CARERS FIRST

England & Wales · Charity number 1085430

Details

Status	Registered
Legal form	Charitable company
Company number	04144820
Registered	2001-03-07
Register	View on the Charity Commission register

Contact

Address	Michael Gill Building Tolgate Lane Strood Kent ME2 4TG
Phone	03003031555
Email	hello@carersfirst.org.uk
Website	www.carersfirst.org.uk

Activities

Objects: 4.1 For the public benefit, to relieve the needs of carers and persons who are sick, infirm, disabled or who have social care needs in particular but not exclusively by:4.1.1 the provision of information, advice and support4.1.2 the provision of respite care

Activities: Carers FIRST is a charity supporting people who look after a relative or friend who due to ill health, physical or mental illness, disability, frailty, or addiction cannot manage without their support. We provide information, advice, guidance, emotional support, training and activities, giving carers an opportunity to have a break from their caring role and help them to get the support they need.

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Classification

- **How:** Provides Services, Provides Advocacy/advice/information, Sponsors Or Undertakes Research, Other Charitable Activities
- **What:** General Charitable Purposes, Education/training, The Advancement Of Health Or Saving Of Lives, Disability, The Prevention Or Relief Of Poverty, Economic/community Development/employment, Human Rights/religious Or Racial Harmony/equality Or Diversity, Recreation, Other Charitable Purposes
- **Who:** Children/young People, Elderly/old People, People With Disabilities, People Of A Particular Ethnic Or Racial Origin, Other Charities Or Voluntary Bodies, Other Defined Groups, The General Public/mankind

Geography

- Essex
- Hackney
- Haringey
- Lincolnshire
- Medway
- Waltham Forest

Finances

Period end	Income	Expenditure	Assets	Employees
2025-03-31	£5,289,243	£5,114,805	£1,867,992	138
2024-03-31	£4,931,362	£5,056,341	£1,723,347	142
2023-03-31	£4,694,622	£4,873,317	£1,793,745	141
2022-03-31	£4,563,735	£4,446,618	£2,095,708	146
2021-03-31	£4,285,129	£4,132,221	£1,934,367	145

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Trustees

Name	Role	Appointed
Semantha Neal	Chair	2023-07-01
CLIVE BERTRAM SPARROW		2023-06-16
Caroline Bernadette Elizabeth Withers		2026-01-22
Christian Patrick Shepley Higham		2025-11-18
Daniela Domenica Cecchini		2024-10-25
Hannah Elizabeth Usher		2026-01-05
Josephine Mary Taylor		2025-12-24
Manir Hussain		2023-06-16
Peter Alan Jenkins		2020-04-06
Roberta Camilla Heys		2023-06-16
Sarah Joan Louise Pickersgill		2026-03-25
Vicki Jayne Wells		2020-11-11

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CARERS FIRST

England & Wales - Charity number 1085430

Accounts

Carers First

Annual Report 2024-2025

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Carers First

Company Information

Registered Charity 1085430
Company Number 04144820

Registered Office
Unit 4 Michael Gill Building
Tolgate Lane
Strood
Kent
ME2 4TG

Bankers
Lloyds Bank Plc
82 Mount Pleasant Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN1 1RP

Auditors
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent
TN9 1BE

Carers First

Contents:

Structure, Governance and Management	4
Chair's Introduction	6
Objectives and Activities	10
Achievements and Performance	13
Independent auditor's report	29
Statement of Financial Activities	34
Balance Sheet	35
Statement of Cash Flows	36
Notes to the Financial Statements	38

Report of the Trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2025

The Directors, who are also the Trustees of the charitable company, present their Annual Report with the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2025. This Trustees' report, prepared in accordance with Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006, is also the Trustees' report as required by Part 8 of the Charities Act 2011. The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) in preparing this annual report and financial statements.

Structure, Governance and Management

Status

Carers First is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity (No.1085430) and was incorporated on 19 January 2001.

The Charity's governing document is its Articles of Association, which have been approved by the Charity Commission, and its affairs are administered by its Trustees.

Trustees

The Trustees who held office during the year and since are as follows:

- Mr. Peter Davis (Chair – resigned 18 October 2024)
- Ms. Vicki Wells (Vice-Chair)
- Mr. Sukwinder Bassi (resigned 31 December 2024)
- Ms. Georgina Hoare (resigned 18 October 2024)
- Mr. Peter Jenkins

- Mr. Marcus Shaw (resigned 6 March 2025)
- Ms. Susannah Botting (resigned 6 August 2024)
- Mr. Clive Sparrow
- Ms. Roberta Heys
- Dr. Manir Hussain
- Ms. Semantha Neal (Chair from 18 October 2024)
- Ms. Daniela Cecchini (appointed 25 October 2024)

The Trustees are elected, or re-elected, by rotation by the Companies Act Members of Carers First at the Annual General Meeting.

Chair's Introduction

This year has been one of growth and progression for Carers First. We launched our ambitious 2024–2027 Strategy and began delivery against a backdrop of economic uncertainty, pressures on social care, and a rapidly changing funding environment. Despite these challenges, we strengthened our foundations and expanded our reach, ensuring that more carers than ever before could access personalised, life-changing support.

Thanks to the dedication of our staff, volunteers, trustees, partners and funders, we have continued to deliver real impact for carers and their families. We have responded with innovation and resilience, mobilising new contracts, further embedding co-production into our work, and increasing the number of carers we reach and support. We are particularly proud of the progress made since securing our new contract in **Merton**, which supports both adult and young carers. Since beginning delivery, we have significantly increased the number of carers receiving support, while developing a strong local team that is already making a real difference in the community.

The success in Merton is just one example of how our strategy is driving meaningful change across all our services. The results speak for themselves: across the charity in the last year **over 57,300 carers registered with Carers First** and we **reached over 283,800 carers and professionals** to provide information about unpaid carers, changing more lives for the better.

Caring has a profound impact on people's lives. Whilst many carers want to care and find caring rewarding, nevertheless millions of unpaid carers face poverty, stress, and isolation as a result of their caring responsibilities. According to Carers UK data in 2024:

- 1.2 million unpaid carers live in poverty, and 400,000 live in deep poverty in the UK.
- 61% of carers are worried about living costs and whether they can manage in the future.
- 68% of carers cut back on hobbies/leisure activities, compared to 58% in 2023 and 47% in 2022.

Carers First has stepped up to meet these challenges, providing tailored support that improves carers' wellbeing, confidence, and ability to balance their own lives with their caring role. This report tells the story of that impact – of partnerships forged, barriers broken down, and lives improved, and I am extremely proud to be able to share it with you.

"I've cared for my brother since I was seven and he was nine. He has suffered neglect, abuse and bullying throughout his life, and it's been my job to look after and protect him. He is autistic, which affects his ability to communicate effectively with others, and this makes him vulnerable...I have also made huge efforts to help him secure housing closer to where I live, considering the support I provide. I am being supported by Carers First to engage with Adult Social Care to get further support for my brother's needs." Vanessa

Carers First will continue to work directly with, and for carers, providing personalised information and tailored support in the way that suits them, helping them find balance, and to live their lives to the fullest.

"Being able to speak to real people [at Carers First]. *People that understand and have empathy with the stresses and frustrations of day to day caring and the difficulties of navigating the system." (anonymous)*

This vital work is made possible not only by our dedicated staff but also by the incredible contribution of our volunteers, whose time and commitment extend the reach and impact of everything we do. Our volunteers are a hugely generous group of people who give up their time to do so much for Carers First. In 2024-25, 136 volunteers delivered over 205 hours per month providing so much to the carers we support. We wouldn't be nearly as successful without them.

Board, Leadership and Governance

This year also brought important changes to our Board of Trustees. Several longstanding members stepped down after many years of committed voluntary service. Our previous Chair, Peter Davis, stepped down from his role after nine years of guiding the charity to uphold our mission, vision and strategic direction. We are very grateful for all that he has done during his tenure.

We welcomed new trustees bringing fresh perspectives and expertise. Following our annual skills audit, new trustees were appointed through an open recruitment process and were supported through a planned onboarding process. We recognise the growing challenge of balancing trustee responsibilities with professional and personal commitments — particularly as many of our Board members hold roles elsewhere. We are immensely grateful for their time, insight, and continued commitment.

In line with the recommendations from our recent Governance Review, we took steps to further strengthen our governance framework — refining the role and remit of our Finance & Risk Committee and our People & Governance Committee to improve oversight and strategic effectiveness. The Trustee Board and both Committees meet quarterly. Day to day running of the charity is delegated to our Chief Executive, Alison Taylor, who adeptly drives forward the delivery of our strategy, with the support of the Senior Leadership Team.

Like many organisations, we also faced unplanned cost pressures, with changes to voluntary income generation, making it harder to secure funding through our previous routes. A significant unexpected cost pressure was preparing for the rise in Employers' National Insurance contributions from April 2025. This added £141,000 to our costs overnight — an unexpected challenge that we are continuing to work hard to meet.

Despite these financial pressures, the dedication and resilience of our staff remained unwavering, and their commitment is reflected in the positive results of our annual staff survey. Our yearly staff survey shows year on year improvements which is something we are immensely proud of, as without the hard work of colleagues across Carers First we wouldn't be able to deliver for carers and the people they look after.

"I love my job. It's so positive when we hear from carers that they've enjoyed an event or that Carers First has supported them when things have been tough. I also really enjoy supporting my team and seeing them progress." Avril Doyle, Operations Manager, Merton, Carers First.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI) remain central to how Carers First operates as both an employer and a service provider. During the year, the Board assessed itself against **Principle 6 of the Charity Governance Code** and was assured that EDI is embedded both in our day-to-day work and in our focused strategic activity. It continues to be an area of importance for the Board and the wider charity. Building on this strong foundation, we worked across our wider management group to develop a refreshed **EDI Action Plan** to ensure our policy is fully implemented in practice. This plan sets out clear actions and measures, supporting us to challenge ourselves and continuously improve the way we champion equality, diversity and inclusion for staff, volunteers and the carers we support.

As a Board, we receive regular reports on the diversity of our staff team and the carers we support.

Environmental Sustainability

In our new three-year strategy we committed to better understand the impact of our operations on the environment by undertaking an impact assessment. As a result, we are developing an action plan to mitigate against the risks identified to deliver over the three-year period.

We took part in the first national Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Survey for charities, developed by Eastside People, to reflect on our performance as a charity in relation to ESG, to access benchmarked data and obtain examples of good practice. We now have a better understanding and an action plan to work to.

Thank You

As the new Chair of Carers First, I want to offer a heartfelt thank you to every volunteer and member of staff. Collectively, your hard work and enthusiasm has delivered so much for carers. My thanks also go to our Chief Executive, Alison Taylor, the Senior Leadership Team and my fellow Trustees for their wisdom, support and many hours of service. A special thank you to Peter Davis, our previous Chair, for all that he has done for Carers First during his term. Finally, to the carers we serve, we understand that you give your all in the hardest circumstances often with little rest, and we thank you for all that you do.

Semantha Neal

Chair of Trustees

Objectives and Activities

The charity's Objects are to "relieve the needs of carers and persons who are sick, infirm, disabled or who have social care needs in particular but not exclusively, by the provision of information, advice and support and by the provision of respite care." In accordance with Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011, the Trustees have had due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit when reviewing the charity's objectives and planning future activities.

Our Mission

Carers First provides support, for carers, with carers – so they can live their lives to the fullest.

Our Ambition

To enable carers to thrive in their role and achieve the balance in their lives they wish to achieve.

Our Values

Our core values underpin all our work. These values are:

Positive: We are dedicated to working with carers to make a positive, material difference in their lives. We celebrate diversity and work in an inclusive, positive and supportive way, actively listening and valuing everyone's contribution.

Collaborative: We recognise the importance and strength of working in collaboration with local and national organisations to deliver improved support to carers. We also know the importance of collaborating with our Carers First colleagues, sharing knowledge and learning, being curious, respecting differences and working with integrity and transparency.

Ambitious: We are ambitious and tenacious in our determination to support more carers in better ways. We will innovate and develop our programmes of support, so more carers are able to obtain the support they need at the time they need it, to achieve a balance in their lives and enable them to live their lives to the fullest.

What we do

In the UK, about 5.8 million people are providing unpaid care to a friend or family member, and any one of us could see our lives change overnight if someone close to us suddenly needed extra support. In the UK, two in three of us will become a carer at some point in our lifetime.

Unpaid carers save the UK around £162 billion each year, this is a huge contribution to our economy. We understand that being a carer can be a rewarding role, but it can come at significant personal cost with huge financial pressures and often finding the right support adds to the daily challenges.

Carers First is here to change that, making sure every carer can find the help they need, when they need it, and know how much their contribution matters.

Where we work

Our service model is based on early identification and prevention, increasing carers' wellbeing and reducing the impact of caring. We work with carers of all ages, using a strengths-based approach to sustain caring roles and to provide high quality, personalised information, advice and support, so carers to have choice and control.

We have staff delivering local commissioned carers services in the following areas:

- Essex
- Hackney
- Haringey
- Lincolnshire
- Medway
- Merton
- Southend-on-Sea
- Waltham Forest

We also continue to build our online digital offer, within and beyond the regions where we operate, so that we can offer all carers the information and support they need.

In 2024/25 we successfully navigated several significant transitions. We secured a new contract in **Merton** with 27% more carers registered, expanding our reach into areas where we had not previously worked and securing new funding for young carers, diversifying our income base. In **Croydon**, we secured a contract and started mobilisation to enable us to launch the service in the next financial year. In **Essex**, we retendered and secured a new contract for **Mid and South Essex** under a new service specification, which required us to establish a dedicated counselling service. We also worked closely with the **Southend** commissioner to expand statutory carers assessments and to create a small but growing young carers service tailored to local needs.

Essex Counselling Service:

Carers First launched a counselling service in Essex in April 2024, as part of a new commissioned service with Essex County Council. Counsellors can provide solution-focused counselling for six weeks to adults and children in mid and south Essex, with the goal of supporting carers whose mental health troubles are impacting on their caring role.

One carer who gave their feedback said: "I'd felt so trapped and stuck and didn't see how counselling could help me. They couldn't change anything. But I began to realise why I was feeling this way. I learned all about agency and that I had the power to make changes. I have learned so much about myself."

The service meets the standards set out in the British Association of Counselling and Psychotherapy (BACP) Ethical Framework.

"Carers First have definitely helped me especially when my son was very ill in hospital and I was visited regularly by a lady from Carers First, without her support I wouldn't have coped. Also, the day trips and events have been fantastic and have allowed me to feel like a normal person again because as a carer you do lose your identity."

(anonymous)

Achievements and Performance

In 2024/25 we set ourselves five ambitious objectives – and delivered tangible progress in every area.

1. Reach and engage more carers early in their caring role
2. Develop new innovative models of collaboration, delivery and programmes with the potential to scale our reach and impact
3. Achieving the highest quality of support possible, so we can maximise the difference made to carers' lives
4. Champion talent and diversity
5. Grow and diversify our income to enable us to achieve more for carers

Strategic Objective 1. Reach and engage more carers early in their caring role

Every year we work hard to reach more carers. We know that the earlier we reach them the more support we can provide to them. One of the challenges is that many carers don't identify as carers, so our campaigns are essential for helping raise awareness and understanding of the support we can provide. We support carers from all communities, so we work to ensure our information is culturally sensitive, accessible and inclusive.

In 2024/25 we **reached over 283,800 carers and professionals** to provide information about unpaid carers, including the remarkable role and value carers contribute to our local communities, and how to best support them. We have worked across the health and care system and with professionals to 'Think Carers', prioritising working with employers, GP surgeries, hospitals, colleagues within health, social care, education, housing, faith, sporting and community organisations.

We were successful in providing more support to carers earlier in their caring journey – **44% had been caring for less than three years before registering with Carers First** – a quarter of these had been caring for less than a year.

Over 57,300 carers registered with Carers First – giving them access to information, advice and support - based on their needs and ensuring that carers can access a range of practical, financial, counselling, health and wellbeing support/activities, know their rights and are assisted with employment, education and learning opportunities.

57% of carers registered provide over 50+ hours a week of care. This shows that we are reaching and working with some carers with very intensive caring roles.

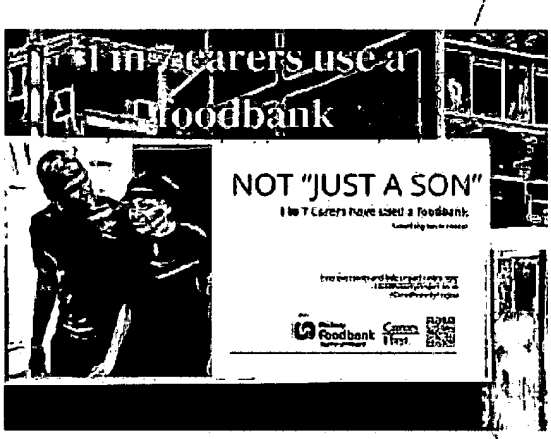
Being available for carers when they need us is essential to the service we provide. In 2024/25 we **supported 13,500 carers through personalised, tailored support in their community or home** and **spoke to over 18,000 carers** through our Helpline. Our **Carers Online Community continues to be active and thrives, with over 1,700 members** providing peer-to-peer support.

Communications campaigns supporting reaching and engaging more carers:

Our communications campaigns were at the heart of our efforts to reach more carers early. Our activities for **Carers Week 2024** truly put carers on the map, bringing together 346 carers and professionals at events, reaching more than 76,000 people on social media, and engaging over 20,000 carers through a special e-newsletter. Influencers Jess and Norma, who sadly died in 2025, amplified our message online, while broadcaster Kate Garraway shared our research on Instagram, highlighting that 70% of carers feel unsupported by health and social care. The campaign not only raised awareness but also generated valuable insights to strengthen future activity.

We also marked **Carers Rights Day** by co-producing a practical Carers Rights Checklist with carers and delivering events across our local areas. **Young Carers Action Day** featured vibrant local activities and films promoted widely on social media, celebrating young carers and connecting them to support. Our bi-annual **Putting Carers First** magazine continued to provide vital information and powerful stories of lived experience.

Following the General Election, we wrote to every new MP in our areas to highlight the number of carers in their constituencies, outline their needs, and introduce Carers First as a trusted partner. As a member of the **Carers Poverty Coalition**, we signed letters to senior ministers, including Rachel Reeves and Liz Kendall, making the case for stronger financial support for carers, as well as an open letter to the Prime Minister. Together, these efforts ensured carers' voices were heard nationally and locally, influencing both policy and public awareness.



Medway Foodbank Campaign

We worked in **co-production with carers and Medway Foodbank**, which is part of Trussell Trust, to highlight that **1 in 7 carers are having to access Foodbanks**. The campaign featured carers' stories, was promoted on local billboards and an Arriva bus and got picked up by the local TV station.

Lucy's Story

Lucy cares for her mother, who has recently experienced two bleeds on the brain which have resulted in long term health problems. Her mother now experiences seizures, memory loss, poor mobility and has mental health difficulties due to previous trauma.

Lucy's caring role

Lucy is an only child, and nobody else lives at home with them. Her role as a young carer does not involve completing too many domestic tasks, but her role is more apparent when her mum is suddenly unwell.

When this happens, Lucy must make quick decisions about her mother's health and care. She has had to call ambulances to help her mother when she is having seizures or is unconscious. She has also been previously told by paramedics to 'say goodbye' to her mother, impacting her emotional wellbeing.

Lucy has had to help put her mother into the recovery position, feed her when she has been poorly and provide emotional support to her mother.

How we have helped

Lucy was referred to Carers First by her mother's physiotherapist, and we intervened to provide support for Lucy in her caring role and at school. Firstly, we completed assessments to inform us of the type of support Lucy required.

Following this, we put together an emergency plan to provide urgent support for Lucy and completed some one-to-one work with her.

We then liaised with her school, to ensure that she could continue getting the most out of her education while caring for her mum. We also provided a range of groups and activities for Lucy, to help her to meet other young carers and engage in peer support and informative sessions. Lucy was referred to Honeypot, a national young carers charity who provide countryside respite breaks, and Off The Record who provide counselling services.

The Merton Household Support Grant Scheme also provided Lucy with a £200 voucher to help her and her family financially.

Strategic Objective 2. Developing innovative collaborations and scalable programmes

At Carers First, we know we achieve more for carers when we work together. In 2024/25, we continued to prioritise collaboration with partners across the statutory, voluntary and private sectors to deliver innovative, scalable programmes that extend our reach and impact.

Our teams are deeply embedded in the local communities we serve and actively collaborate with a wide range of organisations—from hospitals, schools, and GP practices to food banks and large corporate organisations. These partnerships allow us to connect with more carers, tailor support to local contexts, and deliver services that are grounded in community need.

A strong example of this is our partnership with **Legal & General**, which has seen the development of a **mentoring programme for young carers**. Volunteers from Legal & General provided dedicated, structured mentoring to young carers to support their confidence, aspirations and personal development. This collaboration demonstrates the real impact that private sector partnerships can have when aligned to our mission, with overwhelmingly positive feedback.

We also took part in the **first national Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) Survey for charities**, developed by Eastside People. As one of just 78 organisations participating nationally, we were able to benchmark our performance, access examples of good practice, and gain insight into how we can better align our work with ESG principles. This is helping to inform our plans to undertake a full environmental impact assessment, through which we aim to identify and mitigate environmental risks associated with our operations.

Through 2024/25, we developed and delivered several short-term projects that exemplify scalable innovation. These programmes show our ability to test, evaluate and scale approaches that respond to carers' real-world needs — supporting our ambition to grow our impact across diverse geographies and communities.

The Hospital to Home Project trialled new virtual wards support and delivered Significant Care Tool training, helping carers communicate effectively with health and care staff, and to identify, monitor and act on early signs of deterioration in the person they care for. In partnership with health colleagues, we produced a Virtual Ward awareness film. This film helps to ensure carers are identified and supported when relatives are discharged from hospital. One carer said,

"I feel like I have taken power back as a carer and feel confident to discuss with health professionals about the person I care for."

We saw some very positive outcomes from The Medway Carer Wellbeing Programme with **97% of participants reporting reduced stress and 89% reporting improved confidence**. Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF)-funded initiatives enabled the recruitment of dedicated roles across Southend, Waltham Forest, Croydon and Merton, which will support co-production of our services and engagement with carers and other stakeholders.

Strategic Objective 3. Achieving the highest quality of support possible, so we can maximise the difference made to carers' lives

We are committed to delivering the highest quality of support to unpaid carers, helping them sustain their caring role while maintaining their own wellbeing, independence and quality of life. In 2024/25, we built on the strong foundations of our existing services to enhance and expand what we offer.

We delivered tailored, strengths-based support that prioritised carers' choices and circumstances. Carers accessed a wide range of information, advice, advocacy and practical support, including:

- One-to-one advice and guidance
- Carers Assessments and Support Plans
- Informal advocacy and help navigating complex systems
- Access to financial support, benefits and grants
- Counselling, coaching and wellbeing activities
- Support groups, peer networks and specialist workshops
- Trips, respite activities and creative opportunities to recharge

Our Programmes of Support, developed in co-production with carers and peer-reviewed by clinical and specialist organisations, continued to evolve. These high-quality, modular programmes address carers' needs by topic or caring situation, ensuring relevant, structured, evidence-based support. In 2024/25, these programmes were showcased at both the Carers UK and Carers Trust national conferences.

We expanded our delegated authority to undertake Statutory Carers Assessments on behalf of local authorities, with more councils trusting us to lead on this vital work.

We also focused on demonstrating the difference we make through robust outcomes data. Headline results from carers supported this year include:

- 90% improved or sustained their carer assessment outcome
- 88% improved or sustained their health
- 92% improved or sustained their work situation
- 84% said they had more time for themselves

In addition, independent analysis by Apteligen showed:

- 94% felt listened to and that their own needs were taken into account
- 92% felt more confident and informed
- 94% felt more resilient in their caring role
- 79% felt equipped with knowledge and skills to care
- 95% would recommend Carers First

We also continued to uphold external quality and compliance standards, including reaccreditation for:

- ISO 9001 Quality Management
- Cyber Essentials and Cyber Essentials Plus
- NHS Data Security and Protection Toolkit

Together, these achievements reflect our relentless focus on quality, continuous improvement, and delivering the best possible outcomes for the carers we support.

Sarah's Story

"You are not alone. Seeking support is not a sign of weakness – it is essential." Sarah has been receiving support from Carers First, since 2018.

My name is Sarah. I'm a full-time carer for my husband, Jonathan, who lost both his legs to meningitis when he was just 19. We live with our two children, Maisie and Harry, and our beloved cockapoos. Our days are a mix of routine, challenges, and moments of joy.

I became Jonathan's carer in 2008 when we first met. My role covers everything – making tea and breakfast, managing the laundry, tidying the house, and homeschooling the kids. I also help Jonathan with daily tasks, like taking his medication and assisting him with showering and getting in and out of the car.

Jonathan is incredibly strong, but I can always sense when he's struggling. That's when I know I need to step in and encourage him to rest.

My health isn't always great either – I have fibromyalgia, osteoarthritis, and PTSD. Some days, I'm drained, but I do my best to push through for my family. I'm thankful when Maisie steps in to help - she loves it. Occasionally, I steal a moment for myself when I visit the hairdresser – it's a little slice of bliss in my busy life.

Being a carer isn't just physical – it's emotional. Some days, I'm proud of what I do, knowing I'm making a difference. Other days, I feel invisible, as if my needs come last. The feelings of isolation, exhaustion, and guilt can feel overwhelming. But I remind myself that doing my best is enough.

One of my biggest passions is football; I'm a huge Lincoln City FC fan, and I dream of meeting my favourite players, especially Freddie Draper! These moments of joy, no matter how small, help me stay grounded.

I have found comfort in online communities and Carers First support groups and local activities, where I can share my experiences with people who genuinely understand. Organisations like Carers First offer practical advice, helplines, and emotional support for those who need it. The charity has been a lifeline for me.

"Even something as simple as a short walk or a cup of tea in peace can make a difference."

This is just a glimpse into my life as a carer - a role filled with love, struggles, and dreams for the future. It is not always easy, but I take it with an open heart.

Strategic Objective 4. Championing talent and diversity

We are proud of our incredible staff and volunteer team, who bring lived experience, compassion and professionalism to their work every day. In 2024/25, we continued to foster a culture that champions diversity, supports career development and values everyone's contribution.

Within our Carers First team **40% have personal experience of being a carer.** We model carer-friendly practices through flexible working, a Carers Policy, Carers Passports, a staff carers network, and paid carers leave. Our **fifth annual staff survey** showed continued year-on-year improvement, reflecting our supportive internal culture:

- 93% enjoy their work
- 92% feel respected
- 90% feel treated fairly
- 88% feel supported
- 94% understand their contribution to the strategy
- 86% feel they have the right training and development

At the **2024 Away Day**, over 100 staff, volunteers and trustees came together to share learning, celebrate success, and hear from inspiring keynote speaker **Mark Agnew**, European Explorer of the Year, who spoke about team success, resilience and creative problem-solving. We invested in staff development, both in-house and through accredited external learning; including Level 5 apprenticeships in leadership and data. Members of our team have actively supported knowledge-sharing across the organisation, encouraging the development of colleagues and increasing individual learning opportunities and resilience across Carers First.

We are proud of our inclusive workplace. Colleagues have shared powerful stories of how supportive working practices helped them thrive.

One team member reflected on the *"powerful impact of genuinely listening to carer feedback through recent surveys."* They highlighted that actions taken were *"directly informed by survey insights, significantly enhancing the carer experience.*

The feedback we receive from carers has improved in quantity and quality, which can only be due to teamwork and knowing we are all working together."

Volunteers: Enabling us to do more

Our volunteers are so important and help us to deliver more support to the carers we support. Many are former carers or professionals from our local and national partners.

In 2024/25 we were grateful to have the support of **136 volunteers** who gave their time to Carers First initiatives. **72 volunteers were active each month** donating a total of **205 hours** per month on average. During their voluntary hours they supported:

- Group activities
- Befriending and peer support
- Counselling and mentoring
- Community engagement and events
- Fundraising and awareness campaigns

Our work was also recognised through our continued **Disability Committed** and **Disability Confident Employer** accreditations, underlining our values of inclusion and accessibility. However, we know this is a journey, and we are committed to continuous improvement in equity, diversity and inclusion across all areas of our work.

Strategic Objective 5. Growing and diversifying our income to enable us to achieve more for carers

In 2024/25, we continued to grow and diversify our income base to deliver more for carers and to respond to increasing demand, complexity and change in the external environment. We built strong, trusted relationships with commissioners, secured major new contracts, and adapted quickly to challenges in voluntary income.

Contract success and expansion

We successfully delivered existing contracts and met all major KPIs, reinforcing Carers First's reputation as a reliable, outcomes-driven partner. Where commissioners have expanded or redesigned contracts based on need, we have stepped up with new or extended service models.

Notable achievements include:

- Re-securing the London Borough of Haringey contract to continue providing carer support services.
- **Launching new contracts** in the **London Borough of Merton** (April 2024), with a 27% increase in carers registered in the first year of delivering the service. The new team implemented an outreach-based model, deepened local partnerships, and secured additional funding to enhance support for carers.
- **Winning a new contract in Mid and South Essex**, including the introduction of counselling and mental health support for carers.

Commissioner quote: *"One of the main priorities for Essex County Council is to enhance services for unpaid carers. Carers First are a key partner organisation in helping us to achieve our aims to support more carers with higher quality services, and have shown collaboration, dedication and adaptability in responding to the challenges faced by carers and in doing so are making a significant impact to carers."* – Ben Negus, Essex County Council

- **Securing a new seven-year contract with the London Borough of Croydon**, launching April 2025, for adult and young carers. This will enable us to work with local partners in Croydon to provide more face-to-face and localised support to carers within the community.
- **Concluding our contract in Hackney**, ensuring a well-managed and professional handover process.

Voluntary income: navigating challenges

2024/25 presented considerable challenges in voluntary income. A number of Trusts and Foundations changed their focus toward smaller or grassroots charities, paused funding rounds, or reported they had 'spent out'. Notably, we lost funding from **Children in Need**, due to their new threshold excluding charities with an income over £2m.

Despite this, we secured new funding from new sources, including:

- The National Lottery
- Garfield Weston Foundation
- Peter Harrison Foundation

This enabled us to maintain our young carers' support services and expand delivery in several areas.

Innovating to meet need

We secured **Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF)** funding for projects that directly respond to carers' needs, including:

- Hospital discharge support
- Co-production with carers to shape services
- Direct wellbeing grants to carers
- Strengthening local engagement capacity in multiple regions

We also continued working with the **Carers Poverty Coalition**, advocating for increased financial support for carers amidst rising cost-of-living pressures.

As statutory funding becomes more competitive and the voluntary income landscape shifts, Carers First remains committed to building a financially resilient organisation—seeking new partners, diversifying income streams and demonstrating our impact clearly to funders and commissioners alike.

Risks and Challenges

Like many organisations operating in the social care sector, Carers First faced a range of risks and challenges in 2024–25. These included external economic pressures, workforce capacity, digital inclusion, and changing government policy. We remain vigilant in identifying and mitigating these risks to ensure long-term sustainability and impact.

- **Funding volatility**: The grant fundraising environment has become increasingly challenging. Some long-term funders changed their eligibility or strategic focus, so we responded by securing alternative income through other funding streams.
- **Unbudgeted cost increases**: Changes to employers' National Insurance contributions and rises in the National Minimum Wage will increase our costs by an additional £141,000 next year. We continue to work hard to mitigate the impact for the coming year.
- **Recruitment and retention**: Specialist roles have been hard to recruit. We have focused on retaining and developing internal talent and invested in our regional leadership capacity.
- **Digital disengagement and exclusion**: Despite our strong digital offer, some carers remain digitally excluded. We continued to offer blended services and increased outreach to meet people where they are.
- **Underrepresentation of specific groups**: We continue to monitor potential areas of under-representation for carers such as ethnicity, gender, LGBTQ+, working with local organisations, community and faith groups to foster relationships and increase registrations.
- **Cyber and data security**: We maintained key accreditations — Cyber Essentials, Cyber Essentials Plus, and NHS Data Protection Toolkit — to ensure robust digital security and data protection compliance.

Our risk register is reviewed quarterly by the Senior Leadership Team and Board, supported by clear mitigation plans. As we move forward, we remain agile and proactive in managing risks while staying focused on delivering excellent support for carers.

Looking Ahead

As we move into 2025–26, Carers First will continue to deliver against the ambitions of our 2024–2027 Strategy — reaching more carers, strengthening our partnerships, and improving the quality and impact of support for unpaid carers.

