

Swindon Carers Centre

Annual Impact Report 2023 – 2024



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Susanna Jones, CEO, pictured left and Debbie Murphy-Myers, Head of Service Delivery (YC/PC), at our Carers Rights Day 2023 event.

Foreword: Susanna Jones, CEO

Welcome to our Annual Impact Review of 2023-2024. 598 new carers have registered with our service over the past year taking the total number of carers we support to 5,524. We were delighted to become the first Carers Centre in the country to be re-accredited with the Carers Trust Excellence for Carers quality mark in 2023 – further external assurance that our dedicated team of staff and volunteers are providing a robust quality service.

It is increasingly challenging to cope with the rising number of carers needing support, when the funding environment is bleak. The core Swindon Borough Council/Integrated Care Board contract funding we receive is flatline (no inflationary uplifts). For many years Swindon Carers Centre has subsidised that funding with additional external income generation and grant funding to be able to manage increasing demand in service need but also deliver small incremental annual uplifts for staff and ensure our salaries are benchmarked competitively against other charitable organisations.

The current economic environment is tough and we are not in a position yet to know the outcome of the new SBC/ICB contract tender, as at the time of writing it has not yet been published. Our current core contract ends in December 2024. Therefore, as we have no guaranteed core contract funding after the end of December, for good governance we will be making changes to our spending over the coming months to ensure the whole organisation remains viable going forward. However, our focus will remain on ensuring carers are at the heart of everything we do and are recognised, valued and supported for the incredible work they do, which takes enormous pressure off the health and social care system elsewhere. I would also like to thank our team of staff, volunteers and trustees for their ongoing hard work and expertise. I am very proud of our team and its achievements.

Hannah Crawley, Chair of Trustees

I hope you enjoy reading our Annual Report 2023-2024 which is, as ever, full of fantastic work delivered by our team at Swindon Carers Centre. Amongst the highlights are the 3,351 activities delivered for adult and parent carers providing a much-needed break from their caring role, 2,653 volunteering hours donated by our volunteers and an uplift of 137 carers joining us from under-represented communities. With the numbers of carers registered with us now at an all-time high of 5,524, it's wonderful for us to be reaching and supporting more people in Swindon.

In the last 12 months we have also welcomed two new Trustees to our Board, Nina Czajkowski and Peta Fry whose expertise and experience are a huge asset to the team.

But this year has not been without its challenges as Susanna has outlined above. Aligned to these funding pressures we are facing into a period of restructure which will result in reducing staff numbers, and as part of this our long-standing CEO Susanna Jones has made the decision to step down from her role later in 2024 along with Stuart Ilbury our Head of Service Delivery, to support cost saving. Both Susanna and Stuart are hugely valued members of our team and although Stuart won't leave until September and Susanna will stay until the end of December, it will be very sad to be moving forward without them.



Our Walk a Mile 2023 event.

Our Story

Swindon Carers Centre is a charity that supports unpaid carers in Swindon. The support we offer includes assessments of carers' needs, 1:1 support, welfare and benefits advice, plus we run various groups and activities, enabling carers to have a break from their caring responsibilities and gain peer support from other carers.

An unpaid carer is a person who provides unpaid support to a family member, partner, friend, or neighbour who needs help because of an illness, frailty, disability, mental health condition, or an addiction and cannot cope without their support.

Our Vision

Creating a community where carers are recognised, valued, and supported.



Our Mission

To improve the wellbeing of people with caring responsibilities in and around Swindon.



As of 31st March 2024 we had 5,524 carers registered with us

an increase of 598 or 12% on the previous year



1,130
Parent Carers



2,091
Adult Carers



1,410
Older Carers



893
Young Carers



Our young carers having fun at Roves Farm.

“Meeting you has changed our lives. I’m using the money you got us (from Attendance Allowance) to pay for a cleaner and a gardener and take some of the stress away, I don’t know how to thank you enough,”

- an adult carer.



Our adult and older carers enjoyed our Afternoon Tea event. Waitrose & Partners generously funded and participated in serving scrumptious food during the event.



Our young carers at the 4 Kingdoms Adventure Park.

“Happy; and I enjoyed some time with other people who have the same life as me,”

- a young carer who attended one of our Easter holiday activities.



Our Carers Cuppas group funded by Haydon Wick Parish Council.

Highlights and challenges

During the past year we outline some of the successes and challenges we faced as an organisation.

