

Making a difference to the lives of carers

We have made a short video sharing our evidence of the impact we're having on Carers' lives. To accompany this, here are some further examples and feedback from various aspects of the Carers friendly Dorset project, we hope you enjoy reading them:

Carers ID Card

Forward Carers has issued 1207 NEW Cards in its first year and expect to achieve 3000 in 2024. Over 140 new businesses on our Wellness directory accessible to all card holders. This includes some bigger local organisations including BHLive Leisure centres and Robert Frith Opticians.

Carer Feedback

"The card is really useful, not just for using in shops etc, but for one's own confidence. It is empowering just to have it with me"

"I like the photo ID, I recently got mine and it makes it special"

"When the service develops more, it will be amazing, in a strange way it's nice that it's only for carers, makes me feel seen."

Case Worker Feedback

"Our North Dorset Carers Group, that meets at Gillingham Library, really valued the visit from Forward Carers and the opportunity to understand the role the new Carers Card has in supporting them. Carers were also delighted that Friths Opticians Group listened to their request and chose to support them by joining the Carer Friendly Communities Project. This helps Carers to feel their suggestions are listened to, acted upon and recognises the vital role Carers have. It is wonderful that local businesses can make their caring role easier to manage." **Lynne White - Dorset Carers Case Worker**

Local Counsellors Feedback

"I hope Carers will see this as an opportunity to help improve their quality of life as it is so important for them to stay healthy too. Many people don't realise that the support they provide falls under the legal definition of unpaid Care. This card is all about recognition, support and giving them the opportunity to improve their lives" **Cllr Jane Somper - Portfolio lead for Housing, Adults and Public Health Dorset**

Business Feedback

BHLive Leisure Centres are now offering discounted membership to all Carers with our ID Card, not only those on Carer related benefits - and a new subsidised Carer focused health programme is in the making.

"We want to help improve their physical health (to support their mental health). We believe that helping carers to stay strong and healthy will help them to support the ones they love."

There are so many benefits to physical activity. If we are successful in gaining this new funding, sessions will be specifically for Carers so that they meet others going through similar experiences. Sessions will be varied and at various times to support carers of all ages and abilities. We also plan to run online sessions for those unable to get away from their caring roles, work, or home life” **Vivienne Galpin, Health & Wellbeing Manager BHLive**

“I am so pleased to hear about the partnership between BHLive and The Dorset Carers Card. It will make a big difference to carers and provide them with more opportunities to engage in fitness and leisure activities. Your project for Carers sounds exciting, I look forward to hearing more about it.” **Eliza Etyeo – BCP (Bournemouth Christchurch and Poole) Carers Commissioning Offer, Adult Social Care**

Robert Frith Opticians have branches across Dorset.

“We were delighted to be recommend by a Carers Group and add Robert Frith Opticians to the Carer Friendly Community and directory. We are really pleased to be able to offer a 10% discount at all our sites. We are already a dementia friendly business, and we are looking forward to the Carer Friendly training we receive as a part of this scheme. We hope other businesses will be inspired to do the same.” **Group Communications Manager Kate Brown**

Digital Engagement

- Our Facebook page publishes new and updated offers, local events, and Carers news. It has 1.1K followers, with an average reach of 3.5K.
- A new Instagram account already has nearly 200 followers
- Digital version of our Card is available via the Bridget Care platform as an option to all Carers accessing support.
- We run online evening Zoom sessions Carers Card discovery sessions to support Carers in using their Card with confidence. There are always fully booked with high attendance. **Carers Feedback:**

“Thank you so much for taking the time to run this session, it’s helped me understand everything the card can offer, sounds so helpful”

“I didn't realise there were places locally I could use my card in – thank you for showing us all the ways I can find the offers”

Supporting GP Surgeries to join our Carer Friendly Community

We are extremely fortunate to have NHS Carers Engagement Facilitators that are dedicated to supporting GP surgeries to provide exceptional care and support to unpaid carers within their practice and local community. To support their work, we formed a partnership with the facilitators to award our Carer Friendly Recognition to those practices that meet their benchmark of good practice. This good practice is in part based on a piece of work between the NHS and Carers UK, who created an NHS benchmark guidance around identifying and supporting the Carers. 26 x GP surgeries have been awarded so far.

Here are two testimonials but all of them actively promote their support to Carers via websites, social media, posters, hosting events and providing Carer leads.

*“**Poole North PCN** comprises four Practices in the local area and has a designated Carers Lead assigned to each Practice. We work as part of a friendly proactive team of Care Coordinators, meeting regularly to share ideas and plan events to support carers. This summer we arranged a ‘Cake for Carers’ afternoon, which we hosted in Broadstone during Carers Week, and represented our PCN at a local Dementia Awareness event. These were well attended and the feedback we received was positive, which will help us to plan future events”*

*“**At Gillingham Medical Practice**, we work hard to support our carers and give recognition to the invaluable support they provide. We keep in regular contact with our carers through text message with information about upcoming events, whether these are organised by the practice or externally. We also have our Families and Young Person Social Prescriber, who we link in with when thinking about how we can offer support to our young carers. In collaboration with Dorset Council, we run a fortnightly carers group at the library where carers can come together and talk to others who are dealing with similar situations.”*

Young Carers and Pharmacies project

Young Carers across Dorset are now included, we are working closely with them to explore how they feel the Carer ID card can be most valuable to them.

*The young carers felt that the Carer Friendly ID card will be most useful, and extremely important, in gaining credibility in healthcare settings. For example, the young carers would use this Card to signify that they are a useful asset to Doctors, Nurses, and Paramedics. They hope that this Card will encourage the Paramedic (e.g.) to take them seriously as a knowledgeable Carer and not just a frantic child - as one young carer shared, she had experienced. Similarly, the young carers felt that this Card will be useful in being recognised as a young carer in school and having the impacts of their caring role taken seriously. Lastly, the scenario which caused the most excitement around finding a potential solution, was with Pharmacists. Multiple of the young carers shared stories of being unable to collect vital medications for the person they care for as they are under 18. - **My Time Youth Advisory Board***

In our supporting video, you can hear an update on the Young Carers and Pharmacies project.

Carer Friendly Workplaces

We have started to work with several organisations around the new Carers Leave Act and how to be a Carers friendly Employer. We offer 1-1 video calls and Discovery sessions. So far more than 50 organisations have attended discovery sessions in Dorset.

***Hi, my name is Peter Bywater and I own Ridgewater Energy.** We are an Energy Advice and Project Management provider, and we specialise in assisting residents save money on energy bills and*

getting them grants for energy efficiency improvements. We often interact with unpaid carers and support these clients with the resources Forward Carers provided. Many of our employees fulfil unpaid carer roles, so we had a team training day around being a Carers friendly Workplace and started our journey of being a Carer friendly Employer.

*"I was already a registered Carer for my adult stepson, when my husband was suddenly diagnosed with an aggressive Cancer, and everything became uncertain. I am so grateful to my employer for being flexible, listening and trusting me to manage my workload and communicate to them accordingly. I worked from home, I worked at various time of the day and including early hours with certain tasks and had support from the wider team when needed. This support meant I not only kept my job but was able to take on addition hours to support our income as a family and provide my employer with valuable expertise. The Carers leave days really helped too. Every company needs a Carers Policy" - **Rachel – working Carer in Dorset***

Volunteer Ambassadors

This is a newer development in our project with a full launch planned for 2024 in Carers week. Our volunteers will be fully supported to provide ad hoc time attending Carers groups or events, inspiring businesses to offers and being mystery shoppers to give feedback on their experiences. Sylvia, our newest volunteer, and Carers speaks beautifully on the video.