



**KINGSTON  
CARERS  
NETWORK**



# Annual Review.

2024-2025



# About us.

Kingston Carers Network (KCN) is an independent charity providing information, advice, advocacy and support to unpaid carers of all ages who are caring for someone with an illness, disability or substance misuse problem.

## **Our vision.**

A future where unpaid carers are recognised, valued, and enabled to live and care well.

## **Our mission.**

To provide tailored information, advice and support to unpaid carers, advocating for local services that better meet their needs.

# **Our values.**

## **Compassion.**

We bring an empathetic and caring approach to our work and ensure that carers are treated with compassion and care by others.

## **Authenticity.**

We stand with carers and use our independence and lived experience to challenge injustice and champion carers' rights.

## **Representation.**

We are proactive in putting unpaid carers at the heart of our decision-making so that carers' diverse perspectives are seen, heard and shape our services.

## **Expertise.**

We recognise carers as experts in their loved ones' needs, bringing innovation to our services through co-production and listening and learning from feedback.

## **Relationships.**

We build and strengthen peer support and community among carers and proactively create partnerships across the wider care system.

## Message from the Chair.

This past year has been one of both challenge and progress for Kingston Carers Network (KCN). Against a backdrop of rising demand, sustained financial pressures in social care, and a cost-of-living crisis that continues to hit carers hardest, KCN has remained a vital source of support, connection, and advocacy for thousands of unpaid carers across our borough.



Despite the tough operational environment, the dedication and creativity of our staff team has ensured that carers of all ages receive high-quality, person-centred support. Our adult services supported increasing numbers of carers through assessments, information, benefits advice, and wellbeing activities, while the Young Carers Project once again delivered an exceptional programme of emotional, social and practical support.

We have also worked hard this year to strengthen KCN as an organisation. The introduction of Wellness Action Plans, refreshed safeguarding practices, the launch of our new CRM system, and improvements to internal communication and leadership structures have all built stronger foundations for the future. Alongside a major rebrand launching later this year, this work will ensure KCN is positioned for long-term sustainability, impact and influence.

Financially, the year has demanded prudent decision-making. We have sought cost efficiencies, diversified income streams, and strengthened our fundraising approach. We are grateful for the trust and investment of core funders, including the Royal Borough of Kingston, Achieving for Children, City Bridge Foundation, Henry Smith Foundation and Garfield Weston among others. We are also thankful for the generosity of local groups, businesses and individuals who have chosen to back our work this year.

Finally, I want to extend my heartfelt thanks to our extraordinary staff team and volunteers. Their passion, skill, and compassion are the reason KCN continues to be a lifeline for carers in our community. I am also hugely grateful to my fellow trustees for their commitment, challenge and guidance throughout the year. We are delighted to have welcomed our new CEO, Rachael Stokes who has brought fresh energy, clarity and ambition to the organisation. With her leadership, KCN is entering its next chapter with renewed purpose and unity. Together, we will continue to champion carers, reduce inequalities, and make Kingston a truly carer-friendly borough.

**Dr. Tony Woods**

## Message from the CEO.

I joined KCN mid-way through the year, but at an important milestone in the organisation's history as it celebrated thirty years of supporting unpaid carers in Kingston.

KCN has grown and developed significantly over the past thirty years: from a group of 142 carers supported by 1.5 paid staff to a borough-based network of more than 5,000 carers it is today. KCN now offers a wide range of services to both young and adult carers, as well as acting as strategic lead and a commissioning partner of the Royal Borough of Kingston Upon Thames.



Having spent my entire career working and volunteering in the charity sector, I have been struck by how much KCN is able to deliver with the resources it has available. In the past year alone, the small staff team (13 full time equivalents) and volunteers have provided direct support to 1,300 carers across the borough, carried out over 350 statutory assessments and reviews, and secured over £650,000 in additional income for carers through benefits support and cash grants.

A highlight from the year must be the Young Carers 'Dream Big' Party Conference we hosted in November, which brought together nearly 200 young carers to celebrate their achievements, share their personal ambitions for the future and most importantly, take a break from caring. We were joined by local MP Sir Ed Davey and the many volunteers and community partners who help us deliver the Young Carers Project.

I feel enormously privileged to have been invited to join the KCN team and incredibly proud of what it has achieved so far. I am equally excited as we now look to the future and consider how best we can serve and support carers in 2025 and beyond. As incoming CEO, my priority is to ensure we can sustain and grow the organisation in response to the changing needs of carers across the borough. As co-chair of the Kingston Carers Partnership Board, KCN will remain committed to improving carer identification and referral as well as crisis prevention support.