Our key priorities for the year ahead include:

- **Mobilising our new seven-year contract in Croydon**, launching in April 2025, to deliver services for adult and young carers. This represents a significant opportunity to embed an innovative, carer-centred model of support from the outset.

- **Deepening carer voice and involvement**, by embedding co-production across all areas of our work and investing in the capacity of carers to shape services at both local and strategic levels.
- **Growing our peer support offer**, building new networks and groups that foster connection, shared experience and emotional resilience.
- **Extending our reach through digital and community-based support**, ensuring that all carers, regardless of age, background or digital access, can find and use the help they need.
- **Building financial resilience**, by working with commissioners and diversifying income through fundraising, partnerships and innovation.

"The team has focused on strengthening relationships and partnerships so that we can achieve more for carers. I enjoy my role at Carers First and it has been great to see the team making improvements to our services month on month. They are so passionate about the work that they do.

"We've worked hard to develop our dashboard with commissioners and the service is performing really highly in all KPIs. We are reaching more carers through new events and networking." Vicky Skeldon, Head of Lincolnshire Services, Carers First

We will also continue to monitor the external policy and funding environment closely, particularly in light of the new government. We will work with sector partners to ensure carers' voices are heard in policy debates and that their needs are recognised in any emerging reforms to social care, health or benefits systems.

With a clear strategy, strong foundations, and a dedicated team of staff and volunteers, Carers First is well positioned to grow our impact and help more carers live their lives to the fullest.

Our Thanks

To our staff, volunteers, carers, commissioners, partners, funders and supporters - thank you. Together, we are creating a society in which carers are supported, empowered, and never overlooked.

Financial review

The charity's incoming resources for the year ended 31 March 2025 totalled £5,289,243 (2024 - £4,931,362). Resources expended totalled £5,114,805 (2024 - £5,056,341) and net loss on investments was £29,793 (2024 - £54,581 Gain). The net surplus came to £144,645 (2024 - £70,398 Deficit).

Our Reserves Policy is risked-based and assesses the financial risks on an ongoing basis and monetises the possible impact within a reserve range between £1.3m, and £1.8m. The Trustees consider this level of reserves as sufficient to cover our operational commitments in the event of any changes e.g. loss of a significant contract. The level of reserves also allows investments to develop and enhance our services for carers.

At 31 March 2025 the unrestricted fund balance was £1,235,740 (2024 - £1,373,952) and the restricted £632,252 (2024 - £349,395) which are in line with the Reserves Policy.

Investments

Carers First investments are held as a reserve against any future shortfall in income against expenditure. They seek to maintain and, if possible, enhance, the real value of the funds represented by its investments in line with the business plan. We seek to meet these objectives by maintaining an appropriate balance between maximising long-term returns and avoiding undue risk and volatility in capital values.

Our Investment of Financial Assets Policy sets out that our financial assets should be invested in line with our aims and charitable objectives. The Trustees do not wish to adopt an exclusionary policy. However, individual investments may be excluded if perceived to conflict with the charitable purpose of the organisation.

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and ETF's) and holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's). There are no direct foreign investments. Throughout the year we have increased our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) holdings in our investments from 21.6% to 24.5%.

Auditors

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution proposing that Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited be reappointed as auditors of the charitable company will be put to the Annual General Meeting.

Statement of Trustee Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Trustees (who are also the directors of Carers First for the purposes of company law) to prepare financial statements for each fiscal year. Under that law the Trustees have elected to prepare financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law), including the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those financial statements they have:

- Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently.
- Made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- Prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.
- Stated whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the Company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Statement of Disclosure to Auditors

So far as the Trustees are aware, there is no relevant audit information which has not been disclosed to the company's auditors. They have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as Trustees to make themselves aware of any matters which would be relevant for audit purposes, and to ensure that such information has been communicated to the company's auditors.

Small Company Exemptions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:

Semantha Neal
Chair of Trustees

Independent Auditors' Report to the Trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2025

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Carers First (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2025 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2025 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or

- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report on by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or

- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of the trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the preparation of the financial statements of the charity, and the procedures that management adopt to ensure compliance. We have considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements, and in particular we identified: the Companies Act 2006, FRS102, and the Charities SORP.

We have also identified other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the amounts or disclosures within the financial statements, but for which compliance is fundamental to the charity's operations and to avoid material penalties, including GDPR, health and safety, employment law, and fundraising regulations.

Having reviewed the laws and regulations applicable to the charity, we designed and performed audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence. Specifically, we:

- Assigned an engagement team to the audit with particular familiarity in dealing with charity and not-for-profit organisations;
- Obtained an understanding of the charity's procedures for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations;
- Obtained and reviewed internal policy and procedure documents;
- Made enquiries of management and the trustees regarding whether they were aware of any actual or suspected incidences of non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- Obtained and reviewed meeting minutes;
- Confirmed DBS checks were in place for staff members;
- Reviewed legal expenses accounts for indications of any possible non-compliance; and
- Reviewed the completeness and accuracy of any disclosures made in the financial statements.

We assessed the susceptibility of the charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including considering how fraud might occur. This was performed by:

- Making an assessment of the charity's control environment, systems and controls including identifying any weaknesses and considering the risk of management override of controls;
- Assessing the susceptibility of the charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including considering how fraud could occur;
- Considering whether there are any incentives or opportunities for management to manipulate financial results;
- Obtaining and evaluating the trustees' assessment of the risk of fraud, and enquiring as to whether they are aware of any actual or suspected incidences of fraud; and
- Reviewing the accounting policies and accounting estimates for signs of management bias.

The audit has been planned and performed in in accordance with auditing standards, however, because of the inherent limitations of audit procedures there remains a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those that may lead to material misstatements in the financial statements. There are inherent difficulties in detecting irregularities, and irregularities that result from fraud may be more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error, for example due to concealment, override of controls, collusion or misrepresentations.

In addition, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less audit procedures are able to identify it.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and, the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

.....

Jonathan Healey BA FCA
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of:
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Statutory Auditors

North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

Date: 6 November 2025

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Note	*2025 Unrestricted funds* £	*2025 Restricted funds* £	*2025 Total funds* £	*As restated 2024 Total funds* £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	2	205,004	507,766	712,770	1,096,765
Charitable activities	3	3,839,677	706,362	4,546,039	3,798,586
Investments		30,434	-	30,434	36,011
Total income		4,075,115	1,214,128	5,289,243	4,931,362
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	4	94,196	-	94,196	104,056
Charitable activities	5	4,089,338	931,271	5,020,609	4,952,285
Total expenditure		4,183,534	931,271	5,114,805	5,056,341
Net (losses)/gains on investments		(29,793)	-	(29,793)	54,581
Net income / (expenditure) and net movement in funds	8	(138,212)	282,857	144,645	(70,398)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		1,373,952	349,395	1,723,347	1,793,745
Total funds carried forward	14	1,235,740	632,252	1,867,992	1,723,347

Carers First

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2025

	Note	2025 £	2025 £	As restated 2024 £	As restated 2024 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	10		34,098		51,815
Investments	11		816,422		1,118,509
Long term cash deposits			220,439		190,967
			1,070,959		1,361,291
Current assets					
Debtors	12	469,238		569,950	
Cash at bank and in hand		907,491		269,211	
		1,376,729		839,161	
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(579,696)		(477,105)	
Net current assets			797,033		362,056
Total net assets			1,867,992		1,723,347
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds	14		1,235,740		1,373,952
Restricted income funds	14		632,252		349,395
			1,867,992		1,723,347

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 3 November 2025 and were signed on its behalf by:

S Neal
.....
Semantha Neal
Chair of Trustees

C Sparrow
.....
Clive Sparrow
Chair of Finance Committee

Company number: 04144820

Carers First

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

	Note	2025 £	2025 £	2024 £	2024 £
Cash flows from operating activities:					
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	A		382,964		(471,484)
Cash flows from investing activities:					
Interest and dividends received		30,434		36,011	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(17,940)		(24,364)	
Purchases of investments		(385,833)		(129,106)	
Sales of investments		658,127		458,392	
Net cash used in investing activities			284,788		340,933
Change in cash and cash equivalents			667,752		(130,551)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			460,178		590,729
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			1,127,930		460,178
Represented by:					
Long term cash deposits			220,439		190,967
Cash at bank and in hand			907,491		269,211
			1,127,930		460,178

A. Reconciliation of net income to net cash flow from operating activities

Net income/(expenditure) for the year *As per the Statement of Financial Activities*			144,645		(70,398)
Adjustments for:					
Depreciation charges		35,657		46,023	
Net losses/(gains) on investments		29,793		(54,581)	
Interest and dividends receivable		(30,434)		(36,011)	
Decrease/(Increase) in debtors		100,712		(294,846)	
Increase/(Decrease) in creditors		102,591		(61,671)	
			238,319		(401,086)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities			382,964		(471,484)

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025 (continued)

B. Analysis of changes in net debt

	Cash and cash equivalents	*Liquid investments*
At the beginning of the year	460,178	1,118,509
Cash flows	667,752	(272,294)
Gains	-	(29,793)
At the end of the year	1,127,930	816,422

1 Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

1.1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Carers First meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound.

1.2 Income

Income from donations and grants is recognised when the charity is entitled to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably. For donations, this is usually on receipt. For grants, this is usually when a formal offer is made in writing, unless the grant contains terms and conditions outside of the charity's control which must be met before the charity is entitled to the funds. Where grants are received in response to a proposal including a budgeted timescale, such that the timescale for the expenditure is implicit in the grant agreement, the income is recognised in accordance with that timescale.

Income from contracted services, and services to users, is recognised when the services are provided. Income from such sources received in advance of the service provision is accounted for as deferred income.

Investment income is recognised when receivable.

1.3 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised when a present legal or constructive obligation exists at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation, and the amount can be estimated reliably.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises the direct costs incurred by the charity in delivering its charitable objectives. Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly relate to the charitable activities. These costs have been allocated to the charitable activity. Staff costs are allocated to direct costs or support costs on the basis of staff time.

1 Accounting policies (continued)

1.4 Pensions

The charity makes contributions to the personal pension schemes of its employees. The pension cost in the financial statements represents the contributions payable by the charity during the year.

1.5 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.

1.6 Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for the particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

1.7 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less estimated realisable value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment	- Between 20% and 33% straight line

Assets costing less than £500 are written off in the year they are acquired.

1.8 Investments

Listed investments are stated at market value. Gains and losses arising on the revaluation of investments are taken to the Statement of Financial Activities.

1.9 Cash and cash equivalents

Cash on instant access and cash held on deposit with an initial maturity of approximately three months or less is included as cash and cash equivalents in the Statement of Cash Flows.

Long term cash deposits held solely for investment purposes are classified as fixed asset investments on the Balance Sheet.

1.10 Financial instruments

The charity only has financial instruments which are classified as basic financial instruments.

Short-term debtors and creditors are measured at the settlement value. Any losses from impairment are recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1 Accounting policies (continued)

1.11 Status

Carers First is a charitable company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. In the event of the company being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is Unit 4, Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG.

1.12 Prior year restatement

In the prior year, an amount of £190,967 was included within current assets in cash at bank and in hand. This has been reclassified to long term cash deposits as the funds are held for long term investment purposes rather than to meet short-term cash commitments as they fall due. In addition, it was noted that in last years financial statements, £131,339 of staff costs were incorrectly included within direct project costs. These have been reclassified to fundraising, direct, and support staff costs. There was no impact on the prior period net assets nor opening reserves at 1 April 2024.

2 Income from donations and legacies

	2025	*2024*
	£	£
Grants	569,472	786,813
Donations	32,187	34,952
Legacies	111,111	275,000
	712,770	1,096,765

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £694,511.

3 Income from charitable activities

	2025 £	2024 £
Activity: Carers services		
Medway Council	330,950	339,736
Medway PCN	69,971	99,775
Lincolnshire County Council	1,614,624	1,619,984
Waltham Forest Borough Council	196,152	185,000
Hackney Borough Council	192,013	195,933
Haringey Borough Council	109,635	100,571
Newham Borough Council	-	17,385
Essex County Council	1,174,639	927,000
NHS Kent & Medway CCG	250,821	181,502
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	192,844	131,700
Merton Council	414,390	-
	4,546,039	3,798,586

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £187,810.

4 Expenditure on raising funds

	2025 £	As restated 2024 £
Staff costs	66,243	71,003
Fundraising costs	19,698	24,542
Investment charges	8,255	8,511
	94,196	104,056

5 Expenditure on charitable activities

		2025 £	As restated 2024 £
Activity: Carers services			
Direct costs	**Note 6**	4,364,597	4,247,100
Support costs	**Note 7**	656,012	705,185
		5,020,609	4,952,285

Expenditure for restricted funds in the comparative period was £937,498.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

6 Direct costs of charitable activities

	2025 £	As restated 2024 £
Staff costs	3,312,448	3,345,149
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	22,890	15,414
Project costs	907,450	746,595
Grants paid to individuals	121,809	139,942
	4,364,597	4,247,100

7 Support costs

	2025 £	As restated 2024 £
Staff costs	233,497	275,443
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	21,768	54,101
Rent and service charges	26,008	24,971
Other premises expenses	26,118	21,712
Insurance	15,115	16,556
Office and IT costs	235,102	207,702
Legal and professional fees	7,960	26,275
Audit and accountancy fees	18,028	11,554
Payroll processing fees	21,715	6,996
Trustee expenses, meetings, recruitment and training	2,465	3,413
Bad debts	-	24
Bank charges	639	625
Professional membership fees	11,940	9,790
Depreciation	35,657	46,023
	656,012	705,185

8 Net income / (expenditure)

	2025 £	2024 £
Net income is stated after charging:		
Audit fees	11,300	10,900
Accountancy fees	6,728	654
Depreciation	35,657	46,023
Net (losses)/gains on investments	(29,793)	54,581
Rent paid under operating leases	26,008	24,971

The audit fee charged in the year was £11,300 (2024: £10,900).

9 Staff costs

	2025 £	*As restated 2024* £
Gross salaries	3,241,589	3,308,544
Employer's National Insurance contributions	278,987	268,083
Pension and healthcare costs	91,612	114,968
	3,612,188	3,691,595

Three members of staff received employment benefits (excluding employer pension contributions) in excess of £60,000 during the year (2024: 2). During the year 165 employees and former employees received employer contributions to their personal pension schemes (2024: 161).

The average number of employees during the year on a headcount basis was as follows:

	2025 No.	*2024 No.*
Management	5	5
Central Services	9	10
Outreach and carer support	124	127
	138	142

10 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures, fittings & equipment £
Cost	
At 1 April 2024	212,694
Additions	17,940
Disposals	(22,981)
At 31 March 2025	207,653
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2024	160,879
Charge for the year	35,657
Depreciation eliminated on disposals	(22,981)
At 31 March 2025	173,555
Net book value	
At 31 March 2025	34,098
At 31 March 2024	51,815

11 Investments

	2025 £	*2024* £
Market value		
At 1 April 2024	1,118,509	1,393,214
Additions	385,833	129,106
Sales proceeds	(658,127)	(458,392)
Unrealised (losses)/gains on investments	(25,607)	60,522
Realised losses on investments	(4,186)	(.5,941)
At 31 March 2025	816,422	1,118,509

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and ETF's), holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's) and overseas equities and funds.

12 Debtors

	2025 £	*2024* £
Trade debtors	388,846	238,138
Prepayments and accrued income	80,392	331,812
	469,238	569,950

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2025 £	*2024* £
Trade creditors	86,299	80,099
Taxation and social security	225,127	214,612
Deferred income	190,262	57,240
Other creditors	24,095	17,024
Accruals	53,913	108,130
	579,696	477,105

Deferred income:

Incoming resources deferred in the previous period	57,240	115,931
Released to the Statement of Financial Activities	(57,240)	(115,931)
Incoming resources deferred in the current period:		
Grants and contract income	190,262	57,240
	190,262	57,240

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

14 Movement on funds

	At 1 April 2024 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Gains / (losses)* £	*At 31 March 2025* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,373,952	4,075,115	(4,183,534)	(29,793)	1,235,740
	1,373,952	4,075,115	(4,183,534)	(29,793)	1,235,740
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	41,213	133,500	(107,950)	-	66,763
Medway carers support	55,859	35,000	(29,690)	-	61,169
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	7,660	28,753	(14,702)	-	21,711
Other donations and grants	101,924	231,181	(122,775)	-	210,330
Health and Wellbeing	47,646	64,583	(60,940)	-	51,289
Mercers	2,378	29,822	(24,521)	-	7,679
Southend on Sea	58,152	40,000	-	-	98,152
Children in Need	(732)	30,235	(29,503)	-	-
Mid Essex BCF (Virtual Wards)	9,329	27,900	(37,229)	-	-
John Swire Foundation	7,676	22,785	(15,793)	-	14,668
National Lottery	18,290	72,507	(54,542)	-	36,255
Essex Wellbeing Grants	-	57,804	(43,077)	-	14,727
Essex Enhanced Grants	-	431,906	(387,946)	-	43,960
ARF Project	-	8,152	(2,603)		5,549
	349,395	1,214,128	(931,271)	-	632,252
Total funds	1,723,347	5,289,243	(5,114,805)	(29,793)	1,867,992

Restricted funds have been received for the following purposes:

NHS Carers and Crisis Service
To provide support to carers in crisis in Swale and Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley for a 2 week period to prevent hospital admission and support hospital discharge.

Medway Carers Support
The Medway Carers support/wellbeing funding is to make payments to carers to enable them to maintain their caring role and to prevent carer breakdown. The amount paid per carer is based on

14 Movement on funds (*continued*)

Carers Trust
This includes grants to provide workshops, support and activities for young adult carers.

Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young adult carers to transition from children's services into adulthood and supporting them into further education and employment.

Donations
Various donations and legacies received throughout the year to provide specific activities and/or support to carers.

Grants
Various grants to enable the provision of additional activities for carers that are not funded within core contracts and grants awarded to individual carers to enable them to take a holiday or purchase something for the home to assist them in their caring role.

Health and Wellbeing
To employ care coordinators to work within PCN's across Medway to offer support and health checks to carers.

Mercers
Funding to enable the recruitment/training and supervision of volunteers to engage with older carers to combat loneliness.

Making Carers Count
The Making Carers Count grants improves access to support for carers from the Turkish and Kurdish community by working closely with Turkish and Kurdish organisations with in the boroughs of Hackney and Haringey. Carers First provide activities, group meetings, 1:1 support, information advice and guidance in Turkish and Kurdish language to identify hidden and hard to reach carers.

Southend on Sea
Funds to provide carers break including support to enable carers to attend medical appointments.

Children in Need
This funding is to provide support to young carers in Medway.

Mid Essex BCF (Virtual Wards)
The fund is used to provide support to carers after their outpatients have been discharged from

John Swire Foundation
The fund is to be used towards the salary of one Young Adult Carer Adviser.

14 Movement on funds (*continued*)

National Lottery
The funding is to provide support to a minimum of 7,600 carers in the Lincolnshire area.

Medway MVA
Funds to provide a telephone befriending service.

Essex Wellbeing Grants
Grants up to £500 to support carers in their caring role and to prevent carer burnout.

Essex Enhanced Grants
As Essex Wellbeing Grants but the limit is £2,000.

ARF Project
A Department of Health and Social Care (DHSC) initiative, these are grants paid through local authorities to support innovation in adult social care. A number of key priorities for the funding focus on innovations targetted at supporting unpaid carers.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2025

14 Movement on funds (*continued*)

Comparative figures

	At 1 April 2023 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Gains / (losses)* £	*At 31 March 2024* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,389,173	4,049,041	(4,118,843)	54,581	1,373,952
	1,389,173	4,049,041	(4,118,843)	54,581	1,373,952
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	27,488	112,810	(99,085)	-	41,213
Medway carers support	78,803	35,000	(57,944)	-	55,859
Carers Trust	400	-	(400)	-	-
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	7,660	5,507	(5,507)	-	7,660
Other donations and grants	157,223	391,495	(446,794)	-	101,924
Health and Wellbeing	51,732	64,583	(68,669)	-	47,646
Mercers	-	50,488	(48,110)	-	2,378
Making Carers Count	44,446	20,376	(64,822)	-	-
Southend on Sea	36,443	40,000	(18,291)	-	58,152
Children in Need	377	28,150	(29,259)	-	(732)
Mid Essex BCF (Virtual Wards)	-	19,929	(10,600)	-	9,329
John Swire Foundation	-	20,715	(13,039)	-	7,676
National Lottery	-	73,180	(54,890)	-	18,290
Medway MVA	-	20,088	(20,088)	-	-
	404,572	882,321	(937,498)	-	349,395
Total funds	1,793,745	4,931,362	(5,056,341)	54,581	1,723,347

15 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds £	*Restricted funds* £	*Total funds* £
Fund balances at 31 March 2025 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	34,098	-	34,098
Investments	816,422	-	816,422
Long term cash deposits	220,439	-	220,439
Net current assets	164,781	632,252	797,033
	1,235,740	632,252	1,867,992

Comparative figures

Fund balances at 31 March 2024 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	51,815	-	51,815
Investments	1,118,509	-	1,118,509
Long term cash deposits	190,967	-	190,967
Net current assets	12,661	349,395	362,056
	1,373,952	349,395	1,723,347

16 Financial commitments

At 31 March 2025 the charity was committed to future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2025 £	*2024* £
Land and buildings		
Due not later than one year	20,018	20,018
Later than one year not later than five years	11,375	30,875
Other		
Due not later than one year	53	156
	31,446	51,049

17 Contingent assets

The charity is entitled to a legacy but there is uncertainty as to the amount of the payment at the time of approving the financial statements. The expected inflow of economic benefits to the charity is considered probable, although remains subject to realisation of overseas assets by the Executors to the Estate.

18 Pension commitments

The charity operates one (2024: one) defined contribution pension schemes available to the majority of its permanent employees. The scheme funds are administered by Trustees of the pension scheme and are independent of the charity's finances. During the year, £91,612 (2024: £114,968) employers' contributions were made. Contributions totalling £16,802 (2024: £16,278) were payable to the funds at the balance sheet date and are included in other creditors.

19 Related party transactions

The Board of Trustees and the five (2024: seven) members of the Senior Leadership Team are considered to be the charity's key management personnel. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer's national insurance and employer's pension contributions) received by key management personnel during the year was £332,971 (2024: £322,967).

There was no Trustees' remuneration nor other benefits during the current or prior period.

Expenses totalling £378 were reimbursed to three trustees in relation to activity costs (2024: £832).

Office:

Central Office:

Unit 4 Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Strood, Kent ME2 4TG

Carers First

carersfirst.org.uk

0300 303 1555

Registered office: Unit 4 Michael Gill Building Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG

Carers First is a charity registered in England and Wales, registered number 1085430.

Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales Company number 4144820.

CARERS FIRST

England & Wales - Charity number 1085430

Accounts

Carers First

Annual Report 2023-2024

Carers First

Company Information

Registered Charity 1085430
Company Number 04144820

Registered Office
Michael Gill Building
Tolgate Lane
Strood
Kent
ME2 4TG

Bankers
Lloyds Bank Plc
82 Mount Pleasant Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN1 1RP

Auditors
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Chartered Accountants
North House, 198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent
TN9 1BE

Carers First

Index to the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024

Pages

Trustees' report	4 - 19
Independent Auditors' report	20 - 23
Statement of Financial Activities	24
Balance Sheet	25
Statement of cash flows	26 - 27
Notes to the financial statements	28 - 41

Report of the Trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2024

The Directors, who are also the Trustees of the charitable company, present their Annual Report with the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2024. This Trustees' report, prepared in accordance with Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006, is also the Trustees' report as required by Part 8 of the Charities Act 2011.

The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) in preparing this annual report and financial statements.

Structure, Governance and Management

Status

Carers First is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity (No.1085430) and was incorporated on 19 January 2001.

The Charity's governing document is its Articles of Association, which have been approved by the Charity Commission, and its affairs are administered by its Trustees.

Trustees

The Trustees who held office during the year and since are as follows:

- Mr Peter Davis (Chair)
- Mrs Vicki Wells (Vice-Chair)
- Mr Sukwinder Bassi
- Mr Paul Fennell (resigned 24 January 2024)
- Ms Georgina Hoare
- Mr Peter Jenkins
- Mr Marcus Shaw
- Mrs Susannah Botting (resigned 6 August 2024)
- Mr Julian Sinclair (resigned 22 September 2023)
- Mr Clive Sparrow (appointed 16 June 2023)
- Ms Roberta Heys (appointed 16 June 2023)
- Dr Manir Hussain (appointed 16 June 2023)
- Ms Semantha Neal (appointed 1 July 2023)

The Trustees are elected, or re-elected, by rotation by the Companies Act Members of Carers First at the Annual General Meeting.

Chair's Introduction

This year has, once again, shown both the significant role played by carers in this country, and the importance of organisations like Carers First in ensuring carers receive the help and support they need.

During the lifetime of our 2021-24 strategy, we have all faced many challenges. The global pandemic, the ongoing cost of living crisis, and cutbacks to essential services in health and social care, all of which have impacted both Carers First as an organisation and, more importantly, the carers we exist to support. We are very proud that even amongst such turmoil our outcomes for carers have continued to be strong and consistent. Of the people who receive support from Carers First, 95% would recommend us to another carer.

This year saw us transition to our new three-year strategy. Thanks to the hard work and commitment of our staff and volunteers, alongside our Trustees and Senior Leadership Team, Carers First is in a strong position to continue to extend its work for the benefit of carers. We continue to set ourselves challenging targets across the organisation including delivering support which provides further improvements in outcomes for carers and, importantly, identifying and supporting more carers.

These remain challenging times but Carers First is building on strong foundations and we can be confident that over the next three years, and beyond, we will ensure that more carers are able to take positive control of the caring role in their lives, to benefit their own health and wellbeing and that of the person they are caring for.

"The support from Carers First has been a game changer - it gives me strength to keep going" (Mark, 47)

Caring inevitably has a major impact on the lives of carers. According to Carers UK data:

- 60% of carers have a long-term health issue of their own
- 44% of working age adults providing 35 or more hours of care a week are in poverty, and
- Nearly two-thirds of all carers are extremely worried about managing their monthly costs.

Carers Allowance, the main benefit that carers can receive, is only £81.90 per week and comes with a guillotine that removes the benefit entirely if the earnings threshold is passed by even one penny a week, whereas other benefits come with a tapering system. Combined with the feelings of isolation and the specific demands of caring, all of this can mean that carers, especially those facing financial difficulties, can often feel overwhelmed and unsupported.

We are delighted to have continued our upward trend in the number of carers registering with Carers First who then receive information, advice and support services. We now have nearly 51,000 carers registered with us. It's especially important for carers to receive support early in their caring journey and this has been an organisational priority for us. This year, we saw a 14% rise in carers reached within the first year of their caring role – ahead of our target for the year.

Carers First has, in the past year, continued to develop ways of reaching and supporting carers in a variety of settings: face to face in either one to one sessions or groups, online and via the Helpline. Our engagement with carers in employment has continued to develop and we are seeing more employers come to Carers First to understand how they can support the carers in their workforce. These are all positive steps that will make a difference to carers no matter what their specific situation is.

All this means that we have reached more carers and were able to make a material difference to their lives. We know from our carers survey feedback that 80% of carers feel there has been an improvement in their lives as a direct result of the support they received from Carers First.

"You have given me lots of support to receive the benefits I had a right to. I am grateful for the listening ear, the empathy, the time and the knowledge that is behind all the help that is given." (Klara, 63)

Board, Leadership and Governance

I am proud to be Chair of a Board of Trustees with such a strong mix of skills and experience, overseeing the strategic direction of Carers First and ensuring its financial and regulatory stability.

The full Board of Trustees meets quarterly. Following a Governance Review in October 2022, we now have two Committees reporting to the full board: Finance & Risk and People & Governance. These Committees meet quarterly with their own delegated areas of responsibility.

Day to day running of the charity is delegated to the Chief Executive, Alison Taylor, who skilfully drives forward the delivery of our strategy, with the support of our Senior Leadership Team.

We continue to work towards best practice in governance and use the Charity Governance Code to help guide us.

The focus of everyone involved in the leadership and governance of Carers First is ensuring the organisation continues to make a positive difference to the lives of carers.

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI)

We remain committed to being an organisation that is able to support carers from all communities.

To this end, during the year, we have worked to put in place an updated Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy that will provide a framework for positive action in this area. The Board received training in EDI from the National Council of Voluntary Organisations (NCVO) and we have undertaken an internal review to assess ourselves against the Charity Governance Code in relation to EDI.

Our staff team reflects the diversity of the communities we support and Trustees undertake an annual survey to understand the diversity within the Board and to plan for the future.

As a Board, we receive regular reports on the diversity of our staff team and the carers we support. We consider equality and diversity issues across all we do as a charity and take positive action to address any inequality of access.

Environmental Sustainability

With climate change becoming more of a reality, all organisations should think about their environmental impact when making decisions about how they operate and I am very pleased that Carers First continues to make positive advancements in this area.

As an organisation, we continue to explore ways of reducing our carbon footprint. This includes, reducing travel to meetings, and to put in environmentally positive ways of working, through digital and online work, where this is a valid replacement for traditional activities. This covers both how we work as an organisation and how we support carers.

The difference we will make by ourselves may not be huge but if all similar organisations made similar moves, it could help to address the climate challenges and environmental issues the world faces. All these steps may be individually small but collectively make a difference.

Outlook

These are very demanding times on individuals and organisations. Nevertheless, we are proud of what we have achieved so far, whilst having a clear recognition that there is more to be done.

This year has seen the organisation review its current Strategic Objectives and refresh its Objectives for the next three years. These are considered in greater detail later in this report. We have also committed to diversifying our income base and further developing our approach to tendering for commissioned services.

Everything we do is focused on being a sustainable organisation that is reaching and supporting more carers year on year.

Thank You

As Chair, I must say a personal thank you to the volunteers and staff of Carers First. Your hard work and commitment have been exemplary. To our Chief Executive, the Senior Leadership Team and my fellow Trustees, I say thank you for your support, hard work and dedication. I would also like to put on record my thanks to those members of the Board who have served in Chair or Vice Chair roles on committees and to Vicki Wells who has ably assisted me as Vice Chair. And, lastly, to all the carers out there: on behalf of Carers First, thank you for all you do in the most demanding of circumstances. You are seen and you are valued.

Peter Davis
Chair of Trustees

Objectives and Activities

The charity's Objects are to "relieve the needs of carers and persons who are sick, infirm, disabled or who have social care needs in particular but not exclusively, by the provision of information, advice and support and by the provision of respite care."

In accordance with Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011, the Trustees have had due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit when reviewing the charity's objectives and planning future activities.

Our Mission

Carers First provides support, for carers, with carers – so they can live their lives to the fullest.

Our Ambition

To enable carers to thrive in their role and achieve the balance in their lives they wish to achieve.

Our Values

This past year also saw us conclude work on identifying and putting in place the core values by which Carers First will operate in everything it does. These values are:

Positive: We are dedicated to working with carers to make a positive, material difference in their lives. We celebrate diversity and work in an inclusive, positive and supportive way, actively listening and valuing everyone's contribution.

Collaborative: We recognise the importance and strength of working in collaboration with local and national organisations to deliver improved support to carers. We also know the importance of collaborating with our Carers First colleagues, sharing knowledge and learning, being curious, respecting differences and working with integrity and transparency.

Ambitious: We are ambitious and tenacious in our determination to support more carers in better ways. We will innovate and develop our programmes of support, so more carers are able to obtain the support they need, at the time they need it, to achieve a balance in their lives and enable them to live their lives to the fullest.

What we do

We understand that life as a carer can be challenging. Getting the support and help carers need shouldn't be. Any of our lives could be turned upside down due to the ill-health, frailty or the disability of a family member or friend.

In fact, two in three of us can expect to become a carer in our lifetime. There are currently 5.7 million unpaid carers in the UK, however carer charities estimate that number could be as high as 10.6 million.

Their huge contribution saves our economy £162 billion each year - equivalent to the cost of running a second NHS. Each carer's needs and situation are unique but many face similar challenges. They can struggle to balance employment, finances, or their own wellbeing and time for themselves with their caring role. They may not be aware of the help and support available to them - and that is why we are here.

Where we work

Carers First operates a successful remote working model, enabling our staff to work from community venues and in carers own homes to deliver more accessible local services. Carers can access support online, via a helpline and face to face in their local community, giving carers choice in how they engage.

