



Annual Report

2024

2025

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MESSAGE FROM THE CEO



I am delighted to share with you in this year's annual impact report some key achievements and findings from the financial year including sharing our amazing work and also carers stories.

Being the CEO for this wonderful charity makes me enormously proud! Each year when compiling our annual impact report, I reflect on all my staff team, volunteer team and board of Trustees and I am immensely proud of all our achievements and all the differences we make to the lives of unpaid carers in East Lancashire. As always, I would like to thank all of our amazing staff team and volunteers for their commitment shown throughout the year.

A key highlight was being awarded the overall ‘Beacon Award’ at this years Hyndburn Business Award. This award is given to the most outstanding and inspiring organisation throughout the year. This is testament to our staff and volunteer team!

The end of the year saw us working hard engaging with staff, volunteers and carers to implement our new 4 year strategy 2025-2029 and I am excited to share with you that we have already achieved one of our key milestones and have acquired a new property on Yorkshire Street in Bacup. Over the coming 12 months we will be acquiring capital grants and undertaking lots of renovation and restoration works. This property will house another self sustaining charity shop, information and support hub alongside a community meeting space which carers and the wider communities can use as they wish! We are very excited to have a new accessible community base in Rossendale!

Rebecca Hodgson

**Rebecca Hodgson
CEO Carers Link Lancashire**



INTRODUCTION FROM OUR CHAIR



Welcome to our 2024-25 annual report!

One of the highlights of this year was Carers Link Lancashire receiving the overall Beacon Award at this years Hyndburn Business Awards for being a “beacon of inspiration” - more on this later in the report.

There continues to be a high level of demand for the support that carers across East Lancashire require. I am pleased to report that our dedicated team are able to provide it which is evidenced by continuing to meet the performance targets set out in our Lancashire County Council contract and more tellingly in the feedback we receive from our carers. The feedback has been overwhelmingly positive, throughout the year.

During the year we commenced a new ASD (Autism Spectrum Disorder) specialist project which was gratefully funded by a legacy from the former charity ‘Action for ASD’. I am also pleased to report that our three charity shops, information hubs and cafe in Accrington are now exceeding expectations in terms of fundraising. The cafe in particular has been utilised to support registered carers and wider community members by providing free meals & hot drinks to those who need them. This is all in addition to providing locations where carers can have in person access to our services.

A further development was purchasing a new property in Bacup, which will become our fourth charity shop and information hub overall, our second to serve the Rossendale area. Following a period of remodelling and renovation, it is expected to open later on this year.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank all our Board of Trustees, both current and previous, for their commitment, expertise and passion given to the organisation throughout the year. The board of trustees, who give their time freely, possess a wide and varied range of skills which in addition to supporting our management team, ensures that the organisation complies with charity commission and financial guidelines. The board and staff led by CEO, Rebecca, together continue to make significant progress towards achieving our key priorities.

I am also pleased to report that our committed volunteers continue to work in various roles across the organisation and encourage anyone interested in supporting our communities to join us, especially as we seek to grow our volunteer support especially in our growing charity outlets. Anyone interested is very welcome to contact the main Accrington headquarters where you can seek further information about the various opportunities open, or head to the Carers Link Lancashire website.

I would also like to thank the Boroughs of Hyndburn and Rossendale for their continued support through the ongoing election of nomination for roles of Trustees and the support they offer to the Board.

Thanks also to our donors and contractors who continue to offer financial support in the way of grants, donation of materials and work. Projects which support the charity immensely in achieving its vision and strategy.

Special thanks to our main funders of Lancashire County Council, Eric Wright Foundation, BBC Children In Need and other smaller donors including the Ribble Valley Borough Council.



Finally, I thank once again our excellent committed staff and volunteers for their hard work in supporting our carers across East Lancashire and continuing to support the charity especially during these challenging times.

B. Birtle

Brian Birtle
Chair of Trustees

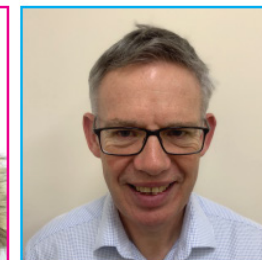
BOARD OF TRUSTEES



Melissa Fisher



Patricia Ahmed



Jeff Leahy



Susan Bibby



Brian Ozenbrook



Brian Birtle



Barbara Ashworth



Daniel Cassidy



Mustafa Mohammed

TREASURER'S REPORT



Carers Link Lancashire continues to achieve a stable and solid financial performance. Turnover increased to over 1.2m and we achieved a small surplus for the year. The cash position at year end was satisfactory at over £400k and above our reserve requirements.

Retail trading continued to improve during the year diversifying the charity's income streams. In line with this strategy, the charity purchased a commercial property in Bacup to function as a charity shop and drop-in support centre, further increasing our presence in the community.

The coming year does, however, present some challenges in that the rises in Employer National Insurances and the Minimum Wage significantly increases the charity's costs, and efficiency gains will be required to offset this.