I would like to thank our many partners across the public, voluntary and business sectors who helped make our work possible in 2024/2025. We look forward to your continued support and collaboration in the year ahead.

**Rachael Stokes**

# Adult Carers.

KCN's adult carer support services provide a holistic range of services to adult carers. We offer advice and information on carers rights, advice on claiming benefits as well as tribunal support and representation, mental health peer support, wellbeing activities, peer support groups and free counselling.

During 2024/25 KCN received 1,021 referrals to the adult carers service and provided direct support to 1,285 carers through the following:

- 362 carer assessments and reviews
- 429 engagements with well-being activities
- 412 counselling sessions
- 127 peer support groups
- Secured £654,813 additional income for carers through benefits and cash grants
- Distributed £40,000 in discretionary payments

In total, we provided 1,393 engagement activities throughout the year. Delivery highlights included the following:

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**1. Benefits and tribunal support**

Our benefits and tribunal services remained busy with 136 referrals over the course of the year. Support included assistance with new claims, appealing decisions and representation at tribunals. To help manage demand, we have introduced a monthly drop-in service to run alongside our tea and toast sessions.

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**2. One Stop Shop for Carers**

KCN continued to provide a regular presence at the quarterly Carers One Stop Shop events hosted by the New Malden and Worcester Park Primary Care Network. The events aim to bring together a range of local and national services relevant to carers and older people.

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**3. GP outreach**

As part of our ongoing efforts to improve carer identification, we organised three outreach events over the course of the year at the Surbiton Health Centre. Working alongside local social prescribers, carers have been able to meet KCN staff, learn more about the services we provide and discuss their caring roles.

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**4. Mental Health Peer Support**

We deliver this service in partnership with the South-West London and St George's Trust and Kingston Mind. During the course of the year, we supported 50 carers referred to this service through the provision of up to eight one-to-one sessions to help them develop coping strategies for their emotional wellbeing.

“Thank you very much for following up my conversations. I found it so helpful. I have already used the Relief Care three times – that is invaluable. I haven’t yet decided what to do with the Discretionary Payment but am enjoying thinking about it! And I have applied for and received my Alert Card. Many thanks to you and your colleagues for a wonderful service.”

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“These peer support sessions have been helpful in ways that they may not have intended- I am a sole carer for my mother who has dementia which is very challenging and I myself am autistic which creates many other challenges. Diana has been extremely supportive and helpful which I very much appreciate and feel that despite my situational circumstances the sessions have had a hugely positive impact on me.”



## **Case Study: Accessing relief care.**

Carer A has been caring for her husband who has Alzheimers as well as a variety of health conditions for several years. Carer AB was initially referred to KCN for support as her caring responsibilities were leaving her exhausted and unable to engage in any other activity which would enable her to have a break and take some time out for herself. Carer A has to be on hand to carry out all personal care as well as cook, clean and maintain the home single handedly. Due to her husband's needs she just did not feel confident or comfortable in leaving him home alone.

Following her initial carers assessment, Relief Care Hours were provided in order for her to continue to participate in a well-loved hobby of sailing. A year on; at review, Carer A continues to heavily rely on the sitting service to get a well needed break from caring and was very keen to have this service renewed, especially as her husband's needs continue to increase. She continues to enjoy and look forward to her breaks spent on the water.

## **Case Study: Providing tribunal support.**

A parent carer approached the service for help in appealing a DWP decision to refuse the Care Element of their cared for's Personal Independence Payment (PIP) award when they transferred from Disability Living Allowance (the benefit paid to children up to the age of 16 years).

By the time the PIP appeal had been listed for hearing, the Carer was exhausted. Simultaneously, they had been fighting for their young person's access to appropriate education, which also involved an appeal to the SEN (Special Educational Needs) Tribunal. I met with them the day before the hearing, to help them prepare for the benefits appeal. They informed me that they did not feel able to attend as they were exhausted and burnt out. They did not feel that they could face yet another hearing and just wanted to pull out. This was very difficult to hear. I advised them that based on the reviewed evidence, I felt that the appeal would be successful. I knew it was a big ask emotionally, but I felt they just needed one last push.

I recognised that the carer and the claimant would need significant support, so I attended the tribunal with the family and made the necessary representations and submissions on their behalf. The appeal resulted in a back-payment in excess of £5,000. These are the experiences that make the role of Benefit Advisor hugely rewarding. It is not always about the value of the award, but the recognition of the huge role that carers play in helping their looked after person each and every day.

