

Time For You: Carers Breaks Strategy, 2025-2028

The importance for carers of being able to take a break from their caring role was highlighted in the Our Manchester Carers Strategy 2018. It has also been a constant issue raised by both carers, and organisations working with carers, in both formal research and through informal conversations over the past 5 years.

Our Carers' Breaks strategy has been co-produced with carers and professionals involved in Carers Manchester. This has been achieved through:

- Working with our Carers Lived Experience Panel and reps
- Developing the strategy with a delivery group consisting of Commissioners, Statutory and Voluntary sector representatives and Carers with lived experience
- Providing regular updates to our Carers Partnership Board
- Sharing this strategy widely within the City Council, Manchester Local Care Organisation and Health structures.

The development of our recommendations and action plan have been built on:

- Undertaking of national and local research into Carers Breaks,
- Development of a comprehensive picture of the breaks that are currently available to carers in the City.
- An analysis of data and plans for enhancing breaks that are currently being progressed.
- Consultation with over 160 carers.

Our strategy is a three-year plan aimed at improving and enhancing the provision of carers breaks in the City, whilst working to tackle the issues that affect the ability of carers to take a break.

It is designed to provide a strategic framework for the provision of Breaks for Adult Carers, aged over the age of 18. It does not include information on the provision of short breaks for disabled children and their families as they have access to different support.

The current Carers Breaks offer in Manchester

Our consultation found that carers in Manchester access a break from their caring role in many different ways: These include:

- Arranging a break independently, whether it is a brief break during their daily life, a trip away from their home or accessing breaks organised by non-carer organisations.
- Attending breaks organised by Carers organisations. During 2024, Carers Manchester network members organised 754 activities that provided a break for carers. These included regular carers group meetings and drop-in support

sessions, exercise activities such as yoga and workout classes, pampering and self-care sessions and activities such as theatre visits and reading clubs.

- Carers can also arrange a break through the use of a Carers Personal Budget. All unpaid carers can request a Carer Assessment, which will include assessing if a carer is eligible for a personal budget. The amount of the Personal Budget allocated is based on need and has to be used on something for the carer, rather than the cared for or household bills. In the 12 months ending in February 2025, there were a total of 2,167 carers assessment completed by Manchester City Council, the majority of whom received a Personal Budget. The three most popular items the Personal Budget in 2024 were used for were holidays, spa / pampering, and laptop / computer / mobile phone.

What carers told us about what breaks are needed

Provision of Breaks - carers told us they want more of:

- Overnight breaks
- Breaks available at times and places that suit them, including evenings and weekends, online and things they can do at home
- Low cost and free break offers
- Opportunities for relaxation and pampering
- Opportunities to take a break with the cared for person, if this is right for the carer

“I would really love to get some proper rest - go away for a couple of nights or even have a longer holiday but this seems very difficult to arrange”

“Short breaks during the day such as a relaxation session with some meditation or massage.”

Importance of Carers Personal Budgets - being able to access a Carers Personal Budget is of significant value to carers, as they provide an opportunity to tailor the break to their own personal circumstances.

Of the carers who filled in the survey, 43% had had a Carers Assessment in the last 12 months, and of those 88% had received a Personal Budget.

- *“I used the money to have a four day stay in Paris. Found a deal online. Was great to have a holiday just for me.”*
- *“[I used it for] an annual gym membership so I could access yoga & fitness classes”*

What carers told us about barriers to taking a break

Our consultation showed that

- Only 50% of carers had a break in the last 12 months and this reduced to 32% of carers who provided support to more than one person.
- Carers who provided more than 50 hours of care per week were less likely to have had a break than those providing less than 9 hours of care per week.

What carers told us about barriers to taking a break

46% of carers stated the **cost** of taking a break was a key barrier, and 23% said cost of replacement care was a barrier. *“I would need someone to care for my daughter while I was away. I don’t have much extra cash available for this support - so I don’t get a break,”*

For many carers, the only option to take a break is when the cared for person is provided with **replacement care**, on a daily basis in a day centre, or for a period of time within a care home.

- 45% of carers stated lack of time as a challenge, and 38% said the cared for person is not comfortable with anyone else providing care for them. Having suitable and trusted replacement care provided would help some carers overcome these challenges.

Support with transport or activities close by home came up regularly. *“Don’t want breaks to be too far away- should be easy to travel and not too hard to fit into schedule”*

What carers told us about comms and information they needed about breaks

The need to improve the way that carers breaks are publicised was mentioned by carers in the consultation:

- 38% of carers responding to the survey said they don’t know what breaks are available and how to access replacement care for the person they support.
- *“I need more information about how to access support.”*

Issues with having accurate and up-to-date information about break opportunities was mentioned repeatedly: *“Better information sharing about what is available and how to apply”*; *“Often information is out of date”*.

Carers also talked about **feeling guilty** about taking a break or not being able to relax because of caring situation *“[I] can’t relax even if taking break because constantly thinking about caring responsibilities”*.

Priorities and recommendations

Based on the research and consultation we have undertaken, five priority areas have been identified and recommendations for each agreed.

The table below introduces these, and the Strategy Action Plan gives further details on how these recommendations will be implemented.

Priorities	Recommendations
1. Provision and availability of carers breaks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Continue to provide breaks and develop new opportunities. • Explore funding opportunities for more regular breaks at a low cost or provided free. • Breaks at times and spaces that suit carers, including evenings, weekends and online.
2. Support carers need to take a break	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Need for varied and comprehensive replacement care offer for the cared for person • Support to cover the cost of breaks • Improve support available with travel and transport
3. Ensuring that carers in Manchester are aware of what is available	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Publicity about available breaks. • Information about rights to a Carers Assessments and how a Carers Personal Budget can be used for a break. • Comms campaign about how taking a break can benefit carer's own health and wellbeing.
4. Enhancing data to ensure carers breaks match carers needs	<p>Improving data collection about</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Carers Personal Budgets, • Carers contacting The Contact Point for information on short breaks and referred for short breaks, and • People accessing respite care, in both day centres and residential care.
5. Governance	<p>The delivery of this Strategy and Action Plan will be shared between The Strategy Delivery Group, the Carers Partnership Board and the partners of Carers Manchester.</p>