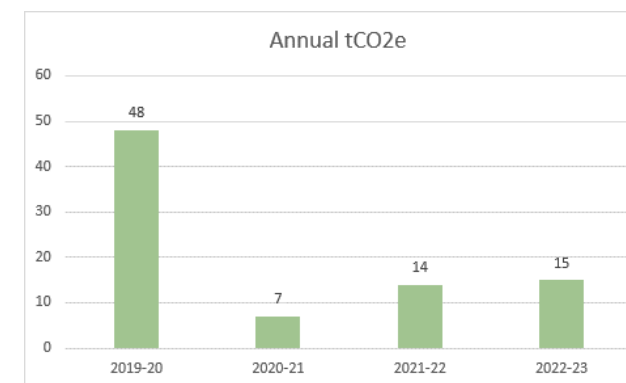


Table shows 61% of our magazine is emailed compared to 29% when we started the initiative.

## DCCS Carbon Footprint



Annual tCO2e (Total Tonnes of carbon dioxide equivalent)

Information is recorded on the 'Smart Carbon' platform; the graph above shows emission levels over the past 4 years.

We are committed to record and reduce our carbon footprint; we are currently monitoring emissions from:

- Electricity from leased office
- Staff, Volunteer and Trustee work mileage
- Staff commuting mileage to and from the office
- Paper usage



# Supporting Carers to have their voice heard

DCCS is passionate about capturing Carer voices and using this to shape our organisation and influence health and social care services locally, regionally and nationally.

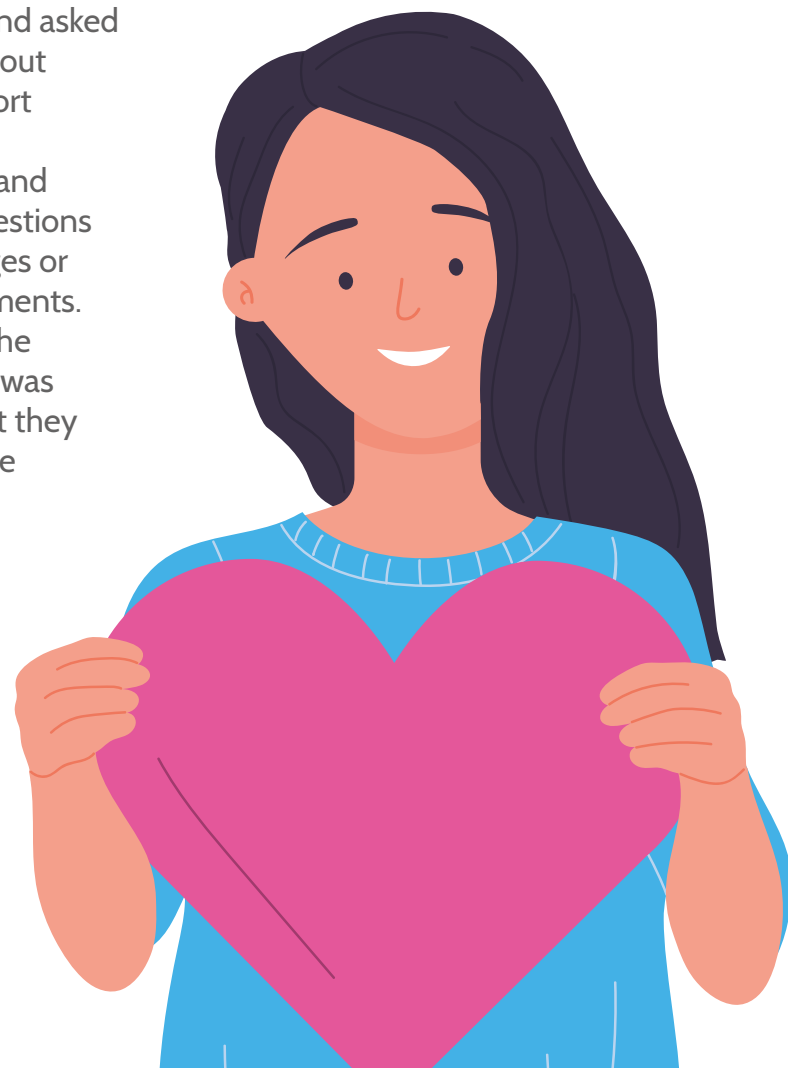
85% of our Board of Trustees have a current caring role or a recent one and they lead on and influence our strategic direction. In addition, over 50% of our current staff team are current or former Carers.