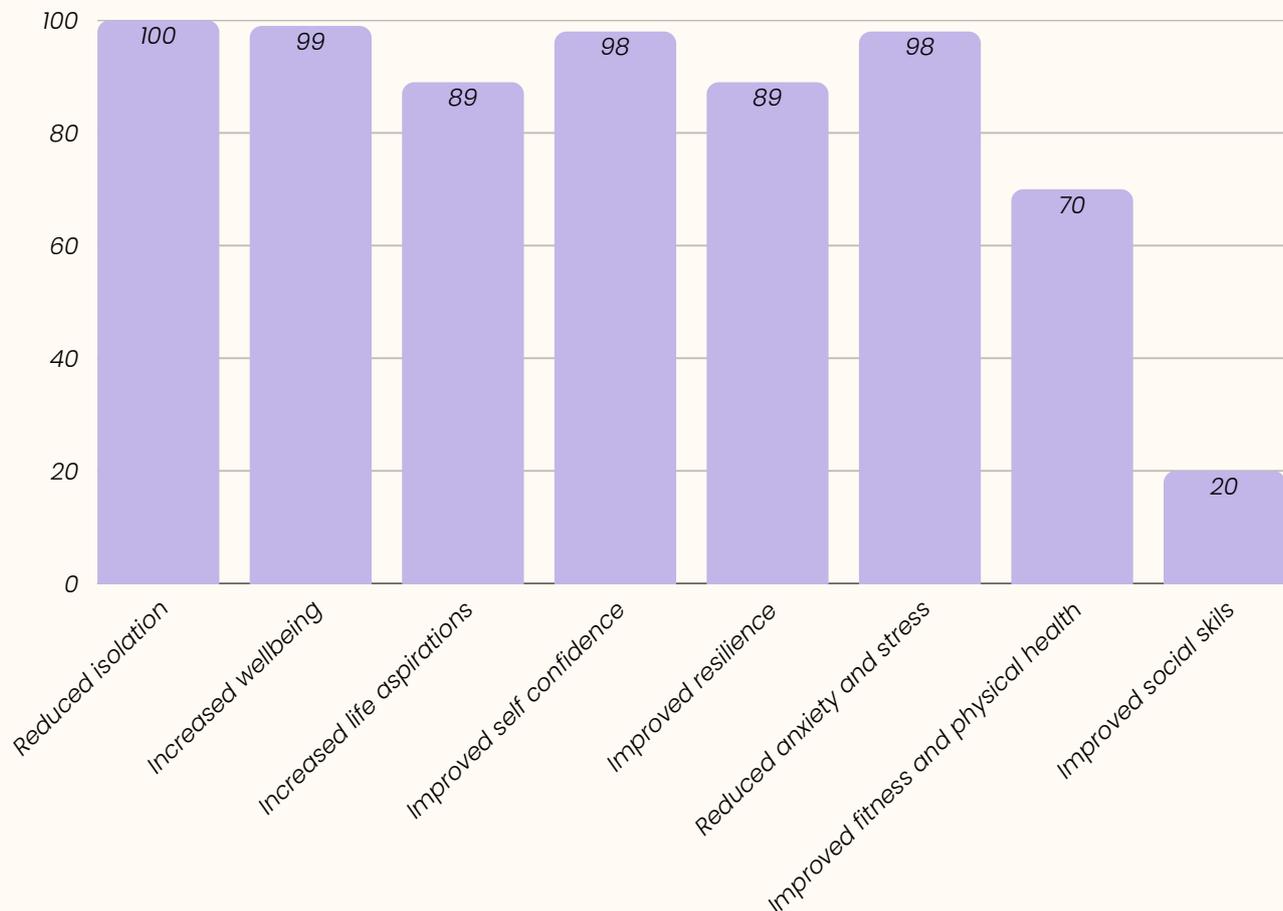
# Young and Young Adult Carers.

KCN's Young Carers Project aims to improve the lives of young carers of all ages living in the borough. We do this by offering respite holiday activities and term-time drop ins where young carers can come together with peers in similar situations to get a short break from their caring roles, have fun and learn a new skill with the support from the YCP staff team.