Our online information and resources for carers can be used by carers in any part of the country, creating new opportunities to expand our reach to support more carers.

We have staff delivering local commissioned carers services in the following areas:

- Essex
- Hackney
- Haringey
- Lincolnshire
- Medway
- Southend-on-Sea
- Waltham Forest

During this year, we successfully tendered to provide support services for adult and young carers in the London Borough of Merton from April 2024.

"Carers First has changed my life for the better, you have enabled me to access so much and been hugely beneficial shaping my life going forward. The support has helped my wellbeing and living situation." (Seb, young carer, 17)

Achievements and Performance

In 2023/24 our Objectives were:

1. Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity.
2. Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in carers' lives.
3. Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations.
4. Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team.
5. Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations.

Strategic Objective 1: Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity

In 2023/24 we:

- Reached over 330,000 people to provide information about carers and for carers, an increase of 23% compared to 2022/23.
- Enabled 51,000 registered carers to access information, advice and support.
- Supported 11,500 carers through personalised, tailored support in their community/home.
- Assisted over 15,000 carers through our Helpline.
- Increased by 14% the number of carers reached in the first year of their caring journey.
- Raised the proportion of carers we support who are from minority ethnic communities to 23%.

This year has seen Carers First continue to reach carers as early as possible in their caring role, and especially those who might not otherwise see themselves as carers. This included a young carers takeover of BBC Radio 2 as part of the BBC Children in Need Appeal. Young carers chose 25 songs to be played throughout the day and shared voice notes which were aired as part of the programmes. Alongside this, Seb, a young carer supported by Carers First, was a key voice in "Young Carers: A Hidden Crisis", a documentary from ITN. We supported the national Carers Rights Day campaign, hosting events for carers and professionals online and in local communities. We produced a new Carers Rights Checklist and hosted a Facebook Live event, featuring experts and carers discussing carers rights and future planning strategies.

The theme for Carers Week was about recognising and supporting carers. We conducted research with over 1,000 people to provide the evidence for our campaign. Additionally, our programme for the week featured a range of events across all our service areas and online. This included not only film screenings and an online concert to celebrate the role of carers and all that they do, but also events for local health and social care professionals to enable them to develop their knowledge in identifying and supporting carers.

We have continued to develop our bi-annual magazine, *Putting Carers First*, which is available online and in print. The magazine contains an engaging mixture of practical information and support, carers stories and Carers First developments, and is sent to over 20,000 people (1,100 receive a print version through the post).

Our online newsletters now reach 19,500 carers monthly. We have significantly expanded our online presence and visibility. Carers First's online community, facilitating peer-to-peer support for carers, has an engaged group of 1,400 carers. Additionally, we produced twelve new insightful carer films covering various topics such as dementia, mental health, and carers' wellbeing. These films were made in collaboration with carers and were viewed on the website and on the Carers First YouTube channel.

We have continued to promote support for carers within health settings, including hospitals and GP surgeries, as well as promoting our services through other community organisations and at community events. To further our work in improving the support available to carers, we joined the Carer Poverty Coalition.

Increasing visibility to improve reach – Kate Garraway and "Derek's Story"

Sadly, in January 2024, Derek Draper, husband of Kate Garraway, passed away. Kate had been Derek's carer throughout his long period of ill health, during which she was keen to use her profile to advocate for solutions to the challenges carers face.

Carers First worked with Kate, as she put together an ITV documentary and related social media activities, about her life as a carer and how caring impacts the lives of others. By developing case studies, recruiting and supporting carers to participate, providing details through our own research, and supporting the messaging of the programmes, Carers First was able to shape some of the narrative around the challenges carers face.

Kate's openness about her caring role has helped Carers First to increase the visibility of carers and caring. This has encouraged more people to identify as carers and to seek the support they now know is available.

Strategic Objective 2: Enhance our support to make a material difference in carers' lives

We were able to deliver the following measurable outcomes for carers who received our support in 2023/24:

- 96% of carers felt more resilient in their caring role.
- 95% of carers felt listened to and that their own needs were taken into account.
- 93% of carers felt more confident and informed in their caring role.
- 81% of carers felt there had been an improvement in their lives as a result of Carers First support.
- 95% would recommend Carers First to other carers.

Carers First has an Impact Measurement Framework in place that encompasses a range of indicators that enable us to constantly monitor, measure and assess the quality of service we are providing for carers, the numbers we are reaching, and the difference it is making to their lives. We also bring our experiences of using our Theory of Change model, working in coproduction with carers and undertaking analysis and reviews of the types of interventions or steps we needed to bring about positive improvements for carers.

This year, we have further extended our information and advice provision. We have secured a new contract to deliver a Hospital to Home Project funded by Mid Essex Better Care Fund. The project will support carers through hospital and virtual ward admissions and discharges as well as working with health professionals in awareness-raising and championing carers needs, enabling better carer identification, communication and support.

Our offer to all carers includes our ‘Caring Confidently’ programme. This is an online, four-part programme that is of benefit to all carers, but especially those who have just begun their caring journey, and so it is offered at the first point of registration. Live sessions are held for registered carers and led by knowledgeable and empathetic facilitators. The course is designed to help increase resilience, improve wellbeing, and develop knowledge and strategies to enable carers to be more resourceful in their caring role.

Our Programmes of Support, developed in coproduction with carers, now cover more than nine caring situations, with further programmes in development. The guidance offered covers a range of practical issues and includes bespoke guidance that addresses the challenges of caring for someone with a specific condition.

Through our partnership work and collaboration with other providers, Carers First can, in certain circumstances, directly support carers with grants or by providing items such as free phone SIM cards to enable carers to access digital services. We are also able to support carers with free short breaks through our partnership with Carefree.

The quality of the work we do was recognised with a 'Highly Commended' award in the category of Health and Wellbeing at the Haringey Community Expo 2023.

How wellbeing activities helped carer Lorraine’s mental health

Lorraine cares for her mum Sylvia who is 86 and has a number of health issues including diabetes, hip problems, cataracts and early onset vascular dementia. Lorraine suffers with health issues herself – she is waiting for a knee replacement, has type-2 diabetes and is recovering from lung cancer.

Caring for Sylvia involves helping her with medication, showering, and travelling to medical appointments. Lorraine also provides emotional support as Sylvia's memory declines. Sylvia uses a wheelchair due to a hip replacement, which was a difficult adjustment for her. Through Carers First, Lorraine has accessed online groups for support and received food vouchers during tough times. She's also taken part in art classes and learned techniques for resilience. Carers First provided Lorraine with a fitness watch to monitor her exercise and wellbeing.

“The support Carers First have given me has been amazing, I don’t feel alone anymore. I speak from the heart when I say that Carers First have helped me appreciate me, and that is so important as a carer. To be able to care for others we need to be ok too, and the team at Carers First have really helped me do that. I know that someone is at the end of the phone to help me and that makes me feel so supported.” (Lorraine, 58)

Strategic Objective 3: Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations

In the last year, we continued to build on existing models of good practice in partnership working whilst also developing new approaches.

We have continued to raise awareness of carers and forged strong referral pathways with health and social care colleagues and local organisations; alongside building relationships with corporate partners.

We have expanded our work in supporting GP practices to identify carers within their systems, to support engagement with Carers First and carer services and developing a Carer Champion model within GP surgeries. We are now rolling out this programme of engagement across more of our service areas with a model partnership framework in place to support this expansion.

New relationships were established with employers who will receive Carers First support in identifying and supporting carers within their own workforces.

Making a difference – working with employers

"Supporting carers has a range of benefits to us as an organisation including reducing turnover and keeping talented and experienced people ... It is also helping us attract people ...and improving the resilience and wellbeing of our colleagues."

Bakkavor is a leading supplier to grocery retailers across the UK providing meals, desserts and other items to high street brands such as M&S, Sainsbury's and Waitrose. It is a major employer with factory sites in Carers First areas.

During this year, our Employment Team approached a local site to develop a partnership and was, as a result, put in contact with the group's Human Resources Manager. This led to a face-to-face meeting with HR and a partnership approach to make the business carer aware.

Carers First supported Bakkavor to create a Carers Policy and wellbeing material to support carers in their employment. This was followed with a presentation from Carers First to all Bakkavor's UK Wellbeing Champions and with dedicated training given by us to improve their knowledge of the issues facing carers and how to support carers in the workplace.

We have continued to develop this work and now support over ninety champions across Bakkavor's UK operations, with further training planned.

Strategic Objective 4: Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team

This year saw Carers First continue to invest in its staff. We increased support for Learning and Development, introduced a Pay and Grading Framework and put in place a new pay and benefits package for staff. Our new organisational values were developed through working with our staff to identify and develop key themes throughout the year.

Around 40% of Carers First's staff identify as carers, and with Carer's Passports in place and flexible and supportive working arrangements, we can model best practice in the support of carers in the workplace. During the year, this included offering paid Carer's Leave in advance of the legal requirements and assisting an internal network of working carers to support our staff who have caring responsibilities.

As a result of the flexible policies and processes we have put in place, and the support and training we give to our employees, 80% of staff say they are proud to work for Carers First. We have a staff culture that is described in our annual staff survey, from which we develop our Action Plan, as 'supportive', 'caring', 'inclusive' and 'friendly'.

This year, we have put in place more pathways for volunteers to become involved in all aspects of our work, in particular, volunteers who will work in the community to raise awareness of what we do and play a major role in signposting carers to the support we can offer, whilst also continuing to play an integral part in how the charity supports carers.

Bringing Carers First colleagues together: Carers First Away Day

"It was an awesome day, and I felt very empowered, humbled and proud to be there."

This year saw Carers First host the first Away Day following the pandemic. As a charity delivering work in different regional service areas, and with staff who are often based away from traditional office environments, it is important that our staff and volunteers feel part of a unified charity, and are confident in sharing with, and learning from, each other.

Over 100 Carers First staff, volunteers and trustees attended the event. There were group activities, presentations, talks and awards, as well as opportunities for informal and formal networking. The day was a positive experience with numerous actions for future collaboration across teams noted and taken forward.

Feedback about the event has been very positive with attendees telling us that they felt inspired, motivated and energised – and proud to be part of Carers First.

Strategic Objective 5: Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations

In 2023/24, we were successful in our retenders of existing contracts and were also successful in our tender for new adult and young carers services in the London Borough of Merton. Voluntary income has continued to increase, with a 200% rise recorded across the three years of the strategy. We have also been mindful of the need to reduce costs, with office costs now cut by 40% over the past two years with no impact on our services for carers. We undertake regular reviews of supplier contracts and agreements to ensure that we are obtaining maximum value for money across our expenditure.

We were very grateful to receive notification of a significant legacy from Lillian Head who was a previous recipient of services from Carers First. This is partly recognised in this year's accounts, in line with the SORP, with the residual legacy income due to be received in 2024/25.

As an organisation, Carers First has maintained its ISO 9001 certification. This is an internationally recognised standard for quality management that, at Carers First, is subject to annual audit across a range of criteria. We take part in an annual independent certification process to assess Carers First against the required standards, ensuring that a high level of quality assurance is consistently achieved. For our 2023/24 audit, no improvement measures were required.

Measuring our performance

Setting ourselves demanding targets that will see the lives of more carers improved through our work is a core part of how we operate. This report has provided updates against many of the targets that were set in last year's Annual Report which, themselves, were part of the goals set through the 2021-2024 Strategy. Overall, across all of the Strategic Objectives, more than three-quarters of the 105 targets set that were deliverable in this year were met or exceeded.

We have in place several robust data systems that monitor performance, and the information these provide are monitored by the Senior Leadership Team. Where targets have not been met, the issues causing this have been identified and strategies and actions put in place to address them.

Lessons learnt

Diversifying income

At Carers First, the majority of our income is derived from commissioned services for carers. We tender to provide these services in order to ensure the delivery of high quality, good value for money services which deliver optimal outcomes for carers. Whilst we have a model in place that supports the agile development of a range of services and the infrastructure of the charity, we have long recognised that, to reduce risk of dependency on any single service stream and continue to improve outcomes for carers we support, we must broaden our income base.

2023/24 has seen us further develop our activity with corporate partners and explore how we can develop community and event fundraising using volunteers and other partners.

These steps will inform our future income growth planning and will sit alongside how we enhance our existing well-developed fundraising streams from Trusts and Foundations.

Increasing visibility

Donors naturally can't support charities that they are not aware off. Similarly, people cannot benefit from services which they are not familiar with. This year, we have continued to test methods of increasing our visibility to key stakeholders from carers to commissioners and continue to look for ways to raise the profile of our services and our needs as a charity.

From this, we know we need to do more to engage high profile advocates who can reach audiences beyond those we are able to, with our own resources. This will build on the support we have provided and will help us to boost the number of carers in contact with us.

Risk management

Effective risk management is at the heart of our strategy and protecting the future sustainability of Carers First. We are fully committed to ensuring risks are appropriately managed.

An organisation-wide risk management approach is in place to identify key strategic and operational risks, ensuring they are managed effectively through clear accountability and escalation when needed.

Risks are assessed to determine their severity, to verify effective management and to take action to mitigate where necessary. Our Risk Register is a live document and is reviewed by Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team each quarter.

Key risks and how we are managing them

The major risk to Carers First is loss of income. We are aware of ongoing cuts to Local Authority funding and the risk of not securing re-tendered contracts. To mitigate these risks, we work closely with Commissioners to ensure we are delivering impactful services to carers and have robust data to evidence this. We continue to strategically assess the available funding opportunities from all sources including statutory sources.

We have taken steps to diversify our income with greater investment in securing voluntary income and building a sustainable approach to community and events fundraising, alongside our strong foundations in support from grant-making trusts.

The importance of defending our IT systems from malicious attack and protecting the personal data we hold from unauthorised access and misuse is recognised by Carers First. We hold Cyber Security Essentials and Cyber Security Essentials Plus certification. Measures are in place to protect unauthorised access to IT systems and to carry out ongoing tests for potential vulnerabilities in the IT network. Policies and procedures are also in place to protect data within the working environment, supported by mandatory data protection training for all staff, trustees and volunteers.

Carers First Strategy 2024-27

Over the next three years, Carers First will unrelentingly focus on delivering our new three year strategy and achieving our five Strategic Objectives to improve the lives of more carers.

Within the Objectives, we have set ourselves ambitious targets for both organisational development and to reach and support more carers. To ensure these are deliverable, we have put in place a detailed Operational Plan which sets out the activities required for each area, the metrics for success and how these are to be measured. The Operational Plan is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and forms the basis of management reporting to the Trustees. The plan will be assessed and updated at the end of each quarter.

Feeding into the Operational Plan are Delivery Plans for each team and service area across Carers First. Managers in those areas have developed these in collaboration with staff to ensure ownership across the organisation. Each team has its own set of Objectives that support the organisational Objectives of the charity.

Our five Strategic Objectives for this period are:

- **Objective 1: Reach and engage more carers early in their caring role**
  We want more carers to be able to access support early in their caring role.

- **Objective 2: Develop new innovative models of collaboration, delivery and programmes with the potential to scale our reach and impact**
  The environment in which we operate is changing and therefore we need to be agile and responsive, explore different ways of working, create innovative solutions and seize opportunities.

- **Objective 3: Achieve the highest quality of support possible, so we can maximise the difference made to carers' lives**
  We will work with adult and young carers, using a strengths-based approach to sustain caring roles and provide high quality information, advice and support, to enable carers to have choice and control.

- **Objective 4: Champion talent and diversity**
  We know that our most important asset is our people; and we want to encourage, support and champion talent and diversity.

- **Objective 5: Grow and diversify our income to enable us to achieve more for carers**
  We are working in uncertain times, with strained financial resource in social care and health, reductions in grant giving and the cost-of-living pressures; however, we will grow and diversify our income so we can continue to meet the increasing needs of carers.

Financial review

The charity's incoming resources for the year ended 31 March 2024 totalled £4,931,362 (2023 - £4,694,622). Resources expended totalled £5,056,341 (2023 - £4,873,317) and net gain on investments was £54,581 (2023 - £123,268 loss). The net deficit came to £70,398 (2023 - £301,963).

Our Reserves Policy, covering our unrestricted reserves, is risk based and assesses the financial risks on an ongoing basis. The Trustees consider the level of reserves as sufficient to cover our operational commitments in the event of any changes e.g. loss of a significant contract. The level of reserves also allows for investments to develop and enhance our services for carers.

During the year we utilised some of our accumulated reserves to strategically invest in the charity's work to extend our capacity to reach more carers.

At 31 March 2024 the unrestricted fund balance was £1,373,952 (2023 - £1,389,173) and the restricted £349,345 (2023 - £404,572) which are in line with the Reserves Policy.

Carers First has continued to demonstrate year-on-year growth of its activities and the numbers of carers it supports. The Trustees are committed to invest in future opportunities as necessary.

Investments

Carers First investments are held as a reserve against any future shortfall in income against expenditure. They seek to maintain and, if possible, enhance, the real value of the funds represented by its investments in line with the strategy. We seek to meet these objectives by maintaining an appropriate balance between maximising long-term returns and avoiding undue risk and volatility in capital values.

Our Investment of Financial Assets Policy sets out that our financial assets should be invested in line with our aims and charitable objectives. The Trustees do not wish to adopt an exclusionary policy. However, individual investments may be excluded if perceived to conflict with the charitable purpose of the organisation.

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and EFT's), holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's) and overseas equities and funds.

Auditors

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution proposing that Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited be reappointed as auditors of the charitable company will be put to the Annual General Meeting.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Trustees (who are also the directors of Carers First for the purposes of company law) to prepare financial statements for each fiscal year. Under that law the Trustees have elected to prepare financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law), including the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those financial statements they have:

- Selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently.
- Made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- Prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.
- Stated whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the Company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Statement of Disclosure to Auditors

So far as the Trustees are aware, there is no relevant audit information which has not been disclosed to the company's Auditors. They have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as Trustees to make themselves aware of any matters which would be relevant for audit purposes, and to ensure that such information has been communicated to the company's auditors.

Small Company Exemptions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006.

Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by

_____

P. Davis
Chair of Trustees

Independent Auditors' Report to the Trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2024

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Carers First (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2024 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2024 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustees were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies' regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the preparation of the financial statements of the charity, and the procedures that management adopt to ensure compliance. We have considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements, and in particular we identified: the Companies Act 2006, FRS102, and the Charities SORP.

We have also identified other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the amounts or disclosures within the financial statements, but for which compliance is fundamental to the charity's operations and to avoid material penalties, including GDPR, health and safety, employment law, and fundraising regulations.

Having reviewed the laws and regulations applicable to the charity, we designed and performed audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence. Specifically, we:

- Assigned an engagement team to the audit with particular familiarity in dealing with charity and not-for-profit organisations;
- Obtained an understanding of the charity's procedures for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations;
- Obtained and reviewed internal policy and procedure documents;
- Made enquiries of management and the trustees regarding whether they were aware of any actual or suspected incidences of non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- Obtained and reviewed meeting minutes;
- Confirmed DBS checks were in place for staff members;

- Reviewed legal expenses accounts for indications of any possible non-compliance; and
- Reviewed the completeness and accuracy of any disclosures made in the financial statements.

We assessed the susceptibility of the charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including considering how fraud might occur. This was performed by:

- Making an assessment of the charity's control environment, systems and controls including identifying any weaknesses and considering the risk of management override of controls;
- Assessing the susceptibility of the charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including considering how fraud could occur;
- Considering whether there are any incentives or opportunities for management to manipulate financial results;
- Obtaining and evaluating the trustees' assessment of the risk of fraud, and enquiring as to whether they are aware of any actual or suspected incidences of fraud; and
- Reviewing the accounting policies and accounting estimates for signs of management bias.

The audit has been planned and performed in in accordance with auditing standards, however, because of the inherent limitations of audit procedures there remains a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those that may lead to material misstatements in the financial statements. There are inherent difficulties in detecting irregularities, and irregularities that result from fraud may be more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error, for example due to concealment, override of controls, collusion or misrepresentations. In addition, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less audit procedures are able to identify it.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and, the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

……

Jonathan Healey BA FCA
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of:
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Statutory Auditors
Chartered Accountants

North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

Date: ……

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Note	*2024 Unrestricted funds* £	*2024 Restricted funds* £	*2024 Total funds* £	*2023 Total funds* £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	**2**	402,254	694,511	1,096,765	855,151
Charitable activities	**3**	3,610,776	187,810	3,798,586	3,805,383
Investments		36,012	-	36,012	34,088
Total income		4,049,042	882,321	4,931,362	4,694,622
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds	**4**	68,663	-	68,663	81,837
Charitable activities	**5**	4,050,180	937,498	4,987,678	4,791,480
Total expenditure		4,118,843	937,498	5,056,341	4,873,317
Net gains/(losses) on investments		54,581	-	54,581	(123,268)
Net expenditure and net movement in funds	**8**	(15,221)	(55,177)	(70,398)	(301,963)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		1,389,173	404,572	1,793,745	2,095,708
Total funds carried forward	**14**	1,373,952	349,395	1,723,347	1,793,745

Carers First

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2024

	Note	*2024* £	*2024* £	*2023* £	*2023* £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	**10**		51,815		73,473
Investments	**11**		1,118,509		1,393,214
			1,170,324		1,466,687
Current assets					
Debtors	**12**	569,950		275,105	
Cash at bank and in hand		460,178		590,729	
		1,030,128		865,834	
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	**13**	(477,105)		(538,776)	
Net current assets			553,023		327,058
Total net assets			1,723,347		1,793,745
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds	**14**		1,373,952		1,389,173
Restricted income funds	**14**		349,395		404,572
			1,723,347		1,793,745

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on ..... and were signed on its behalf by:

.....	.....
P Davis	**C Sparrow**
Chair of Trustees	Chair of Finance Committee

Company number: 04144820

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

	Note	*2024* £	*2024* £	*2024* £	*2023* £
Cash flows from operating activities:					
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	**A**		(471,484)		100,042
Cash flows from investing activities:					
Interest and dividends received		36,012		34,088	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(24,365)		(53,484)	
Purchases of investments		(129,106)		(310,810)	
Sales of investments		458,392		285,328	
Net cash used in investing activities			340,933		(44,878)
Change in cash and cash equivalents			(130,551)		55,164
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			590,729		535,565
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			460,178		590,729
A. Reconciliation of net income to net cash flow from operating activities					
Net expenditure for the year *As per the Statement of Financial Activities*			(70,398)		(301,963)
Adjustments for:					
Depreciation charges		46,023		46,120	
Net (gains)/losses on investments		(54,581)		123,268	
Interest and dividends receivable		(36,012)		(34,088)	
(Increase)/decrease in debtors		(294,845)		259,102	
(Decrease)/increase in creditors		(61,671)		7,603	
			(401,086)		402,005
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities			(471,484)		100,042

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024
(continued)

B. Analysis of changes in net debt	*Cash at bank*	*Liquid investments*
At the beginning of the year	590,729	1,393,214
Cash flows	(130,551)	(329,286)
Gains	-	54,581
At the end of the year	460,178	1,118,509

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

1 Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

1.1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Carers First meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound.

1.2 Income

Income from donations and grants is recognised when the charity is entitled to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably. For donations, this is usually on receipt. For grants, this is usually when a formal offer is made in writing, unless the grant contains terms and conditions outside of the charity's control which must be met before the charity is entitled to the funds. Where grants are received in response to a proposal including a budgeted timescale, such that the timescale for the expenditure is implicit in the grant agreement, the income is recognised in accordance with that timescale.

Income from contracted services, and services to users, is recognised when the services are provided. Income from such sources received in advance of the service provision is accounted for as deferred income.

Investment income is recognised when receivable.

1 Accounting policies (continued)

1.3 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised when a present legal or constructive obligation exists at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation, and the amount can be estimated reliably.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises the direct costs incurred by the charity in delivering its charitable objectives. Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly relate to the charitable activities. These costs have been allocated to the charitable activity. Staff costs are allocated to direct costs or support costs on the basis of staff time.

1.4 Pensions

The charity makes contributions to the personal pension schemes of its employees. The pension cost in the financial statements represents the contributions payable by the charity during the year.

1.5 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.

1.6 Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for the particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

1.7 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less estimated realisable value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment - Between 20% and 33% straight line

Assets costing less than £500 are written off in the year they are acquired.

1 Accounting policies (continued)

1.8 Investments

Listed investments are stated at market value. Gains and losses arising on the revaluation of investments are taken to the Statement of Financial Activities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity only has financial instruments which are classified as basic financial instruments.

Short-term debtors and creditors are measured at the settlement value. Any losses from impairment are recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.10 Status

Carers First is a charitable company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. In the event of the company being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is Unit 4, Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

2 Income from donations and legacies

	2024 £	2023 £
Grants	786,813	785,122
Donations	34,952	46,295
Legacies	275,000	23,734
	1,096,765	855,151

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £667,505.

3 Income from charitable activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Activity: Carers services		
Medway Council	339,736	329,862
Medway Council - unspent funds returned	-	(55,839)
Medway PCN	99,775	107,354
Lincolnshire County Council	1,619,984	1,511,821
Waltham Forest Borough Council	185,000	185,000
Hackney Borough Council	195,933	192,013
Haringey Borough Council	100,571	97,723
Newham Borough Council	17,385	208,615
Essex County Council	927,000	900,000
NHS Kent & Medway CCG	181,502	203,299
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	131,700	125,535
	3,798,586	3,805,383

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £146,484.

4 Expenditure on raising funds

	2024 £	2023 £
Staff costs	35,610	63,919
Fundraising costs	24,542	9,410
Investment charges	8,511	8,508
	68,663	81,837

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

5 Expenditure on charitable activities

		2024 £	2023 £
Activity: Carers services			
Direct costs	**Note 6**	4,318,952	4,026,186
Support costs	**Note 7**	668,726	765,294
		4,987,678	4,791,480

Expenditure for restricted funds in the comparative period was £702,067.

6 Direct costs of charitable activities

	2024 £	2023 £
Staff costs	3,285,662	3,165,322
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	15,414	16,531
Project costs	877,934	746,079
Grants paid to individuals	139,942	98,254
	4,318,952	4,026,186

7 Support costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Staff costs	238,984	251,604
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	54,101	47,057
Rent and service charges	24,971	60,769
Other premises expenses	21,712	38,315
Insurance	16,556	16,593
Office and IT costs	207,702	230,149
Legal and professional fees	26,275	33,747
Audit fees	11,554	9,504
Payroll processing fees	6,996	7,362
Trustee expenses, meetings, recruitment and training	3,413	12,357
Bad debts	24	23
Bank charges	625	539
Professional membership fees	9,790	11,155
Depreciation	46,023	46,120
	668,726	765,294

8 Net (expenditure)/income

	2024 £	2023 £
Net income is stated after charging:		
Audit fees	10,900	9,504
Accountancy fees	654	-
Depreciation	46,023	46,120
Net gains/(losses) on investments	54,581	(123,268)
Rent paid under operating leases	24,971	60,769

The audit fee charged in the year was £10,900 (2023: £10,900).

9 Staff costs

	2024 £	2023 £
Gross salaries	3,193,144	3,139,225
Employer's National Insurance contributions	255,087	255,719
Pension and healthcare costs	112,025	85,901
	3,560,256	3,480,845

Two members of staff received employment benefits (excluding employer pension contributions) in excess of £60,000 during the year (2023: 1). During the year 161 employees and former employees received employer contributions to their personal pension schemes (2023: 133).

The average number of employees during the year on a headcount basis was as follows:

	2024 No.	2023 No.
Management	5	5
Central Services	10	10
Outreach and carer support	127	126
	142	141

10 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures, fittings & equipment £
Cost	
At 1 April 2023	195,152
Additions	24,365
Disposals	(6,823)
At 31 March 2024	212,694
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2023	121,679
Charge for the year	46,023
Eliminated on disposal	(6,823)
At 31 March 2024	160,879
Net book value	
At 31 March 2024	51,815
At 31 March 2023	73,473

11 Investments

	2024 £	*2023* £
Market value		
At 1 April 2023	1,393,214	1,491,000
Additions	129,106	310,810
Sales proceeds	(458,392)	(285,328)
Net gains/(losses) on investments	54,581	(123,268)
At 31 March 2024	1,118,509	1,393,214

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and EFT's), holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's) and overseas equities and funds.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2024

12 Debtors

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade debtors	238,138	252,247
Prepayments and accrued income	331,812	22,858
	569,950	275,105

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2024 £	2023 £
Trade creditors	80,099	73,808
Taxation and social security	214,612	216,293
Deferred income	57,240	115,931
Other creditors	17,024	14,238
Accruals	108,130	118,506
	477,105	538,776

Deferred income:

Incoming resources deferred in the previous period	115,931	120,511
Released to the Statement of Financial Activities	(115,931)	(120,511)
Incoming resources deferred in the current period:		
Grants and contract income	57,240	115,931
	57,240	115,931

14 Movement on funds

	At 1 April 2023 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Gains / (losses)* £	*At 31 March 2024* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,389,173	4,049,042	(4,118,843)	54,581	1,373,952
	1,389,173	4,049,042	(4,118,843)	54,581	1,373,952
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	27,488	112,810	(99,085)	-	41,213
Medway carers support	78,803	35,000	(57,944)	-	55,859
Carers Trust	400	-	(400)	-	-
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	7,660	5,507	(5,507)	-	7,660
Other donations and grants	157,223	391,496	(446,794)	-	101,925
Health and Wellbeing	51,732	64,583	(68,669)	-	47,646
Mercers	-	50,488	(48,110)	-	2,378
Making Carers Count	44,446	20,376	(64,822)	-	-
Southend on Sea	36,443	40,000	(18,291)	-	58,152
Children in Need	377	28,150	(29,259)	-	(732)
Mid Essex BCF (Virtual Wards)	-	19,929	(10,600)	-	9,329
John Swire Foundation	-	20,715	(13,039)	-	7,676
National Lottery	-	73,180	(54,890)	-	18,290
Medway MVA	-	20,088	(20,088)	-	-
	404,572	882,321	(937,498)	-	349,395
Total funds	1,793,745	4,931,362	(5,056,341)	54,581	1,723,347

Restricted funds have been received for the following purposes:

NHS Carers and Crisis Service
To provide support to carers in crisis in Swale and Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley for a 2 week period to prevent hospital admission and support hospital discharge.

14 Movement on funds (*continued)*

Medway Carers Support
The Medway Carers support/wellbeing funding is to make payments to carers to enable them to maintain their caring role and to prevent carer breakdown. The amount paid per carer is based on assessment.

Carers Trust
This includes grants to provide workshops, support and activities for young adult carers.

Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young adult carers to transition from children's services into adulthood and supporting them into further education and employment.

Young Londoners
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young carers and young adult carers to fulfil their potential through a range of activities such as support sessions, training and other social activities.

Donations
Various donations and legacies received throughout the year to provide specific activities and/or support to carers.

Grants
Various grants to enable the provision of additional activities for carers that are not funded within core contracts and grants awarded to individual carers to enable them to take a holiday or purchase something for the home to assist them in their caring role.
.

Health and Wellbeing
To employ care coordinators to work within PCN's across Medway to offer support and health checks to carers.

Mercers
Funding to enable the recruitment/training and supervision of volunteers to engage with older carers to combat loneliness.

14 Movement on funds (*continued)*

Making Carers Count
The Making Carers Count grant improves access to support for carers from the Turkish and Kurdish community by working closely with Turkish and Kurdish organisations within the boroughs of Hackney and Haringey. Carers First provide activities, group meetings, 1:1 support, information advice and guidance in Turkish and Kurdish language to identify hidden and hard to reach carers.

Southend on Sea
Funds to provide carers' breaks including support to enable carers to attend medical appointments.

Children in Need
This funding is to provide support to young carers in Medway.

Mid Essex BCF (Virtual Wards)
The fund is used to provide support to carers after their outpatients have been discharged from hospital.

John Swire Foundation
The fund is to be used towards the salary of one Young Adult Carer Adviser.

National Lottery
The funding is to provide support to a minimum of 7,600 carers in the Lincolnshire area.

Medway MVA
Funds to provide a telephone befriending service.