Last summer we worked with an external consultant Matt from Goodlabs. He held 4 Carer focus groups with 40 people attending across the County to hear what they valued from DCCS and how they would like us to develop. The feedback was collated and shaped our new Strategic Plan. He also used a regional survey from Association of Directors of Social Services (ADASS) from earlier in that year as 50% of respondents were from County Durham. This heard what was important to Carers and what they needed from

a support service. The overriding message from Carers was that the quality of the service was key and made them feel valued.

During 2022 we worked with DCC Commissioning team who were reviewing our contract. They visited all our Carer Support groups across the County and asked Carers about the support they had received and any suggestions for changes or improvements. Overall, the message was again that they valued the

breadth of the service, in particular the support with benefits, specialist advice and funding to take a Carer Breaks. This feedback shaped the specification for our core contract.



# Parent Carer Specialist Support

Our early point of help project was aimed at supporting families whose children were on the neurodevelopmental pathway towards a diagnosis of conditions such as Autism.

The funding for this was from the NHS and recognised this often takes time and families need support along the way.

Parent Carers were given a named worker who offered flexible advice and information to navigate the health and social care services at times and ways that worked for them. In addition, support at meetings, a range of training, events, funding for breaks and opportunities to meet other families in similar situations to them.

Over 200 Parent Carers were supported by the project.

A survey showed 95% felt the support improved their wellbeing, 65% felt confident to access support from other services in the future, 85% feel supported in their caring role and 100% would recommend us to other Parent Carers.

*“Consistently great support! I now don’t feel so alone.”*

*“I know that someone has my back on the darkest days, its invaluable.”*

*“Caring is an isolating role and not a lot of people understand the impact. Having someone who ‘gets it’ without judgement was invaluable.”*



## Case Study

Amy registered as her daughter is 8 and on the neuro pathway. Amy is also undergoing an assessment for ADHD herself. DCCS supported her with a DLA application for her daughter, got an Occupational Therapy assessment, attended a Team Around the Family (TAF), got funding for a short break and referred to several local support and activity groups. Amy attended training offered in partnership with other support services. We offered ongoing support via phone, email and social media. We visited Amy and helped fill in paperwork for school and her own assessment.

*“I am so grateful to have been put in contact with the service. I can’t thank them enough.”*



# Improving Financial Health

**Carers have been disproportionately financially impacted by the pandemic compared to the rest of the population.**

Reductions in working hours, more demands on their household budgets and dealing with the rising cost-of-living. DCCS has focused our efforts on improving the practical support we offer through the following.

## Financial survey

We surveyed Carers in July 2022 and 765 responded. The results showed 31% not managing financially and 63% only just about managing. 83% could not save anything each month. 73% were worried about the cost of energy and 74% were worried about paying for food and other household costs and 16% were worried about being in debt over £5,000.

## Benefits support

We continued to offer advice and support to fill in a range of benefits. This resulted in £3,023,453 in additional annual income awarded for County Durham and £628,174 in backdated amounts. For Darlington, we upskilled our team and began offering this support from June 2022. Since then, we have secured £160,243 in annual income and £36,694 in backdated amounts. For Parent Carers of disabled children, we began a volunteer project to support

with Child Disability Living Allowance claims. During the year this secured £510,010 in annual awards and a backdated amount of £116,512. So overall across both areas staff and volunteers secured £3,693,706 and £781,380 in backdated amounts.