During 2024/25 the YCP directly supported 835 young carers and offered 2,419 engagement opportunities through the provision of the following:

- 28 weekly drop-in sessions for young carers aged 5-11 years
- 26 weekly youth club sessions for 11-18 year olds
- 70 holiday respite activities
- 12 school lunchtime & breakfast clubs
- 129 young carers benefited from targeted family support
- 15 young carers received 182 hours of one-to-one mentoring support

## Young Carer Outcomes.



"I'm so happy with how much she opens up to you guys and it's been the only consistent thing in M's life since moving here years ago. Honestly, I don't think you realise how much we all love and respect you all :) Thank you for always supporting us and more so helping me parent my children! As you know family has never been there and I stay as isolated as possible, so it really does mean the world to me having you all in our lives :)"

Parent of a young carer.

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"Today has been one of the best days of my life."

Young Carer, taking part in summer holiday activities.

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"Today has helped me, if not everyone, to make at least one friend."

Young Carer, taking part in summer holiday activities.



Highlights from the year included the following :

### **1. Schools transitions programme**

Our annual school transition programmes aims to support young carers in year 6 prepare for their move to secondary school. Over a six-month period, we delivered a series of workshops built around the 'five ways to wellbeing' to help young carers explore their thoughts and feelings around leaving primary school, and consider the impact on their caring responsibilities. During the course of the programme, the young carers became more confident sharing their thoughts and fears, discussing friendship issues, bullying, problems with school staff, as well as the impact of living with someone who is ill or autistic.

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### **2. Young carers 'Dream Big' conference**

In November, we hosted our second YCP conference for more than 200 young carers, their families and professionals. Young carers were entertained with a magic show, along with balloonists, glitter tattooists, and a photo booth to capture precious memories. They also had the opportunity to take part in dance and drama performances, as well as share their inspiring personal stories.

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### **3. Relaunch of the Young Adult Carers group**

In February, we relaunched our support group for Young Adult Carers (YACs) at the New Malden Community Hub. The sessions, running twice a month on the first and third Fridays (6–8pm), aim to reduce isolation, stress, and loneliness by offering peer-to-peer support, social activities, and a chance to relax. The 'chill out' environment includes music, food, games, and opportunities to connect with others who share similar experiences.

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### **4. Co-producing 'Young Carers in Bunnyland' resource**

Young carers from YCP worked with the Young Carers Illustration Project to co-produce a publication aimed to support young carers understand their caring role. 'Young Carers in Bunnyland' was launched at our conference in November and the young carers who helped develop the resource have since supported the delivery of workshops in schools, as well as promoting the book and good practice guidance for professionals via the Young Carers Alliance and All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers.

## **Case Study: targeted support to young carers.**

M is an 8-year-old Young Carer who has been part of the Young Carers' Project since 2022. He lives with his mother, father and sibling; and both M and his sibling take on a lot of responsibilities as Young Carers' for their blind father. M assist's his father with daily tasks such as guiding him around, and outside of the house, making cups of tea, helping mum with the cooking, translating for his parents who do not speak fluent English, taking out the rubbish, and much more. M also spends a lot of time worrying about his father when he goes out on his own, due to the risks associated with his disability. In addition to his caregiving responsibilities, M must balance his schoolwork and social life, which has proven challenging due to the family's low income and associated issues such as food insecurity.

After being referred to the Young Carers Project, we were able to understand his extensive duties for such a young boy, and the impact they had on his daily life. Therefore, the Young Carers Project were able to intervene. Since being a part of the project, M has had the chance to socialise with peers, volunteers and staff who are very understanding and empathetic towards his situation. This has improved his quality of life because he can relate to others through shared experience, and he can rely on adult staff and volunteers to talk to if anything is bothering him. This social support has been crucial for M, providing him with a network of friends who understand his challenges.

The project has also provided M with opportunities for new experiences. For example, during the summer holidays of 2024, M expressed his excitement about going bowling which was a first-time experience for him - he stated that his family had only ever seen it on TV. Additionally, M has never visited a water park before and he expressed how he hopes to do this with the project when he is older because his older sibling was given this opportunity by YCP over the summer. This promotes increased life aspirations as YCP has given M something to look forward to. Over the Summer, M also took part in pottery making and other activities that provided enjoyment and respite from his caring role.

Overall, the support provided by the Young Carers Project has had a significant positive impact on M's life. By offering peer support and fun activities, the project has helped M balance his caring responsibilities and his social life, whilst improving his overall well-being.

# Volunteering.

KCN could not exist without volunteers. From young carer mentors, counsellors and front desk volunteers through to our governing body, the board of trustees, volunteers provide the backbone of our organisation and services to carers.