Jeff Leahy
Jeff Leahy
Treasurer

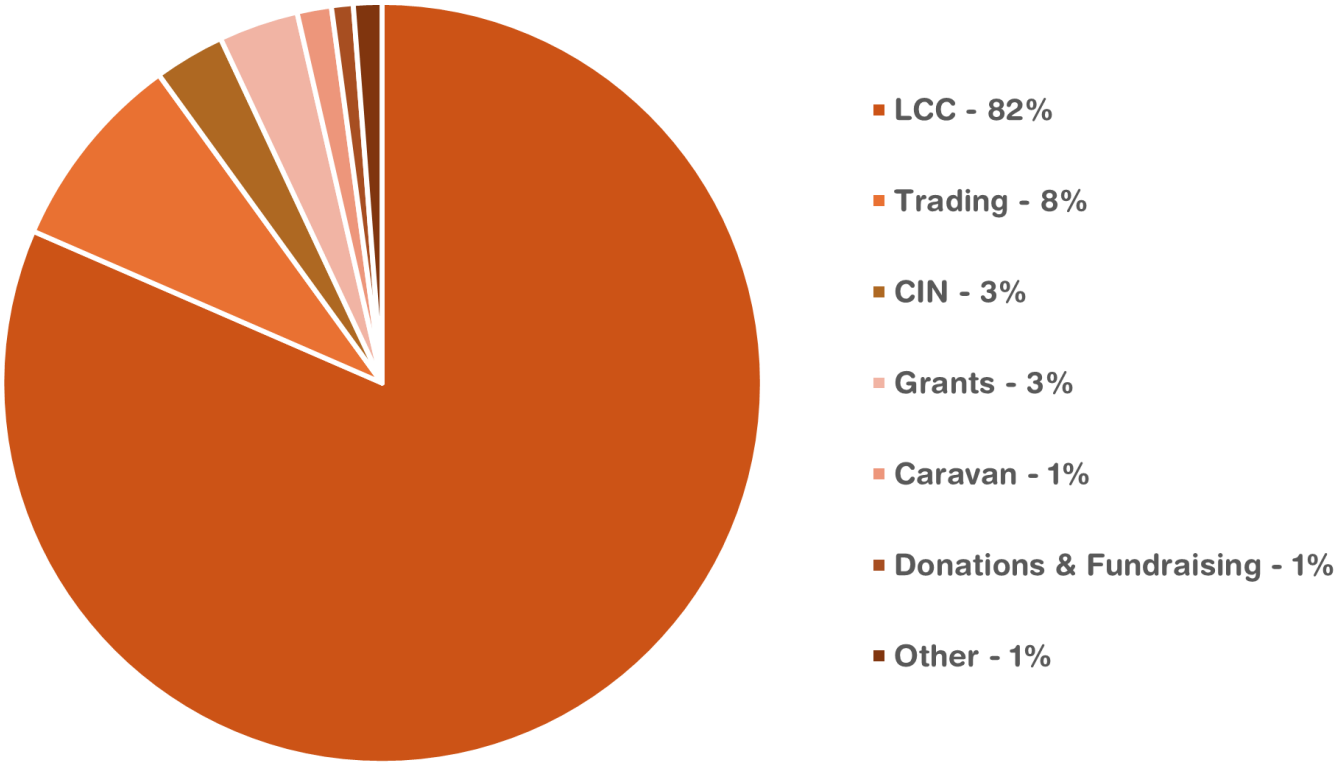
**Our new
Bacup
shop!**

**Our
Accrington shop
won the Acorn
Community News
'Best Charity Window
Display' in
Hyndburn 2024!**

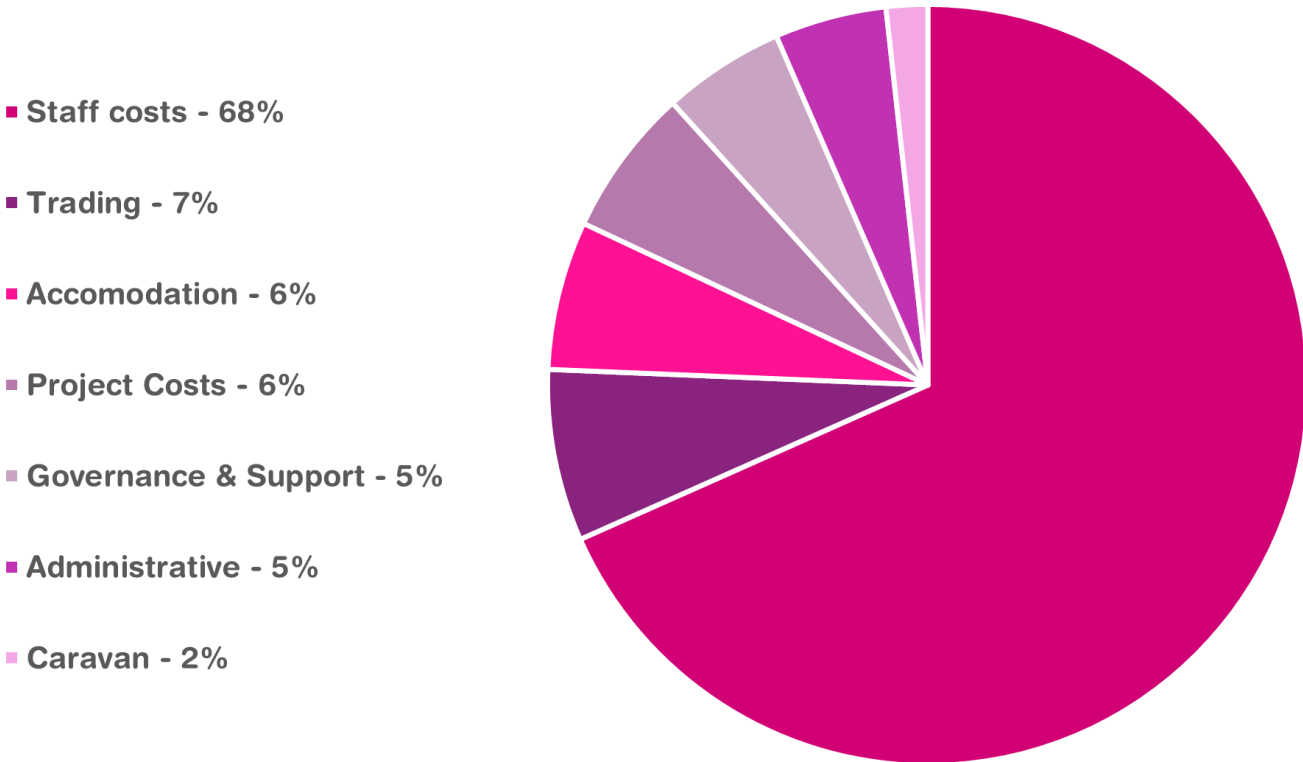


FINANCIAL ANALYSIS

INCOME



EXPENDITURE



STATISTICS & STATE OF CARING 2024

According to the 2021 Census, at least **5.8 million** people across the UK are providing unpaid care for an ill, older or disabled family member or friend.

Many of these people have had to give up paid employment or reduce their working hours to support their family member or friend, and this can have a significant impact on finances.

The Carers UK 'State of Caring' 2024 survey found:



35%
of carers do not feel confident that they will manage financially over the next 12 months

21%
of carers are struggling to afford their rent or mortgage payments

28%
of carers have cut back on essentials like food and heating in order to make ends meet. This is an increase from 25% in 2022

60%
of carers finding it difficult to afford essentials are struggling to afford electricity, gas and utility bills. 28% have had to use credit cards, 22% have used their bank account overdraft.

76%
of carers aged 18-64 in paid employment are worried about their ability to save for the future (e.g. retirement)

As of 31st March 2025, Carers Link Lancashire are currently supporting:

13,450 adult carers & **93** young carers in the East Lancashire area.



THE LANCASHIRE CARERS SERVICE

Throughout the year, the charity continued to work successfully alongside **n-compass** towards a brighter future in successfully delivering the Lancashire Carers Service. This service works across the county providing support, guidance and information to adult carers with **n-compass** delivering support in North and Central Lancashire and our charity delivering support in East Lancashire.

The service supports people in their caring role, undertaking statutory carers assessments and supporting their emotional health and wellbeing. This sees the two organisations jointly delivering the statutory Lancashire Carers Service until **2026**.

All registered carers receive regular information, support and services to assist them within their caring roles. The charity provides a wide range of provision and services to support adult carers within their roles including:

- An accessible and inclusive **community facility** on Blackburn Road in Accrington
- Partner of **The Lancashire Carers Service**, delivering aligned statutory services & support for carers across Lancashire
- Undertaking Statutory Carers Assessments and commissioning personal budgets in line with the **Care Act**
- Making outgoing referrals and recommendations to **Social Care** for commissioned respite