Highlights include;

★ Collaborative working with a range of partners and organisations to support and champion carers. These included GPs in Swindon (with whom we had increased engagement), Adult Social Care colleagues at Swindon Borough Council, Great Western Hospital, Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board, the Live Well Team, Macmillan Personalised Care Team, Prospect Hospice, Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership NHS Trust, and Home Instead.

★ Funding from local organisations and businesses to support young carers, adult and older carers and parent carers with a range of training, wellbeing, and social activities.

★ Held several parent carer specific training and workshop sessions. These focused on subjects such as looking after the carer’s mental wellbeing, puberty in children and young people with additional needs and managing challenging behaviours. These have all been very well attended with positive feedback received.

★ Held two school Young Carers Leads meetings, represented the needs of young carers at Swindon Safeguarding Partnership meetings, Early Help Locality Boards and Contact Swindon. Also, supported other services to capture young carer voice including Swindon Borough Council Young Carer Charter, Great Western Hospital Young Carer Passport, and School Nurses meetings.

★ Our Adult Carers Events Team featured in Carers UK best practice guide for the range of activities and events they offer carers to improve their physical, and mental wellbeing.



Our Adult Carers "Walk and Talk" event at Lydiard Park featured in Carers UK best practice guide. Funded by Zurich.



A parent carer and her children at our Festive Family Focus event funded by Nationwide.



Our carers had the opportunity to gain valuable life skills such as at our car maintenance workshop. Funded by T.E. Connectivity.

Challenges were;

- 

The absence of a dedicated Carers Lead at Swindon Borough Council for a significant period hindered the prompt processing of Carers Relief applications, impacting support for isolated carers.
- 

Consistently high numbers of referrals to our service.
- 

We had to put young carer referrals on hold for three months, due to staffing restraints, to prevent waiting times increasing significantly.



Our achievements



2,827 individual carers were supported by teams across Swindon Carers Centre.



137 minority ethnic carers registered with us, an increase of 15% on the previous year.



Our adult carers participated in a "Walk and Talk" event hosted at Lydiard Park.



Our young carers at our Festive Family Focus event.



2,653.25 hours given by **18** volunteers, including Trustees and Students.



229 new or reviewed Emergency Card Scheme plans for carers issued.



Our young carers at the 4 Kingdoms Adventure Park.



56 adult carers were supported with carers relief, enabling them to have a regular break from their caring roles.



69 parent carers supported to successfully access funding through the Carers Support Scheme to help improve their health and wellbeing.



57 young carers were supported to attend our term-time groups and we provided **774** places for young carers to attend activities during school holidays.



3,351 total attendances at our events for adult and parent carers, giving them a break from their caring role.

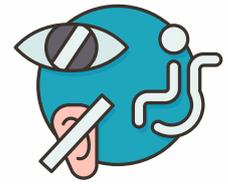


Our Welfare and Benefits Service secured an estimated **£261,533.33** in benefits and allowances for carers in Swindon.



The Social Return On Investment tool we use from Carers Trust shows for every pound invested in our service, we generated **£9.98 added value**.

Equality, diversity and inclusion



We strive to be an inclusive and diverse organisation and offer equality of opportunity for our team and the carers we support. All staff attended Inclusion and Diversity training, facilitated by Baljit Kaur from Innate Consultancy, which focused on inclusive practice, unconscious bias and enhanced confidence in communication. Everyone who attended really benefitted from it and lots of learning has already been imbedded within our work.

Twenty members of staff attended Honour Based Abuse, Forced Marriage and Female Genital Mutilation training with Meena Kumari at HOPE consultancy. This was predominately to ensure that staff who have direct contact with carers are confident in dealing with culturally specific safeguarding issues.



The Asian Womens Networking Group with our Community Engagement Officers, Monica and Kiran Chumber. This was funded by Carers UK.

“It’s really nice that Swindon Carers are doing something for our communities, we stick to our own groups and rarely mix in with others. Sometimes I think we shoot ourselves in the foot by alienating ourselves, then not knowing where to turn when we really need it.”
- a registered carer.



A few members of our PATH love & loss group funded by the Coop community fund.

Making Carers Count project

Through collaboration with leaders, volunteers and community champions we have been able to increase our reach and obtain referrals from Asian carers in Swindon. Our Community Champions have been instrumental in helping us share information with carers and have been a vital part of the project, which was funded by Carers Trust.

