

Learning Snapshot: Working and Engaging with Carers

Ageing Better is a test and learn programme funded by the National Lottery Community Fund.

We collect information and insights from across 14 partnerships and use this learning to support service deliverers, funders and policy makers working to reduce social isolation in people aged 50+.

This learning snapshot details key findings and recommendations relevant to those working and engaging with carers.

You can use it as a summary of the full [learning report](#), to share practical tools with colleagues and in teams, or include in your own presentations and briefings.

<p>1. Why focus on carers? 1 in 10 people are carers; playing a valuable role in society and the social care system. Yet caring is a risk factor for experiencing social isolation and carers need support.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The value of unpaid carers' support is estimated to be £132 billion in the UK. • 8 in 10 carers experience loneliness or isolation as a result of their carer role. <p>Supporting carers to build social connections will have long term benefits for their own personal wellbeing as well as their ability to maintain their caring role.</p>	<p>2. What are the challenges? Connecting with and supporting carers has its own unique set of challenges.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Half of carers identify 'time' and the ability to leave the home (to connect with people) as a challenge. • A third feel uncomfortable talking about their caring role with friends and family. <p>In addition, we learnt that cultural differences, language, awareness of support, loss of social connections, finances and mistrust of support services, are all challenges to be understood and addressed.</p>
<p>4. So what can we do with this learning? The number of people caring is set to increase and their contribution to the social care system will grow. We encourage funders and commissioners to support collaboration between organisations working to provide long term, evidence-led support to those working with and supporting carers.</p> <p>Test and learn from services in your area:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Telephone support for carers. • Support for carer-led peer groups. • Targeted support packages aimed at specific groups based on gender, age, faith or shared interests. 	<p>3. How can we improve connections? Making early support links with carers when the cared for person first gets a diagnosis is key, as is developing a wide range of connections and partnerships across local services such as GPs, hospitals, libraries and community hubs. Other learning highlights the following approaches as best practice:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide practical courses for carers. • Enlist ex-carer volunteers to help deliver these. • Ensure carers have access to personalised (including home based) activities that promote self-care and encourage social connections, peer support and respite.