## Grants

Our team have focussed on securing a range of grants and bursaries for Carers. We have our own in house “Carer Wellbeing” grants for emergencies and have funded £1,123 out of this for items such as an oil radiator for a Carer when their boiler broke down. In County Durham, we have secured from Turn 2 us, Carers Trust, and a range of grant makers a total of £40,700 for life changing events such as moving house as well as smaller but essential items such as beds. In Darlington, grants awarded were £10,601.

## Debt

Responding to the financial survey results we entered a partnership with Durham Community Money Advice to deliver specialist debt advice to Carers. So far this has resulted in £319,000 in debt being resolved and 115 Carers supported. The team used our

office in Spennymoor to hot desk and both organisations have benefited from improved knowledge of each other.

## Household Support Fund (HSF)

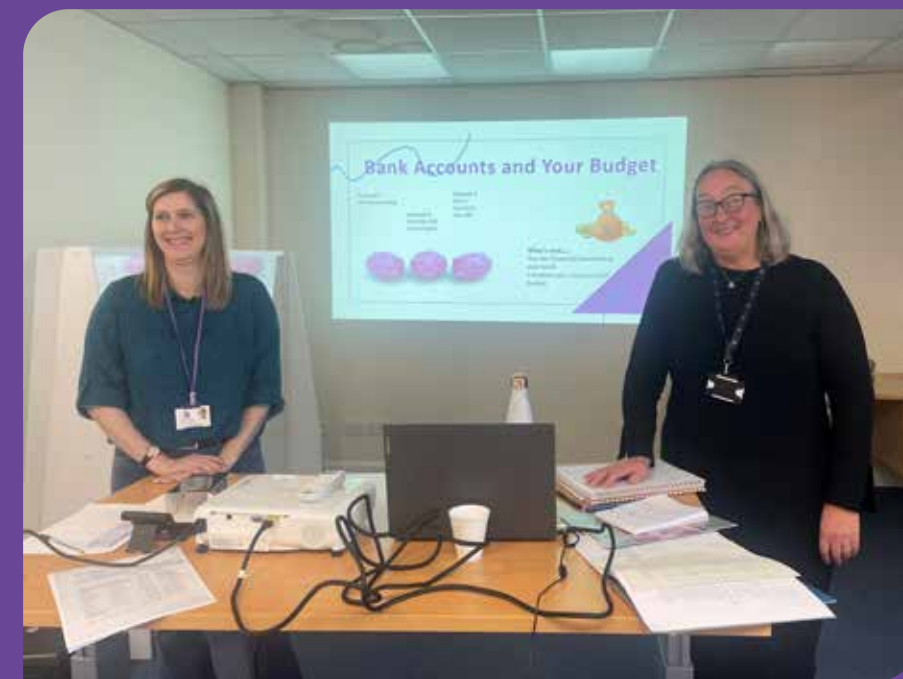
In Durham, we have worked closely with Durham County Council to target a range of cost-of-living support to Carers. During the year we allocated £80,000 of fuel and food vouchers as well as buying energy efficient items and warm clothing and blankets. In Darlington, we allocated £5,000.

## Money Matters Project

In January 2023, we began a project in County Durham aimed at supporting Carers with all matters relating to financial wellbeing. Two members of our team are ensuring Carers get the latest advice and information on energy efficiency, budgeting and general financial issues. They have also followed up the many queries that came from the surveys we did. Watch out for more details in next year’s Annual Report, but there is a Case Study to highlight the difference made so far.

# Money Matters Project

## Case Study



L-R Charlene and Helen from our Money Matters Project

**Jane has mental ill health and cares for her son with mental health issues and her Mum who is elderly and frail.**

Jane was not receiving any support around her own mental health issues and her son was going through a diagnosis for Autism.