14 Movement on funds (*continued*)

Comparative figures

	At 1 April 2022 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Gains / (losses)* £	*At 31 March 2023* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,762,499	3,880,633	(4,130,691)	(123,268)	1,389,173
	1,762,499	3,880,633	(4,130,691)	(123,268)	1,389,173
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	21,594	133,500	(127,606)	-	27,488
Medway carers support	122,803	(20,839)	(23,161)	-	78,803
Carers Trust	400	-	-	-	400
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	5,168	28,364	(25,872)	-	7,660
Young Londoners	7,235	38,065	(45,300)	-	-
Other donations and grants	111,640	434,224	(388,641)	-	157,223
Health and Wellbeing	28,468	64,583	(41,319)	-	51,732
Mercers	385	20,399	(20,784)	-	-
Making Carers Count	22,233	54,295	(32,082)	-	44,446
Southend on Sea	13,283	33,823	(10,663)	-	36,443
Children in Need	-	27,575	(27,198)	-	377
	333,209	813,989	(742,626)	-	404,572
Total funds	2,095,708	4,694,622	(4,873,317)	(123,268)	1,793,745

15 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds £	*Restricted funds* £	*Total funds* £
Fund balances at 31 March 2024 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	51,815	-	51,815
Investments	1,118,509	-	1,118,509
Net current assets	203,628	349,395	553,023
	1,373,952	349,395	1,723,347

Comparative figures

Fund balances at 31 March 2023 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	73,473	-	73,473
Investments	1,393,214	-	1,393,214
Net current assets	(77,514)	404,572	327,058
	1,389,173	404,572	1,793,745

16 Financial commitments

At 31 March 2024 the charity was committed to future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2024 £	*2023* £
Land and buildings		
Due not later than one year	20,018	12,906
Later than one year not later than five years	30,875	-
Other		
Due not later than one year	156	174
Later than one year not later than five years	-	-
	51,049	13,080

17 Contingent assets

The charity is entitled to a legacy but there is uncertainty as to the amount of the payment at the time of approving the financial statements. The expected inflow of economic benefits to the charity is considered probable, although remains subject to realisation of overseas assets by the Executors to the Estate.

18 Pension commitments

The charity operates one (2023: one) defined contribution pension schemes available to the majority of its permanent employees. The scheme funds are administered by Trustees of the pension scheme and are independent of the charity's finances. During the year, £112,025 (2023: £85,901) employers' contributions were made. Contributions totalling £16,278 (2023: £14,116) were payable to the funds at the balance sheet date and are included in other creditors.

19 Related party transactions

The Board of Trustees and the seven (2023: six) members of the Senior Leadership Team are considered to be the charity's key management personnel. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer's national insurance and employer's pension contributions) received by key management personnel during the year was £322,967 (2023: £280,474).

There was no Trustees' remuneration nor other benefits during the current or prior period.

Expenses totalling £832 were reimbursed to three trustees in relation to activity costs (2023: £114).

Office:

Central Office:
Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Strood, Kent ME2 4TG

Carers First

carersfirst.org.uk

0300 303 1555

Registered office: Unit 4 Michael Gill Building Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG

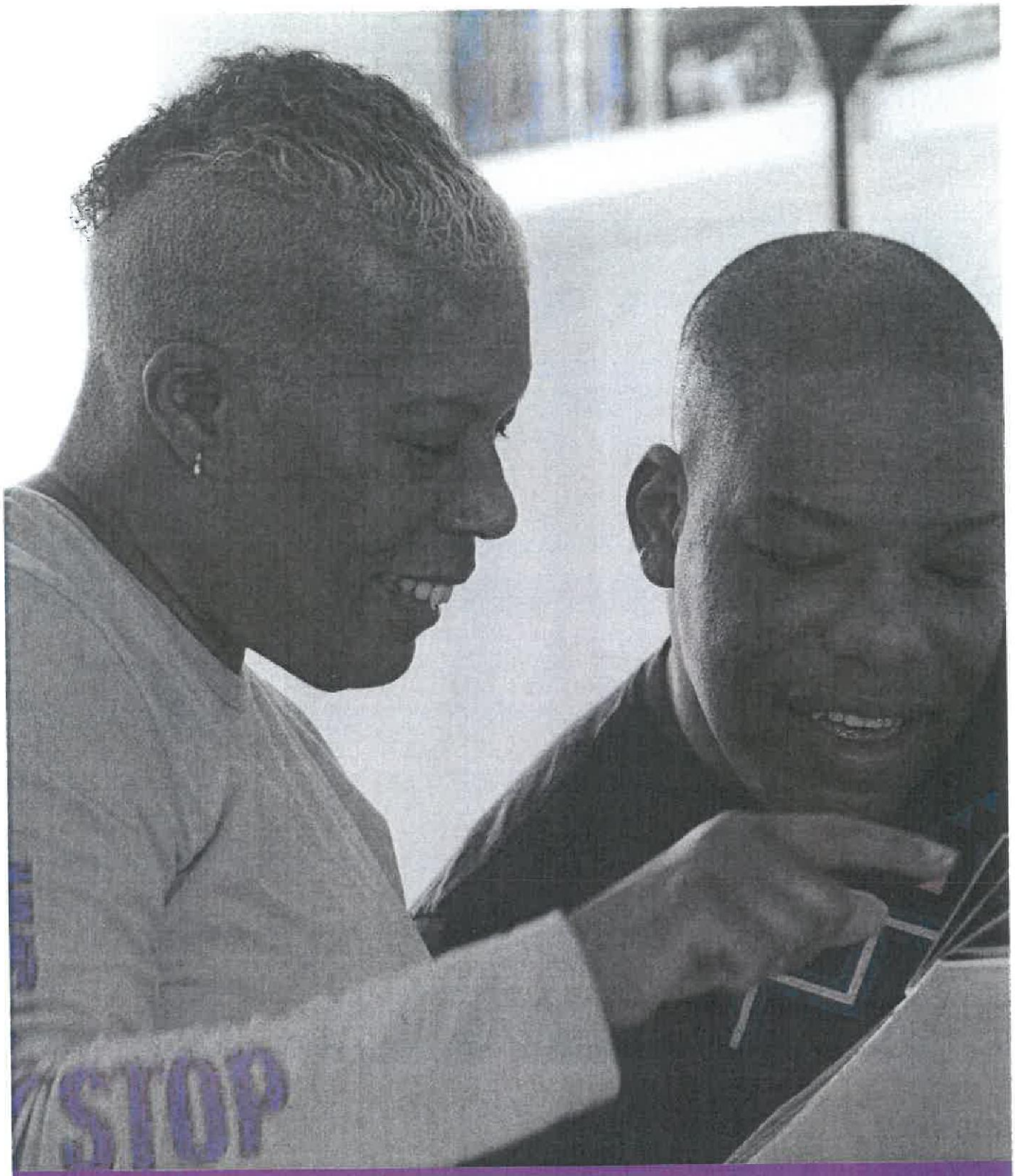
Carers First is a charity registered in England and Wales, registered number 1085430.

Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales Company number 4144820.

CARERS FIRST

England & Wales - Charity number 1085430

Accounts



Carers First

Annual Report 2022-23

Carers First

Company Information

REGISTERED CHARITY 1085430
COMPANY NUMBER 04144820

Registered Office
Michael Gill Building
Tolgate Lane
Strood
Kent
ME2 4TG

Bankers
Lloyds Bank Plc
82 Mount Pleasant Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN1 1RP

Auditors
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Chartered Accountants
North House, 198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent
TN9 1BE

Carers First

INDEX TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

Pages

Trustees' report	3 - 18
Independent Auditors' report	19 - 22
Statement of Financial Activities	23
Balance Sheet	24
Statement of cash flows	25
Notes to the financial statements	26 - 37

Carers First

Report of the Trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2023

The Directors, who are also the Trustees of the charitable company, present their Annual Report with the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2023. This Trustees' report, prepared in accordance with Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006, is also the Trustees' report as required by Part 8 of the Charities Act 2011.

The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) in preparing this annual report and financial statements.

Structure, Governance and Management

Status

Carers First is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity (No. 1085430) and was incorporated on 19 January 2001.

The Charity's governing document is its Articles of Association, which have been approved by the Charity Commission, and its affairs are administered by its Trustees.

Trustees

The Trustees who held office during the year and since are as follows:

Mr Peter Davis (Chair)
Mrs Ruth Rankine (resigned 16 November 2022)
Mr Sukwinder Bassi
Mr Paul Fennell
Ms Georgina Hoare
Mr Antony Hall (resigned 16 May 2022)
Mr Peter Jenkins
Mr Craig Pashler (resigned 10 November 2022)
Mr Marcus Shaw
Mr Julian Sinclair
Mrs Vicki Wells (vice-Chair)
Mrs Susannah Botting (appointed 20 November 2022)
Dr Marie Wheatley (resigned 13 April 2022)
Ms Roberta Heys (appointed 16 June 2023)
Dr Manir Hussain (appointed 16 June 2023)
Mr Clive Sparrow (appointed 16 June 2023)
Ms Samantha Neal (appointed 1 July 2023)

The Trustees are elected, or re-elected, by rotation by the Companies Act Members of Carers First at the Annual General Meeting.

Chair's introduction

The last year has been a particularly tough time for carers. Having endured the pandemic, carers are now suffering disproportionally compared to the general population as a result of cost of living pressures. Against this backdrop, I'm delighted to see Carers First increase our reach to over 274,000 carers, exceeding our 2024 Strategy target (250,000 carers) a year early! 92% of carers in our surveys tell us our support helped them feel more resilient and 90% more informed and confident in their caring role.

Recognise and reach more carers at the earliest opportunity

Two in three of us will become a carer in our lifetime. However, many will not recognise the term or seek support, as they see themselves as just helping a family member or friend. This makes the need for information, timely support and practical help for carers more critical than ever. We know many carers are increasingly accessing information and support online. As a result, we have invested charity reserves to help accelerate the development of our digital services as well as supporting campaigns.

Our digital services have driven our increased reach to carers. I'm pleased to see over 231,000 people accessing information and resources on our website, 111% above our target. I am proud of the team's work on the award-winning, *Lighten the Load* campaign which helped carers to get support with making ends meet in the face of the cost of living crisis.

It is important we do not forget the carers who have difficulty in accessing online information. We deliver support face-to-face and by phone and we have developed new partnerships with complementary organisations in the local communities we serve.

Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in carers' lives

Financial worries in the face of the cost of living crisis have affected many of us but carers have been particularly impacted. Our survey of over 1,000 carers in August 2022 revealed that nine in ten carers are losing sleep because they are worrying about how to afford the basic essentials. We have focused on how we can help maximise carers' income during this period and I am pleased to see so many carers being helped directly to maximise their income.

I am delighted to see the progress with our new service offer and Programmes of Support in this period. This will create a more consistent experience for carers and further tailor our support and assistance. We were successful with a grant from the National Lottery which will help us embed these new programmes over the next three years.

Board and management

We have a Board of Trustees with a strong mix of skills and experience including finance, law, communications, business, health and social care.

During this period, we had our triennial independent external review of the Board and have streamlined the governance meeting cycle. We now have two Committees – Finance & Risk and People & Governance, in addition to our Trustee Board meetings. We have been working towards the Charity Governance Code to support with Board development. Since the year end (March 2023) we have recruited four new Trustees to strengthen and diversify the Board with additional skills and experience.

In November 2022, we said a fond goodbye to long serving vice-Chair Ruth Rankine. Ruth has served tirelessly for over 15 years and contributed enormously to the growth and stability of Carers First. My personal thanks to Ruth for her wonderful service.

Our role as a Board is to drive the activities of the charity through the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), led by the Chief Executive, Alison Taylor. We have a strong commitment and practice to working in co-production with carers and carers playing a central role in everything we do.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

We are committed to offering services that are personalised, inclusive and creative. To do this, we need a diverse staff team and volunteers who can respond to individual carers' needs. We want to reach out to all sections of the community and provide a working environment in which everyone feels supported, respected, valued and able to contribute.

As a Board, we receive regular reports on the diversity of our staff and the carers we support. We consider equality and diversity issues across all we do as a charity and take positive action to address any inequality of access.

Work towards the Charity Governance code

We are committed to establishing strong foundations for trustee succession and good governance practice. To support with this, we have assessed ourselves against the seven principles in the Charity Governance Code including Leadership, Board Effectiveness and Equality, Diversity and Inclusion (EDI). We are using this self-assessment to assist the Board development and our planning for the future.

Outlook

We know the cost of living crisis is making times incredibly tough for carers. We will continue our efforts to recognise and reach carers at the earliest opportunity and provide information and support that makes a difference in their lives.

This is the final year of our 2021-24 strategy, and we will begin work on a new strategy in the next period. In the meantime, we will continue our efforts to increase the total number of carers we reach online and in the community. We will develop our service offer and embed new Programmes of Support to provide tailored, high-quality and consistent support to carers. We will continue to build operational and strategic collaborations with key partners and stakeholders to help reach and support more carers.

Thank you

I would like to thank all our supporters and partners who have made our success over this period possible. I would also like to recognise the dedication of our Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to support carers. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you.

Peter Davis
Chair of Trustees

Objectives and Activities

The charity's Objects are to relieve the needs of carers and persons who are sick, infirm, disabled or who have social care needs in particular but not exclusively, by the provision of information, advice and support and by the provision of respite care.

In accordance with Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011, the Trustees have had due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit when reviewing the charity's objectives and planning future activities.

Our Mission and Ambition

Ambition: To enable carers to thrive in their role and achieve the balance in their lives they wish to achieve.

Mission: Carers First provides support, for carers, with carers – so they can live their lives to the fullest.

What we do

We understand that life as a carer can be challenging. Getting the support and help carers need shouldn't be.

Any of our lives could be turned upside down due to the ill-health, frailty or the disability of a family member or friend. In fact, two in three of us can expect to become a carer in our lifetime.

There are currently 5.5 million unpaid carers in the UK[1], however carer charities estimate that number could be as high as 10.6 million. Their huge contribution saves our economy £162 billion each year[2] - the cost of a second NHS. Each carer's needs and situation are unique, but many face similar challenges. They can struggle to balance employment, finances, or their own wellbeing and time for themselves with their caring role. They may not be aware of the help and support available to them - and that is why we are here.

Carers First works directly with, and for carers, providing personalised information and tailored support in a way that suits them: online, by phone, or face-to-face in their local community.

[1] Census 2021
[2] Valuing Carers 2021: England and Wales, Petrillo and Bennett (2023)

Achievements and Performance

We developed our strategy in an inclusive way informed by extensive consultation with carers, staff, trustees, and key stakeholders. The strategy sets out five Strategic Objectives with outcomes, targets and measures.

Strategic Objective 1: Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity

We reached **274,560 carers** online, by phone and face-to-face in the community, 65% above our target. **231,844 carers** accessed information and resources on our website, 111% above target.

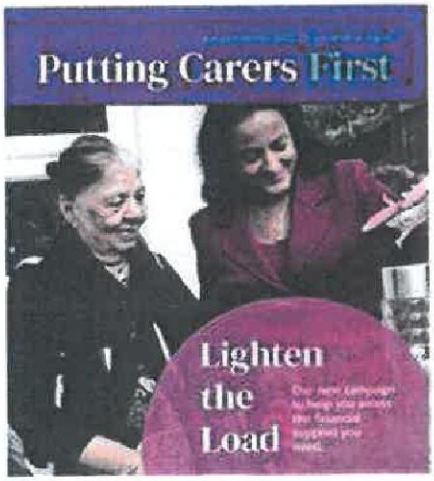
We helped recognise and reach greater number of carers by increasing the reach and impact of our communication activities.

Supporting carers with the cost of living

In October 2022, we launched our *Lighten the Load* campaign to help support carers in getting help to make ends meet. This was in response to troubling findings in our cost of living survey of over 1,000 carers in August. Nine in ten carers told us they were losing sleep because they were worrying about how to afford the basic essentials, and more than half were already in debt, or will be soon, owing to their caring responsibilities. A third were going without food on a regular basis.

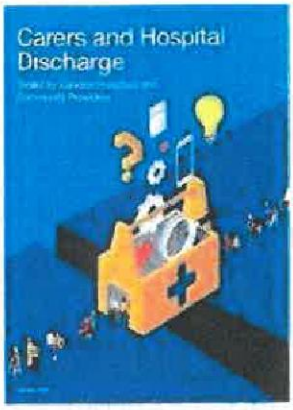
The campaign was supported by Kate Garraway, Jennie Bond and Colin McFarlane and we were invited to speak on Steph's Packed Lunch on Channel 4 to discuss financial support for carers. During the campaign, and in the months since, we have been able to directly help over a thousand carers receive support with benefits, grants, discounts and assist with household bills like energy and food.

We were delighted to see the impact of the *Lighten the Load* campaign recognised with an award for *Best Charity/Not-for-profit Campaign* at the 2023 UK Digital Excellence Awards.



Improving the hospital discharge process for carers

National research highlights that hospital discharge continues to be a key challenge for carers. Many carers do not feel they are given enough information or advice to support them in caring following the discharge process, putting both the patient and carer's health and wellbeing at risk.



We were proud to work in partnership with NHS England, fellow carer charities as well as almost 400 London carers to produce a new Carers and Hospital Discharge Toolkit. Designed for London hospitals and community partners, the Toolkit aims to improve the experience of carers and the people they care for during the hospital discharge journey.

Since its launch in March 2023, the Toolkit has already been adopted by 10 London NHS Trusts with other Trusts working to embed it in existing discharge processes. Thanks to this work, thousands of previously unknown carers are being identified and receiving support. In one hospital they have identified on average 140 carers unknown to services each month since the Toolkit launch. The Toolkit has started to receive interest from NHS Trusts outside of London.

Reaching and engaging carers through different media

During this period, we launched a new magazine and our first radio advert to help us reach and engage more carers. Our new bi-annual *Putting Carers First* magazine was printed and mailed to over 2,300 carers as well as receiving 1,000 downloads. We also launched our first radio advert airing across Lincs FM, Greatest Hits Radio Essex and across radio stations in Medway and London. Voiced by actor and Carers First supporter, Colin McFarlane, the advert reached 220,000 listeners in Lincolnshire and Essex and was listened to 100,000 times in Medway and London.

Amplify the voices of carers at a local and national level to influence policy changes

We were delighted to support the successful *Right to Carers Leave* campaign led by Carers UK. The Carer's Leave Act may come into force as early as April 2024 and will offer carers the right to five days unpaid leave each year to support with their caring role. We supported three carers to attend Parliamentary events for Carers Week 2022 and Young Carers Action Day 2023.

Strategic Objective 2: Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in carer's lives

Personalised support for carers

Our helpline often acts as the first point of contact for carers who, depending on their needs, are then triaged to our local community teams. Over 45,000 carers have registered with Carers First.

Measuring impact

- **87%** of carers maintained or improved their Carers Star Assessment score/outcome
- **94%** of carers would **recommend** Carers First to other carers (94% in 2021/22)
- **94%** of carers feel they were **listened to** and that their own needs were taken into account (92% in 2021/22)
- **90%** of carers feel **more confident** and informed in their caring role (89% in 2021/22)
- **92%** of carers feel **more resilient** in their caring role (89% in 2021/22), and
- **78%** of carers feel there has been an **improvement in their lives** as a result of the support they received from Carers First (90% in 2021/22).

The data above was independently analysed and had a response rate of 10%.

We recognise the drop in the percentage of carers reporting an improvement in their lives compared to 2021-22. We believe this has been influenced by the deepening cost of living crisis and challenges in health and social care which has made life even tougher for some carers; and this has been reflected in national research.

Develop our service offer and Programmes of Support for different groups of carers, in co-production with carers

Carers have told us they want us to understand them and the challenges they face as a carer specific to their caring situation. In response to this, we have been developing high quality information, tools and resources tailored to different caring situations, that can be accessed and adapted by our teams, to support carers in the communities they operate in. During this period, we have created new information, tools and resources for carers of someone with dementia, mental health and dependency as well as training all our staff in providing more bespoke support to these carers.

Maximising carers income

We directly supported carers to maximise their income through benefits, grants, discounts and help with household bills. We directly secured over £500,000 in benefit entitlements for carers in this period as well as providing benefit checks and helping them fill in forms themselves. In the last four years alone, we have secured cumulative benefits of over £5 million for carers in Lincolnshire and London.

We increased the capacity of our Benefits Advice service in Lincolnshire as well as secured funding from Independent Age to offer a new Benefits Advice service for carers aged 65+ in Essex.

We partnered with local councils to award over £100,000 in Household Support Fund grants for carers. We awarded a further £100,000+ in grants for carers to support with payment of bills, as well as payment for larger household expenses that most would otherwise be unable to afford, for example, replacing washing machines and beds.

We have supported carers to get into and maintain employment. This has included coaching around drafting of CVs, job applications and interviews. We have also supported carers to seek volunteering opportunities to develop skills, and helped to address employment related issues, allowing them to make informed choices about their future. We have signposted carers for Benefits Advice and supported carers to complete their Carers Passport ready for employment.

Rob became a full-time carer overnight when his wife, Josie suffered multiple strokes during complications with her second pregnancy. He has received financial support from Carers First including benefits advice and help with grants including paying for a stairlift and new washing machine.

Breaks for carers

We have provided a range of regular respite activities for carers throughout this period, online and face-to-face in the community.

We find online activities help us reach carers who may find it hard to leave the house because of the person they care for. Examples include our monthly Care2relax online group which has a membership of over 140 carers. Our online Breathworks sessions have attracted 194 carers over the year and received wonderful feedback, for example: *"I start off feeling guilty taking time out for myself, but afterwards it makes me realise that I DO need to care for ME. It reduces tension in my body and shows me that if I can reduce the stress in my brain and body, I have room to actually deal with stuff going on around me."*

We have a host of regular groups and events meeting every month in the community. There is something for everyone we support and the people they look after. From exercise and wellbeing groups to peer support groups catering for carers in specific caring situations, age groups and gender. Local teams also arrange regular trips and activities catering for different ages and interests.

Family empowerment

In Medway, over 95% of the young carers we support look after a family member with a mental health condition. In response, we launched family empowerment workshops in partnership with North Kent Mind. Over four weeks, families learn different coping strategies to deal with mental health/anxiety/healthy relationships, bringing everyone back together to reconnect in a fun, informal cooking activity.

All participants reported feeling more confident and resilient following the workshops and there was a 20% improvement in mental wellbeing, (measured using the Warwick Edinburgh Mental Wellbeing Scale,) for over half the group. It is also a great example of partnership working.

Jacqui Leek, the co-facilitator from North Kent Mind says: *"Combining the expertise and experience of North Kent Mind and Carers First enables us to provide and deliver a first-class programme whilst also learning from each other."*

Thriving Online Community

Our Online Facebook Community significantly grew to over 1,000 members in this period. The thriving community provides the opportunity for carers to share stories, ask questions and receive peer support. Some of the most popular topics in the community include the challenges of day-to-day caring, getting help from your local council and how to get help in a range of areas such as financial support. Carers tell us how helpful it is to have a safe, non-judgemental space to share their experiences and learn from others. This, in turn, can help them feel less alone and isolated.

Engaging seldom heard carers

We have worked with a diverse range of carers to develop specific Programmes of Support. This includes engaging male carers through activities chosen by them including monthly breakfasts, pubs, film screenings and axe throwing. We have also supported a range of specific communities working with local community leaders and organisations, such as in the Turkish and Kurdish community in London, where we have events and support groups in their language.

Strategic Objective 3: Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations

Forge strong and productive relationships with the local Integrated Care Systems (ICS)

We have been engaging with Integrated Care Systems on a local level to ensure carers are recognised as a priority and highlighting how supporting carers can help tackle key health and social care challenges and address the health inequalities they face.

Build operational and strategic partnerships to reach and support more carers

We have developed a range of partnerships with complementary organisations in health, social care, schools, employers and commercial organisations to achieve greater support and impact for carers.

We have staff embedded in several GP surgeries and hospitals. For example, in Medway, we work with GP surgeries to increase awareness of carers and how to identify them and add carers to the GP Practice Carer's Register. On average a GP surgery has around 1-2% on the Carer Register when the average carer patient population is 9%. In one large GP practice in Gillingham, we have increased the number of carers on the GP Practice Register from 1% to 8% of its patients, a total of 1,252 carers who are now known to the practice.

We work with over 25 primary and secondary schools in Medway to provide lunch and after school clubs for young carers as well as raise awareness.

One in seven people are working carers. We have worked with private and public sector organisations to raise awareness of caring and support their employees who are caring. In Lincolnshire, we have supported the Ministry of Justice (MOJ) to develop its working carer package which is being rolled out to all UK prisons and probation services. We have also supported Waltham Forest Council to launch a Carers Network in this period.

We developed new partnerships in this period with Carefree which provides breaks for unpaid carers by working with accommodation providers to turn their empty rooms into priceless short breaks. And the Good Things Foundation to offer free SIM cards giving six months' worth of free calls and data for carers on a low income.

Raise the profile of the impact of the charity's work

- Finalist, Care Charity of the Year, Kent Charity Awards 2022.
- Finalist, Helpline of the Year, Helpline Awards 2022.

Carers First helpline team, April 2023

Strategic Objective 4: Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team

Increase the number of staff who feel there is a positive, inclusive and supportive work culture and those proud to work for Carers First

89% of staff reported they are proud to work for Carers First (+7.9% on 2021-22).

We introduced a new Pay and Grading Framework during the period to make sure our salaries are fair and equitable. We awarded staff a discretionary cost of living payment and significantly upgraded our staff benefits package. We are committed to looking after our teams' wellbeing. We have Mental Health Aiders and actively promote our Employee Assistance Programme. We have invested in learning and development including implementing a bespoke management programme, mentoring through a partnership with Legal & General as well as an online Learning Management System.

Support for our working carers

Almost half of our staff identify as a working carer. Staff have reported feeling supported as a working carer by Carers First and have Carer Passports in place. We have increased our support for working carers by refreshing our Carers Policy which includes five days paid carers leave as well as launching a new Carers Network and Staff Carer Champions.

Increase the number of volunteers and those who feel supported and valued in their roles

201 people volunteered for us in this period, a 21% increase. Volunteers donated 8,042 hours and helped us support over 1,500 carers, which is a 50% increase on the previous period. We have increased the range of volunteer roles from one-off e.g. fundraising collectors at an event, regular e.g. telephone befrienders to strategic volunteering e.g. mentoring.

We are proud to hold the *Investing in Volunteers* accreditation which demonstrates our commitment to giving volunteers the best experience. We provide all our volunteers with training and ongoing support. In our 2023 survey of volunteers, 98% told us they felt valued by Carers First and 88% felt supported.

Volunteering has proved a pathway to employment for some volunteers. Katie did a volunteer placement with Carers First as part of her Health and Social Care degree and has since joined as a Carer Support Adviser. She says: *"I never would have thought of doing a job like this if I had not been involved through volunteering. I was wowed by my placement and knew I wanted to be involved in the charity more. I want to do a job where I make a difference and that is rewarding. A job that allows me to put my learning into practice."*

We have other volunteers with no experience of caring yet have gained a lot from their experience. Rahul works for Legal & General and has volunteered as a Telephone Befriender for the past three years.

"Volunteering gives me a sense of purpose. Helping another human feel heard is one of life's most underrated gifts. When I speak with my carer, we go over a range of topics. We speak about him growing up in Barbados to his life in London now with daughters and grandchildren. We talk about the news, the weather, gardening, cricket and even dominoes which he loves to play.

***Volunteering has really helped me understand compassion, kindness and listening** to someone who isn't in your bubble of friends, family or colleagues." Rahul, Telephone Befriending volunteer*

Strategic Objective 5: Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations

Successfully retender for four existing contracts

We were disappointed not to re-secure the contract for the Carer Support Service in Newham and are reflecting on the outcome and learning from this.

We successfully re-secured the contract to deliver the Carer Support Service in Lincolnshire for up to five years during this period. We also secured extensions to our contracts in Essex and Haringey.

Continue to grow and diversify income from non-statutory sources

We raised £606.5k in voluntary income, 22% higher than the previous period. This was 97% of the target (£624k) set in year two of our 2021-24 Income Generation (IG) Plan. Our ambition by the end of year three of the 2021-24 IG Plan is to have quadrupled our voluntary income and diversified our funding base. For every £1 we spent on fundraising, we raised £6.

We were delighted to win significant new grants from the National Lottery, Independent Age and Mercers Philanthropy during this period as well as create new partnerships with Smart Energy GB and Cripps Law firm.

Introduce a new HR System

We successfully implemented and embedded a new HR system during this period. This has helped improve the efficiency of our HR processes as well as enhance the experience of existing and prospective employees.

One of Carers First community teams

Lessons learnt

Digital

Offering information, advice and support online is enabling us to reach and engage with large numbers of people. We have found that our website is helping us to reach a different profile of carer compared to those registered with us, including more working-age and male carers.

We recognise that not all carers can use, or wish to use, online support and therefore it is important that we offer a blended service approach to suit different carers, including face-to-face, telephone and online.

Importance of partnerships

Strong, local partnerships have been key to helping us enhance our support to carers, particularly around financial support. Our teams have increasingly co-located in a range of health and community settings including GP surgeries, hospitals, job centres, neighbourhood teams and more. This has helped us increase the profile of our services with both carers and partners as well as reach more carers.

Work with Integrated Care Systems

Our health and care systems could not function without the total involvement of carers. Any plan to improve health and social care cannot succeed without having 'carers at its heart'. As the new ICS's take shape, we will be promoting how supporting carers can assist with priorities including reducing pressure on health and social care and tackling health inequalities.

Plans for the future

Our current three-year strategy commits us to five strategic objectives which we have outlined above. These are broken down into outcomes and targets which inform our annual Operational Plan.

The difference we want to see by 2024:

1. Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity

- 20% increase in total number of carers reached
- 25% increase in visitors accessing information and resources on the website
- Increase the proportion of carers supported early in their caring journey
- 15% increase in carers receiving one-to-one or group support
- Increase in reach and impact of communication activities

2. Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in their lives

- Develop our service offer and Programmes of Support for different groups of carers, in co-production with carers
- 88% of carers maintain or improve their Carers Star score
- 93% of carers feel more resilient in their caring role
- 95% of carers feel they were listened to and that their needs were taken into account
- 90% of carers feel more confident and informed

3. Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations

- Forging strong and productive relationships with the local Integrated Care Systems (ICS)
- Build operational and strategic collaborations to help reach and support more carers

4. Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team

- 90% of staff feel proud to work for Carers First
- 99% of new staff have a positive and effective recruitment and induction process
- Increase the number of volunteer hours donated to 9,000
- Increase the number of volunteers who feel supported and valued in their roles

5. Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations

- Successfully retender for existing contracts
- Continue to grow and diversify income from non-statutory sources. Target £764.5k
- Further develop our data reporting and insight

Financial review

The charity's incoming resources for the year ended 31 March 2023 totalled £4,694,622 (2022 - £4,563,735). Resources expended totalled £4,873,317 (2022 - £4,446,618) and net loss on investments was £123,268 (2022 - £44,224 gain). The net deficit came to £301,963 (2022 - £161,341 gain).

Our Reserves Policy is risked based and assesses the financial risks on an ongoing basis and monetises the possible impact within a reserve range between £1.3m, and £1.8m. The Trustees consider this level of reserves as sufficient to cover our operational commitments in the event of any changes e.g. loss of a significant contract. The level of reserves also allows for investments to develop and enhance our services for carers.

During the year we utilised some of our accumulated reserves to strategically invest in the charity through targeted upgrade of systems, specific expertise and campaigns to extend our capability to reach more carers.

At 31 March 2023 the unrestricted fund balance was £1,389,173 (2022 - £1,762,499) and the restricted £404,572 (2022 - £333,209) which are in line with the Reserves Policy.

Carers First has continued to demonstrate year-on-year growth of its activities and the numbers of carers it supports. The Trustees are committed to invest in future opportunities as necessary.

Investments

Carers First investments are held as a reserve against any future shortfall in income against expenditure. They seek to maintain and, if possible, enhance, the real value of the funds represented by its investments in line with the business plan. We seek to meet these objectives by maintaining an appropriate balance between maximising long-term returns and avoiding undue risk and volatility in capital values.

Our Investment of Financial Assets Policy sets out that our financial assets should be invested in line with our aims and charitable objectives. The Trustees do not wish to adopt an exclusionary policy. However, individual investments may be excluded if perceived to conflict with the charitable purpose of the organisation.

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and EFT's) and holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's). There are no direct foreign investments. Throughout the year we have increased our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) holdings in our investments from 6.4% to 18.5%.

Risk Management

Effective risk management is at the heart of our strategy and protecting the future sustainability of Carers First. We are fully committed to ensuring risks are appropriately managed. An organisation-wide risk management approach is in place to identify key strategic and operational risks, ensuring they are managed effectively through clear accountability and escalation when needed.