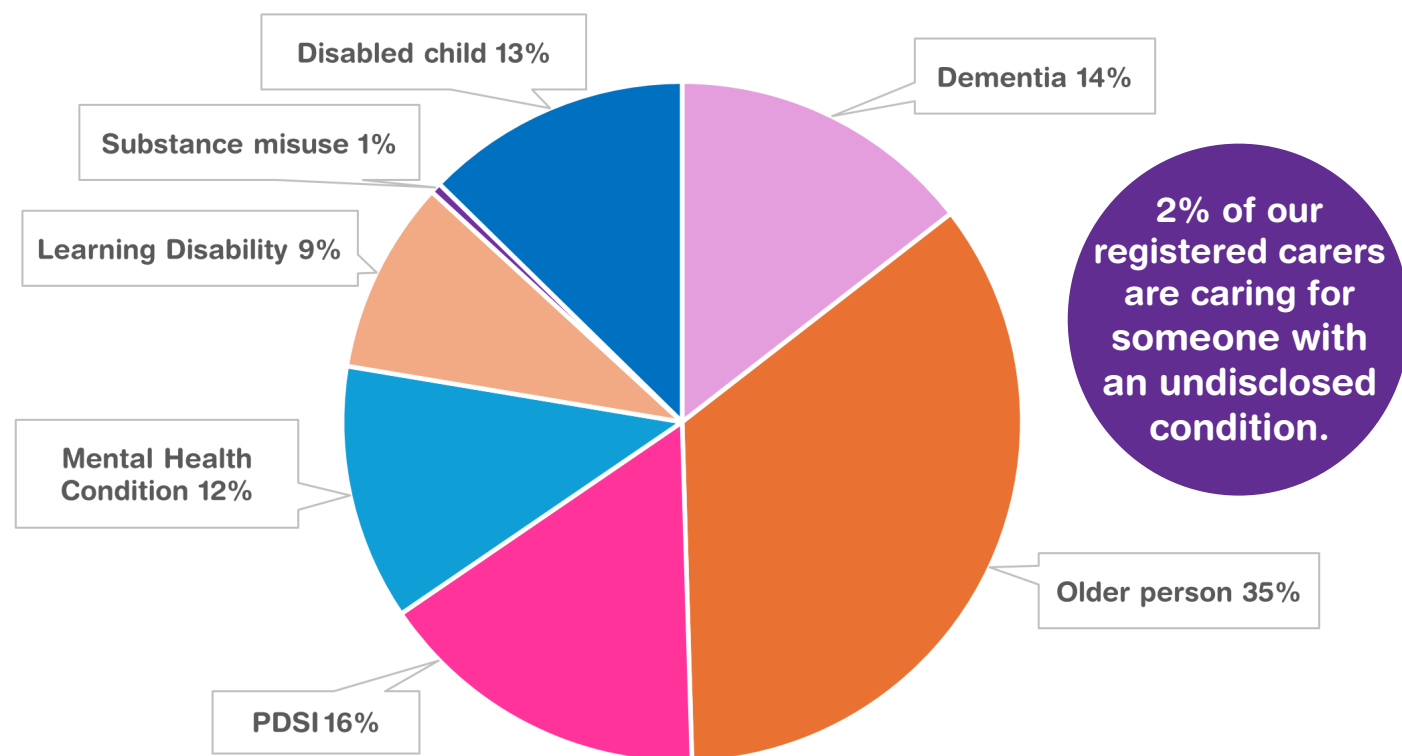
See the next few pages for more information on what we at Carers Link Lancashire have offered through the year...



KEY ADULT STATISTICS

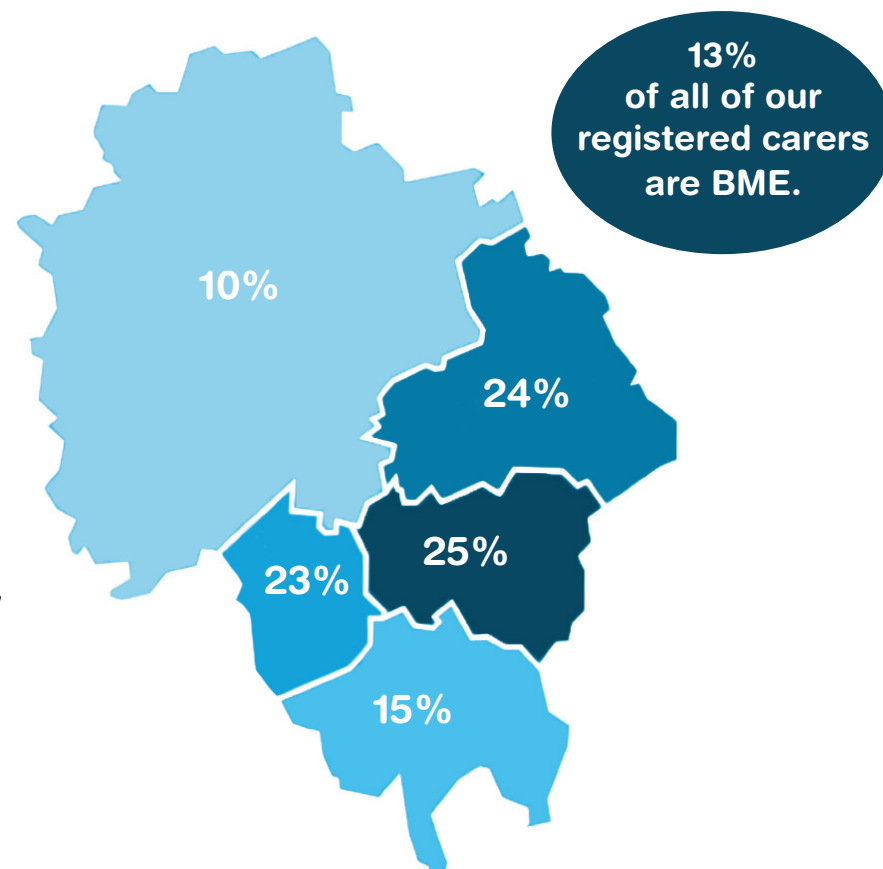
People can care for others due to a variety of conditions.

The main conditions our carers are supporting someone with, are:



As of 31st March 2025, Carers Link Lancashire has:

- 25% registered carers from Burnley
- 24% registered carers from Pendle
- 23% registered carers from Hyndburn
- 15% registered carers from Rossendale
- 10% registered carers from Ribble Valley
- 2% of registered carers are from another area but are caring for someone in the local authority area.