Even though the project’s funding has concluded, we’re committed to strengthening our engagement with carers to identify the most essential services. As part of this initiative, we’re striving to engage with various minority groups in Swindon, using the project’s insights to guide us in reaching out to these carers. We’re also expanding our range of culturally diverse activities and integrating our cultural calendar into our communication plan for the year.

“This is an amazing group (Dementia Support Group). It is so helpful, I get a lot of information, it has been a godsend for me and my husband.”
- a registered carer.

Dementia support group

We run a number of groups and activities for carers who look after someone living with dementia and which their cared for can also attend.

These include a monthly Dementia Peer Support Group, Open Minds social afternoon with live entertainment and refreshments and Walk and Talk.

We also have a monthly Love & Loss Group for carers who are experiencing feelings of loss and grief due to their loved one living with dementia and ‘losing’ a little of them each day.

We are also a member of Swindon Dementia Action Alliance and we took part in an Expo, particularly targeting newly diagnosed patients and their families.



Our “Walk and Talk” group.



Tina, Deputy Service Delivery Manager, and a carer at one of the Carers Cuppa events at Lawn Community Centre.

Our outreach work

We work with a range of organisations to raise awareness about our services, creating opportunities for more carers to be referred to us for support.



During the past year these have included attending;



Carers Cuppas at GP surgeries, linking with the Live Well hub at Sanford House.



Swindon & Wiltshire Pride's event in Queens Park.



A Health and Wellbeing Day for people living with head and neck cancer run by the Macmillan Personalised Care Team.



The Community Fridge in Gorse Hill.

We also linked in with many other professionals, such as Avon and Wiltshire Mental Health Partnership's Complex Intervention and Treatments Team, Swindon Borough Council's Adult Social Care Initial Contact Team and Adult Social Care's Community Led Support Teams, Great Western Hospital's Training Department as well as Voluntary Action Swindon's Veteran Support Navigator.

We have also connected with the Highworth Forget Me Not Cafe and Haydon Wick Memory Café, supporting people living with dementia and their carers.

Many parent carers who look after children with additional needs don't see themselves as carers. To increase our reach with parent carers and to provide support, advice and guidance around their caring role, our Parent Carer Team ran monthly drop-in coffee mornings at The Sun Inn, Coate Water, kindly funded by Nationwide, and attended coffee and chat mornings at local schools.

The team also helped to plan and attended the first My Future event with Swindon Borough Council. The event was aimed specifically at helping young people with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND) to make choices as they move into adulthood.



Our staff and at the Swindon & Wiltshire Pride's 2023 event in Queens Park.



Lorraine and Isabel, our Parent Carer Support Practitioners, who run our Parent Carer Coffee Mornings. Funded by Nationwide.

"Invaluable opportunity to meet other parent carers and to feel less isolated. I've been registered six weeks and so pleased to have joined and met other people with similar experiences - THANK YOU." - a parent carer attending a coffee morning funded by Nationwide.

Carer Voice

Carers are at the heart of everything we do and it's vital to hear their experiences and suggestions. The purpose of carer voice is to raise awareness and understanding of carers and their roles, share knowledge and expertise and to ensure their voice is heard by health and social care leaders in Swindon.

Our Carers Forum enables adult carers, older carers and parent carers to meet to discuss issues of concern. It's a platform for them to put forward their ideas to increase the influence of carer voiced in our service design and delivery. The forum began in September 2022 and meets four times a year (read more on page 10 about the work of the forum and our Mental Health Group for carers).

Young carers

Young carers took part in and created the narrative for the film, Superheroes, produced by Light-Up Media. They used the letters from the word 'Superheroes' to describe the qualities or feelings of being a young carer. For example, 'R' being resilient and 'E' being empathetic.

For Young Carers Action Day young carers designed posters depicting their chosen super-power and how it could help them in their caring role. Their creations were superb!



Community events

During Carers Week at our **Walk A Mile** event we welcomed carers, the people they care for and supporters, including Swindon MPs Sir Robert Buckland and Justin Tomlinson, the Mayor of Swindon Councillor Barbara Parry, the High Sheriff of Swindon Pradeep Bhardwaj and Sarah-Jane Peffers, Associate Director of Patient Safety and Quality at Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board (ICB).



Walk a Mile 2023.