In 2024/2025, KCN benefited from the support of 92 volunteers who contributed nearly 3,500 hours of support, the equivalent of 490 working days. Our free counselling service, delivered in partnership with Kingston College, has created savings for carers of approximately £16,320. We estimate the total value of our volunteering support to be £68,607.

Our diverse range of volunteer roles provide Kingston residents with an opportunity to contribute to their local community and a be a force for positive social change.



## Volunteer profile: Vince, Young Carers Mentor.

“Mentoring Z has been both memorable and rewarding. Z is a polite, creative and sociable young man, and despite a challenging home life, he’s a great role model for boys his age. Knowing his circumstances, I focused on making our sessions fun and engaging.

Some of our highlights included visiting Comic Con, trying escape rooms, going to gaming expos and supporting his interests in drawing and skateboarding – both of which he picked up quickly.

When Z mentioned his interest in the Police after a Young Carers Project visit, I arranged for him to attend a Police Cadet session through a family contact. Z loved the experience and quickly joined the Kingston branch as a fully-fledged cadet, which we made one of his mentoring goals.

Z’s mum later shared: ‘I can see genuine happiness in Z when he’s been with his mentor. We don’t have any other males for Z to look up to – this has been the best thing for him.’

Seeing Z’s confidence grow through mentoring and achieving his goals has been incredibly fulfilling.”

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"I started volunteering for Kingston Young Carers because they were such a big part of my life growing up. I didn't want to leave that behind when I turned 18. I love attending, sharing experiences, chatting and having fun with other young adult carers and I feel so lucky to now support others the way I was supported".

Emily, Young Adult Carer Support Volunteer

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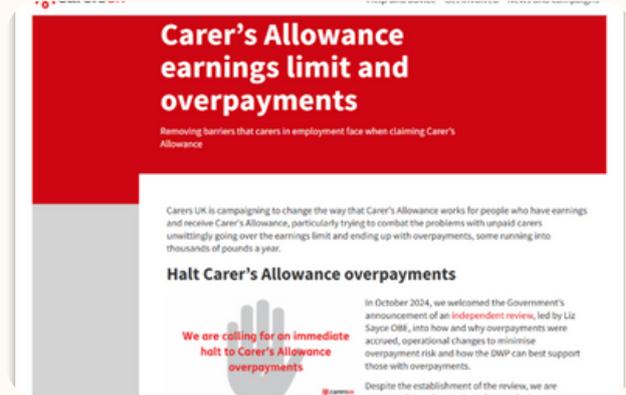
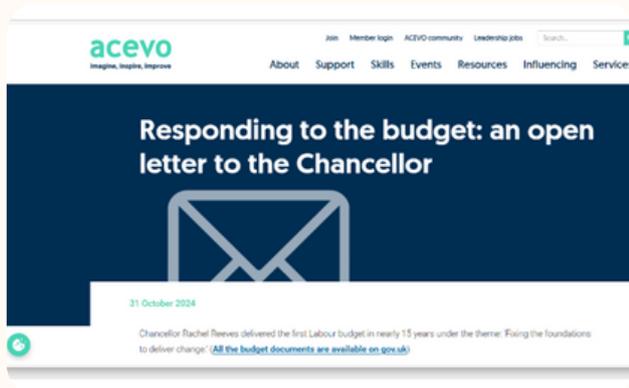
"Volunteering for YAC's has been such an incredible opportunity, it's provided me with a purpose and deepened my passion to help others. This volunteering journey has allowed me to meet and support some incredible people! The charity's team offers incredible support and I feel very lucky to be a part of this lovely team!"

Emma, Young Adult Carer Support facilitator



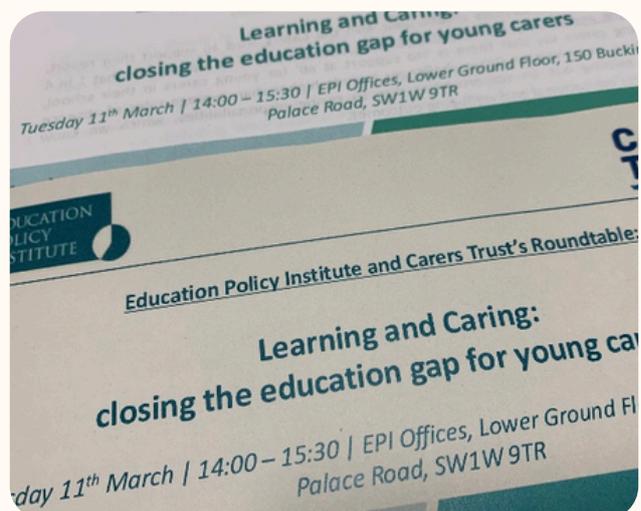
# Shaping policy and practice.