Risks are assessed to determine their severity, verify effective management, and action mitigation where necessary. This is reviewed by the Senior Leadership Team and Trustees quarterly.

Key risks faced by Carers First and how we are managing them

A key risk is loss of income. Carers First is aware of potential Local Authority cuts to funding and the risk of not securing re-tendered contracts. To mitigate these risks, we are working closely with Commissioners to ensure that we are delivering impactful services to carers and that we can evidence this. We have also taken steps to diversify our income and ensure the continuance and sustainable growth of our work.

Information security is high on the risk agenda for all organisations. The importance of defending our IT systems from malicious attack and protecting the personal data we hold from unauthorised access and misuse is recognised by Carers First. Security measures are in place to protect unauthorised access to IT systems and to carry out ongoing tests for potential vulnerabilities in the IT network. Policies and procedures are also in place to protect data within the working environment, supported by mandatory data protection training for all staff, trustees and volunteers.

AUDITORS

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution proposing that Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited be reappointed as auditors of the charitable company will be put to the Annual General Meeting.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustees are responsible for preparing financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Trustees (who are also the directors of Carers First for the purposes of company law) to prepare financial statements for each fiscal year. Under that law the Trustees have elected to prepare financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law), including the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those financial statements they have:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently.
- made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent.
- prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business.
- stated whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the Company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

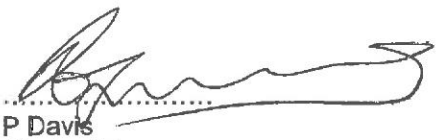
The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE TO AUDITORS

So far as the Trustees are aware, there is no relevant audit information which has not been disclosed to the company's auditors. They have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as Trustees to make themselves aware of any matters which would be relevant for audit purposes, and to ensure that such information has been communicated to the company's auditors.

SMALL COMPANY EXEMPTIONS

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006. Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



P Davis
Chair of Trustees

Independent Auditors' Report to the Trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2023

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Carers First (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2023 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2023 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustee were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined above, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applicable to the preparation of the financial statements of the charity, and the procedures that management adopt to ensure compliance. We have considered the extent to which non-compliance might have a material effect on the financial statements, and in particular we identified: the Companies Act 2006, FRS102, and the Charities SORP.

We have also identified other laws and regulations that do not have a direct effect on the amounts or disclosures within the financial statements, but for which compliance is fundamental to the charity's operations and to avoid material penalties, including GDPR, health and safety, employment law, and fundraising regulations.

Having reviewed the laws and regulations applicable to the charity, we designed and performed audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence. Specifically, we:

- Assigned an engagement team to the audit with particular familiarity in dealing with charity and not-for-profit organisations;
- Obtained an understanding of the charity's procedures for ensuring compliance with laws and regulations;
- Obtained and reviewed internal policy and procedure documents;
- Made enquiries of management and the trustees regarding whether they were aware of any actual or suspected incidences of non-compliance with laws and regulations;
- Obtained and reviewed meeting minutes;
- Confirmed DBS checks were in place for staff members;
- Reviewed legal expenses accounts for indications of any possible non-compliance; and
- Reviewed the completeness and accuracy of any disclosures made in the financial statements.

We assessed the susceptibility of the charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including considering how fraud might occur. This was performed by:

- Making an assessment of the charity's control environment, systems and controls including identifying any weaknesses and considering the risk of management override of controls;
- Assessing the susceptibility of the charity's financial statements to material misstatement, including considering how fraud could occur;
- Considering whether there are any incentives or opportunities for management to manipulate financial results;
- Obtaining and evaluating the trustees' assessment of the risk of fraud, and enquiring as to whether they are aware of any actual or suspected incidences of fraud; and
- Reviewing the accounting policies and accounting estimates for signs of management bias.

The audit has been planned and performed in in accordance with auditing standards, however, because of the inherent limitations of audit procedures there remains a risk that we will not detect all irregularities, including those that may lead to material misstatements in the financial statements. There are inherent difficulties in detecting irregularities, and irregularities that result from fraud may be more difficult to detect than irregularities that result from error, for example due to concealment, override of controls, collusion or misrepresentations. In addition, the further removed non-compliance with laws and regulations is from the events and transactions reflected in the financial statements, the less audit procedures are able to identify it.

A further description of our responsibilities is available on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: https://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and, the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Ltd

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Jonathan Healey BA FCA
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of:
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Statutory Auditors
Chartered Accountants

North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

Date: 13 October 2023

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	*2023 Unrestricted funds* £	*2023 Restricted funds* £	*2023 Total funds* £	*2022 Total funds* £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	2	187,646	667,505	855,151	739,769
Charitable activities	3	3,658,899	146,484	3,805,383	3,791,822
Investments		34,088	-	34,088	32,144
Total income		3,880,633	813,989	4,694,622	4,563,735
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		81,837	-	81,837	73,947
Charitable activities	5	4,048,854	742,626	4,791,480	4,372,671
Total expenditure		4,130,691	742,626	4,873,317	4,446,618
Net losses on investments		(123,268)	-	(123,268)	44,224
Net (expenditure)/income and net movement in funds	8	(373,326)	71,363	(301,963)	161,341
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		1,762,499	333,209	2,095,708	1,934,367
Total funds carried forward	14	1,389,173	404,572	1,793,745	2,095,708

Carers First

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £	2022 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	10		73,473		66,109
Investments	11		1,393,214		1,491,000
			1,466,687		1,557,109
Current assets					
Debtors	12	275,105		534,207	
Cash at bank and in hand		590,729		535,565	
		865,834		1,069,772	
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	13	(538,776)		(531,173)	
Net current assets			327,058		538,599
Total net assets			1,793,745		2,095,708
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds	14		1,389,173		1,762,499
Restricted income funds	14		404,572		333,209
			1,793,745		2,095,708

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on .....22/9/23..... and were signed on its behalf by:

.....
P Davis
Chair of Trustees

.....
P Fennell
Chair of Finance Committee

Company number: 04144820

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

	Note	2023 £	2023 £	2022 £	2022 £
Cash flows from operating activities:					
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities	A		100,042		(173,080)
Cash flows from investing activities:					
Interest and dividends received		34,088		32,144	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(53,484)		(38,242)	
Purchases of investments		(310,810)		(336,967)	
Sales of investments		285,328		113,589	
Net cash used in investing activities			(44,878)		(229,476)
Change in cash and cash equivalents			55,164		(402,556)
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			535,565		938,121
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			590,729		535,565

A. Reconciliation of net income to net cash flow from operating activities

Net income for the year *As per the Statement of Financial Activities*		(301,963)		161,341
Adjustments for:				
Depreciation charges	46,120		34,787	
Net losses/(gains) on investments	123,268		(44,228)	
Interest and dividends receivable	(34,088)		(32,144)	
Decrease/(increase)in debtors	259,102		(261,684)	
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	7,603		(31,152)	
		402,005		(334,421)
Net cash provided by/(used in) operating activities		100,042		(173,080)

1 Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

1.1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Carers First meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound.

1.2 Income

Income from donations and grants is recognised when the charity is entitled to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably. For donations, this is usually on receipt. For grants, this is usually when a formal offer is made in writing, unless the grant contains terms and conditions outside of the charity's control which must be met before the charity is entitled to the funds. Where grants are received in response to a proposal including a budgeted timescale, such that the timescale for the expenditure is implicit in the grant agreement, the income is recognised in accordance with that timescale.

Income from contracted services, and services to users, is recognised when the services are provided. Income from such sources received in advance of the service provision is accounted for as deferred income.

Investment income is recognised when receivable.

1.3 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised when a present legal or constructive obligation exists at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation, and the amount can be estimated reliably.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises the direct costs incurred by the charity in delivering its charitable objectives. Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly relate to the charitable activities. These costs have been allocated to the charitable activity. Staff costs are allocated to direct costs or support costs on the basis of staff time.

1 **Accounting policies (continued)**

1.4 Pensions

The charity makes contributions to the personal pension schemes of its employees. The pension cost in the financial statements represents the contributions payable by the charity during the year.

1.5 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.

1.6 Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for the particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

1.7 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less estimated realisable value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment	- Between 20% and 33% straight line

Assets costing less than £500 are written off in the year they are acquired.

1.8 Investments

Listed investments are stated at market value. Gains and losses arising on the revaluation of investments are taken to the Statement of Financial Activities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity only has financial instruments which are classified as basic financial instruments.

Short-term debtors and creditors are measured at the settlement value. Any losses from impairment are recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.10 Status

Carers First is a charitable company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. In the event of the company being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is Unit 4, Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

2 Income from donations and legacies

	2023 £	2022 £
Grants	785,122	701,370
Donations	46,295	25,684
Legacies	23,734	12,715
	855,151	739,769

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £570,439.

3 Income from charitable activities

	2023 £	2022 £
Activity: Carers services		
Medway Council	329,862	330,959
Medway Council - unspent funds returned	(55,839)	-
Medway PCN	107,354	134,085
Lincolnshire County Council	1,511,821	1,454,902
Waltham Forest Borough Council	185,000	198,000
Hackney Borough Council	192,013	192,013
Haringey Borough Council	97,723	104,319
Newham Borough Council	208,615	208,620
Essex County Council	900,000	900,000
NHS Kent & Medway CCG	203,299	196,897
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	125,535	72,027
	3,805,383	3,791,822

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £194,677.

4 Expenditure on raising funds

	2023 £	2022 £
Staff costs	63,919	65,186
Fundraising costs	9,410	-
Investment charges	8,508	8,761
	81,837	73,947

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2023

5 Expenditure on charitable activities

		2023 £	2022 £
Activity: Carers services			
Direct costs	**Note 6**	4,026,186	3,673,176
Support costs	**Note 7**	765,294	699,495
		4,791,480	4,372,671

Expenditure for restricted funds in the comparative period was £702,067.

6 Direct costs of charitable activities

	2023 £	2022 £
Staff costs	3,165,322	2,947,942
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	16,531	10,923
Project costs	746,079	612,229
Grants paid to individuals	98,254	102,082
	4,026,186	3,673,176

7 Support costs

	2023 £	2022 £
Staff costs	251,604	231,049
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	47,057	25,134
Rent and service charges	60,769	51,473
Other premises expenses	38,315	24,275
Insurance	16,593	15,382
Office and IT costs	230,149	257,904
Legal and professional fees	33,747	30,401
Audit fees	9,504	9,090
Payroll processing fees	7,362	6,702
Trustee expenses, meetings, recruitment and training	12,357	778
Bad debts	23	-
Bank charges	539	524
Professional membership fees	11,155	11,996
Depreciation	46,120	34,787
	765,294	699,495

8 Net (expenditure)/income

	2023 £	2022 £
Net income is stated after charging:		
Audit fees	9,504	9,090
Depreciation	46,120	34,787
Net gains on investments	(123,268)	44,224
Rent paid under operating leases	60,769	51,473

The audit fee charged in the year was £10,900 (2022: £9,450).

9 Staff costs

	2023 £	2022 £
Gross salaries	3,139,225	2,935,213
Employer's National Insurance contributions	255,719	224,748
Pension and healthcare costs	85,901	84,216
	3,480,845	3,244,177

One member of staff received employment benefits (excluding employer pension contributions) in excess of £60,000 during the year (2022: 1). During the year 133 employees and former employees received employer contributions to their personal pension schemes (2022: 173).

The average number of employees during the year on a headcount basis was as follows:

	2023 No.	2022 No.
Management	5	4
Administration and HR	10	11
Outreach and carer support	126	131
	141	146

10 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures, fittings & equipment £
Cost	
At 1 April 2022	141,668
Additions	53,484
Disposals	-
At 31 March 2023	195,152
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2022	75,559
Charge for the year	46,120
Eliminated on disposal	-
At 31 March 2023	121,679
Net book value	
At 31 March 2023	73,473
At 31 March 2022	66,109

11 Investments

	2023 £	*2022* £
Market value		
At 1 April 2022	1,491,000	1,223,394
Additions	310,810	336,967
Sales proceeds	(285,328)	(113,589)
Net losses on investments	(123,268)	44,228
At 31 March 2023	1,393,214	1,491,000

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and EFT's) and holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's). There are no direct foreign investments.

12 Debtors

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade debtors	252,247	514,820
Prepayments and accrued income	22,858	19,387
	275,105	534,207

13 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2023 £	2022 £
Trade creditors	73,808	83,265
Taxation and social security	216,293	198,365
Deferred income	115,931	120,511
Other creditors	14,238	13,796
Accruals	118,506	115,236
	538,776	531,173

Deferred income:		
Incoming resources deferred in the previous period	120,511	43,888
Released to the Statement of Financial Activities	(120,511)	(38,005)
Incoming resources deferred in the current period:		
Grants and contract income	115,931	114,628
	115,931	120,511

14 Movement on funds

	At 1 April 2022 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Transfers/(losses)* £	*At 31 March 2023* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,762,499	3,880,633	(4,130,691)	(123,268)	1,389,173
	1,762,499	3,880,633	(4,130,691)	(123,268)	1,389,173
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	21,594	133,500	(127,606)	-	27,488
Medway carers support	122,803	(20,839)	(23,161)	-	78,803
Carers Trust	400	-	-	-	400
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	5,168	28,364	(25,872)	-	7,660
Young Londoners	7,235	38,065	(45,300)	-	-
Other donations and grants	111,640	434,224	(388,641)	-	157,223
Health and Wellbeing	28,468	64,583	(41,319)	-	51,732
Mercers	385	20,399	(20,784)	-	-
Making Carers Count	22,233	54,295	(32,082)	-	44,446
Southend on Sea	13,283	33,823	(10,663)	-	36,443
Children in Need	-	27,575	(27,198)	-	377
	333,209	813,989	(742,626)	-	404,572
Total funds	2,095,708	4,694,622	(4,873,317)	(123,268)	1,793,745

Restricted funds have been received for the following purposes:

NHS Carers and Crisis Service
To provide support to carers in crisis in Swale and Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley for a 2 week period to prevent hospital admission and support hospital discharge.

Medway Carers Support
The Medway Carers support/wellbeing funding is to make payments to carers to enable them to maintain their caring role and to prevent carer breakdown. The amount paid per carer is based on assessment.

14 Movement on funds (*continued*)

Carers Trust
This includes grants to provide workshops, support and activities for young adult carers.

Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young adult carers to transition from children's services into adulthood and supporting them into further education and employment.

Young Londoners
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young carers and young adult carers to fulfil their potential through a range of activities such as support sessions, training and other social activities.

Donations
Various donations and legacies received throughout the year to provide specific activities and/or support to carers.

Grants
Various grants to enable the provision of additional activities for carers that are not funded within core contracts and grants awarded to individual carers to enable them to take a holiday or purchase something for the home to assist them in their caring role.

Health and Wellbeing
To employ care coordinators to work within PCN's across Medway to offer support and health checks to carers.

Mercers
Funding to enable the recruitment/training and supervision of volunteers to engage with older carers to combat loneliness.

Making Carers Count
The Making Carers Count grants improves access to support for carers from the Turkish and Kurdish community by working closely with Turkish and Kurdish organisations with in the boroughs of Hackney and Haringey. Carers First provide activities, group meetings, 1:1 support, information advice and guidance in Turkish and Kurdish language to identify hidden and hard to reach carers.

Southend on Sea
Funds to provide carers break including support to enable carers to attend medical appointments.

Children in Need
This funding is to provide support to young carers in Medway.

14 Movement on funds (*continued*)

Comparative figures

	At 1 April 2021 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Transfers/ Gains* £	*At 31 March 2022* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,664,207	3,798,619	(3,744,551)	44,224	1,762,499
	1,664,207	3,798,619	(3,744,551)	44,224	1,762,499
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	24,483	133,500	(136,389)	-	21,594
Children in Need	-	70,662	(70,662)	-	-
Medway carers support	128,308	35,000	(40,505)	-	122,803
Carers Trust	400	-	-	-	400
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	-	19,379	(14,211)	-	5,168
Young Londoners	-	35,979	(28,744)	-	7,235
Other donations and grants	109,659	301,282	(299,301)	-	111,640
Health and Wellbeing	-	74,209	(45,741)	-	28,468
Mercers	7,310	43,764	(50,689)	-	385
Making Carers Count	-	25,164	(2,931)	-	22,233
Southend on Sea	-	26,177	(12,894)	-	13,283
	270,160	765,116	(702,067)	-	333,209
Total funds	1,934,367	4,563,735	(4,446,618)	44,224	2,095,708

15 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds £	*Restricted funds* £	*Total funds* £
Fund balances at 31 March 2023 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	73,473	-	73,473
Investments	1,393,214	-	1,393,214
Net current assets	(77,514)	404,572	327,058
	1,389,173	404,572	1,793,745

Comparative figures

Fund balances at 31 March 2022 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	66,109	-	66,109
Investments	1,491,000	-	1,491,000
Net current assets	205,390	333,209	538,599
	1,762,499	333,209	2,095,708

16 Financial commitments

At 31 March 2023 the charity was committed to future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2023 £	*2022* £
Land and buildings		
Due not later than one year	12,906	36,181
Later than one year not later than five years	-	12,388
Other		
Due not later than one year	174	198
Later than one year not later than five years	-	-
	13,080	48,767

17 Related party transactions

The Board of Trustees and the six (2022: six) members of the Senior Leadership Team are considered to be the charity's key management personnel. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer's national insurance and employer's pension contributions) received by key management personnel during the year was £280,474 (2022: £266,428).

There was no Trustees' remuneration nor other benefits during the current or prior period.

Expenses totalling £114 were reimbursed to one trustee in relation to activity costs (2022: £74).

Offices:

Central Office:
Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Strood, Kent ME2 4TG

Lincolnshire Office:
2nd Floor, 28 Market Place, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LR

Essex Office:
Unit 4 Ground Floor, Freeport Office Village, Century Drive, Braintree, Essex CM77 8YG

London Office:
Waltham Forest Resource Hub, 1 Russell Road, Leyton, London E10 7ES

Carers First

carersfirst.org.uk

0300 303 1555

Registered office: Unit 4 Michael Gill Bldg, 28 Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG

Carers First is a charity registered in England and Wales, registered number 1080430.

Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales Company number 4148826.

CARERS FIRST

England & Wales - Charity number 1085430

Accounts

Carers First

Annual Report 2021-22

Carers First

Company Information

REGISTERED CHARITY 1085430
COMPANY NUMBER 04144820

Registered Office
Michael Gill Building
Tolgate Lane
Rochester
Kent
ME2 4TG

Bankers
Lloyds Bank Plc
82 Mount Pleasant Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN1 1RP

Auditors
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Chartered Accountants
North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent
TN9 1BE

Carers First

INDEX TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Pages

Trustees' report	3-24
Independent Auditors' report	25-28
Statement of Financial Activities	29
Balance Sheet	30
Statement of cash flows	31
Notes to the financial statements	32-45

Report of the Trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2022

The Directors, who are also the Trustees of the charitable company, present their Annual Report with the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2022. This Trustees' report, prepared in accordance with Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006, is also the Trustees' report as required by Part 8 of the Charities Act 2011.

The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) in preparing this annual report and financial statements.

Structure, Governance and Management

Status

Carers First is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity (No. 1085430) and was incorporated on 19 January 2001.

The Charity's governing document is its Articles of Association, which have been approved by the Charity Commission and its affairs are administered by its Trustees.

Trustees

The Trustees who held office during the year and since are as follows:

Mr Peter Davis (Chair)
Mrs Ruth Rankine (Vice-Chair)
Mr Sukwinder Bassi
Ms Shirley Briggs (resigned 22 October 2021)
Mr Paul Fennell
Ms Georgina Hoare
Mr Antony Hall (resigned 16 May 2022)
Mr Peter Jenkins
Mr Craig Pashler
Mr Marcus Shaw
Mr Julian Sinclair
Mrs Vicki Wells
Dr Marie Wheatley (resigned 13 April 2022)
Mr William Swan (resigned 26 April 2021)

The Trustees are elected, or re-elected, by rotation by the Companies Act Members of Carers First at the Annual General Meeting.

Chair's Introduction

This year, Carers First has significantly increased our reach and impact for carers. Despite operating in a pandemic, the charity has flourished supporting more carers than previously and making a material difference in their lives. We have reached 119,000 carers, 32% higher than the year before. 90% of carers tell us we have helped to improve their lives.

New Strategy (2021-24)

It is now estimated that two in three of us will become a carer in our lifetime. This makes the need for information, timely support and practical help for carers more critical than ever. As a result, we recognise we need to substantially increase the number of carers we reach and have set ourselves an ambitious target of reaching 250,000 carers by 2024.

Underpinning our strategy to increase our reach is the use of digital channels, starting with the launch of our new website in September 2021. Designed in co-production with carers, the new website has customised journeys according to caring situations and extensive, nationally relevant, help and advice content and interactive self-help tools.

The website is the first phase in the wider development of our new service offer for different carer groups. We have not seen a similar offer available elsewhere in the carer support sector and believe it will help position Carers First as an organisation that shapes its services alongside carers to meet their evolving needs.

A Royal occasion

2021 marked 30 years since Carers First was first started by a group of carers in Kent. We were delighted to be joined by HRH The Princess Royal for a celebration event in Lincolnshire alongside carers, volunteers, staff, Trustees and partners. It was a wonderful occasion and I was delighted to see local media coverage of the event. This is important in raising the profile of Carers First which, in turn, helps us to reach more carers.

Board and management

We have a Board of Trustees with a strong mix of skills and experience including finance, law, communications, business, health and social care.

The Board meet quarterly supported by our three Committees (Finance; People and Safeguarding; Quality, Performance and Business Development). In total, there are 15 governance meetings a year.

As Chair, I lead an internal annual governance review and we have an independent external review every three years, the next of which is in 2022. We are working towards using the Charity Governance code to measure our effectiveness.

Our role as a Board is to drive the activities of the charity through the Senior Leadership Team (SLT), led by the Chief Executive, Alison Taylor. We have a strong commitment to co-production with carers. We have Carer Forums in each locality we work in, and these report into SLT. There are Trustees who are linked to each of the Carer Forums and we take the opportunity to meet with carers wherever possible.

Equality, diversity and inclusion (EDI)

We are committed to offering services that are personalised, inclusive and creative. To do this, we need a diverse staff team and volunteers who can respond to individual carers needs. We want to reach out to all sections of the community and provide a working environment in which everyone feels supported, respected, valued and able to contribute.

We have reviewed and updated our EDI policy and EDI training. As a Board, we receive regular reports on the diversity of our staff and the carers we support. We consider equality and diversity issues across all we do as a charity and take positive action to address any inequality of access.

Outlook

There is no doubt that the year ahead is going to continue to be challenging for carers, especially with the cost of living crisis. It is vital we continue to recognise and reach carers at the earliest opportunity and provide information and support that makes a difference in their lives.

In the year ahead, we will increase the total number of carers we reach online and in the community. We will develop our service offer and programmes of support to provide tailored, high-quality and consistent support to carers. We will continue to build operational and strategic collaborations with key partners and stakeholders to help reach and support more carers.

Thank you

I would like to thank all our supporters and partners who have made our success over the last year possible. I would also like to recognise the dedication of our Senior Leadership Team, staff and volunteers who work tirelessly to support carers. We couldn't do it without you. Thank you.

Peter Davis
Chair of Trustees

Objectives and Activities

The charity's Objects are to relieve the needs of carers and persons who are sick, infirm, disabled or who have social care needs in particular, but not exclusively, by the provision of information, advice and support and by the provision of respite care.

In accordance with Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011, the Trustees have had due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit when reviewing the charity's objectives and planning future activities.

Our Mission and Ambition

Ambition: To enable carers to thrive in their role and achieve the balance in their lives they wish to achieve.

Mission: Carers First provides support, for carers, with carers – so they can live their lives to the fullest.

What we do

We understand that life as a carer can be challenging. Getting the support and help you need shouldn't be.

Any of our lives could be turned upside down due to the ill-health, frailty or disability of a family member or friend. In fact, two in three of us can expect to become a carer in our lifetime.

There are currently 7 million unpaid carers in the UK[1], and that number is on the rise. Their huge contribution saves our economy £132 billion each year[2] - the cost of a second NHS. Each carer's needs and situation are as unique as they are, but many face similar challenges. They can struggle to balance employment, finances, or their own wellbeing and time for themselves with their caring role. They may not be aware of the help and support available to them - and that's why we're here.

Carers First works directly with, and for, thousands of carers, providing personalised information and tailored support in the way that suits them: online, on the phone or face-to-face in their local community.

[1] Carers Trust, 2022
[2] Valuing Carers 2015 – the rising cost of Carer Support, Yeadle, Buckner and Carers UK (2015)

Achievements and Performance

We developed our strategy in an inclusive way informed by extensive consultation with carers, staff, Trustees and key stakeholders. The strategy sets out five Strategic Objectives with outcomes, targets and measures.

Strategic Objective 1: Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity

2021-22 key targets:	What we achieved:
25% increase in total number of carers reached. Baseline 90,000 carers	119,000 carers reached, a 32% increase on the previous year
25% increase in number of carers registered. Target: 40,000	39,012 carers registered, a 23% increase
25% increase in users accessing information and resources on the website	188% increase in the number of people accessing information and support on the website to March 2022 By July 2022, this had jumped to an 866% increase

A key challenge we face is that many people do not identify or recognise themselves as a carer but rather as a daughter, son, mother, father, partner or friend, helping someone close to them. Moreover, many carers can struggle without support for several years before seeking help and seem to slip invisibly between services without accessing or being offered support for themselves.

Improve our communications capability and capacity

We put in place a new communications team to enhance our digital and communications capacity and capability and support with reaching more carers, including through campaigns.

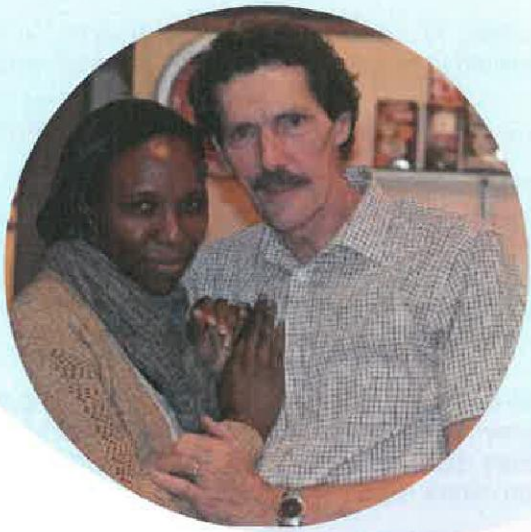
We also successfully launched our refreshed brand, applying it across all our communications. Being consistent across all our communications helps us build trust with carers, partner organisations, funders and key stakeholders, so we can reach and support more carers.

Deliver public focused communications campaigns – in co-design with carers

In November 2021, we launched a charity-wide awareness-raising campaign with the aim of reaching 'hidden' carers. Co-produced with carers, our 'We Care For You' campaign included the creation of a handy pocket guide. The campaign was promoted widely in the community, in local newspapers and digital screens as well as on social media where our content was seen 1.3 million times.

"I didn't know I was entitled to any support as a carer, or that there are people looking out for carers' health, safety, and wellbeing. I used to think that being labelled a 'carer' would increase the pressure on me. But I have been encouraged and gained confidence in myself. The support from Carers First has been a real blessing for my family."

Jacqueline, 47, cares for her husband Nicholas who has ulcerative colitis



In February 2022, we launched a campaign in Southend-on-Sea to reach those supporting someone leaving hospital. We co-produced with carers a pocket guide, online and in print, to assist carers through the discharge process. This includes an easy-to-understand flow chart and information to help the carer think about what they need to know in advance and how to prepare. The guide is being promoted in Southend Hospital, through community health services, voluntary partners and GP surgeries. It has also been promoted by Carers Trust to other Network Partners as good practice.

"I didn't know what to do with Brian's hospital stay and a lack of support - and contact - with staff meant I was struggling to find help when I needed it most. The 1-to-1 support I received from Carers First was fantastic, I was able to get in touch with local support networks, really helping me during a daunting time."

Barbara, 77, reached out for support using Carers First's pocket guide after her husband Brian was admitted to hospital for his hip replacement surgery in December 2021

Develop a new website, as a key vehicle for delivering information and support for carers

In September 2021, we launched our new website. Designed in co-production with carers, the new website has customised journeys according to caring situations and nationally relevant information. There are over 80 help and advice topics covering everything from looking after yourself, grants and discounts for carers to handling legal matters. The website also has a range of self-help tools including calculators for benefits and care costs.

The website is helping us reach more working age and male carers. Recent data shows that we reach a higher proportion of users (15% more) aged between 18-45 via the website than compared to the age of carers registered with us. Similarly, the proportion of male carers reached via the website is 12% higher than carers registered with us.

Strategic Objective 2: Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in their lives

2021/22 key targets:	What we achieved:
95% of carers who would recommend Carers First to other carers	94% of carers would recommend Carers First to other carers
95% of carers who feel they were listened to and that their own needs were taken into account	92% of carers feel they were listened to and that their own needs were taken into account
90% of carers who feel more confident and informed in their caring role following support from Carers First	89% of carers feel more confident and informed in their caring role following support from Carers First
90% of carers who feel more resilient in their caring role	89% of carers feel more resilient in their caring role
92% of carers who feel there has been an improvement in their lives as a result of the support they received from Carers First	90% of carers feel there has been an improvement in their lives as a result of the support they received from Carers First

Results based on responses from 574 carers

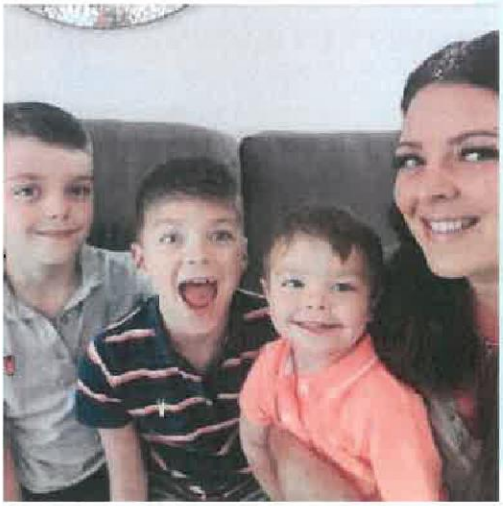
Personalised support for carers

Our helpline often acts as the first point of contact for carers who, depending on their needs, are then triaged to our local community teams. Our helpline team will guide carers through our wellbeing summary to understand their needs and make them aware of support that is available to them.

Carers with more complex needs are referred to our local community teams who will create a tailored plan with the carer using the Carers Star tool. Our community teams supported 12,773 carers in 2021-22.

This plan could include support with anything from looking after yourself, taking breaks, connecting with other carers, getting financial support, help with everyday tasks, planning ahead, legal matters and managing in work or education. The plan is reviewed with the carer after 12 weeks. In some cases, we will refer carers to partner agencies or for support from health and social care.

Lisa is a single parent and cares for her twin sons, Joshua and Jaidan, aged nine who have been diagnosed with learning difficulties. Her caring role is incredibly demanding physically and emotionally, as Lisa supports the additional needs of her sons. Lisa has received information to support her including parenting/autism courses, financial support and help to take a break.



"My Carer Support Adviser calls me or visits to check in on how I'm coping. It's just great to have someone around who totally understands what I'm going through and supports me, even if it's just for a quick chat over the phone. It means I don't have to deal with everything alone, and she can even help talk through decisions like which schools the boys will go to."

Develop information and resources tailored for different groups of carers for use online, by the helpline and our community teams

We held in-depth workshops with over 110 carers across the different caring situations to help shape the development of our service offer and new Programmes of Support. This includes carers of someone with D*ementia, Mental Health, Learning Disability or Autism, Physical Disability, Sensory Conditions, Dependency, those who are Frail or Elderly and End of Life.*

Carers told us they want us to understand them and the challenges they face as a carer specific to their caring situation. They want high quality information, tools and resources to support them at each stage of the carer journey. This includes at diagnosis, when things change, the move to significant care and end of life.

We created a Theory of Change (a visual diagram showing how our work will create change for carers in the short, medium and long-term) for each service offer, mapped to an organisational Theory of Change, and put in place an implementation plan. This includes creating new information materials and resources together with training for staff which is tested with carers and experts.

Develop new online and community-based programmes in co-production with carers

Carers have accessed our peer support and activity groups ranging from dance classes, book clubs and wellbeing groups to workshops. We have also developed new workshops to support carers wellbeing.

Caring Confidently is a four-week online workshop course, developed with and for carers, and covers topics ranging from the essentials of caring, looking after yourself, managing financially and spotting signs of deterioration in the person you care for.