We walked through the town centre and the story of Julia, a carer registered with us, was read out. We raised a fantastic £1,702.81 through an online raffle, tombola and match funding by our generous sponsors Pebley Beach Hyundai and Suzuki Swindon.

Our **Carers Rights Day** event focused on parent carers looking after a child under 18 with Special Educational Needs and Disabilities (SEND).

Parent carer Anna Bird spoke about her caring role, followed by presentations, a question and answer session which included Sir Robert Buckland MP and

Caroline Holmes, Deputy Place Director for the Swindon Locality on the ICB, and a marketplace with stallholders from key local organisations and charities.

“Meeting other carers and feeling part of a community. Nice to be thanked and recognised.”
– A carer who attended our Walk A Mile event.



Caroline Holmes (Deputy Director of Place), Freyr Bendleton (SIAS) and Sir Robert Buckland (Former MP for South Swindon) at our Carers Rights Day 2023 event.



Anna Bird from Mum's On A Mission; a group aimed to raise awareness for the need of changing places in Swindon's parks and open spaces.

Reporting on our key priorities for 2023/24

What we said we would do last year

Continue to keep carers at the centre of decision making and ensuring their voice is heard.

Using our Income Generation Plan to reduce our reliance on our statutory funding and to maximise full cost recovery on additional grants.

Using data available throughout the Integrated Care System (ICS) to inform gaps in support for carers and work with the ICS and Integrated Care Alliance partners in Swindon to plug those gaps and inform planning for the next carer support contract.

What we did

Through our Carers Forum carers share their experiences and suggestions for our services. The forum has been key in designing and developing our Carers Rights Day events, giving their comments on our strategic aims, the redesign of our leaflets and came up with 'Supporting our Carer Community', which we chose as our new charity tagline.

Forum members were also involved in giving feedback to Great Western Hospital on the Carers Passport scheme which has now been rolled out.

We also have a Mental Health Group for carers who support adults with a mental health illness and it has been involved in shaping Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board's new Mental Health Strategy.

We were so grateful to receive grants from trusts and donations from individuals, community groups and businesses.

These included a fundraising pamper night by Lil Beauty Salon, which raised £577 for future group pamper sessions for our carers.

Also, Jeska Lyons started a Go Fund Me fundraiser in memory of her mum, Jane Lyons, who championed and advocated for young people throughout her life and cared deeply for the work Swindon Carers Centre did for young people. Family and friends of Jane raised a total of £5,800. The global investment firm, KKR, generously match funded a total of £4,474.00 of the funds raised resulting in the amazing total of £10,274.

During 2023 we relaunched our 50:50 Lottery Club, resulting in an increase in monies raised. The proceeds are split 50:50 each month, with half going to Swindon Carers Centre to provide our essential services to carers and the remaining half is retained as the prize fund to be won by club members.

All existing carer Emergency Card Scheme plans were uploaded onto the Careflow management system at Great Western Hospital (to date 807), as well as new plans going forward.

We have done a lot of work with Primary Care Networks and GP surgeries to raise carer awareness and ensure carers are better supported at the first point of access in the health system.

Our Making Carers Count project, funded by the Carers Trust, targeted Asian carers in Swindon and reached 747 carers who we would not have reached otherwise, nearly 15% above the original target. We presented to the Swindon Integrated Care Alliance around the findings/successes/challenges of this work and our recommendations for inclusive practice for all key partners.

In January 2024 data from our Carers Support Line (funded by the NHS Charitable Trust, with a focus on mental health), showed that 1,045 carers struggled to cope in the past 18 months and 70 carers had high crisis needs. Around 10% of callers with high mental health needs live in areas of high deprivation in Swindon and over 30% of carers also sought support with our Welfare and Benefits service, showing a correlation to mental health issues and financial difficulties. Our CSL Practitioner gives callers advice to address their concerns, which can include referring them to 1:1 support within Swindon Carers Centre or to other organisations.



Our Christmas Open Minds event, featuring special guest Daisy, brought joy to our adult carers during the festive season. Funded by Zurich.

Our funders

We receive statutory funding from Swindon Borough Council and Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board towards our core services. But to fully cover our running costs for our essential services and go above and beyond for carers, we have also been awarded grants from Trusts and Foundations. We are grateful to all our funders for their support.



The Walter Guinness Charitable Trust

Swindon Carers Centre is registered with the Fundraising Regulator and adheres to its Code of Practice and Promise. Our fundraising practices are outlined in our Ethical Fundraising Policy and information about our supporters is available on our website. We do not use external fundraising suppliers and we received no complaints about our fundraising over the year.