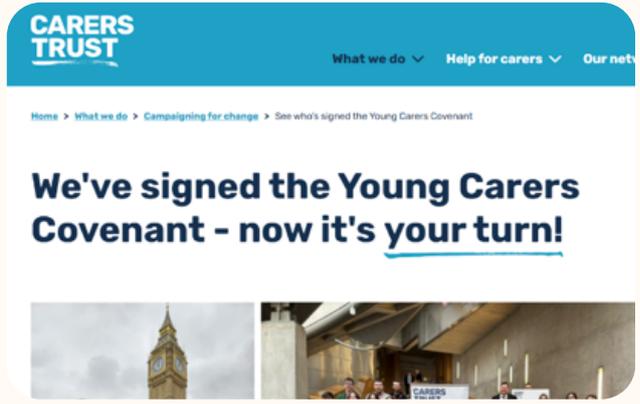
Through our partnerships with the Carers Trust and Carers UK, KCN engaged with the newly elected Government on a variety of issues affecting carers and carer organisations. Following the Autumn budget, we signed an open letter to the Chancellor on the impact of increased National Insurance Contributions on charities. We also signed a joint letter to the Secretary of State for Work and Pensions calling for a halt to Carer Allowance Overpayments.



As a member of the Carers Poverty Coalition, we attended a parliamentary reception in December to meet newly elected MPs to discuss the financial impacts of caring. To mark Young Carers Action Day in March, KCN took part in a roundtable hosted by the Education Policy Institute to discuss the educational impacts of being a carer with parliamentarians and key policy makers from the Department for Education and OFSTED.

Closer to home, we continued to champion carers rights as Co-Chair of the Kingston All-Age Carers Partnership Board. We engaged carers to refresh board priorities, with a renewed focus on carer identification and crisis prevention. We also continued to act as strategic lead for carers on the South-West London ICB's Kingston Place Committee and the regional VCSE Alliance.





During 2024/25, KCN took part in a regional consultation on the 10-year NHS Plan, fed into the development of Kingston's Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2025-2028) and successfully encouraged the Council to sign up to the Young Carers Covenant.

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# Partnerships and Collaboration.

KCN's work is strengthened and sustained by its partnerships, both within the borough and beyond. We are lucky to benefit from long-standing relationships across the public, voluntary and business sectors, as well as with local and national funding bodies.

In 2024/25 we were pleased to secure new partnerships with the City Bridge Foundation, Goldman Sachs Gives, the Hedley Foundation, the National Lottery Community Fund (Awards for All) and the Cooperative Community Fund. We remain grateful to the following trusts and foundations for their continued support in 2024/25: BBC Children in Need, Clothworkers Foundation, Garfield Weston, Jack Petchey Foundation, Henry Smith Foundation, Mercers Foundation, and the Trust for London.

We continued to work with our statutory partners The Royal Borough of Kingston-Upon-Thames Council, Achieving for Children and the local NHS to deliver our core services to young and adult carers. During the year, we supported the Adult Social Care team's CQC inspection and contributed to regional planning of the Accelerated Reform Fund.

Carers were able to benefit from specialist services and support thanks to our partnerships and collaboration with the following organisations:

- Kingston Mind and SWLSTG Trust (mental health peer support service)
- Kingston College (counselling service)
- New Malden and Worcester Park PCN (carers' one stop shop)
- Kingston Hospital Clinical Carers Liaison Service (in-hospital identification and support)
- Welcare (targeted family support)
- Create Arts and Rosetta Life (creative arts for young carers)
- Young Carers Illustration Project (young carers resource)

Last, but by no means least, our work with carers is sustained by the generous financial and in-kind support we receive from our many community partners across the Borough. We would like to extend our thanks to the following partners for their support in 2024/25:

