



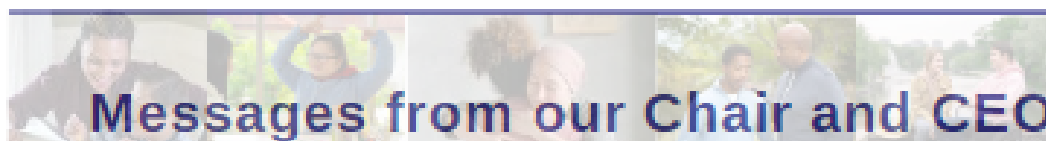
CARERS SUPPORT MERTON

# Annual Review 2022-2023

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## Messages from our Chair and CEO

### Word from the CEO - Tracy Weight

It has been another tough year for Carers in Merton. The after-effects of the pandemic, public sector cuts, health and social care staffing issues and cost of living crisis has left so many Carers exhausted, stressed and feeling alone. It isn't any wonder that referrals of adult Carers to our service doubled compared to 2021 - 2022.

We have focused our resources on reaching as many Carers as possible to enable them to access our specialist advice, information and support services, and carried out **209** more assessments and reviews than last year.

Although more Carers are reaching out for help, too many Carers are still remaining unidentified, which prevents them getting the help and support they need.

We have stood by our pledge to ensure no Carer is left behind by digital advancements, by offering targeted and individual support.

The voice of the Carer remains at the centre of what we do. This year we have carried out consultation and research on the needs of Young Carers and Parent Carers of children under 18 on behalf of the Local Authority. Through this we have learnt that we have much to do to enhance support for these groups of Carers in the borough and gained valuable insight for future service development.

Thank you for taking the time to read our report. We hope you will enjoy learning about all we have achieved for Carers in 2022 - 2023 and our plans for the future.

*Tracy Weight*  
TRACY WEIGHT CEO



Mike Ribton  
Chair



Tracy Weight  
CEO

### A message from our Chair - Mike Ribton

The Annual Report gives us an opportunity to cast an eye over the past year, but also look forward to the future. It's appropriate, then, that as I write this we are planning for the next five years of CSM in terms of securing the necessary funding and contracts to build on our success to date - don't worry, our commitment to supporting unpaid carers in the borough remains the same. We are here for you if you need us; we hear you and can help.

If you are a Carer you have our deepest respect and admiration. There is no greater act of love than caring for someone who relies upon you. As you read this report I hope you are left with the sense that caring for others means you are valued and the notion that caring can be both rewarding and satisfying. Caring makes a real difference to someone's life. How many people can truly say that what they do provides peace of mind for someone they love and has such a positive impact?

A huge thank you to Tracy and the team for the amazing work they have done this year. Thank you to our partners. And most of all, thank you to the 35,000 carers in Merton for being there. You are greatly valued.

*Mike Ribton*

MIKE RIBTON CHAIR

## Our year at a glance



**677**

**NEW ADULT  
CARERS  
REGISTERED WITH  
THE SERVICE**



**819**

**ADULT CARERS  
RECEIVED HELP &  
SUPPORT**



**635**

**ADULT CARERS  
RECEIVED AN  
ASSESSMENT OF  
NEED AND  
SUPPORT PLAN**



**74**

**NEW YOUNG  
CARERS  
REGISTERED WITH  
THE SERVICE**



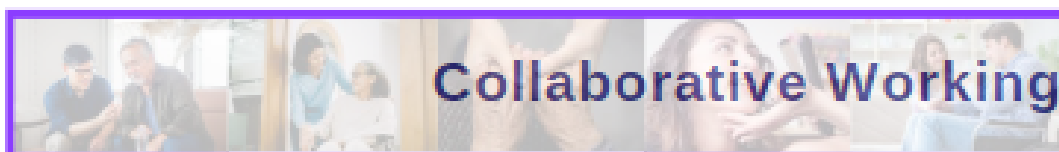
**£56,000**

**DISTRIBUTED IN  
INDIVIDUAL  
GRANTS TO  
CARERS**



**114**

**YOUNG CARERS  
SUPPORTED**



This year we have continued with established partnerships, for example, with Merton Mencap and Merton Uplift to bring an integrated approach to supporting Carers. Carers value our collective support, but we know that it is the recognition, understanding and empathy that they receive on a day to day basis from those they come into contact with which makes the most difference in improving their lives, for example, their GPs, social worker, health professionals, school staff, employers and other community services. Carers often report they are not listened to, their needs are not considered, or that services are not flexible enough to meet their needs.