Annual accounts

Last year our services cost £1,026,833 to deliver. Funding from Swindon Borough Council and the Integrated Care Board covered our core costs. This totalled £586,410.

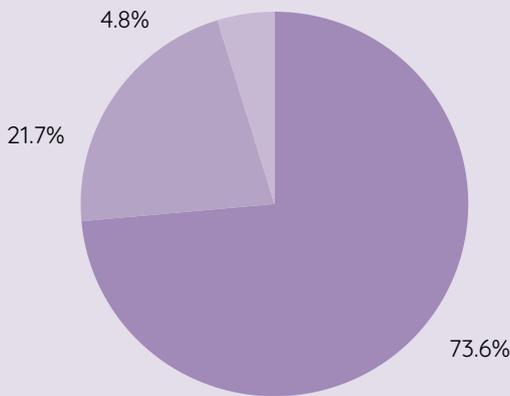
Thanks to the generous grants we receive from Trusts and Foundations we are able to deliver a wide range of holistic support to carers to enable them to remain resilient, confident and connected.



Walk a Mile 2023.

Income

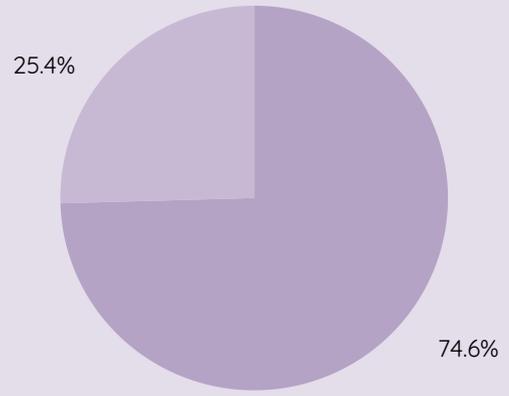
Statutory organisations	£589,476
Grants	£173,614
Other fundraising	£38,155



Reserves

Balance as at 31st March 2024

Unrestricted funds	£146,746
Restricted funds	£50,078



Expenditure

The overspend occurred because we used both our grants income and reserves. In 2023, our restricted funds were £200,369, but we spent around £150,000, leaving £50,078. This indicates that we are actively using our grants, with some of this income recorded in previous years but spent across multiple years. Additionally, we spent approximately £60,000 from our reserves, reducing them from £214,094 to £146,746, which is prompting our staff restructure in April/May 2024.



Our SN25 Carers Cuppas group funded by Haydon Wick Parish Council.