- |  |                                   |                              |
|--|-----------------------------------|------------------------------|
| • Anne Owen Consulting                   | • Humphrey and Brand Estate Agent | • Odeon Cinema               |
| • Blossom Homecare                       | • Imber Court                     | • Ramon Selvakumaran         |
| • Chelsea FC                             | • John Lewis & Partners           | • RBKares                    |
| • Chessington World of Adventures        | • Kew Gardens                     | • Robert Holmes Estate Agent |
| • Full Cycle                             | • Kingstonian FC                  | • Surplus Food Hub           |
| • Friends of Latchmere Recreation Ground | • Kingston Gives                  | • Square 1 cafe              |
| • Grow Baby                              | • Kingston Nursing Association    | • Surbiton Rotary Club       |
| • Hampton Court Palace                   | • Kingston Rotary Club            | • St Mary's University       |
| • Hogsmill Nature Reserve                | • Kingston Voluntary Action       | • Wimbledon Hygiene Bank     |
|  |                                   | • Wych Elm Pub               |

## Partnership Profile: Public Health Partnership through the SWL NHS Winter Engagement Fund.

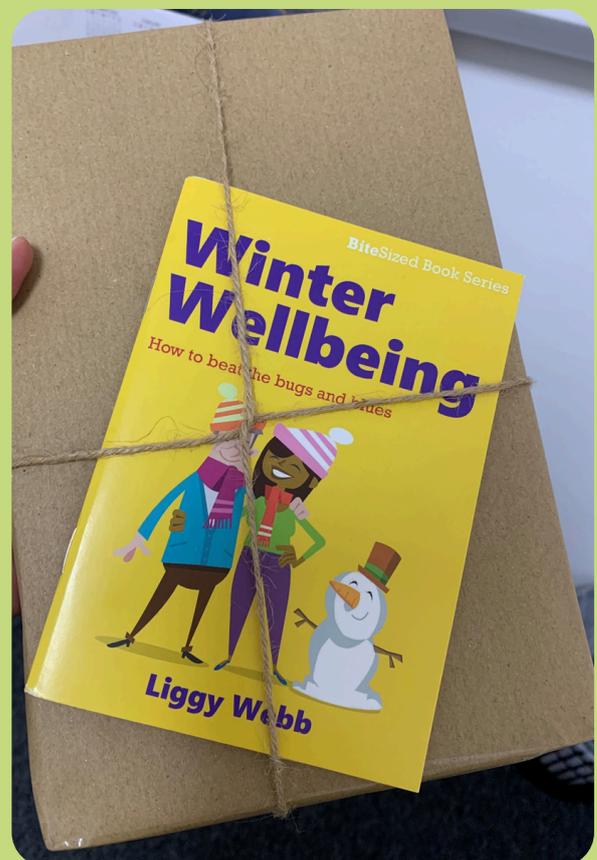
With funding from the South-West London NHS Winter Engagement Fund, KCN was able to deliver a 8-week programme of public health workshops for carers over the winter period addressing a range of themes from bone health and exercise, mental health, how to save money with the winter fuel scheme and how to use the NHS app.

Speakers included:

- PSM Pharmacy
- Better Bones
- Good Gym
- SWLSG Trust Recovery College
- Staywell
- Thinking Works.

Carers enjoyed finding out about the new services in a friendly and warm environment and all participants received a goodie bag at the end.

"I have had some great information to take away. Has been nice to get out of the house and devote to myself some "me" time with other carers".



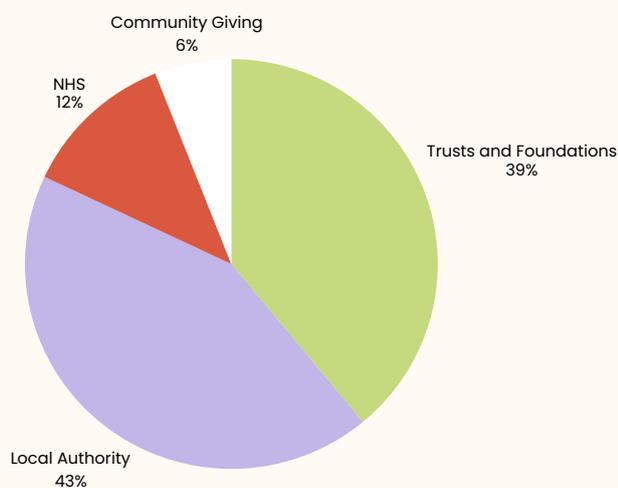
# Finance.

The year to March 2025 was difficult financially for KCN, resulting in a significant loss for the year. Some major funders changing grant criteria to a more location based approach undoubtedly impacted, removing eligibility through conditions over which KCN has no control. In addition, as with other charities, we suffered the effects of a tough economic background and an extremely tight funding environment.