We launched a new virtual wellbeing programme aimed at helping carers manage stress, build resilience and increase self-care. This made use of techniques such as Neuro-Linguistic Processing (NLP), Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) Tapping and Breathworks.

Our Facebook Community doubled in size this year. The thriving Community provides the opportunity for carers to share stories, ask questions and receive peer support. An example of the group's value is shown in this quote from a carer. "I find this group helpful as somewhere to let off steam, no judgments, lots of understanding and care for what each other are facing."

Maximise carers income

The cost of living started to bite for carers as the year progressed with money worries rising to the top of carer concerns. We continued to support carers to maximise their income and helped secure £887,764.38 in benefit entitlements.

We secured over £100,000 in grants for carers to support with bills as well as pay for larger household expenses that most would otherwise be unable to afford, for example, replacing washing machines and beds.

We increased the opportunities for carers to take a break, through new partnerships. We offered 'Moments for Me' grants for carers through a partnership with Anglian Water. We partnered with Carefree, a new charity turning vacant hotel accommodations into breaks for carers.

Pat, 69, cares for her son, Matt, 45, who has physical and mental disabilities. Her caring role is very physical which has caused her back problems. She hadn't had a break for several years. Pat used the 'Moments for Me' grant for a two-night break to London with her husband.

Pat says:

"This trip has been on my bucket list but we wouldn't have been able to do it without the grant. It was such a lovely break after such a hard couple of years. It was something just for us. I didn't have to do anything for anyone and went to sleep without an alarm. We went to the Theatre and had afternoon tea at the Oxo Tower (a gift from our daughter)."

Supporting young carers

We have contracts and grants to provide support for young carers and young adult carers in Medway and Newham. This included one to one support, attending school and professional meetings, online peer support groups and financial help, e.g. securing grants for school uniforms or laptops.

In summer 2021, we were able to run our activity programme again after the easing of restrictions. 153 young carers aged 5 to 25 years old took part in activities ranging from trips to the zoo, theatre, Laser Tag and trampoline park.

Reaching 'hard to reach' carers

We have a range of projects aimed at traditionally 'harder to reach' carers including men, carers from ethnic minority communities and members of the LGBQT+ community. We secured funding from the Carers Trust 'Making Carers Count' programme for a project aimed at reaching Turkish and Kurdish carers in Hackney and Haringey. As part of this project, we developed a new partnership with Dey-mer, an organisation supporting Turkish and Kurdish people in Hackney including drop-ins at its community centre. We have increased the number of carers registered from ethnically diverse communities by 10% in the last year.

Men Do is a co-produced programme bringing male carers aged 50+ together in a range of activities. This year, we launched monthly Banter Breakfasts in East Lincolnshire thanks to the support of the Masonic Charitable Foundation. These events are helping to tackle loneliness and isolation in older male carers.

Strategic Objective 3: Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations

2021/22 key targets:	What we achieved:
Collaborations with key targeted organisations	Range of new partnerships in place
Raise the profile of Carers First work	New Communications team in place. Improved and pro-active communications

Collaborations with key organisations

Partnerships are key to helping us reach more carers and increase the support available to carers. We have developed partnerships with a range of organisations.

Our volunteering partnership with Legal and General went from strength to strength this year as we introduced strategic volunteering opportunities including mentoring our managers. We also received strategic volunteering support from Asda around digital and data to improve insight and identify gaps and opportunities to develop our services.

We were delighted to receive the support of Lincolnshire Co-op for our 'We Care for You' campaign. During December, posters and copies of our handy pocket guide could be found in Lincolnshire Co-op's 49 pharmacies.

We were proud to win the public vote to be one of the Lincoln City F.C. Charity of the Year partners. We look forward to the opportunities the partnership presents to raise the profile of carers and raise funds.

We continued to develop our partnership with Anglian Water and have reached 150,000 of their customers to date with the support available from Anglian Water and Carers First. This involved offering the 'Moments for Me' grants to carers.

We were selected to participate in the pilot Money Helpers programme from the Money and Pension Service. This gave the opportunity to develop our staff in giving money guidance via a City&Guilds endorsed e-learning programme. We had the distinction of being the only carers organisation in the England pilot programme.

One in seven people are working carers. We work with private and public sector organisations to raise awareness of caring and support their employees who are caring. We have had a longstanding relationship with the Kent Police Enable Group which has grown to over 350 members in the last four years. We attend meetings to promote the support available and provide speakers on different topics.

We were pleased to be asked to author the Equalities Review of support for carers by Haringey Council. We will be working with the Council and partners to implement the report recommendations to help improve reach into communities and remove barriers to engaging carers.

Our teams were able to return to hospitals and GP surgeries during the year. Research by Macmillan Cancer Support shows 70% of carers come into contact with health professionals however only 7% of carers are identified by GPs. In Medway, we worked with local GP surgeries to increase the number of carers registered. Registrations increased by 240% in one surgery alone.

Raise the profile of the impact of the charity's work

We were delighted to be a finalist in the Care Charity of the Year category in the Kent Charity Awards. We also received recognition in the Healthwatch Medway Awards.

The visit by HRH the Princess Royal in December 2021 presented a wonderful opportunity to increase our profile and help us reach more carers. The visit received coverage on the Lincolnite, which has over 100k likes on its Facebook page as well as articles on Yahoo and Good Housekeeping. A tweet about the Royal visit on the Royal Family page received 1.8k likes.

Strategic Objective 4: Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team

2021-22 key targets:	What we achieved:
Staff who feel engaged in their work – "I am motivated to go the extra mile"	82% (none disagreed)
Staff programme of learning and development opportunities in place	Full programme of learning and development opportunities for managers, staff and volunteers
Secure Investing in Volunteers accreditation	Investing in Volunteers accreditation awarded in January 2022

Engaged staff team and positive work culture

We completed an Annual Staff Survey to better understand levels of staff engagement and motivation. Following the Survey, we put in place an action plan to help us continue to listen to, and address, any issues raised by staff. We want to ensure Carers First is a great place to work and staff feel supported, valued and able to flourish.

We have colleagues trained as Mental Health First Aiders and actively promote our Employee Assistance Programme. We introduced a new Pay and Grading Framework during the year to make sure our salaries and benefits are fair and competitive.

Learning and development opportunities

40 Carers First Managers and Team Leads have participated in our bespoke Management Programme covering a range of tools, techniques and resources such as understanding themselves as a manager, project planning and creating high performing teams.

Eight of our Managers were paired with a mentor as part of our skilled volunteering partnership with Legal & General. One Manager fed back: 'It has made me more confident in my abilities. It was good to reflect on work I was putting in place and I am now in a really good place to move forward."

We have an online Learning Management System where staff, volunteers and Trustees can stay up to date with training. This includes mandatory courses such as Safeguarding, Health and Safety and the Carers Star to optional skill enhancement courses like Thriving in Change, Time Management and Coaching and Mentoring. Many of our team also completed training opportunities from external providers.

We are committed to looking after our teams' wellbeing. We were proud to receive the highest level of accreditation as part of the Working Well for the Healthy Employer and Workplace which is supported by Essex County Council. We also received a Healthy Workplace Silver Award in Medway, advancing from the Bronze Award the previous year.

Grow our number of volunteers and volunteer roles

We welcomed new volunteers this year taking our total to 166, 30% more than last year. We are very grateful to our volunteers who gave 7,619 hours and supported over 1,000 carers. The value of volunteers' contribution to the charity was over £100,000.

Volunteers bring a different set of skills and experience that add a lot of value to our service. Many of our volunteers have been carers themselves, have cared for someone previously, or know someone in their family who's been a carer. This often gives them an empathy that connects with carers.

We have a range of volunteer roles including telephone befrienders, online support and support groups and events.

We have worked with several universities and colleges and have welcomed placement students who are completing health and social care courses.

Zoe is a university student studying health and social care as well as a carer for her daughter who has profound learning disabilities. She recently completed a two week placement which included volunteering as a moderator on the Carers First Online Community which has doubled in size in the last six months. Zoe plans to continue volunteering with Carers First.

"My placement showed me how important the work of Carers First is. The Online Community allows other carers to share stories, enquire for support, and have general friendships. These groups were influential to myself as I realised there is a large community of carers that need peer support as well as statutory support."

Strategic Objective 5: Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations

2021-22 key targets:	What we achieved:
Secure re-tenders or extensions of existing contracts	Extensions secured on four contracts and won a new contract
Achieve fundraising target for first year of new Income Generation Plan	Exceeded target
Maintain quality accreditation	Successfully secured re-accreditation for all quality awards including ISO 9001

Maintain existing statutory contracts and attract new contracts, where financially viable

We successfully secured extensions to our contracts in Lincolnshire, Medway, Newham and Hackney as well as winning a new contract to deliver the Carer Support service in Southend-on-Sea.

In August 2022, we were re-awarded the contract to deliver the Carer Support Service in Lincolnshire.

Grow our income and diversify our funding base

We exceeded the first-year target of our new three-year Income Generation Plan which sets out our ambition to quadruple our voluntary income and diversify our funding base. For every £1 we spent on fundraising, we raised £5.33.

We continued to develop new income streams. For example, we secured new corporate partnerships and our Christmas appeal raised four times more than the previous year.

Quality accreditation maintained

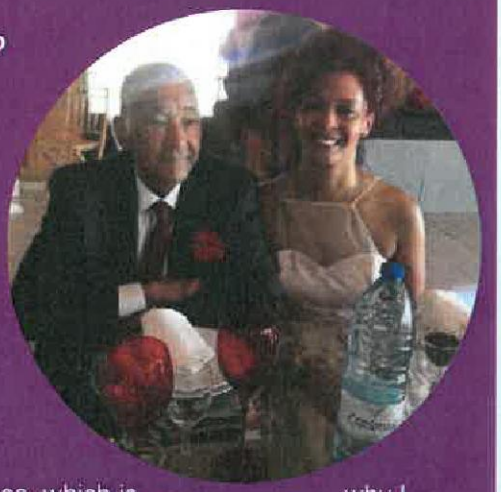
We received re-accreditation for ISO 9001, an internationally recognised quality management system. This is important in ensuring we have the processes and people to deliver effective services. It also assures funders and stakeholders that we have a system of quality assurance in place. We also secured Cyber Essentials Plus which demonstrates our rigour in protecting the sensitive data we hold and the security of our systems.

Strengthen the efficiency of our operations

We commissioned a new HR system, made improvements in reporting our impact and reduced our office costs.

Becoming a carer overnight: Sheila' story

"I was working in a care home at the time but I had to stop working to concentrate on my father's recovery. My life completely changed; in fact, I stopped having a life. I had a child to look after and my father's illness was life changing.



"When my father Francisco suffered his strokes it was the start of a very difficult time for both of us," said Sheila, who is now 45. "At the time I was a single parent working in residential care and looking after my teenage son Ruben. After his stroke my father had aphasia which meant he had very poor communication skills and he stopped talking. It was a very hard time for all of us.

"I was hoping and praying that he could recover from the strokes, which is why I dedicated myself 100% to him, and thank God today he's much more independent. He has improved and he's regained his power of speech."

Despite this improvement Sheila says her father still needs a lot of help and support. "He lives in sheltered accommodation in Leytonstone and I visit him almost every day," she says. "I take care of all his finances, I do his shopping, cook his meals, make appointments - basically I do everything for him.

"The biggest challenge is to try to improve his health," she added. "Healthwise he's not that well; it's a big, big challenge. He still has a heart condition and he's monitored every week by the hospital. We still have a lot to do."

Looking back, things began to change and improve for Sheila when she contacted Carers First.

"Carers First saved my life to be honest," she said. "When I contacted them, I was so desperate and I didn't know I could get help.

It took me a long time to ask for help but when I did, I found Renee, from Carers First, who supported me. I'm so appreciative of this person – she supported me with everything, even money issues; I'd stopped working so there was no money coming in, but Renee told me about the various benefits I could claim. They also helped me a lot emotionally, and they still do."

With support from Carers First, Sheila has started working again; she has received a care package from the Council including Care Workers to help her look after Francisco, and she's even started volunteering for Carers First herself, making sure other unpaid carers get the advice and support they need.

Lessons learnt

Digital and adapting post COVID-19

Over the past year our team have learned to adapt to life post COVID-19.

The pandemic transformed our model of support from primarily face-to-face to digital. While this was difficult for many carers who missed the face-to-face contact, it presented new opportunities to reach other carers who struggled to leave the person they care for.

We continue to develop our digital support alongside face-to-face and telephone in a blended service offer which meets the needs of all carers. Successful examples of this include Caring Confidently and our new Wellbeing programmes with one-off sessions on Breathworks and Emotional Freedom Technique (EFT) tapping.

Our team have also increased their use of social media and WhatsApp to communicate with carers this year. Our Facebook Online Community has doubled in membership in the last year. Young carers have told us WhatsApp is their preferred form of communication.

We have learnt that adaption must be continuous, trying new online learning events and activities, being creative and thinking 'outside of the box' to effectively engage carers.

We need to ensure we have a balanced approach; digital engagement cannot completely replace face-to-face services or there will be groups of carers who would be excluded. Our project with the Turkish and Kurdish community is an example of how we are reaching out to communities who are not able to engage digitally.

Financial concerns have continued to be a challenge for carers post pandemic, in addition to mental health and wellbeing challenges. We need to find new ways to support carers financially and have been working closer with local Councils to support the delivery and access of the household funds grant.

Programmes of Support

Through our strategy development it became clear that we needed to create a more consistent experience for carers and further professionalise our support and expertise. This is to make sure that every carer receives a consistent level of high-quality support.

Through multiple workshops, we have gained rich insight on the challenges carers and our staff face which has helped define our new service offer and Programmes of Support.

We aim for every carer to have a clear understanding of the different Programmes of Support available from Carers First and the best possible support tailored for them, based on their caring situation - in person and online.

We aim for all Carers First staff working directly with carers to have a consistent understanding of different caring situations, the support they need and how to provide it. We will make sure our staff have high quality information, tools and resources to use to support carers; and training to use these.

Impact

It is essential that we understand the difference we are aiming to make for carers and how we can demonstrate this. To support this, we have worked with our staff to shape an overarching Theory of Change for Carers First setting out the short, medium and long-term outcomes and changes we are looking to see.

We have created a new framework for measuring and demonstrating the impact of the work of Carers First. This includes the impact on carers, staff and volunteers, and the impact across the wider care and support systems in which Carers First operates. The framework is supported by an action plan that builds on the data and evidence already collected by the organisation and which will provide Carers First with more consistent and robust evidence of the difference it makes, and for whom.

Partnerships

Engaging with our key stakeholders and partners has continued to grow stronger since the introduction of virtual meetings. Our teams have been able to join and attend more meetings which has led to stronger relationships and collaborations which have continued post pandemic.

The ease of access to join online meetings has enabled projects to be scoped and delivered within shorter time frames. It has allowed us to engage experts onto projects where previously this may have been difficult. These projects have helped us develop stronger relationships with Commissioners and key stakeholders in the locality.

Plans for the future

In April 2022, we entered the second year of our three-year strategy which sets out our ambition to help 250,000 carers by 2024. It commits us to the five strategic objectives which we have outlined above. These are broken down into outcomes and targets over the next three years. These objectives inform our annual Operational Plan.

The difference we want to see by 2023 -

1. Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity

- 40% increase in total number of carers reached
- 40% increase in visitors accessing information and resources on the website
- Increase the proportion of carers supported early in their caring journey
- 15% increase in carers receiving 1:1 or group support
- Increase in reach and impact of communication activities

2. Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in their lives

- Develop our service offer and Programmes of Support for different groups of carers, in co-production with carers
- Implement new Impact Framework for evaluating outcomes and impact of our support for carers
- 90% of carers maintain or improve their Carers Star score
- 92% of carers report an improvement in their lives as a result of Carers First support
- 90% of carers feel more resilient in their caring role

3. Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations

- Forging strong and productive relationships with the local Integrated Care Systems (ICS)
- Build operational and strategic collaborations to help reach and support more carers

4. Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team

- Increase the number of staff who feel there is a positive, inclusive and supportive work culture
- Increase the number of staff who feel proud to work for Carers First
- Increase the number of volunteers
- Increase the number of volunteers who feel supported and valued in their roles

5. Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations

- Successfully retender for four existing contracts
- Continue to grow and diversify income from non-statutory sources. Target £619k
- Introduce a new HR system
- Further develop our data reporting and insight
- Work towards the Charity Governance Code

Financial review

The charity's incoming resources for the year ended 31 March 2022 totalled £4,563,735 (2021 - £4,285,129). Resources expended totalled £4,446,618 (2021 - £4,132,221) and net gain on investments was £44,224 (2021 - £222,390). The net surplus came to £161,341 (2021 - £375,298).

During the year, the Trustees reviewed the reserves of the charitable company and established a revised policy under which the Charity's reserves are determined and monitored. The policy is risk based and assesses the financial risks on an ongoing basis and monetises the possible impact within a reserve range between £1.4m and £1.9m. The Trustees consider this level of reserves as sufficient to cover our operational commitments in event of any changes e.g. loss of a significant contract. The level of reserves also allows for investments to develop and enhance our services for carers.

At 31 March 2022 the unrestricted fund balance was £1,762,499 (2021 - £1,664,207) and the restricted balance was £333,209 (2021 - £270,160) which are in line with the reserves policy.

Carers First has continued to demonstrate year-on-year growth of its activities and the numbers of carers it supports. The Trustees are committed to invest in future opportunities as necessary.

Investments

Carers First investments are held as a reserve against any future shortfall in income against expenditure. They seek to maintain and, if possible, enhance, the real value of the funds represented by its investments in line with the business plan. We seek to meet these objectives by maintaining an appropriate balance between maximising long-term returns and avoiding undue risk and volatility in capital values.

Our Investment of Financial Assets policy sets out that our financial assets should be invested in line with our aims and charitable objectives. The Trustees do not wish to adopt an exclusionary policy. However, individual investments may be excluded if perceived to conflict with the charitable purpose of the organisation.

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and EFT's) and holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's). There are no direct foreign investments. In May 2022, we instructed our broker to increase our Environmental, Social and Governance (ESG) holdings in our investments from 6.4% to between 20% and 25%.

Risk Management

Effective risk management is at the heart of our strategy and protecting the future sustainability of Carers First. We are fully committed to ensuring risks are appropriately managed. An organisation-wide risk management approach is in place to identify key strategic and operational risks, ensuring they are managed effectively through clear accountability and escalation when needed.

Risks are assessed to determine their severity, verify effective management, and take action to mitigate where necessary. This is reviewed by Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team on an ongoing basis.

Key risks faced by Carers First and how we are managing them

A key risk is loss of income. Carers First is aware of potential Local Authority cuts to funding and the risk of not securing re-tendered contracts. To mitigate these risks, we are working closely with commissioners to ensure we are delivering impactful services to carers and that we can evidence this.

We have also taken steps to diversify our income and ensure the continuance and sustainable growth of our work.

Health and safety continues to be a priority for Carers First, especially in light of the COVID-19 pandemic. We have taken appropriate measures and put in place robust risk assessments to ensure we are protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of the staff team and the carers we work with.

Information security is high on the risk agenda for all organisations. The importance of defending our IT systems from malicious attack, and protecting the personal data we hold from unauthorised access and misuse, is recognised by Carers First. Security measures are in place to protect unauthorised access to IT systems and to carry out ongoing tests for potential vulnerabilities in the IT network. Policies and procedures are also in place to protect data within the working environment, supported by mandatory data protection training for all staff, Trustees and volunteers.

AUDITORS

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution proposing that Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited be reappointed as auditors of the charitable company will be put to the Annual General Meeting.

STATEMENT OF TRUSTEES' RESPONSIBILITIES

The Trustees are responsible for preparing financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Trustees (who are also the directors of Carers First for the purposes of company law) to prepare financial statements for each fiscal year. Under that law the Trustees have elected to prepare financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law), including the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those financial statements they have:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business;
- stated whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records which disclose, with reasonable accuracy, at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

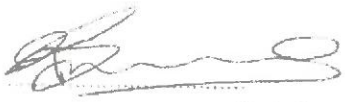
The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

STATEMENT OF DISCLOSURE TO AUDITORS

So far as the Trustees are aware, there is no relevant audit information which has not been disclosed to the company's auditors. They have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as Trustees in order to make themselves aware of any matters which would be relevant for audit purposes, and to ensure that such information has been communicated to the company's auditors.

SMALL COMPANY EXEMPTIONS

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006. Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



.....
P Davis
Chair of Trustees

INDEPENDENT AUDITORS' REPORT TO THE TRUSTEES

FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Carers First (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2022 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2022 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

- the information given in the trustees' report, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
- the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustee were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined below, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applying to the charity, and the procedures that management adopt to ensure compliance, including those relating to the Charities SORP FRS 102. Disclosure checklist has been performed to ensure compliance with applicable laws and regulations.

The charity is subject to other regulations including employment law, health and safety and General data protection regulation (GDPR). Those identified do not have a direct effect on the amounts or disclosure within the financial statements, however non-compliance would result in penalties or impact on the charity's operations. We designed and performed audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with laws and regulations, including:

- Assigning an engagement team familiar with charities.
- Enquiry of the Board of Trustees.
- Review of meeting minutes and correspondence.
- Review of legal expenses.
- Confirming DBS checks were in place for staff members.
- Review of the completeness and accuracy of disclosures made in the financial statements.

We assessed the susceptibility of the charity's financial statement to material misstatement, including considering how fraud might occur. This was performed by:

- Reviewing the charity's systems and controls by performing walkthrough tests to assess for strong controls and segregation of duties.
- Obtaining the Board of Trustee's assessment of fraud risk.
- Considering the ways fraud could be committed, including through fraudulent financial reporting to attract new grant funders or whether management have incentives to manipulate results.
- Reviewing the application of accounting policies and estimates for any signs of management bias.
- Identifying key risks as revenue recognition, cut off, cost allocations and management override of controls.
- Reviewing performance material journals for any signs of management bias or override of controls.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and, the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

Lindyer Francis Ferguson Ltd

Jonathan Healey BA FCA
Senior Statutory Auditor
For and on behalf of:
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Statutory Auditors
Chartered Accountants

North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

Date: 12 October 2022

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	Note	*2022 Unrestricted funds* £	*2022 Restricted funds* £	*2022 Total funds* £	*2021 Total funds* £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	2	169,330	570,439	739,769	582,902
Charitable activities	3	3,597,145	194,677	3,791,822	3,664,997
Investments		32,144	-	32,144	37,230
Total income		3,798,619	765,116	4,563,735	4,285,129
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		73,947	-	73,947	71,891
Charitable activities	4	3,670,604	702,067	4,372,671	4,060,330
Total expenditure		3,744,551	702,067	4,446,618	4,132,221
Net gains on investments		44,224	-	44,224	222,390
Net income and net movement in funds	7	98,292	63,049	161,341	375,298
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		1,664,207	270,160	1,934,367	1,559,069
Total funds carried forward	13	1,762,499	333,209	2,095,708	1,934,367

Carers First

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2022

	Note	2022 £	2022 £	2021 £	2021 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	9		66,109		62,654
Investments	10		1,491,000		1,223,394
			1,557,109		1,286,048
Current assets					
Debtors	11	534,207		272,523	
Cash at bank and in hand		535,565		938,121	
		1,069,772		1,210,644	
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	12	(531,173)		(562,325)	
Net current assets			538,599		648,319
Total net assets			2,095,708		1,934,367
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds	13		1,762,499		1,664,207
Restricted income funds	13		333,209		270,160
			2,095,708		1,934,367

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on ..... and were signed on its **behalf by:**

.....
P Davis
Chair of Trustees

.....
P Fennell
Chair of Finance Committee

Company number: 04144820

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

	Note	2022 £	2022 £	2021 £	2021 £
Cash flows from operating activities:					
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities	A		(173,080)		239,851
Cash flows from investing activities:					
Interest and dividends received		32,144		37,230	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(38,242)		(62,151)	
Purchases of investments		(336,967)		(351,593)	
Sales of investments		113,589		321,963	
Net cash used in investing activities			(229,476)		(54,551)
Change in cash and cash equivalents			(402,556)		185,300
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			938,121		752,821
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			535,565		938,121
A. Reconciliation of net income to net cash flow from operating activities					
Net income for the year *As per the Statement of Financial Activities*			161,341		375,298
Adjustments for:					
Depreciation charges		34,787		43,687	
Net (gains)/losses on investments		(44,228)		(264,985)	
Interest and dividends receivable		(32,144)		(37,230)	
(Increase)/decrease in debtors		(261,684)		(22,545)	
Increase/(decrease) in creditors		(31,152)		145,626	
			(334,421)		(135,447)
Net cash (used in)/provided by operating activities			(173,080)		239,851

1 Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

1.1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Carers First meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound.

1.2 Income

Income from donations and grants is recognised when the charity is entitled to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably. For donations, this is usually on receipt. For grants, this is usually when a formal offer is made in writing, unless the grant contains terms and conditions outside of the charity's control which must be met before the charity is entitled to the funds. Where grants are received in response to a proposal including a budgeted timescale, such that the timescale for the expenditure is implicit in the grant agreement, the income is recognised in accordance with that timescale.

Income from contracted services, and services to users, is recognised when the services are provided. Income from such sources received in advance of the service provision is accounted for as deferred income.

Investment income is recognised when receivable.

1 Accounting policies (continued)

1.3 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised when a present legal or constructive obligation exists at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation, and the amount can be estimated reliably.

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises the direct costs incurred by the charity in delivering its charitable objectives. Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly relate to the charitable activities. These costs have been allocated to the charitable activity. Staff costs are allocated to direct costs or support costs on the basis of staff time.

1.4 Pensions

The charity makes contributions to the personal pension schemes of its employees. The pension cost in the financial statements represents the contributions payable by the charity during the year.

1.5 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.

1.6 Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for the particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

1.7 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less estimated realisable value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment	- Between 20% and 33% straight line

Assets costing less than £500 are written off in the year they are acquired.

1 **Accounting policies (continued)**

1.8 Investments

Listed investments are stated at market value. Gains and losses arising on the revaluation of investments are taken to the Statement of Financial Activities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity only has financial instruments which are classified as basic financial instruments.

Short-term debtors and creditors are measured at the settlement value. Any losses from impairment are recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.10 Status

Carers First is a charitable company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. In the event of the company being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is Unit 4, Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG.

2 Income from donations and legacies

	2022	*2021*
	£	£
Grants	701,370	525,844
Donations	38,399	57,058
	739,769	582,902

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £489,741.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

3 Income from charitable activities

	2022 £	2021 £
Activity: Carers services		
Medway Council	330,959	327,908
Medway PCN	134,085	82,989
Lincolnshire County Council	1,454,902	1,431,052
Waltham Forest Borough Council	198,000	182,111
Hackney Borough Council	192,013	192,013
Haringey Borough Council	104,319	87,299
Newham Borough Council	208,620	209,211
Essex County Council	900,000	901,451
NHS Kent & Medway CCG	196,897	250,963
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	72,027	-
	3,791,822	3,664,997

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £170,000.

4 Expenditure on charitable activities

		2022 £	2021 £
Activity: Carers services			
Direct costs	**Note 5**	3,673,176	3,485,270
Support costs	**Note 6**	699,495	575,060
		4,372,671	4,060,330

Expenditure for restricted funds in the comparative period was £647,158.

5 Direct costs of charitable activities

	2022 £	2021 £
Staff costs	2,947,942	2,914,030
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	10,923	19,703
Project costs	612,229	448,255
Grants paid to individuals	102,082	103,282
	3,673,176	3,485,270

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

6 Support costs

	2022 £	2021 £
Staff costs	231,049	193,114
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	25,134	23,246
Rent and service charges	51,473	58,489
Other premises expenses	24,275	23,446
Insurance	15,382	12,583
Office and IT costs	257,904	151,923
Legal and professional fees	30,401	26,980
Audit fees	9,090	12,075
Payroll processing fees	6,702	6,313
Trustee expenses, meetings, recruitment and training	778	9,958
Bad debts	-	658
Bank charges	524	309
Professional membership fees	11,996	12,279
Depreciation	34,787	43,687
	699,495	575,060

7 Net income/(expenditure)

	2022 £	2021 £
Net income is stated after charging:		
Audit fees	9,090	12,075
Depreciation	34,787	43,687
Net gains on investments	44,224	222,390
Rent paid under operating leases	51,473	58,489

The audit fee charged in the year was £9,450 (2021: £9,150).

8 Staff costs

	2022 £	*2021* £
Gross salaries	2,935,213	2,890,491
Employer's National Insurance contributions	215,801	204,766
Pension and healthcare costs	82,197	77,367
	3,233,211	3,172,624

One member of staff received employment benefits (excluding employer pension contributions) in excess of £60,000 during the year (2021: 1). During the year 173 employees and former employees received employer contributions to their personal pension schemes (2021: 155).

The average number of employees during the year on a headcount basis was as follows:

	2022 No.	*2021* No.
Management	4	4
Administration and HR	11	20
Outreach and carer support	131	121
	146	145

9 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures, fittings & equipment £
Cost	
At 1 April 2021	175,476
Additions	38,242
Disposals	(72,050)
At 31 March 2022	141,668
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2021	112,822
Charge for the year	34,787
Eliminated on disposal	(72,050)
At 31 March 2022	75,559
Net book value	
At 31 March 2022	66,109
At 31 March 2021	62,654

10 Investments

	2022 £	*2021* £
Market value		
At 1 April 2021	1,223,394	928,779
Additions	336,967	351,593
Sales proceeds	(113,589)	(321,963)
Net gains on investments	44,228	264,985
At 31 March 2022	1,491,000	1,223,394

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and EFT's) and holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's). There are no direct foreign investments.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

11 Debtors

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade debtors	514,820	252,539
Prepayments and accrued income	19,387	19,984
	534,207	272,523

12 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2022 £	2021 £
Trade creditors	83,265	61,079
Taxation and social security	198,365	209,128
Deferred income	120,511	43,888
Other creditors	13,796	13,169
Accruals	115,236	235,061
	531,173	562,325

Deferred income:

Incoming resources deferred in the previous period	43,888	36,361
Released to the Statement of Financial Activities	(38,005)	(30,477)
Incoming resources deferred in the current period:		
Grants and contract income	114,628	38,004
	120,511	43,888

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

13 Movement on funds

	At 1 April 2021 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Transfers/ Gains and (losses)* £	*At 31 March 2022* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,664,207	3,798,619	(3,744,551)	44,224	1,762,499
	1,664,207	3,798,619	(3,744,551)	44,224	1,762,499
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	24,483	133,500	(136,389)	-	21,594
Children in Need	-	70,662	(70,662)	-	-
Medway carers support	128,308	35,000	(40,505)	-	122,803
Carers Trust	400	-	-	-	400
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	-	19,379	(14,211)	-	5,168
Young Londoners	-	35,979	(28,744)	-	7,235
Other donations and grants	109,659	301,282	(299,301)	-	111,640
Health and Wellbeing	-	74,209	(45,741)	-	28,468
Mercers	7,310	43,764	(50,689)	-	385
Making Carers Count	-	25,164	(2,931)	-	22,233
Southend on Sea	-	26,177	(12,894)	-	13,283
	270,160	765,116	(702,067)	-	333,209
Total funds	1,934,367	4,563,735	(4,446,618)	44,224	2,095,708

13 Movement on funds *continued*

Restricted funds have been received for the following purposes:

NHS Carers and Crisis Service
To provide support to carers in crisis in Swale and Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley for a 2 week period to prevent hospital admission and support hospital discharge.

Children in Need
This funding is to provide one to one support and recreational activities for young carers.

Medway Carers Support
The Medway Carers support/wellbeing funding is to make payments to carers to enable them to maintain their caring role and to prevent carer breakdown. The amount paid per carer is based on assessment.

Carers Trust
This includes grants to provide workshops, support and activities for young adult carers.

Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young adult carers to transition from children's services into adulthood and supporting them into further education and employment.

Young Londoners
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young carers and young adult carers to fulfil their potential through a range of activities such as support sessions, training and other social activities.

Donations
Various donations and legacies received throughout the year to provide specific activities and/or support to carers.

Grants
Various grants to enable the provision of additional activities for carers that are not funded within core contracts and grants awarded to individual carers to enable them to take a holiday or purchase something for the home to assist them in their caring role.

13 Movement on funds *continued*

Health and Wellbeing
To employ care coordinators to work within PCN's across Medway to offer support and health checks to carers.