1873
New referrals

1168
New Carers Assessments Undertaken

1486
Existing Registered Carers
Supported with further support and services

3971
1-2-1 Support Sessions

4352
Assessments Undertaken
(Statutory Carers Assessments/ Reviews)

374
New POM4C Emergency plans

118
Support Groups and Events
(Attended by 643 carers)

9
FREE Understanding Dementia Courses

60
Peer Support Groups
(Attended by 360 carers)

18
Organised Activities
(Attended by 184 carers)

3184
Reviewed Carers Assessments

54
Carers Awareness Training Sessions
(Training 540 professionals)

48
Counselling Sessions
(Free counselling to carers through a team of volunteer counsellors)

527
Max Cards Provided
(Enabling families to receive free and discounted access to recreational facilities)

£643k
In Benefits Secured For Carers
(Secured by providing a dedicated welfare and benefits worker who advises on benefits carers are entitled to, assisting them with completing claim forms and ensuring carers receive the benefits they are entitled to. This is an increase of 6% from what we achieved in 2023/24)

43
Personal Grants Secured
(With £13,551.43 additional income being secured for carers)

1002
Go2 Leisure Cards Issued
(Giving carers highly discounted access to a range of health and well-being services across East Lancashire)



SUPPORT FOR ASD CARERS

The end of 2023 saw the charity being gifted almost £70,000 from Action for ASD which sadly closed down and ceased operating. The funds were designated by our charity to providing specialist support for carers of individuals with ASD.

In August 2024, we launched our ASD project and now have an amazing ASD Support Officer, helping ASD carers access information and support in East Lancashire, and who offers Cygnet Autism Training, monthly peer support groups, activities and workshops!

Our FREE Cygnet Autism training - a 6-7 week programme created by Barnardos for carers of those aged under 18 living with Autism - has proven incredibly popular, as has the launch of our curated Autism Support Guide which includes various services and organisations that can support both carers and individuals with ASD: wellbeing and social groups, financial services, education services, respite offers, and NHS/clinical services.

145

ASD carers identified
between Aug'24-March'25

22

**Carers attended
Cygnet course**
since launch Oct'24-March '25

44

**Carers attended our
peer support groups**

Kylie's Carers Story in her own words...

Carers name has been changed for anonymity

I first came across Carers Link Lancashire when I saw their ASD Cygnet training course on social media. As a parent caring for my daughter who has Autism, is non-speaking, and has PICA disorder, I was eager to find ways to better support her. I had heard that the Cygnet course was one of the most helpful available, so I called up right away and booked on.

When I first attended the Cygnet course, I felt a bit overwhelmed, but that quickly changed. The welcoming and supportive atmosphere created by the trainers and the group of parents and carers helped me feel comfortable. I felt heard, valued, and part of a community.

At the time, I was also facing challenges with finding permanent housing after relocating to a new area, and I was struggling to access the right support for my daughter's complex needs. Laura, the ASD Support Officer, took the time to speak with me after the Cygnet sessions to understand my situation. She reached out to local organisations on my behalf, and within just a few days, I was offered further support I needed from them.

When the Cygnet training ended, I made sure to leave feedback, as I had found the course incredibly informative across many areas. The team truly went above and beyond.

My daughter and I are now settled in our new 'forever' home, and I've gained a renewed sense of confidence after completing the Cygnet course. Carers Link has also supported me in securing a grant for a short break, so I am now able to enjoy a lovely caravan holiday over the summer!

CARERS STORY

One of our registered male carers supports his wife, who suffers from multiple health conditions including functional neurological disorder, diabetes, asthma, migraines, and pulmonary embolism. The carer himself faces health challenges after a right knee injury and is awaiting physiotherapy. Despite his own difficulties, he provides full-time care, day and night, without any support from family or friends.

"The carer himself faces health challenges"

The carer's preferred language is Urdu, therefore conversations were conducted in Urdu to ensure clear communication and to ensure his needs were understood. It became evident during the assessment that due to the demands of his caring role, he faced significant challenges. He had to leave his job, leading to financial struggles, including energy bill arrears and poor living conditions caused by a broken bed.

"Due to demands of his caring role, he had to leave his job"

Support was offered through a carers assessment, introducing him to and providing him with information on local services, mental health support, grants, and food banks in the area. In particular, he was signposted to Turn2Us and successfully secured a £200 discount on his energy bills as well as a significant reduction to his monthly bill, which almost halved.

Additionally, a Carers Trust grant funded a new bed, improving his quality of sleep and physical wellbeing. This enabled him to get the rest that he needed for his busy day ahead.

Discussions also took place around contingency planning, leading the carer to set up the Peace of Mind plan to ensure that arrangements were in place should anything happen to him unexpectedly.

"The financial assistance and practical support had eased a considerable amount of stress"