Jane was referred to DCCS in December 2022 and was in need of urgent support and internally referred to our Money Matters project. She had been served an eviction notice and faced homelessness from a private tenancy due to the landlord needing to carry out essential work due to unsafe living conditions.

Jane was referred to Housing Solutions and Durham Key Options (DKO) and supported by

DCCS staff. This included weekly welfare calls, contacting the local MP, DKO and Social Housing provider. After 4 months Jane was provided with a suitable house. Other support included liaison with son’s college to access additional support with his learning, physical and mental health needs.

Several successful grant applications were made resulting in £2,400 of support with moving costs, carpets, furniture and new bedding. Also accessed Household support fund (HSF) payments for energy costs and food and funding for a short break.

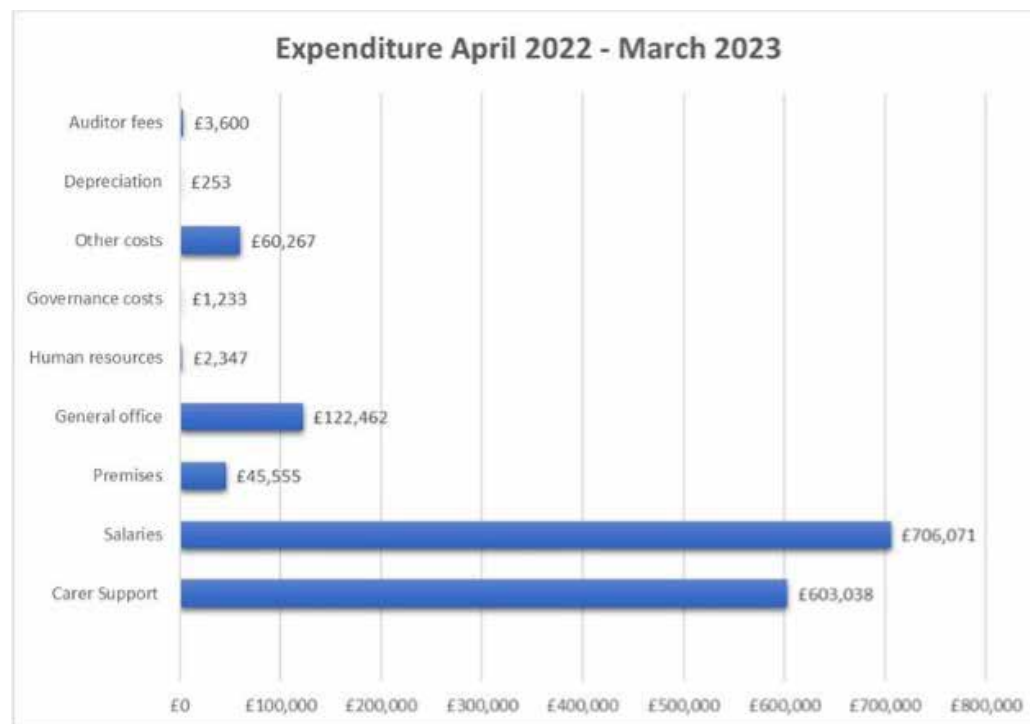
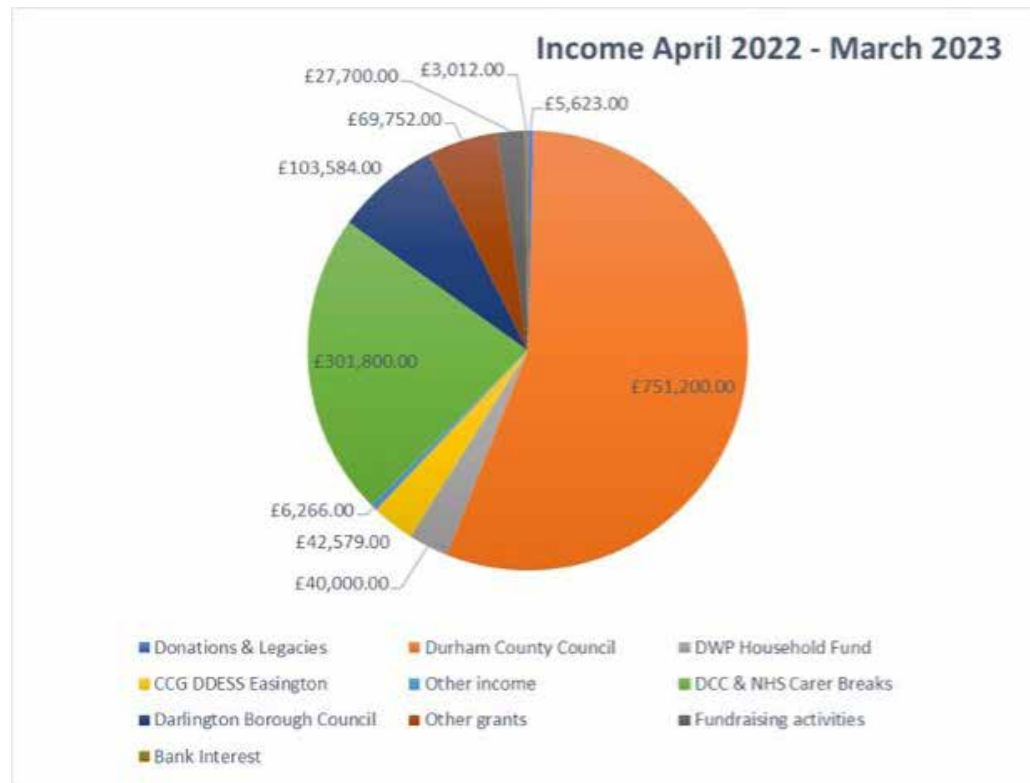
Additional support with bus fares came from the mental health fund to attend assessments and essential appointments resulting in more support in place.