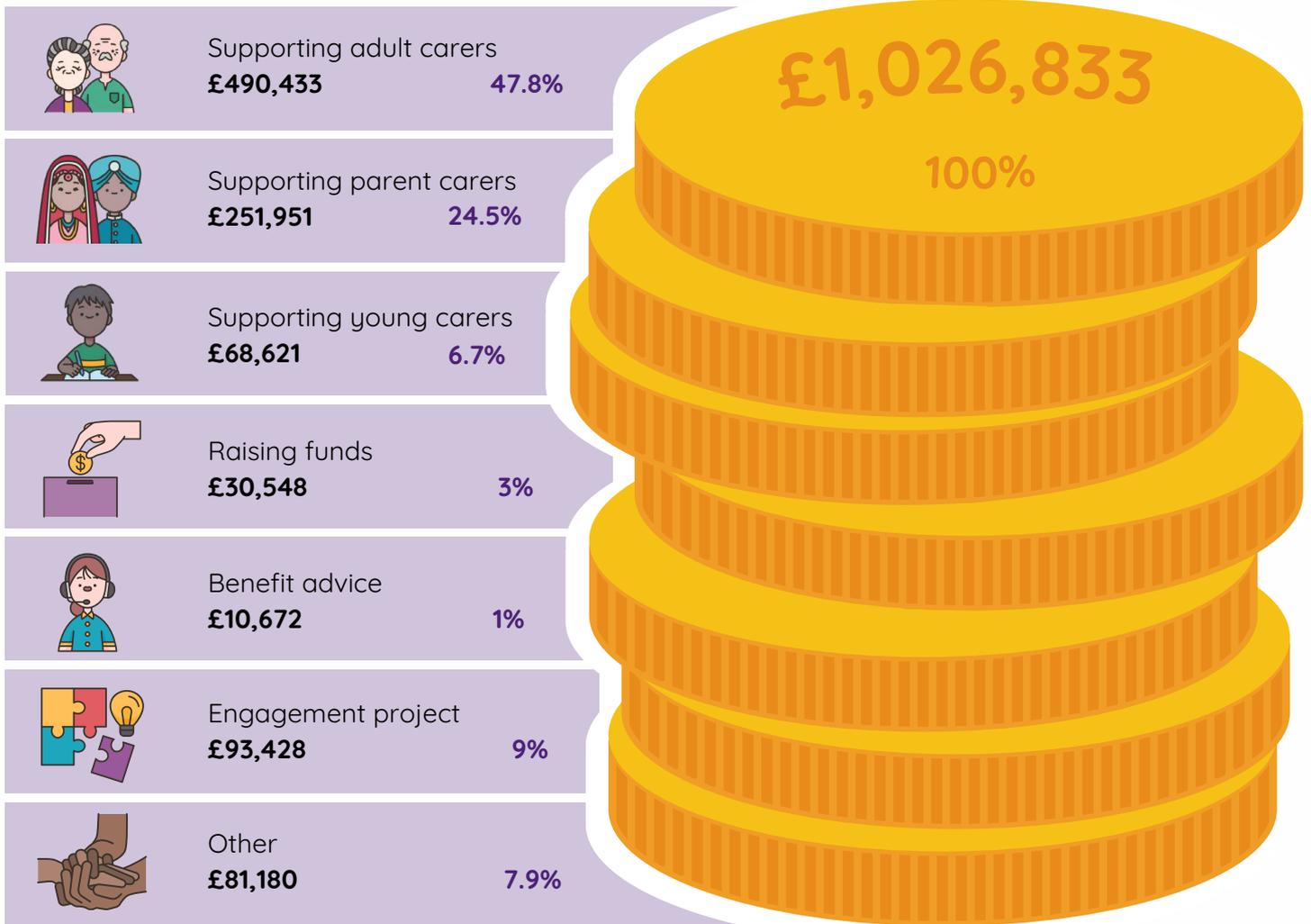


Walk and Talk event funded by Zurich.



Our PATH love & loss group funded by the Coop community fund.

Annual accounts



Governance

The Trustees of Swindon Carers Centre have considered the Charity Commission’s guidance on public benefit and has benchmarks itself against the [Good Governance Code](#). The main benefit which the organisation delivers is support to carers carrying out a caring role for persons with physical or mental health challenges or disability and to promote the development of self-help. This will enable them to have a quality of life alongside their caring role. This benefit is clearly relevant to the organisation’s charitable purposes. The main beneficiaries are carers themselves.

Quality Assurance

We currently hold the Trusted Charity Version 4 Level 2 award. This helps our beneficiaries, commissioners, supporters, donors, volunteers, staff and the public to have confidence that we always work to a high standard. The Trusted Charity standard exists to build public trust and confidence in individual charities and in the sector as a whole and is a way of making sure organisations are well run, accountable and transparent. In 2023 we were also the first Carers Centre in the country to be reaccredited with the Carers Trust Excellence for Carers quality mark.



Strategy for 2024 onwards

The key priority for Swindon Carers Centre in 2024-2025 is to go through the procurement process for the jointly funded Swindon Borough Council and Bath and North East Somerset, Swindon and Wiltshire Integrated Care Board Carer Services contract for Swindon.

At the time of publication this process is live and we will be able to update further in the year on the outcome and plans going forward.



Some of our wonderful volunteers and SCC staff.

The key aims in our updated 2024-2027 Strategic Plan are:

- 2024 Understand our contractual and financial position.
- 2025 Review our service offer, ensuring carers are the focus, and continue to embed community engagement into our services.
- 2026 Offer a digitalised service as much as possible and continue to grow our partnership working.
- 2027 Continue to raise awareness of carers and their rights across Swindon.

For us to tell our story of success and challenge, we will regularly review and enhance our monitoring and evaluation processes through:



Formative and summative assessment and reports of impact



Quarterly Swindon Borough Council contract performance monitoring and meetings with Commissioners



Carer feedback analysis



Staff and volunteer feedback analysis



Impact report to grant funders



Quarterly report to Trustees including exception reporting



Appraisal system feeding into business planning process



Thank you to all unpaid carers who continue to do such incredible work in Swindon. If you care, we care.