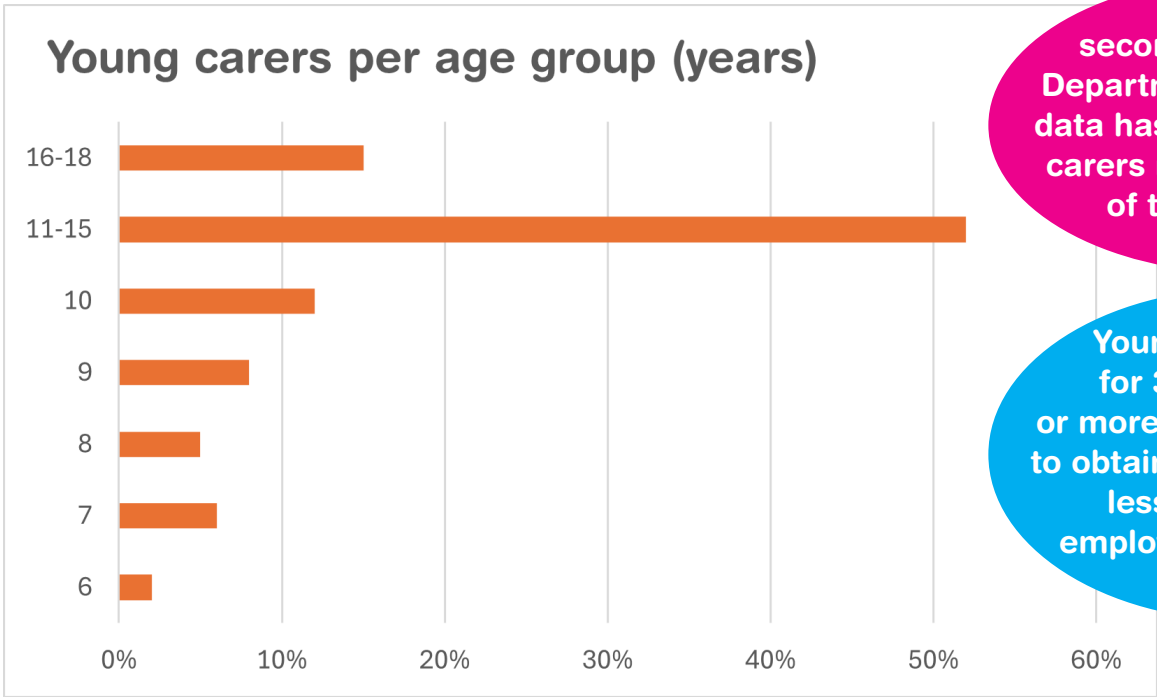
The carer expressed great satisfaction with the support he received from Carers Link Lancashire, stating that the financial assistance and practical support had eased a considerable amount of stress. Having a new bed enabled him to get better rest, preparing him for the demands of the caring role each day. Overall, the intervention improved both his physical and emotional wellbeing and helped him manage his caring responsibilities more sustainably.

YOUNG CARERS STATISTICS

A young carer is under the age of 18, looking after a family member with a long term illness, disability, mental health or substance misuse issue.

As of the 31st March 2025, the young carers team were supporting **93** registered young carers from Hyndburn & Ribble Valley of the following ages:

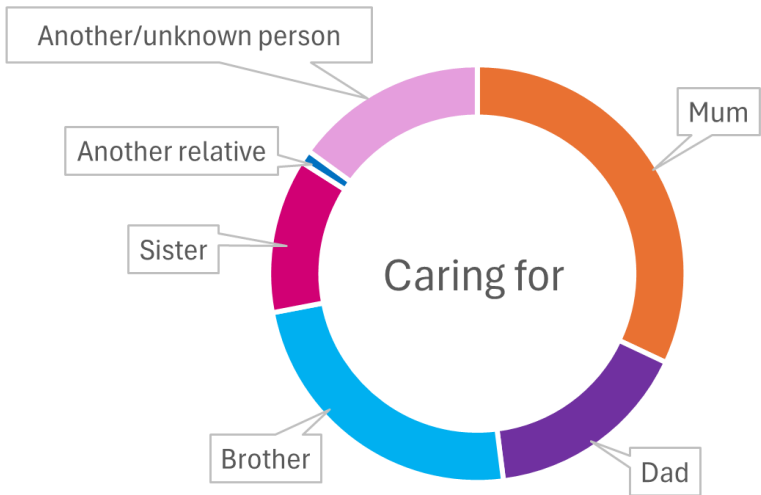
- 2% are aged 6 years
- 5% are aged 8 years
- 12% are aged 10 years
- 15% are aged 16-18 years
- 6% are aged 7 years
- 8% are aged 9 years
- 52% are aged 11-15 years



For the second year in a row, Department for Education data has shown that young carers miss over a month of their education a year.

Young carers caring for 35 hours a week or more are 86% less likely to obtain a degree and 46% less likely to enter employment. (Xue et. al, 2023)

As of 31st March 2025, Carers Link Lancashire has:



- 32% young carers caring for Mum
- 24% young carers caring for a brother
- 16% young carers caring for Dad
- 12% young carers caring for a sister
- 1% young carers caring for another relative
- 15% caring for another person

Our young carers are caring for those with the following conditions:



166
Young Carers worked with throughout the year

344
1-2-1 sessions with young carers

20
Free trips and activities provided

172
Free respite opportunities provided

44
Targeted Group Sessions

52
Local schools worked with in East Lancashire

YOUNG CARER STORY...

The name of this young carer has been changed.

Ivy, aged 13, cares for her mum who has epilepsy, and a mental health condition thought to be related to the epilepsy. She was referred to our service in January 2025, and on reading through the referral it was apparent that she had a significant caring role. The two of them live together, although her grandad lives nearby and helps when he can. Ivy says she prefers to help mum as she understands her needs more than her grandad.

When I met Ivy in school to carry out a young carers assessment, she didn't see herself as a young carer and she appeared really stressed and distracted, but was adamant that she was proud of helping her mum and loved her very much.