Jane received intensive support over 6 months whilst facing homelessness. Nearly £3,000 of extra funding was put in place. Jane says she has gone from feeling very alone and fighting the housing agencies, her landlord and the mental health services to being in a lovely new home and getting much better support for her and her son.



# Financial Summary 2022 - 2023

# Durham County Carers Support



Statement of Financial Activities  
(including income and expenditure account)  
Year ended 31 March 2023

	2023		2022
	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total funds
	£	£	£
<b>Income and endowments</b>			
Donations and legacies	756,713	110	756,823
Charitable activities	-	557,715	557,715
Other trading activities	27,700	-	27,700
Investment income	3,012	-	3,012
Other income	6,266	-	6,266
<b>Total income</b>	<b>793,691</b>	<b>557,825</b>	<b>1,351,516</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>			
Expenditure on raising funds:			
Costs of other trading activities	7,385	-	4,370
Other	-	-	7,516
Expenditure on charitable activities	903,755	641,071	1,544,826
<b>Total expenditure</b>	<b>911,140</b>	<b>641,071</b>	<b>1,549,196</b>
<b>Net (outgoing)/incoming resources before transfers</b>	<b>- 117,449</b>	<b>- 83,246</b>	<b>200,695</b>
<b>Gross transfers between funds</b>	<b>69,554</b>	<b>69,554</b>	<b>-</b>
<b>Net movement in funds</b>	<b>- 47,895</b>	<b>- 152,800</b>	<b>200,695</b>
<b>Reconciliation in funds</b>			
Total funds brought forward	581,840	259,382	841,222
Total funds carried forward	533,945	106,582	640,527

The statement of financial activities includes all gains and losses recognised in the year. All income and expenditure derive from continuing activities

This information is a summary of our financial position, if you would like to receive a full set of financial statements, please contact Jacqui Coulson on 01833 600575 or Jacqui.coulson@dccarers.org



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Charity Number: 1069278  
Company Number: 3534933



Your local charity supporting carers



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Your local charity supporting carers



Darlington  
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