Mercers
Funding to enable the recruitment/training and supervision of volunteers to engage with older carers to combat loneliness.

Making Carers Count
The Making Carers Count grants improves access to support for carers from the Turkish and Kurdish community by working closely with Turkish and Kurdish organisations with in the boroughs of Hackney and Haringey. Carers First provide activities, group meetings, 1:1 support, information advice and guidance in Turkish and Kurdish language to identify hidden and hard to reach carers.

Southend on Sea
Funds to provide carers break including support to enable carers to attend medical appointments.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2022

Comparative figures

	At 1 April 2020 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Transfers/ Gains* £	*At 31 March 2021* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,301,492	3,625,388	(3,485,063)	222,390	1,664,207
	1,301,492	3,625,388	(3,485,063)	222,390	1,664,207
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	45,359	135,000	(155,876)	-	24,483
Children in Need	-	52,698	(52,698)	-	-
Medway carers support	126,798	35,000	(33,490)	-	128,308
Carers Trust	400	-	-	-	400
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	-	22,035	(22,035)	-	-
Young Londoners	-	15,676	(15,676)	-	-
Other donations and grants	85,020	250,273	(225,634)	-	109,659
Health and Wellbeing	-	74,060	(74,060)	-	-
Mercers	-	74,999	(67,689)	-	7,310
	257,577	659,741	(647,158)	-	270,160
Total funds	1,559,069	4,285,129	(4,132,221)	222,390	1,934,367

14 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds £	*Restricted funds* £	*Total funds* £
Fund balances at 31 March 2022 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	66,109	-	66,109
Investments	1,491,000	-	1,491,000
Net current assets	205,390	333,209	538,599
	1,762,499	333,209	2,095,708

Comparative figures

Fund balances at 31 March 2021 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	62,654	-	62,654
Investments	1,223,394	-	1,223,394
Net current assets	378,159	270,160	648,319
	1,664,207	270,160	1,934,367

15 Financial commitments

At 31 March 2022 the charity was committed to future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2022 £	*2021* £
Land and buildings		
Due not later than one year	36,181	34,181
Later than one year not later than five years	12,388	18,468
Other		
Due not later than one year	198	629
Later than one year not later than five years	-	-
	48,767	53,278

16 Related party transactions

The Board of Trustees and the six (2021: six) members of the Senior Leadership Team are considered to be the charity's key management personnel. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer's national insurance and employer's pension contributions) received by key management personnel during the year was £266,428 (2021: £243,080).

There was no Trustees' remuneration nor other benefits during the current or prior period.

Expenses totalling £74 were reimbursed to one trustee in relation to travel costs (2021: None).

Offices:

Central Office:
Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Strood, Kent ME2 4TG

Lincolnshire Office:
2nd Floor, 28 Market Place, Grantham, Lincolnshire NG31 6LR

Essex Office:
Unit 4 Ground Floor, Freeport Office Village, Century Drive, Braintree, Essex CM77 8YG

London Office:
Waltham Forest Resource Hub, 1 Russell Road, Leyton, London E10 7ES

Carers First

carersfirst.org.uk

0300 303 1555

Registered office: Unit 4 Michael Gill Building Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent. ME2 4TG

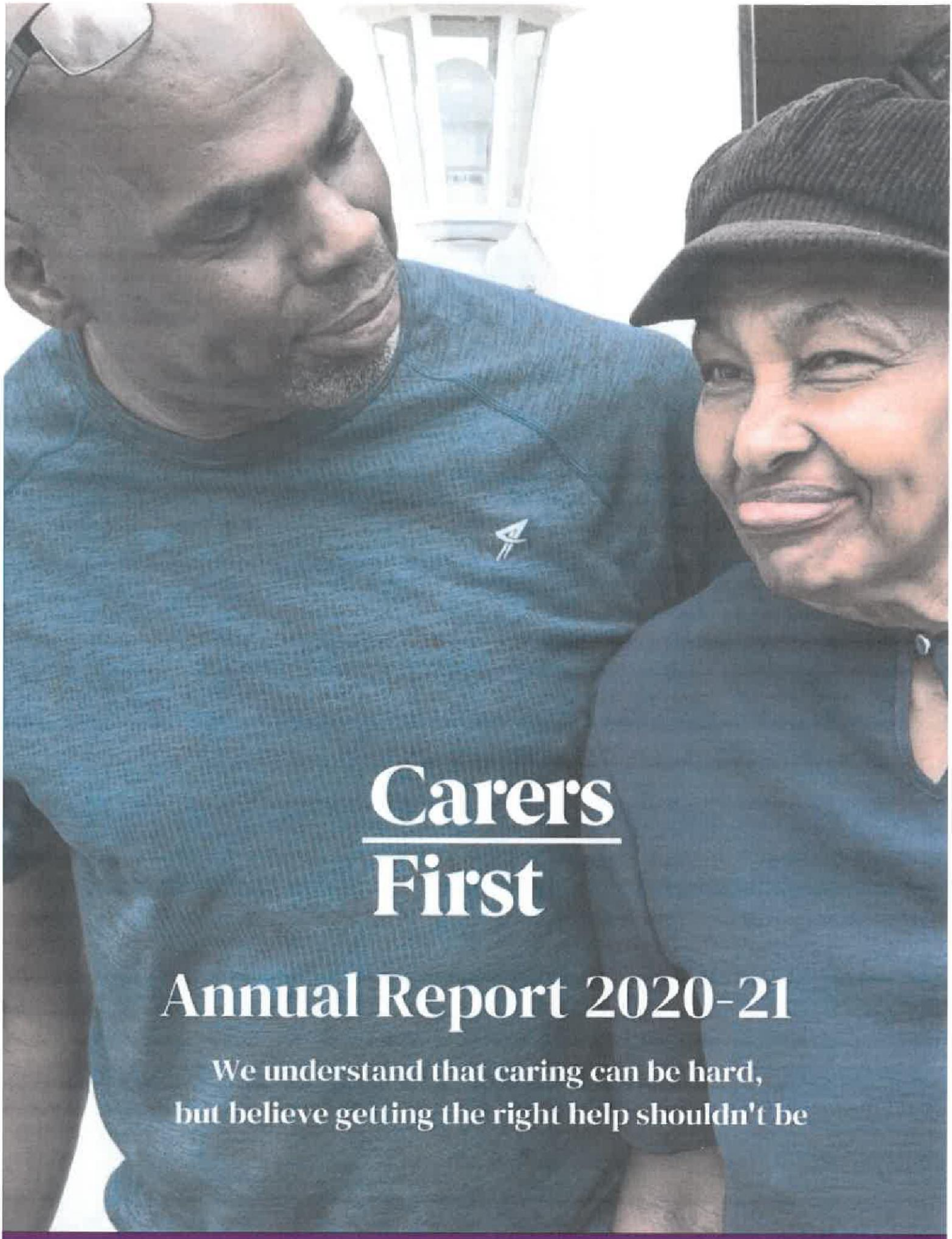
Carers First is a charity registered in England and Wales, registered number 1085430.

Company limited by guarantee. Registered in England and Wales Company number 4144820.

CARERS FIRST

England & Wales - Charity number 1085430

Accounts



Carers First

Annual Report 2020-21

We understand that caring can be hard, but believe getting the right help shouldn't be

Carers First

Company Information

REGISTERED CHARITY 1085430
COMPANY NUMBER 04144820

Directors and Trustees

Mr Peter Davis (Chair)
Mrs Ruth Rankine (vice-Chair)
Mr Sukwinder Bassi
Ms Shirley Briggs
Mr William Daniels (resigned 20.11.20)
Mr Paul Fennell
Ms Georgina Hoare (appointed 11.11.20)
Mr Antony Hall (appointed 11.11.20)
Mrs Susan Ilott (resigned 20.11.20)
Mr Peter Jenkins (appointed 06.04.20)
Mr Ron Martin (resigned 10.09.20)
Mr Craig Pashler (appointed 4.12.20)
Mr John Purdie (resigned 20.11.20)
Mr Marcus Shaw (appointed 02.04.20)
Mr Julian Sinclair (appointed 11.11.20)
Mr William Swan (resigned 26.4.21)
Mrs Vicki Wells (appointed 11.11.20)
Dr Marie Wheatley

Chief Executive

Mrs Alison Taylor

Secretary

Mrs Alison Taylor

Registered Office

Michael Gill Building
Tolgate Lane
Strood
Kent
ME2 4TG

Bankers

Lloyds Bank Plc
82, Mount Pleasant Road
Tunbridge Wells
Kent
TN1 1RP

Auditors

Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Chartered Accountants
North House, 198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent
TN9 1BE

Carers First

INDEX TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

Pages

Trustees' report	5-23
Independent Auditors' report	24-27
Statement of Financial Activities	28
Balance Sheet	29
Statement of cash flows	30
Notes to the financial statements	31-43

Carers First

The Directors, who are also the Trustees of the charitable company, present their Annual Report with the Financial Statements for the year ended 31 March 2021. This Trustees' report, prepared in accordance with Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006, is also the Trustees' report as required by Part 8 of the Charities Act 2011.

The Trustees have adopted the provisions of the Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) (effective 1 January 2019) in preparing this annual report and financial statements.

Structure, Governance and Management

Status

Carers First is a company limited by guarantee and a registered charity (No. 1085430) and was incorporated on 19 January 2001.

The Charity's governing document is its Articles of Association, which have been approved by the Charity Commission and its affairs are administered by its Trustees.

Trustees

The Trustees who held office during the year and since are as follows:

Mr Peter Davis (Chair)
Mrs Ruth Rankine (vice-Chair)
Mr Sukwinder Bassi
Ms Shirley Briggs
Mr William Daniels (resigned 20.11.20)
Mr Paul Fennell
Ms Georgina Hoare (appointed 11.11.20)
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Mr William Swan (resigned 26.4.21)
Mrs Vicki Wells (appointed 11.11.20)
Dr Marie Wheatley

The Trustees are elected, or re-elected, by rotation by the Companies Act members of Carers First at the Annual General Meeting.

Introduction

Each year the Trustees review the skills and experience of those on the Board so that skill gaps can be identified, and appropriate candidates can be recruited. A maximum of 20 Trustees can be elected to the Board. One third of the Trustees retire from office at each Annual General Meeting. A retiring Trustee is eligible for re-election, and there is no upper age limit imposed on Trustees. The Board have appointed a Chair and Vice Chair. We have also appointed Chairs and Vice Chairs of three Committees (Finance, People and Safeguarding and Quality, Performance and Business.)

An induction programme is provided to all Trustees and includes key information relating to the charity's governance and operations. The Chair holds an annual one-to-one review discussion with each Trustee, and this includes the consideration of any potential development opportunities which would support the Trustee.

Following a comprehensive Governance Review in 2019, which resulted in several recommendations taken forward to enhance and strengthen the charity's governance arrangements, in 2020 the Board committed to an annual governance review led by the Chair and an independent review every three years. The Board is currently working towards measuring itself against the Charity Governance Code.

The Board of Trustees meets quarterly supported by Committees which meet regularly and report to the Trustee Board.

The Board controls the activities of the charity through the Senior Leadership Team, led by the Chief Executive, Mrs Alison Taylor.

The Trustees are responsible for setting the policies of the charity and developing its strategic direction; and the Board has instigated a user involvement strategy to ensure the views of carers and their families are integral to how the charity operates both strategically and operationally.

Objectives and Activities

Objects

The charity's objects are to relieve the needs of carers and persons who are sick, infirm, disabled or who have social care needs in particular, but not exclusively, by the provision of information, advice and support and by the provision of respite care.

In accordance with Section 17 of the Charities Act 2011, the Trustees have had due regard to the guidance published by the Charity Commission on public benefit when reviewing the charity's objectives and planning future activities.

How we achieved our aims and objectives

Any of our lives can be turned upside down because of ill health, disability or frailty of a member of our family or a close friend. At Carers First we understand that caring can be hard but believe getting the help you need shouldn't be. We work directly with and for, unpaid carers to provide personalised information and a range of tailored support – making it easier for those caring for someone else to continue living their lives to the fullest.

Carers First works across Lincolnshire, Medway, Essex, Newham, Haringey, Hackney and Waltham Forest. With a diverse mix of services, challenges and opportunities we are in the privileged position of being able to share nuanced learning across a wide range of service areas.

We strive to be the trusted provider of high quality, tailored, localised support; helping carers feel empowered, respected and valued for what they do. Carers First works with carers and external partners, such as our commissioning councils, to deliver strategic, integrated services to support carers across local communities. We ensure accessibility through our proven outreach model, taking into consideration carers living in rural or dispersed communities, unable to attend traditional carer centres.

2020-21 represented a significant year for Carers First with a new Chair of Trustees, new Chief Executive and with work beginning on a new three-year strategy. Our focus was on avoiding disruption to services and supporting carers at such an uncertain and anxious time. In March/April 2020, we responded swiftly to the first lockdown, transitioning face-to-face support to digital online platforms and telephone support. Throughout the year, we were able to successfully increase engagement with carers and make a positive, material difference in their lives.

It is important to recognise that the pandemic has presented unprecedented challenges and affected so many people in profound ways. The Trustees would like to thank Carers First staff and volunteers for the way they have so often selflessly responded to meet the needs of carers who have been so impacted by the pandemic.

It is down to these individuals that we have achieved so much that we present in this report. Thank you.

Key developments during the year

In September 2020, we won a new three-year contract to deliver the Carers Support Service in Waltham Forest following a competitive bidding process. This was a validation of what we had achieved in the last three years for carers in Waltham Forest.

We also won extensions to our contracts in Lincolnshire (until May 2022) and Haringey (until March 2022) which helped our team to fully focus on supporting carers at such an uncertain time.

Back in March 2020, none of us could have predicted the impact the Covid-19 pandemic would still be having in our lives. Our extensive community based, face to face services were moved to online and phone delivery models without interruption.

The pandemic presented the opportunity to accelerate the development and adoption of new digital services. We increased proactive telephone support, particularly for those unable or unwilling to engage digitally. We were able to reduce costs and invest more in supporting carers. We also accessed additional grant funding to support carers whose lives were made so much harder by the pandemic.

We have been limited in some areas of support for carers, particularly around helping them access breaks, with so many services either shut down or reduced. We increased our offering to provide additional proactive wellbeing calls to the most vulnerable carers and making sure they had the practical, financial and emotional support they needed.

Our mission and ambition

During the year, we developed a new three-year strategy which builds upon our successful past and enables us to reach and support significantly more carers, deliver new services and programmes in co-design with carers, forge new collaborations to increase our impact and to grow and diversify the funding base of the charity. We also set a new mission and ambition.

Mission: Carers First provides support, for carers, with carers – so they can live their lives to the fullest.

Ambition: To enable carers to thrive in their role and achieve the balance in their lives they wish to achieve.

Achievements and performance

Objective 1:

Increase the number of new carers we reach

Over 33,000 carers have registered with us with around half of these actively engaged with carer activities or one-to-one support each year.

A key challenge is helping people to recognise themselves as carers (with many seeing themselves as a daughter, son, mother, partner or friend helping someone close to them) and seek help as early as possible. It takes an average of two years for people to recognise themselves as a carer with many taking much longer.

We have seen time and again the benefits to carers getting support earlier in their caring journey. For example, when Denise's son, Jamal, had a nervous breakdown, she was referred to Carers First and joined one of our peer support groups. She says "accessing support for myself early helped me manage better in my caring role. My friends from the group were a lifeline and a great comfort to me as I went through such difficult times with Jamal."

Carer, Denise

The pandemic presented both challenges and opportunities in reaching new carers. For example, we lost our presence in healthcare and community settings while we found more carers seeking out support online.

We recognised the need to increase Carers First's profile and raise awareness of the support available to carers and appointed a new Director of Income and Communications in September with the remit to create a new Communications team. We ran campaigns to coincide with national awareness days including Carers Week (June), Carers Rights Day (November) and Young Carers Action Day (February). These campaigns helped us increase our website visits by over a third.

We formed new partnerships to help us reach more carers. We ran joint campaigns with Anglian Water promoting Carers First and the Anglian Water Priority Service Register which reached over 124,000 people. As part of our new partnership with Legal & General, we presented to their staff on Carers Rights Day in November as part of the launch of their Carer Concierge service.

Increase the numbers of carers participating in our services and activities

Carers First has had a successful community-based outreach model for over eight years rather than operating from traditional Carer Centres. Working this way helped us adapt swiftly to the pandemic with no interruption of services to carers.

Digital accessibility for carers during the pandemic was crucial, the pandemic meant that our service offer had to be provided digitally. To enable Carers First to achieve this, digital training was developed and delivered to carers, volunteers, and staff teams. Grants were secured to purchase equipment for carers, laptops and tablets with training and support. A digital champion programme was developed involving volunteers, further supporting carers to get online and access support.

Offering online groups and activities has helped us reach more carers, including outside the normal working day. We have seen a 22% increase in carers engaged with our services.

Digital has helped us reach carers who are traditionally harder to reach including male carers, carers in rural areas and carers who find it difficult to leave the person they care for to attend a physical meeting. We have also been able to offer groups and activities to carers wherever they live, increasing the choice of activities and peer support.

"I think I've made about 20 new friends online since lockdown. We share tips and advice. We all have a pretty good idea about what we all do, and we support each other."

Peter, 73, cares for his wife Olive who has dementia.

Peter and Olive

Carers receiving ongoing wellbeing support from Carers First increased significantly compared to last year. This was particularly important for carers unable or unwilling to engage digitally. We carried out over 8,000 wellbeing calls to carers in the first six months of the pandemic. These calls often resulted in further support being put in place e.g. emotional support and practical help. We have since put in place the volunteer Check-in and Chat service to continue these proactive calls to carers.

Social media played an important part, particularly during the lockdowns, in keeping in touch with carers and encouraging them to join activities. We saw an 122% increase in social media followers over the year.

Objective 2

Assess carers needs and provide personalised support to enable carers to live their lives to the fullest

Our helpline acts as the first point of contact for carers who, depending on their needs, are then triaged to our local community teams. Our helpline team will guide carers through our wellbeing summary to understand their needs and make them aware of support that is available to them. 41% of carers confirm at this point that they have what they need and are willing and able to continue caring.

59% of carers will have more complex needs and are triaged to our local community teams, who will create a tailored plan with the carer using the Carers Star tool. This may include support with managing work, taking a break, getting financial support or peer support. The plan will be reviewed with the carer every 12 weeks. In some cases, we will refer carers to partner agencies for a statutory carers assessment or longer-term intervention from health and social care.

Carers have experienced multiple challenges during the pandemic which we have been tackling. These include:

- Help with finances. We helped carers secure £4 million in benefits. We were also able to award over £100,000 in individual grants to our carers thanks to our partnerships including Carers Trust. These grants helped provide carers with essential items like beds and washing machines.
- Supporting carers wellbeing and mental health in an environment of heightened stress and anxiety. Alongside emotional support from our staff and volunteers, and with thanks to many local businesses, we provided over 1,000 wellbeing parcels to carers. We also scaled up our volunteer Telephone Befriending Service to offer more support to carers who may be feeling isolated or need someone to talk to about their caring role.
- Informal advocacy such as help for carers to access supermarkets at key worker times.
- We worked with local Councils to provide advice and help to carers to understand Government guidance around lockdown restrictions and vaccination programmes, access to food and supplies and access to Personal Protective Equipment (PPE).
- Supporting those from ethnically diverse communities to access services. 62% of carers we work with in London are from ethnically diverse communities. 76% of carers responding to our annual survey (August 2020) said we had helped them navigate health and social care services and/or advocacy support.
- Supporting those digitally excluded. We offered grants for digital equipment, training and support to help carers get online. We increased our telephone support to those who were unable or unwilling to access online support.

"Life is so much better now. I use the Carers Allowance to buy better food which I can cook with my new cooker (from a grant secured by Carers First). I feel so glad that I can take better care of my husband."

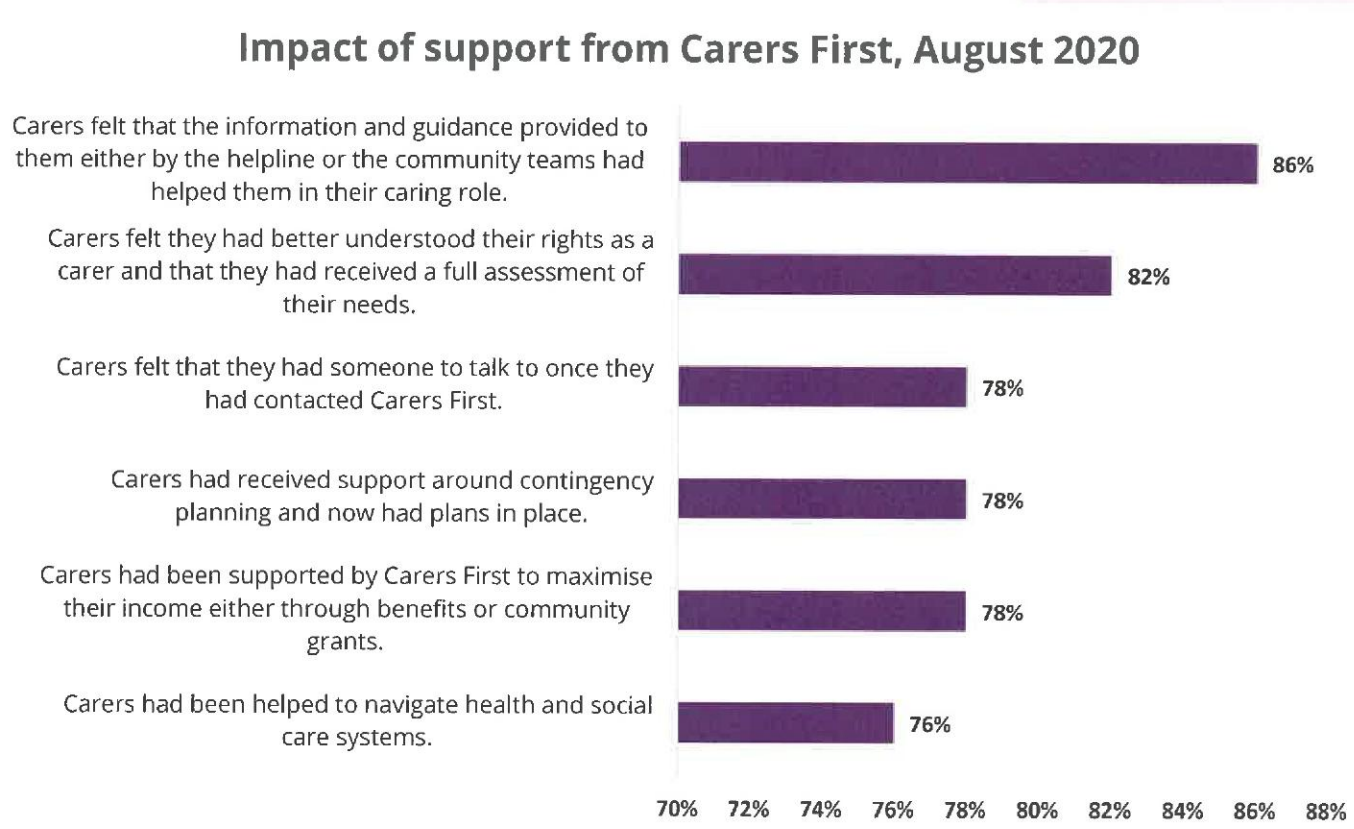
Rose cares for her husband Karl who has terminal cancer

We have contracts and grants to provide support for young adult carers in Medway and Newham and supported 250 young people this year. This included one to one support, attending school and professional meetings, online peer support groups and financial help, e.g. securing grants for school uniforms or laptops. Pre pandemic, we provided events and activities for young and young adult carers such as cinema, meals out and days out. During the pandemic, we have been running virtual chat groups and private WhatsApp groups.

"Carers First have helped me a lot. I can chat with other young carers confidently. You helped me get a new school uniform and an art grant so I can do art as a hobby. You have also helped me with food and to get out of the house when I was struggling."

Crystal, 13, cares for her mum Charlene who has multiple conditions.

Carers First's survey was conducted in August 2020. Over 1,000 carers from across all seven service areas took part in the survey and provided feedback on how Carers First had supported them.



Carers First

Objective 3:

Review key areas of our work with carers to improve the effectiveness, efficiencies and impact of our services

We engaged in extensive consultation to inform our new three-year strategy including engaging with over 1,150 adult and young carers, interviewing 25 key stakeholders and consulting with 124 staff. We also completed an Environmental/Literature Review and conducted a Market Analysis.

Our new strategy commits us to developing programmes of support that are co-designed with carers, to make sure support is inclusive and accessible to all carers in different communities. We will focus on the needs of different groups of carers at each stage of their journey and recognise the complexity and uniqueness of each caring role.

We developed new digital programmes to enhance the material difference we make including a pilot Carers First Winter Mindset, Reset programme. The four-week course directly benefited carers personal wellbeing alongside the person(s) they look after. Carers left sessions with a positive outlook and techniques to deal with tough situations instead of becoming stressed, overwhelmed, or anxious. 73% of participants said they were better equipped after the four-week programme to move forwards with winter and their caring role.

"It has had a big impact on my mental health and how I treat myself. I look for the positive in everything now and I'm much more resilient to the challenges that come with caring. I'd recommend the course to anyone in a caring role."

Leane cares for her daughter Isla, 7, who is autistic

We developed new peer-led support groups and WhatsApp groups that have been co-produced by carers and volunteers and are led by the Peer Support volunteer. These include groups around cooking, art, poetry, photography and Moving On groups for former carers.

Carer, Leane

Review and develop our Carers Forums to create empowered communities of carers to help shape our work, to provide insight to share with commissioners and to inform the national carers' policy agenda through our partnership with Carers Trust.

Co-production with carers is at the heart of our work and carers played a key role through our Project Strategy group, our Carer Forums, as well as in workshops and surveys, to shape our new three-year strategy.

Carer Forums were reviewed in 2020 to give them a renewed focus. The Forums are facilitated by Carers First team members and provide carers with the opportunity to have a voice and be heard, to influence the planning of their local carer service and to shape the organisation.

Carer Forums are now held quarterly across all seven service areas. We increased the number of Forums held by 33% in the past year as well as nearly doubling the number of carers taking part.

We supported carers to participate in the development of Council Carer Support Strategies in several of our service areas. Several of our young carers took part in the Carers Trust steering group to develop the Young Carers Action Day campaign in February.

Carers First were stakeholders to the NICE consultation to develop the Supporting adult carers - quality standard which was published in March 2021. We supported carers and staff to put forward their views into consultation.

"After giving up my job to look after Toby, I've sometimes thought "who am I now?" Being part of something, giving my input and perspective, has given me back my identity. I have found my voice again and feel listened to. Carers First has made me feel valued and recognised for what I do".

Carla cares for her son Toby who is autistic. She was a member of our Strategy Project Group

Objective 4

Develop Carers First managers' and staff Learning & Development Programmes

Carers told us in our annual survey how important it was to them having someone to talk to who they could trust, and who could provide empathy and emotional support. We are proud to consistently receive positive feedback from carers on their experience with our staff teams.

"She was the most caring, supportive and understanding person I have had the pleasure to meet. She had such a unique understanding and had great empathy in me as a person. Thank you to this very kind, loving person."

"Everyone I have spoken with and in contact with have been excellent in dealing with any question asked. Professional, polite, helpful, respectful, patient, caring, communicating effectively (clear and precise) and organised."

Feedback from carers from our annual survey, August 2020

It is essential that Carers First equip our managers and staff teams so that they can continue to deliver this exceptional support. With this in mind, we introduced a new learning management training platform (LMS) in April 2020. The platform is available to all employees and volunteers and offers a wide range of courses covering mandatory topics and development programmes.

We are committed to developing a vibrant, inclusive and supportive place to work and volunteer, and our managers are key to bringing this to life. To support them with this, 30 Carers First managers participated in a bespoke Management Programme covering a range of tools, techniques and resources such as understanding themselves as a manager, project planning and managing performance.

Refine our volunteer offer, increasing the number of volunteers and the roles they undertake to support the charity's work.

Our thriving community of volunteers help us support more carers than we otherwise could. In the past year, more volunteers have joined us, in more roles, to enrich the support we can offer.

We have seen a 61% increase in the number of volunteers in the past year supporting carers with 127 people now active as Carers First volunteers. These volunteers have supported over 1,000 carers which is an amazing 800% increase on 2019-20.

We have developed new volunteering partnerships to reach more carers including with Legal & General and Lincoln University. We estimate Legal & General colleagues gifted 1,050 hours from May 2020- May 2021. This is the equivalent value of £22,050.

Volunteers have helped us scale up vital services in response to the pandemic including tripling the number of carers who receive a call from our Telephone Befriending service. For some carers, this is the only conversation they will have that's about them. Carers have said that their befriender "listens and we have a good chat" and they "always feel better after talking."

It is important to us that volunteers feel supported and valued in their roles. We are delighted that a survey of our volunteers revealed 80% feel valued in their role and 81% feel supported in their role. Chris, who has volunteered with us for over 10 years, says "They have always respected my experience and allowed me to share my ideas to improve processes. They also make me feel valued. I visited the Head Office a couple of years ago and they made me feel like a celebrity. Everyone seemed to know who I was and thanked me."

Volunteer, Chris

We plan to build on these high standards by receiving external accreditation to evidence the quality of our volunteer programme. We are conscious of the high growth of our volunteer programme in a relatively short space of time. We are keen to ensure volunteers are being properly matched to roles, have clear roles and responsibilities as well as appropriate training and support. With this in mind, we have been working towards the externally assessed Investing in Volunteers accreditation with the aim for this to be awarded by the end of 2021.

Objective 5

Develop a new strategy and three-year plan

The pandemic has made caring harder than ever. Carers are providing more care with less breaks and many are exhausted and worn out. Carers First are needed more than ever to ensure carers get the support they need to thrive in their role and find the balance in their lives they want to achieve.

Our key challenge over the next three years is to reach a greater number of carers, at the earliest opportunity and enhance our support to carers to make a positive, material difference in their lives.

With this in mind, we developed a new strategy and three-year plan with the ambition to provide access to information, support and resources to 250,000 carers by 2024. This will be ten times the number of carers we currently reach.

The new strategy sets out key strategic objectives as well as breaking these down into outcomes and targets with monthly, quarterly and annual measures. We will be unrelentingly focused on these objectives and fulfilling our ambition to enable carers to thrive in their roles and achieve the balance in their lives they wish to achieve.

Develop an Income Generation Plan to diversify the funding base of the charity

Over 90% of our income currently comes from statutory contracts. It is essential we grow and diversify our income to be responsive to local carers needs and become financially sustainable over the longer term.

As a growing and innovating charity, we want to make sure we can have the greatest impact on carers' lives. With this in mind, we appointed a new Director of Income and Communications with the remit of developing an ambitious three-year Income Generation Plan to deliver our new strategy. The plan sets out our ambition to quadruple our voluntary income and diversify our funding base – growing our income from Trusts and Foundations, building individual giving, community fundraising, corporate partnerships and legacies and maintaining and securing new statutory contracts.

We have made some positive early progress including running our first Christmas fundraising appeal which helped lead to a major gift from a supporter. We also launched a new monthly supporter e-newsletter and ran a focus group with companies to help shape the development of a new corporate offer.

Giving Dan his life back

"I was driving one day when the thought came into my mind that if I just drove into a wall, it would be all over. My caring role had taken over my life and I needed a way out. Fortunately, I reached out for help and Carers First gave me my life back."

Having someone dependent on him was something Dan learnt from a young age caring for his mum who has emotional instability personality disorder. This followed him to adulthood where he now cares for his wife, Nicci, and his stepson who has autism.

The biggest challenge Dan has faced caring is the feeling he had to do it all alone. He always thought of himself as being able to hold it together and his childhood experience had made him sensitive to looking after his mental health. However, being on call 24/7 and 'moving from one person's crisis to another' led him to that fateful day in the car.

Dan had never received a Carers Assessment despite caring since the age of five. Carers First has helped him secure a personal budget through a recent statutory Carers Assessment that will help cover additional costs of caring which has made him feel more in control. Dan says, "It has helped me realise I'm not alone in the difficulties I've faced and there is help available. Talking to someone outside my situation made me realise how much my caring role was affecting my physical and mental health. I learnt that I could give myself permission to think of myself and I don't have to feel guilty."

Dan has now found more balance in his life and is thriving. He has time to see friends and has also enjoyed volunteering. Fittingly, he has recently started a job as a Carer Support Adviser.