Ivy said she had helped to look after her mum from the age of 8. She said "I just do things and only realised that other people do not have to do what I do when I started high school". She said that she made the meals, did the shopping, gave her mum her medication and spent most of her spare time making sure her mum was ok and not feeling down. When the other girls in school used to be able to go out in the evening or at the weekend to the cinema, she said she was always busy or too tired trying to keep up with everything. She said she felt lonely and like she was missing out on things.

We put together an action plan with Ivy, which included asking grandad to sit with mum so that she could attend our weekly time out sessions and mix with her peers, and weekly 1-2-1 sessions where Ivy began to open up about her feelings and discussed her worries about her mum's illness. Ivy said that because no one had explained to her about mums' illness, she worried about what would happen to mum, especially when she was at school, and because of this was unable to concentrate on her schoolwork. We had a discussion with mum and an appointment was arranged so that, at the next hospital visit, a nurse sat with mum and Ivy and went through how mum's brain worked and that the medication would help control mum's epilepsy. This seemed to put her mind at rest and mum said she would try and take some of the responsibility for the cooking and cleaning when she was well enough.

Ivy has now made friends, grown in confidence, is less stressed, and school say her concentration has improved. She feels her life is now more balanced.



CHARM is an inter-schools event, celebrating the talents and achievements of young people throughout Hyndburn. The event was created to give the opportunity for outstanding young people to gain recognition for their talents and achievements.

The event also raises money for our Young Carers team and local charity YNOT Aspire through ticket sales to the final show, and through fundraising events that the local schools and their pupils arrange in the build up to the event. The March 2025 CHARM event was held at Mount Carmel School and raised for our Young Carers Team an amazing...



£2504.88

OUR NEW BACUP SHOP

We are pleased to announce that Carers Link Lancashire have acquired a new property on Yorkshire Street in Bacup!



This will become our fourth charity shop and Information and Support Hub!

The property, once renovated, will see us having a two-floor self-sustaining charity shop, with an information and support hub space, which serves as a central drop in space to register as a carer and for the benefit of carers to chat face to face with our staff and officers for support and advice. The building will also house a community meeting room space, open for the wider communities in Bacup.

Our aim as a charity is to create a chain of self-sustaining charity shops and information and support hubs in each borough of East Lancashire. This is very exciting news, not only for our charity and carers, but also to be a part of the regeneration work in Bacup. Bacup has recently been granted an investment of level up funding from the government to improve the market.



We are extremely grateful our new community facility in Bacup is being supported by the Morrisons Foundation, who have kindly committed funds to support us in creating our new support hub and community meeting room space.

We look forward to opening this new facility later this year!

Our Colne shop turned ONE in 2024!

Thank you to all of our customers, donators and volunteers, without whom we wouldn't have such an amazing shop and occasionwear boutique! We have had many brides, bridal parties, prom-goers and more who have been able to find their dream outfit, supporting our charity with their purchases.

THANK YOU!



OUR CARERS CARAVAN



In 2023-24 we were able to upgrade our Carers Caravan at the beautiful Lakeland Haven site! The caravan is a 2021 model with a modern design, 3 bedrooms that can sleep up to 6 people, and a spacious layout for carers to relax come rain or shine on a staycation.

2024 was our first full season of renting this caravan to our registered carers at the Lancashire Carers Service to enjoy a much deserved break. The caravan bookings were filled incredibly fast, showing the need for it for carers.

Included in our caravan offer, we include a discount card that enables you to claim 15% off in the restaurants/bars on site and 50% off sports and activities! Our caravan is bookable between March and October every year.

43
Unpaid carers booked and enjoyed short breaks at our caravan

High quality caravan and very comfortable.
We had a lovely time, thank you!

It was very easy to book, and the payment scheme was helpful. Caravan was lovely and clean with everything you need and lots to do on site.

“Caravan lovely, park lovely, activity discount and owner privileges - amazing! Would happily book again.”



FREE MEALS IN OUR COMMUNITY CAFE

Concerningly, the Carers UK State of Caring 2024 survey found 38% of carers are struggling to afford essentials including food. 61% of carers who are struggling to afford food have skipped a meal, and 59% have reduced the size of their meals.

A fifth (20%) of carers who are struggling to afford food said they had not eaten at all for a whole day.

We applied for and were awarded funding to improve food poverty in the area. This funding allowed us to offer FREE meals at our Accrington Community Cafe to groups of residents in Hyndburn struggling to make ends meet. We were able to provide 501 meals to customers who were over the age of 65, in a caring role, or a parent of a child under the age of 18.

We were delighted to be able to distribute so many filling and nutritious meals which included foods such as our pies and sweet treats from Clayton Park Bakery, our delicious breakfast meals, jacket potatoes, paninis, salads, homemade soups and hot drinks.

501
Free meals distributed
Hyndburn residents through our community café



Department for Work & Pensions

2024
HYNDBURN BUSINESS AWARDS

HYNDBURN BUSINESS AWARDS 2024



Our charity was nominated and were finalists for 2 awards at the Hyndburn Business Awards!

However this year the charity were awarded the overall Beacon Award - in the opinion of the judging panel, the best entry across all categories and a beacon of inspiration.