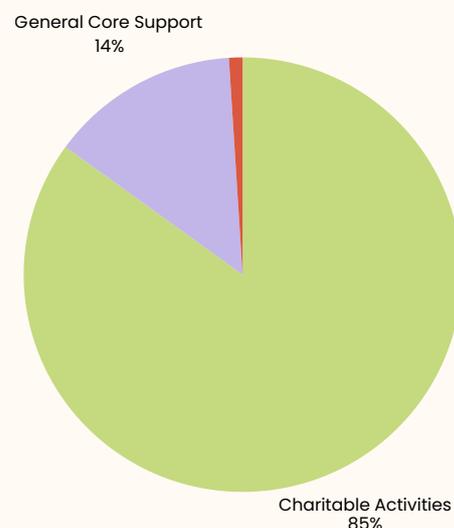
Our Young Carers Project (YCP) in particular was badly hit by these circumstances. In the light of this, the Trustees determined early in the year that the overall aims of KCN were best served by continuing our existing operations out of reserves for a short period, whilst initiating actions to improve financial health over the medium term. These actions have helped the current financial year into a much healthier position.

The Board are very aware of the need to ensure the long term financial viability of KCN and review the financial position (current and future) regularly. The reserves at year end March 2025 remain healthy.

The charts below illustrate some of the challenges and opportunities for KCN from a financial viewpoint. Looking at income, our 12 main funders provide 92% of total income. Whilst grants from key funding bodies will always be vital for us, KCN is very actively looking at ways to diversify our income and build financial strength. On costs, 85% of our cost base is core charitable spend. We have identified areas where this can be more cost effective. On 'non charitable spend' - whilst some of this is unavoidable, we have again made changes to reduce without affecting our core purpose.



**Sources of Income.**



**KCN Expenditure.**

# Balance sheet 2024/2025.

	2024/2025			2023/24
	Unrestricted £	Restricted £	Total Funds £	Total Funds £
<b>Income</b>				
Donations and legacies	111,827	0	111,827	116,036
Investments	6,996	0	6,996	5,479
Charitable activities		634,151	634,151	666,644
<b>Total</b>	<b>124,823</b>	<b>634,151</b>	<b>758,974</b>	<b>788,159</b>
<b>Expenditure</b>				
Charitable activities	213,560	601,448	815,008	766,253
Other	12,270	0	12,270	12,474
<b>Total</b>	<b>225,830</b>	<b>601,448</b>	<b>827,278</b>	<b>778,727</b>
Net resources before transfers	(101,007)	32,703	(68,304)	9,432
Transfers between funds	46,143	(46,143)	0	0
Net before other gains/losses	(54,864)	(13,440)	(68,304)	9,432
Other gains/losses	0	0	0	0
Net movement in funds	(54,864)	(13,440)	(68,304)	9,432
<b>Reconciliation of funds</b>				
Total funds brought forward	206,219	43,316	249,535	240,102
Total funds carried forward	151,355	29,875	181,229	249,534

# Governance.

Kingston Carers Network (KCN) is a charity registered in England and Wales with the Registered Number 1151456. The charity is a company limited by guarantee and was incorporated on 25 January 2013 and operates in accordance with its written Memorandum and Articles of Association. New Trustees are appointed in accordance with its Articles of Association.

## Membership.

KCN welcomes individuals and organisations committed to supporting carers within the Royal Borough of Kingston upon Thames. Membership is open to carers, representatives of voluntary, private, and statutory organisations, and individuals who share our mission to promote carers' interests. All applications are subject to approval by the Board of Directors, who ensure alignment with the charity's values and objectives. Each member, whether an individual or an organisation, is entitled to one vote at general meetings, helping shape the governance and future direction of the charity.

## Trustees / Directors in 2024/25.

Dr Anthony Woods (Chair), 17 October 2018

Steven Edward Blake, 18 September 2024

Wydeeswaran Thayalan, 16 November 2022 (re-elected 11 October 2024)

Peter David Whatnall, 20 July 2022 (re-elected 11 October 2024)

Simon Post, 16 February 2022 (re-elected 11 October 2024)

Dawn Whitcombe, 15 July 2020

Robert Charles Humphries, 17 October 2018

John Mays, 5 March 2003







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NETWORK**



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Volunteering opportunities: [volunteering@kingstoncarers.org.uk](mailto:volunteering@kingstoncarers.org.uk)

Partnership opportunities: [ceo@kingstoncarers.org.uk](mailto:ceo@kingstoncarers.org.uk)

418 Ewell Road, Tolworth, KT6 7HF. Registered Charity No. 1151456. Company No. 8376060.

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