Lessons learnt

It is without doubt that 2020 was an unprecedented year, which has presented both opportunities and challenges for Carers First and the carers we support.

Services

During the Covid-19 pandemic our community teams constantly reviewed, monitored, and adapted to the continuing changes in the government guidelines. Ensuring that the wellbeing and safety of staff and carers was at the forefront of any decisions made, our focus was to continue to provide the best support for carers.

We found that many of our unpaid carers struggled during the lockdowns. They reported feeling lonely, isolated, angry, frustrated, tired (due to increasing caring responsibilities and more time spent caring due to the usual support networks being closed/postponed), they experienced financial hardship; having to give up work or reduced hours. Our young adult carers struggled balancing their caring responsibilities with their education, work and training; they missed seeing their friends and family face-to-face who have provided much needed peer support. Young adult carers have struggled with identifying themselves as carers and been challenged when attempting to access priority services.

The organisation moved quickly to respond to the changing situation and the changing needs of carers. Our remote working model was ideally placed to continue providing support to carers during the pandemic and our infrastructure allowed for rapid mobilisation of staff to remote working. The teams were able to respond quickly to the ever-changing situation, with no gaps in service provision and a seamless transition from face-to-face support to digital online platforms and telephone support. The helpline maintained the support for carers and experienced an increase in carers asking for advice and support.

Pre-pandemic our service offer was either face to face or via a phone call. The past year has taught us that engaging with carers digitally is an effective way of delivering support. The community teams have worked in partnership with carers to identify and create our digital offer, and we now have a wide-ranging portfolio of digital support groups from peer support groups, health and wellbeing groups to advice and information support including benefits, carers rights and planning for the future.

Moving forward we will now blend our service offer to combine, face to face and telephone support with online digital support. We will continue to develop new and exciting digital services in partnership with carers and create new opportunities through engaging with partner organisations to co-deliver elements of our offer.

Digital

A key learning this year has been the opportunities created by digital. We have seen increased engagement by carers in our services, including those who would or could not attend face-to-face activity. We plan to continue to develop our digital channels in a blended model of service delivery including our new-launch website (coming September 2021), helpline and community services to maximise our reach and impact.

Our extensive strategy consultation with carers, stakeholders and staff in summer 2020 highlighted that the Carers First website needs to be more locally relevant, more interactive and engaging for carers, with information from a carer's perspective, easier navigation and structure and to have a national relevance. We are taking the opportunity to redevelop the website as a key vehicle for the delivery of support to carers, providing strong carer journeys and providing carers access to a range of information, tools and resources aligned to their caring situation.

Like many, we have witnessed a clear 'digital divide' both locally and nationally. This has raised questions about digital poverty and accessibility to digital technology. We have been working to increase carers' access by supporting individuals to use their digital devices as well as working in partnership to address challenges around access. Alongside supporting carers with digital access, we have also developed new ways to engage with carers by phone.

Strategy

We learnt a lot from our consultation with carers, key stakeholders and staff which has shaped our new three-year strategy. The feedback from carers showed that Carers First make a huge difference on their lives however many struggled without support for several years before seeking help. Key barriers were people not recognising themselves as carers as well as not being identified by services for support. There is also a need to increase awareness of who Carers First are and what we do. Many carers said their route into Carers First was 'by chance'. We need to build a stronger brand and better communicate our impact to increase the support we can give to carers.

Partnerships

Over the past 12 months working collaboratively with our key stakeholders has been vital in sustaining our support to carers.

We have been recognised by our stakeholders for our flexible, adaptable, and creative approach to supporting carers within their local communities. The increase in digital platforms and remote working by other organisations enhanced our opportunities to create more meaningful partnerships.

The collaborative working with our commissioners meant that we were able to support the local Covid-19 vaccine programmes. Across all of our service areas we worked with commissioners and community partners to identify carers eligible for the vaccine and provide them with advice and information.

Looking to the future, our stakeholders emphasised in our consultation the need for a focus on partnership working to increase reach and to provide more 'seamless' support for carers. To build our local and national profile and to ensure our model fits within a more strategic 'system-wide' view of carer support.

Staff wellbeing

The past year has demonstrated the strength, commitment, and dedication of the community teams across the organisation. The teams put 'carers first' regardless of the challenges they may have been facing themselves, they continued to provide outstanding support and guidance to carers.

Many of our teams were personally affected by the pandemic, had to personally adapt to continually changing guidelines and faced increasing workloads. Throughout the last year we wanted to ensure our staff were fully supported to enable them to continue in their roles.

The organisation developed a programme of wellbeing activities and teams were actively encouraged and given the time to engage in activities. Contact and support was increased with daily and weekly wellbeing check ins, communication across the organisation increased to ensure teams were kept abreast of any changes. This helped us maintain staff morale and look after their wellbeing.

Plans for the future

In April 2021, we launched our new three-year strategy which sets out our ambition to help 250,000 carers by 2024. It commits us to five strategic objectives which are broken down into outcomes and targets over the next three years. These objectives inform our annual Operations Plan. Alongside our new strategy, we have refreshed our brand to help raise the profile of Carers First and secure more support.

The difference we want to see by 2024

1. Recognise and reach greater numbers of carers, at the earliest opportunity
2. Enhance our support to carers to make a material difference in their lives
3. Raise the profile of Carers First and its work, to secure support for carers in collaboration with other organisations
4. Develop a vibrant, supported, inclusive and high performing team
5. Grow our financial sustainability and strengthen efficiency of our operations

Key developments in the year ahead will include a public facing campaign across our service areas to increase awareness of the support available to carers.

We will develop our service offer, both online and in the community. We will launch our new website in September 2021 which will provide carers access to a greater range of information, tools and resources aligned to their caring situation. We will also build upon and develop new programmes of support including around wellbeing/mental health, resilience and maximising income.

We will start to deliver our ambition to quadruple our voluntary income and diversify our funding base.

Financial Review

The charity's incoming resources for the year ended 31 March 2021 totalled £4,285,129 (2020 - £3,740,687). Resources expended totalled £4,132,221 (2020 - £3,716,407) and net gain on investments was £222,390 (2020 - loss £200,129). The net surplus came to £375,298 (2020 - deficit £175,849). At 31 March 2021 the unrestricted fund balance was £1,664,207 (2020 - £1,301,492) and the restricted balance was £270,160 (2020 - £257,577). Carers First has continued to demonstrate year-on-year growth of its activities and the numbers of carers it supports.

The Trustees have reviewed the reserves of the charitable company and have established a policy under which the free reserves held should be equivalent to between three and six months of the unrestricted resources planned to be expended in the forthcoming financial year. Based on our budget for 2021-22 that is between £0.925m and £1.85m. At 31 March 2021, the free funds amounted to £1.6m (2020 - £1.3m). Trustees are in the process of reviewing and updating the reserves policy against the current financial climate which is due for completion within the 2021-22 financial year.

Investments

Carers First investments are held as a reserve against any future shortfall in income against expenditure. They seek to maintain and, if possible, enhance, the real value of the funds represented by its investments in line with the business plan. We seek to meet these objectives by maintaining an appropriate balance between maximising long-term returns and avoiding undue risk and volatility in capital values.

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and EFT's) and holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's). There are no direct foreign investments.

Overall performance has been ahead of the FTSE 100 index and the FTSE All-Share Index for the period.

Risk Management

Effective risk management is at the heart of our strategy and protecting the future sustainability of Carers First. We are fully committed to ensuring risks are properly managed. An organisation-wide risk management approach is in place to identify key strategic and operational risks, ensuring they are managed effectively through clear accountability and escalation when needed.

Risks are assessed to determine their severity, verify effective management and action mitigation where necessary. This is reviewed by Trustees and the Senior Leadership Team on an ongoing basis.

Key risks faced by Carers First and how we are managing them

A key risk is loss of income. Carers First is aware of potential Local Authority cuts to funding and the risk of not securing re-tendered contracts. To mitigate these risks, we are working closely with commissioners to ensure we are delivering impactful services to carers and that we can evidence this. We have also taken steps to diversify our income and ensure the continuance and sustainable growth of our work.

Health and safety continues to be a priority for Carers First, especially in light of the Covid-19 pandemic. We have taken appropriate measures and put in place robust risk assessments to ensure we are protecting the health, safety and wellbeing of the staff team and the carers we work with.

Information security is high on the risk agenda for all organisations. The importance of defending our IT systems from malicious attack and protecting the personal data we hold from unauthorised access and misuse is fully recognised by Carers First. Security measures are in place to protect unauthorised access to IT systems and to carry out ongoing tests for potential vulnerabilities in the IT network. Policies and procedures are also in place to protect data within the working environment, supported by mandatory data protection training for all staff, Trustees and volunteers.

Auditors

In accordance with section 485 of the Companies Act 2006, a resolution proposing that Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited be reappointed as auditors of the charitable company will be put to the Annual General Meeting.

Statement of Trustees' Responsibilities

The Trustees are responsible for preparing financial statements in accordance with applicable law and regulations.

Company and charity law requires the Trustees (who are also the directors of Carers First for the purposes of company law) to prepare financial statements for each financial year.

Under that law, the Trustees have elected to prepare financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law), including the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102).

Under company law the Trustees must not approve the financial statements unless they are satisfied that they give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charitable company and of the surplus or deficit for that period. In preparing those financial statements they have:

- selected suitable accounting policies and then applied them consistently;
- made judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepared the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the company will continue in business;
- stated whether applicable UK accounting standards have been followed, subject to any material departures disclosed and explained in the financial statements.

The Trustees are responsible for maintaining adequate accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the company and to enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Companies Act 2006. They have general responsibility for taking such steps as are reasonably open to them to safeguard the assets of the Company and to prevent and detect fraud and other irregularities.

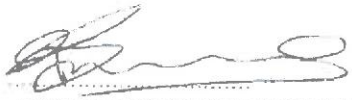
The Trustees are responsible for the maintenance and integrity of the charitable company's website. Legislation in the United Kingdom governing the preparation and dissemination of financial statements may differ from legislation in other jurisdictions.

Statement of disclosure to auditors

So far as the Trustees are aware, there is no relevant audit information which has not been disclosed to the company's auditors. They have taken all the steps that they ought to have taken as Trustees in order to make themselves aware of any matters which would be relevant for audit purposes, and to ensure that such information has been communicated to the Company's auditors.

Small company exemptions

This report has been prepared in accordance with the provisions applicable to companies subject to the small companies' regime in Part 15 of the Companies Act 2006. Approved by the Trustees and signed on their behalf by:



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P Davis
Chair of Trustees

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P Fennel
Chair of Finance Committee

Independent Auditors' Report to the Trustees

For the year ended 31 March 2021

Opinion

We have audited the financial statements of Carers First (the 'charitable company') for the year ended 31 March 2021 which comprise the statement of financial activities, balance sheet, statement of cash flows and notes to the financial statements, including a summary of significant accounting policies. The financial reporting framework that has been applied in their preparation is applicable law and United Kingdom Accounting Standards, including Financial Reporting Standard 102 The Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice).

In our opinion, the financial statements:

- give a true and fair view of the state of the charitable company's affairs as at 31 March 2021 and of its incoming resources and application of resources for the year then ended;
- have been properly prepared in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice; and
- have been prepared in accordance with the requirements of the Companies Act 2006.

Basis for opinion

We conducted our audit in accordance with International Standards on Auditing (UK) (ISAs (UK)) and applicable law. Our responsibilities under those standards are further described in the Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements section of our report. We are independent of the charitable company in accordance with the ethical requirements that are relevant to our audit of the financial statements in the UK, including the FRC's Ethical Standard, and we have fulfilled our other ethical responsibilities in accordance with these requirements. We believe that the audit evidence we have obtained is sufficient and appropriate to provide a basis for our opinion.

Conclusions relating to going concern

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the ISAs (UK) require us to report where:

- the trustees' use of the going concern basis of accounting in the preparation of the financial statements is not appropriate; or
- the trustees have not disclosed in the financial statements any identified material uncertainties that may cast significant doubt about the charitable company's ability to continue to adopt the going concern basis of accounting for a period of at least twelve months from the date when the financial statements are authorised for issue.

Other information

The other information comprises the information included in the annual report, other than the financial statements and our auditor's report thereon. The trustees are responsible for the other information. Our opinion on the financial statements does not cover the other information and, except to the extent otherwise explicitly stated in our report, we do not express any form of assurance conclusion thereon.

In connection with our audit of the financial statements, our responsibility is to read the other information and, in doing so, consider whether the other information is materially inconsistent with the financial statements or our knowledge obtained in the audit or otherwise appears to be materially misstated. If we identify such material inconsistencies or apparent material misstatements, we are required to determine whether there is a material misstatement in the financial statements or a material misstatement of the other information. If, based on the work we have performed, we conclude that there is a material misstatement of this other information, we are required to report that fact.

We have nothing to report in this regard.

Opinions on other matters prescribed by the Companies Act 2006

In our opinion, based on the work undertaken in the course of the audit:

the information given in the trustees' report, which includes the directors' report prepared for the purposes of company law, for the financial year for which the financial statements are prepared is consistent with the financial statements; and
the directors' report included within the trustees' report has been prepared in accordance with applicable legal requirements.

Matters on which we are required to report by exception

In the light of the knowledge and understanding of the charitable company and its environment obtained in the course of the audit, we have not identified material misstatements in the directors' report included within the trustees' report.

We have nothing to report in respect of the following matters in relation to which the Companies Act 2006 requires us to report if, in our opinion:

- adequate accounting records have not been kept, or returns adequate for our audit have not been received from branches not visited by us; or
- the financial statements are not in agreement with the accounting records and returns; or
- certain disclosures of trustees' remuneration specified by law are not made; or
- we have not received all the information and explanations we require for our audit; or
- the trustee were not entitled to prepare the financial statements in accordance with the small companies regime and take advantage of the small companies' exemptions in preparing the directors' report and from the requirement to prepare a strategic report.

Responsibilities of trustees

As explained more fully in the trustees' responsibilities statement, the trustees (who are also the directors of the charitable company for the purposes of company law) are responsible for the preparation of the financial statements and for being satisfied that they give a true and fair view, and for such internal control as the trustees determine is necessary to enable the preparation of financial statements that are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error.

In preparing the financial statements, the trustees are responsible for assessing the charitable company's ability to continue as a going concern, disclosing, as applicable, matters related to going concern and using the going concern basis of accounting unless the trustees either intend to liquidate the charitable company or to cease operations, or have no realistic alternative but to do so.

Auditor's responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements

Our objectives are to obtain reasonable assurance about whether the financial statements as a whole are free from material misstatement, whether due to fraud or error, and to issue an auditor's report that includes our opinion. Reasonable assurance is a high level of assurance, but is not a guarantee that an audit conducted in accordance with ISAs (UK) will always detect a material misstatement when it exists. Misstatements can arise from fraud or error and are considered material if, individually or in the aggregate, they could reasonably be expected to influence the economic decisions of users taken on the basis of these financial statements.

Irregularities, including fraud, are instances of non-compliance with laws and regulations. We design procedures in line with our responsibilities, outlined below, to detect material misstatements in respect of irregularities, including fraud. The extent to which our procedures are capable of detecting irregularities, including fraud is detailed below.

We obtained an understanding of the legal and regulatory framework applying to the charity, and the procedures that management adopt to ensure compliance, including those relating to the Charities SORP FRS 102;

- We assessed the susceptibility of the charity's financial statement to material misstatement, including considering how fraud might occur;
- We obtained the Board of Trustee's assessment of fraud risk and enquired as to any known or suspected instances of fraud; and
- We designed and performed audit procedures to obtain sufficient appropriate audit evidence regarding compliance with laws and regulations, including enquiry of the trustees, review of minutes and correspondence, and review of the completeness and accuracy of disclosures made in the financial statements.

A further description of our responsibilities for the audit of the financial statements is located on the Financial Reporting Council's website at: http://www.frc.org.uk/auditorsresponsibilities. This description forms part of our auditor's report.

Use of our report

This report is made solely to the charitable company's members, as a body, in accordance with Chapter 3 of part 16 of the Companies Act 2006. Our audit work has been undertaken so that we might state to the charitable company's members those matters we are required to state to them in an auditor's report and for no other purpose. To the fullest extent permitted by law, we do not accept or assume responsibility to anyone other than the charitable company and, the charitable company's members as a body, for our audit work, for this report, or for the opinions we have formed.

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Jonathan Healey BA FCA
Senior Statutory Auditor

For and on behalf of:
Lindeyer Francis Ferguson Limited
Statutory Auditors
Chartered Accountants

North House
198 High Street
Tonbridge
Kent TN9 1BE

Date: 20 December 2021

STATEMENT OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITIES (INCLUDING INCOME AND EXPENDITURE ACCOUNT)
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

	Note	*2021 Unrestricted funds* £	*2021 Restricted funds* £	*2021 Total funds* £	*2020 Total funds* £
Income from:					
Donations and legacies	2	93,161	489,741	582,902	282,620
Charitable activities	3	3,494,997	170,000	3,664,997	3,413,805
Investments		37,230	-	37,230	44,262
Total income		3,625,388	659,741	4,285,129	3,740,687
Expenditure on:					
Raising funds		71,891	-	71,891	37,818
Charitable activities	4	3,413,172	647,158	4,060,330	3,678,589
Total expenditure		3,485,063	647,158	4,132,221	3,716,407
Net gains/(losses) on investments		222,390	-	222,390	(200,129)
Net income/(expenditure) and net movement in funds	7	362,715	12,583	375,298	(175,849)
Reconciliation of funds:					
Total funds brought forward		1,301,492	257,577	1,559,069	1,734,918
Total funds carried forward	13	1,664,207	270,160	1,934,367	1,559,069

BALANCE SHEET
AS AT 31 MARCH 2021

	Note	2021 £	2021 £	2020 £	2020 £
Fixed assets					
Tangible assets	9		62,654		44,190
Investments	10		1,223,394		928,779
			1,286,048		972,969
Current assets					
Debtors	11	272,523		249,978	
Cash at bank and in hand		938,121		752,821	
		1,210,644		1,002,799	
Liabilities					
Creditors: amounts falling due within one year	12	(562,325)		(416,699)	
Net current assets			648,319		586,100
Total net assets			1,934,367		1,559,069
The funds of the charity					
Unrestricted funds	13		1,664,207		1,301,492
Restricted income funds	13		270,160		257,577
			1,934,367		1,559,069

The financial statements were approved by the Board of Trustees on 22 October 2021 and were signed on its behalf by:

P Davis
Chair of Trustees

P Fennell
Chair of Finance Committee

Company number: 04144820

STATEMENT OF CASH FLOWS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

	Note	2021 £	2021 £	2020 £	2020 £
Cash flows from operating activities:					
Net cash provided by operating activities	A		239,851		36,727
Cash flows from investing activities:					
Interest and dividends received		37,230		44,262	
Purchase of tangible fixed assets		(62,151)		(23,241)	
Purchases of investments		(351,593)		(85,547)	
Sales of investments		321,963		57,015	
Net cash used in investing activities			(54,551)		(7,511)
Change in cash and cash equivalents			185,300		29,216
Cash and cash equivalents at the beginning of the year			752,821		723,605
Cash and cash equivalents at the end of the year			938,121		752,821

A. Reconciliation of net income to net cash flow from operating activities

Net income/(expenditure) for the year *As per the Statement of Financial Activities*		375,298		(175,849)
Adjustments for:				
Depreciation charges	43,687		45,352	
Net (gains)/losses on investments	(264,985)		200,130	
Interest and dividends receivable	(37,230)		(44,262)	
(Increase)/decrease in debtors	(22,545)		132,074	
Increase/(decrease) in creditors	145,626		(120,718)	
		(135,447)		212,576
Net cash provided by operating activities		239,851		36,727

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

1 Accounting policies

The principal accounting policies adopted, judgements and key sources of estimation uncertainty in the preparation of the financial statements are as follows:

1.1 Basis of preparation

The financial statements have been prepared in accordance with "Accounting and Reporting by Charities: Statement of Recommended Practice applicable to charities preparing their accounts in accordance with the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102)" (effective 1 January 2019) - (Charities SORP (FRS 102)), the Financial Reporting Standard applicable in the UK and Republic of Ireland (FRS 102) and the Companies Act 2006.

Carers First meets the definition of a public benefit entity under FRS 102. Assets and liabilities are initially recognised at historical cost or transaction value unless otherwise stated in the relevant accounting policy note(s).

The global pandemic Covid-19 has inevitably impacted the operations of the charity. The trustees are keeping the matter under constant review and believe that the charity has sufficient reserves to absorb the impact of the Covid-19 crisis and will be able to continue in its operations for the forseeable future. Therefore, there are no material uncertainties about the charity's ability to continue, and so the going concern basis of accounting continues to be adopted.

The financial statements are presented in pounds sterling and rounded to the nearest pound.

1.2 Income

Income from donations and grants is recognised when the charity is entitled to the funds, the receipt is probable and the amount can be measured reliably. For donations, this is usually on receipt. For grants, this is usually when a formal offer is made in writing, unless the grant contains terms and conditions outside of the charity's control which must be met before the charity is entitled to the funds. Where grants are received in response to a proposal including a budgeted timescale, such that the timescale for the expenditure is implicit in the grant agreement, the income is recognised in accordance with that timescale.

Income from contracted services, and services to users, is recognised when the services are provided. Income from such sources received in advance of the service provision is accounted for as deferred income.

Investment income is recognised when receivable.

1 Accounting policies (continued)

1.3 Expenditure

Expenditure is recognised when a present legal or constructive obligation exists at the balance sheet date as a result of a past event, it is probable that a transfer of economic benefits will be required to settle the obligation, and the amount can be estimated reliably.

Expenditure continued

Expenditure on charitable activities comprises the direct costs incurred by the charity in delivering its charitable objectives. Support costs are those functions that assist the work of the charity but do not directly relate to the charitable activities. These costs have been allocated to the charitable activity. Staff costs are allocated to direct costs or support costs on the basis of staff time.

1.4 Pensions

The charity makes contributions to the personal pension schemes of its employees. The pension cost in the financial statements represents the contributions payable by the charity during the year.

1.5 Taxation

The charity is exempt from corporation tax on its income and gains to the extent that these are applied to its charitable objectives.

1.6 Fund accounting

Unrestricted funds can be used in accordance with the charitable objectives at the discretion of the Trustees.

Restricted funds can only be used for the particular restricted purposes within the objects of the charity. Restrictions arise when specified by the donor or when funds are raised for particular restricted purposes.

1.7 Tangible fixed assets and depreciation

Tangible fixed assets are stated at cost less depreciation. Depreciation is provided at rates calculated to write off the cost less estimated realisable value of each asset over its expected useful life, as follows:

Fixtures, fittings and equipment	- Between 20% and 33% straight line

Assets costing less than £500 are written off in the year they are acquired.

1 Accounting policies (continued)

1.8 Investments

Listed investments are stated at market value. Gains and losses arising on the revaluation of investments are taken to the Statement of Financial Activities.

1.9 Financial instruments

The charity only has financial instruments which are classified as basic financial instruments.

Short-term debtors and creditors are measured at the settlement value. Any losses from impairment are recognised in the statement of financial activities.

1.10 Status

Carers First is a charitable company limited by guarantee incorporated in England and Wales. In the event of the company being wound up, the liability in respect of the guarantee is limited to £1 per member of the charity. The address of the registered office is Unit 4, Michael Gill Building, Tolgate Lane, Rochester, Kent, ME2 4TG.

2 Income from donations and legacies

	2021 £	*2020* £
Grants	525,844	209,958
Donations	57,058	72,662
	582,902	282,620

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £216,468.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

3 Income from charitable activities

	2021 £	2020 £
Activity: Carers services		
Medway Council	327,908	331,379
Medway PCN	82,989	-
Lincolnshire County Council	1,431,052	1,466,558
Waltham Forest Borough Council	182,111	176,610
Hackney Borough Council	192,013	96,007
Haringey Borough Council	87,299	83,788
Newham Borough Council	209,211	156,500
Essex County Council	901,451	900,000
NHS Kent & Medway CCG	250,963	190,001
Southend-on-Sea Borough Council	-	11,594
Charges to service users	-	1,367
	3,664,997	3,413,805

Income from restricted funds in the comparative period was £170,000.

4 Expenditure on charitable activities

		2021 £	2020 £
Activity: Carers services			
Direct costs	**Note 5**	3,485,270	3,125,698
Support costs	**Note 6**	575,060	552,891
		4,060,330	3,678,589

Expenditure for restricted funds in the comparative period was £344,556.

5 Direct costs of charitable activities

	2021 £	2020 £
Staff costs	2,914,030	2,607,950
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	19,703	32,617
Project costs	448,255	427,701
Grants paid to individuals	103,282	57,430
	3,485,270	3,125,698

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

6 Support costs

	2021 £	2020 £
Staff costs	193,114	211,711
Staff expenses, recruitment and training	23,246	28,984
Rent and service charges	58,489	66,868
Other premises expenses	23,446	42,050
Insurance	12,583	11,911
Office and IT costs	151,923	116,157
Legal and professional fees	26,980	13,751
Audit fees	12,075	25
Payroll processing fees	6,313	5,982
Trustee expenses, meetings, recruitment and training	9,958	1,160
Bad debts	658	-
Bank charges	309	624
Professional membership fees	12,279	8,733
Depreciation	43,687	45,352
Irrecoverable VAT	-	(417)
	575,060	552,891

7 Net income/(expenditure)

	2021 £	2020 £
Net income/ (expenditure) is stated after charging:		
Audit fees	12,075	25
Depreciation	43,687	45,352
Net gains/(losses) on investments	222,390	(200,129)
Rent paid under operating leases	58,489	66,868

The audit fee charged in the year was £9,150 (£8,950).

8 Staff costs

	2021 £	*2020* £
Gross salaries	2,890,491	2,602,157
Employer's National Insurance contributions	204,766	184,014
Pension and healthcare costs	77,367	64,266
	3,172,624	2,850,437

One member of staff received employment benefits (excluding employer pension contributions) in excess of £60,000 during the year (2020: None). During the year 155 employees received employer contributions to their personal pension schemes (2020: 127).

The average number of employees during the year on a headcount basis was as follows:

	2021 No.	*2020* No.
Management	4	6
Administration and HR	20	22
Outreach and carer support	121	108
	145	136

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

9 Tangible fixed assets

	Fixtures, fittings & equipment £
Cost	
At 1 April 2020	254,000
Additions	62,151
Disposals	(140,675)
At 31 March 2021	175,476
Depreciation	
At 1 April 2020	209,810
Charge for the year	43,687
Eliminated on disposal	(140,675)
At 31 March 2021	112,822
Net book value	
At 31 March 2021	62,654
At 31 March 2020	44,190

10 Investments

	2021 £	*2020* £
Market value		
At 1 April 2020	928,779	1,100,377
Additions	351,593	85,547
Sales proceeds	(321,963)	(57,015)
Net gains/(losses) on investments	264,985	(200,130)
At 31 March 2021	1,223,394	928,779

The portfolio is split between UK quoted investments (investment trusts, REIT's and EFT's) and holdings in unit/open ended investment companies (OEIC's). There are no direct foreign investments.

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

11 Debtors

	2021	2020
	£	£
Trade debtors	252,539	225,971
Other debtors	-	2,024
Prepayments and accrued income	19,984	21,983
	272,523	249,978

12 Creditors: amounts falling due within one year

	2021	2020
	£	£
Trade creditors	61,079	47,673
Taxation and social security	209,128	192,829
Deferred income	43,888	36,361
Other creditors	13,169	11,559
Accruals	235,061	128,277
	562,325	416,699

Deferred income:

Incoming resources deferred in the previous period	36,361	12,750
Released to the Statement of Financial Activities	(30,477)	(12,750)
Incoming resources deferred in the current period:		
Grants and contract income	38,004	36,361
	43,888	36,361

NOTES TO THE FINANCIAL STATEMENTS
FOR THE YEAR ENDED 31 MARCH 2021

13 Movement on funds

	At 1 April 2020 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Transfers/ Gains and (losses)* £	*At 31 March 2021* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,301,492	3,625,388	(3,485,063)	222,390	1,664,207
	1,301,492	3,625,388	(3,485,063)	222,390	1,664,207
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	45,359	135,000	(155,876)	-	24,483
Children in Need	-	52,698	(52,698)	-	-
Medway carers support	126,798	35,000	(33,490)	-	128,308
Carers Trust	400	-	-	-	400
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	-	22,035	(22,035)	-	-
Young Londoners	-	15,676	(15,676)	-	-
Other donations and grants	85,020	250,273	(225,634)	-	109,659
Health and Wellbeing	-	74,060	(74,060)	-	-
Mercers	-	74,999	(67,689)	-	7,310
	257,577	659,741	(647,158)	-	270,160
Total funds	1,559,069	4,285,129	(4,132,221)	222,390	1,934,367

13 Movement on funds *continued*

Restricted funds have been received for the following purposes:

NHS Carers and Crisis Service
To provide support to carers in crisis in Swale and Dartford, Gravesham & Swanley for a 2 week period to prevent hospital admission and support hospital discharge.

Children in Need
This funding is to provide one to one support and recreational activities for young carers.

Medway Carers Support
The Medway Carers support/wellbeing funding is to make payments to carers to enable them to maintain their caring role and to prevent carer breakdown. The amount paid per carer is based on assessment.

Carers Trust
This includes grants to provide workshops, support and activities for young adult carers.

Colyer Fergusson Charitable Trust
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young adult carers to transition from children's services into adulthood and supporting them into further education and employment.

Young Londoners
This funding allows the employment of staff to support young carers and young adult carers to fulfil their potential through a range of activities such as support sessions, training and other social activities.

Donations
Various donations and legacies received throughout the year to provide specific activities and/or support to carers.

Grants
Various grants to enable the provision of additional activities for carers that are not funded within core contracts and grants awarded to individual carers to enable them to take a holiday or purchase something for the home to assist them in their caring role.

13 Movement on funds *continued*

Health and Wellbeing
To employ care coordinators to work within PCN's across Medway to offer support and health checks to carers.

Mercers
Funding to enable the recruitment/training and supervision of volunteers to engage with older carers to combat loneliness.

Comparative figures

	At 1 April 2019 £	*Income* £	*Expenditure* £	*Transfers/ Gains and (losses)* £	*At 31 March 2020* £
Unrestricted funds					
General fund	1,519,253	3,354,219	(3,371,851)	(200,129)	1,301,492
	1,519,253	3,354,219	(3,371,851)	(200,129)	1,301,492
Restricted income funds					
NHS Carers and Crisis Service pilot	20,352	135,000	(109,993)		45,359
Children in Need	-	36,001	(36,001)	-	-
Medway carers support	133,938	35,000	(42,140)	-	126,798
Carers Trust	400	-	-	-	400
Colyer-Fergusson Charitable Trust	-	18,453	(18,453)	-	-
Young Londoners	-	19,884	(19,884)	-	-
Other donations and grants	60,975	142,130	(118,085)	-	85,020
	215,665	386,468	(344,556)	-	257,577
Total funds	1,734,918	3,740,687	(3,716,407)	(200,129)	1,559,069

14 Analysis of net assets between funds

	Unrestricted funds £	*Restricted funds* £	*Total funds* £
Fund balances at 31 March 2021 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	62,654	-	62,654
Investments	1,223,394	-	1,223,394
Net current assets	378,159	270,160	648,319
	1,664,207	270,160	1,934,367

Comparative figures

Fund balances at 31 March 2020 are represented as follows:			
Tangible fixed assets	44,190	-	44,190
Investments	928,779	-	928,779
Net current assets	328,523	257,577	586,100
	1,301,492	257,577	1,559,069

15 Financial commitments

At 31 March 2021 the charity was committed to future minimum lease payments under non-cancellable operating leases as follows:

	2021 £	*2020* £
Land and buildings		
Due not later than one year	34,181	46,681
Later than one year not later than five years	18,468	51,798
Other		
Due not later than one year	629	2,517
Later than one year not later than five years	-	382
	53,278	101,378

16 Related party transactions

The Board of Trustees and the six (2020: six) members of the Senior Leadership Team are considered to be the charity's key management personnel. The total amount of employee benefits (including employer's national insurance and employer's pension contributions) received by key management personnel during the year was £243,080 (2020: £228,593).

There was no Trustees' remuneration nor other benefits during the current or prior period.

No expenses were reimbursed during the year (2020: expenses totalling £463 were reimbursed to 2 trustees in relation to travel and subsistence costs).

Offices:

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Lincolnshire Office:
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Essex Office:
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Carers First

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Carers First is a charity registered in England and Wales, registered number 1085430.

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