This is a fantastic achievement for the charity demonstrating the impact, support and services to carers and the wider communities across Hyndburn!

RESPITE AND BREAKS

We provided a range of targeted support groups, training, events, activities and peer support opportunities aimed at overcoming loneliness and isolation. We have successfully provided:

18

Organised Activities
(Engaging with 184 Carers)

£13551

Secured in Personal Grants
(For 43 Carers)



WELFARE & BENEFITS SUPPORT

Many carers often struggle to balance work and care. There are also significant financial costs associated with caring, with carers often using their income or savings to pay for support services and care equipment. We already know that carers face poorer health outcomes, with a high proportion of carers struggling with mental and physical health problems and experiencing low levels of wellbeing.

During the year, we have secured a huge

£643,663.80

in benefits
for our registered carers!

Throughout the year, our welfare and benefits worker has worked hard to ensure our registered carers are supported with their overall welfare and benefits, particularly ensuring they are in receipt of the benefits that they are entitled to! This ensures that our carers and their families are not in financial poverty and hardship and are able to have their needs met

During the year, we have secured a huge £643,663.80 in benefits for our registered carers!

Here is a case study of someone who we supported with welfare and benefits this year:

“The Welfare and Benefits Officer came out to help my mum apply for a blue badge and Attendance Allowance. I had started the process but struggled with some questions so having that support and guidance really helped to ensure we did not miss out any important information.

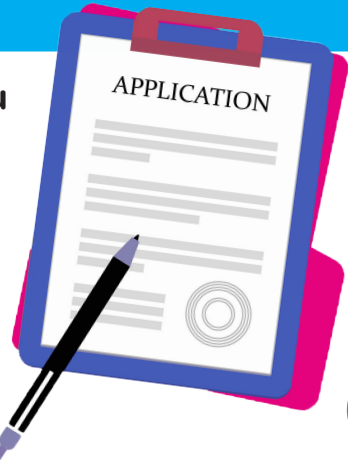
Whilst he was here, he informed us that my dad would also be eligible for Attendance Allowance and helped us complete an application form for him as well. He was very patient and helpful throughout.

We were very grateful to have that support and guidance from the Benefits Officer as we had never had to apply for this before.

Since the Attendance Allowance’s have been successful, my parent’s have started having a cleaner come in to help around the house, which has improved their quality of life.”

Our Benefits & Welfare Officer can help you and the person you care for apply for certain benefits such as:

- Attendance Allowance
- Carers Allowance
- Disability Living Allowance
- Personal Independence Payment



“The few hours of not having to worry did me the world of good. We had time to treat ourselves. It was a nice escape from everyday responsibilities.”

“I feel very relaxed after attending the activity, hopefully I will sleep well tonight. Carers Link has meant a lot to me since I’ve been going to the group meetings.”

VOLUNTEERS & VOLUNTEER LED SERVICES

As of 31st March 2025, Carers Link Lancashire has 81 active volunteers who are assisting in supporting in the direct delivery of services and facilities.



132

**Registered
Volunteers**
(Throughout the
whole year)



£86k

Worth of hours
(If quantified into a paid
salary at national
minimum wage -
£12.21 per hour)



7047

**Volunteering
Hours Provided**

48

**Free Counselling
Sessions
Provided
For carers**

VOLUNTEERS STORIES

I have been a volunteer at Carers Link for 18 months now. I took early retirement after working for an organisation for 37 years and wanted to give something back to the community. My father had Dementia and I knew what an amazing charity Carers Link was.

My favourite part about being a volunteer for Carers Link Lancashire is meeting customers, and of course working with the other volunteers!
- Allyson, Retail Volunteer

I joined Carers Link Lancashire as a volunteer after hearing about their opportunities through the Job Centre.

I am currently a stay at home parent, and I am looking to go into full-time employment in the retail industry. Volunteering in the charity shop builds the skills needed for working in retail.
- Samreen, Retail Volunteer

I am retired but a full time carer, and I started volunteering for Carers Link Lancashire in early 2024. I joined to meet other people and socialise, as it's quite lonely being a carer.

I feel like a part of another family at Carers Link, and I now volunteer for 8 hours a week.
- Violet, Cafe Volunteer

Being new to the area, I joined Carers Link as a volunteer to help with fundraising events during the evening and weekends, promoting the prom/wedding charity boutique in the Colne shop and attending local craft fayres to raise awareness of the charity and making goods to sell on the day. Everyone is lovely to volunteer with, I have met lots of lovely volunteers and carers. I really enjoy it and we have a lot of laughs along the way
- Sharon, Fundraising and Events Volunteer

I joined Carers Link Lancashire as a volunteer over 2 years ago, at 84 years of age. I visited the charity shop, and at the time I was bored and lonely and decided to try volunteering for just a couple of hours at first... now I work a whole day a week here! I have made wonderful friends from it - we all go out together outside of volunteering now.
- Joan, Retail Volunteer

OUR PARTNERS



OUR FUNDERS



OUR AWARDS



FIND US:

54-56 BLACKBURN ROAD, ACCRINGTON, BB5 1LE
13 DEARDENGATE, HASLINGDEN, BB4 5QN
59 MARKET STREET, COLNE, BB8 0LL

CONTACT US:

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