Carers Manchester

TIME FOR YOU:

Carers' Breaks Strategy Summary 2025-2028

Introduction and Context

Carers Manchester is a partnership of statutory and voluntary sector organisations who come together to plan, develop and deliver carers support services to over 37,072 carers who we know live in the city. The key partners are:

- Manchester City Council
- Manchester Local Care Organisation
- Manchester Foundation Trust
- Greater Manchester Mental Health
- Voluntary sector organisations who are members of the Carers Manchester Network

Manchester City Council's Carers Commissioning Strategy 2023 – 2025 identified Quality of life and Carer respite (break) offer as an area of improvement which was needed. In research by Carers Manchester Central (2024), 48% of respondents reported that they did not have enough time for themselves, and over a third felt that being a carer affected their physical health.

Along with this, the Carers Manchester partners identified the need to produce a strategic framework for the development and delivery of breaks for carers. This strategy is a three-year plan designed for improving the provision of Breaks for Adult Carers in the city of Manchester, aged over the age of 18. It also aims to tackle the issues affecting the ability of carers to take a break. The support that unpaid carers need to take a break includes two elements: support for the person they care for, and the break itself.

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

- Undertaking of national and local research into Carers' Breaks
- A comprehensive audit of breaks currently available to carers in the city
- An analysis of data and plans for enhancing breaks that are currently in progress.
- Consultation with groups such as the Carers Manchester Lived Experience Panel and professionals working with carers.
- Feedback from a total of 215 unpaid carers in Manchester.

It is our intention that the action plan that has emerged from development of this strategy will be monitored through appropriate governance structures, including the Carers Partnership Board and Manchester's Health Scrutiny Committee.

Our Findings

The literature review examined the barriers that exist for carers taking breaks along with the impact that breaks have on the wellbeing of carers; the strategy review examined national policy context about carers' breaks, and a further local strategy review examined the Greater Manchester context. National and Local research suggests that breaks offer substantial benefits to unpaid carers, including improved mental health, physical well-being, quality of life, and social support. Recent research by Carers UK found that 41% of carers had not taken a break in the last year.

Barriers identified in the literature and strategy reviews included:

- lack of suitable replacement care,
- lack of awareness and information,
- financial constraints and lack of suitable breaks,
- cultural and social factors,
- limited awareness of the need for breaks for underrepresented groups of carers.

Currently carers in Manchester can get a break in a number of ways including:

- Independently organised
- Through carer organisations (e.g. ACCG Hotel break offer)
- Using Carers Personal Budget
- With replacement care for cared for
- Assistive technology

The consultation examined:

- Carer experiences of taking breaks and what breaks they have taken in the last 12 months,
- What breaks would carers like to see provided in Manchester,
- The biggest challenges carers face in taking a break.
- What additional support or services carers would like to see being provided to help carers get a break

Phase 2 of the consultation also gave carers an opportunity to provide feedback on the Priorities developed in this strategy. The data then underwent thematic analysis to highlight recurring issues and collected demographic and relationship data to build a detailed picture of the opportunities and barriers for carers in the city of Manchester.

Of the carers who completed our consultation survey, 50% had had a break from caring in the last 12 months. Most often taken breaks included activities outside the home (53%), in the home (37%), physical activity outside the home (37%) and overnight trips (33%). Barriers from the survey included: cost of breaks, transportation to and from breaks, committing to plans due to caring situation, and knowing what break opportunities are available.

Through the consultation, gaps in the current carer break provision were identified as:

- a lack of weekend or evening breaks,
- culturally appropriate availability of breaks,
- support to take breaks (replacement care, cost, transportation in relation to the cared-for person),
- up to date and easily accessible comms so that carers are aware of what's on offer.

There was some difficulty in gathering all of the information to build a comprehensive supply map of the available breaks in Manchester, particularly in these areas:

- Information about what breaks are being purchased by carers through personal budgets.
- The number of people with care needs accessing day centre services and how these impacts on carers being able to access their own breaks.
- The numbers of people with care needs accessing respite residential care provision and how this impacts on carers being able to access their own break.

Themes from the consultations and research were developed into 5 priority areas, agreed with Delivery Group and Lived Experience Panel and used to develop the action plan.

Recommendations and Implementations

Priorities	Recommendations
1. Provision and availability of carers' breaks	1.1 Continue the current provision of breaks and develop new opportunities. 1.2 Explore funding opportunities to provide carers access to more flexible, regular breaks at a low cost or provided free. Including: 1.2a Exploring linking Carers Manchester Carers Card to the City Council's, or an alternative rewards scheme. 1.2b Seek to provide free or subsidised access to leisure centres. 1.2c Explore opportunities for further collaboration with culture, music and sports providers for free or discounted tickets; and collaboration with business and colleges to provide regular opportunities for pampering, haircuts and massages. 1.3 Delivering breaks at times and spaces that suit carers, including evenings, weekends and online. 1.4 The free hotel breaks project to be extended for 9 months.
2. Support carers need to take a break	2.1 To develop a varied replacement care offer for the cared for person. This to include: 2.1a Developing, or commissioning, sitting services in the home of the cared for person during the day and overnight 2.1b Developing a better understanding of the availability and provision of respite care in care homes and day centres and the benefits they bring to carers. 2.2 Increased support to cover the cost of breaks through providing free or subsidised offers, grants and support to access mainstream activities at reduced cost or for free. 2.3 Improve support available with travel and transport, particularly for carers with disabilities or on a low income.

Priorities	Recommendations
3. Ensuring that carers in Manchester are aware of what is available	3.1 Improving publicity about all available breaks. 3.2 Ensuring that all carers have access to information about their rights to a carers assessment and how a Carers Personal Budget can be used for a break. 3.3 Developing a comms campaign to help carers understand that taking a break is important to their own health and wellbeing.
4. Enhancing data to ensure carers' breaks match carers needs	4.1 City Council to capture data regarding the provision of Carers Personal Budgets for a period of 6 months, and the reviewed with Delivery Group and Lived Experience Reps. 4.2 The Contact Point to enhance the data they collect on carers contacting them for information on short breaks and referred for short breaks. 4.3 Improve data collection about people accessing respite care, in both day centres and residential care, their unpaid carers and the impact this has on carers. 4.4 Explore ways to capture the impact breaks are having on carers' wellbeing.
5. Governance	5.1 The delivery group monitors and oversees the strategy. 5.2 The responsibility for the Action Plan lies with the Carers Partnership Board and the partners of Carers Manchester. 5.3 The review of any policies carried out by statutory partners which impact on carers access to short breaks should be co-produced with the involvement of Carers Lived Experience reps. 5.4 The Lived Experience panel to review their involvement in the development of this strategy. 5.5. The core recommendations of this strategy are considered in the development of the new Manchester Carers Strategy.

In order to ensure that these changes take place, we will do the following:

- Provide a quarterly report on delivery of the Action Plan to the Carers Partnership Board
- Ask the Lived Experience panel to consider progress against action plan twice yearly.
- Reconvene the group who delivered the strategy a minimum of twice a year to consider progress on delivering the action plan.
- Ensure that the key recommendations from the strategy are considered for incorporation in the new Manchester Carers Strategy which will be developed between June – December 2025