This year we saw the introduction of the Health and Care Act 2022, the main purpose of which was to establish a legislative framework that supports collaboration and partnership working to integrate services. The act introduced Integrated Care Boards (ICB) who are tasked with the commissioning and oversight of NHS services. We have been working with the South West London ICB to improve support for Carers within health services. There is still much to do, but it is an exciting time with potential to make real changes for Carers in the coming years.

We undertook a pilot project with St George's Hospital with the aim of enhancing support for Carers when their loved ones are in hospital and during the period following discharge. We worked with **43** Carers during the pilot, **28** of these were new to Carers Support services. We know there is much more work to do, but we are now able to build on the learning from the pilot to work with the hospital to make greater changes across the health and social care system in the coming years.

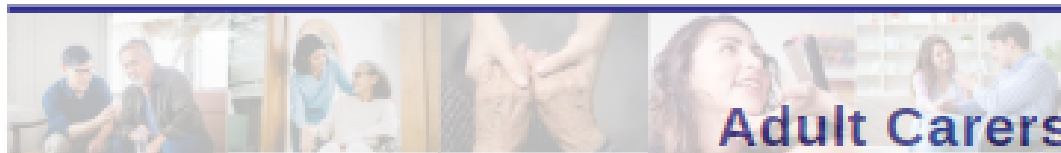
#### **Cost of Living Crisis**

Carers have faced financial pressures for years, but this year we have seen these pressures affecting an unprecedented number of Carers, piling further stress on top of their caring role. Alarming, many Young Carers are also contributing to or managing family finances at this difficult time.

We were able to support Carers of all ages and their families through the addition of a Crisis Prevention Worker through a partnership with Merton Citizen's Advice. Carers who were identified as being impacted by the crisis were able to obtain a swift appointment to receive specialist support with budgeting, managing debts and maximizing income.

We were also awarded the funds through the Local Authority which we were able to use to distribute supermarket and fuel vouchers to Carers in emergency need. We issued **68** emergency food and fuel vouchers to **51** Carers and families; of these, 62 were for supermarket vouchers, highlighting the food poverty experienced by some Carers.

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The services to adult Carers this year have been predominantly funded by the London Borough of Merton. This funding, along with contributions from others such as South West London & St Georges Mental Health Trust and the Wimbledon Nursing & Midwifery Benevolent Society, we have been able to continue to provide highly valued information, advice and support to Carers in Merton.

In 2022 – 2023 we received **677** new referrals of Carers over the age of 18 (compared to 363 2021/2022), which is quite a considerable increase. They come from a range of agencies, for example, social workers, GPs, hospitals, other voluntary sector organisations and from Carers themselves.

**819** adult Carers have received some form of service over the year (compared to 815 (2021-2022)). This is only slightly more than last year, despite a very large increase in new referrals. This is due to changing our strategy to reach more Carers with information, advice, and support, rather than expanding resource on activities which are only accessed by a few Carers. We have continued to widen our network of partner agencies in order to facilitate Carers accessing a wider range of services.

We carried out **635** statutory *Care Act Assessments/reviews* (compared to 426 (2021/2022)) on behalf of the London Borough of Merton over the year. Carers Assessments help to identify the needs of a Carer and a support plan is put in place, using community and other resources to help meet those needs. Our outcome monitoring has demonstrated we have made a real difference to Carers, making them feel less isolated, better equipped to manage their caring role, and more aware of how to look after their own emotional and physical needs.

Partnership work with other agencies has enhanced support for Carers. Our partnership with Merton Mencap has brought specialist support to Carers of adults with a Learning Disability.

We have continued to offer Coffee and Conversation peer support group and workshops on a variety of topics to support in the caring role, for example, Lasting Power of Attorney, Contingency and Future Planning.

We continue to administer the Carers Discretionary Grant on behalf of London Borough of Merton which allows Carers to buy something to support them in their caring role.

We have also gained grants from Wimbledon Nursing and Midwifery Benevolent fund to support Carers who have limited financial resources to pay for things they need to support their caring role. A total of £56,800 in individual grants was awarded which helped Carers in a variety of ways. Some examples include technological equipment, school uniform, and short breaks.





Mr Pen cares for his mother who suffers with dementia and has very limited mobility following a stroke ten years ago. Mr Pen's mother lives in sheltered accommodation and is receiving a care package with support from carers 3 times a day to help her with her personal hygiene, with meals and with medication.

Mr Pen was referred to CSM by the dementia nurse for general advice and support.

During the Wellbeing Assessment, it was identified that Mr Pen had the lasting power of attorney to manage his mother's finances, however, he was not aware that she could be entitled to claim attendance allowance. As his mother has a low income, Mr Pen buys the ingredients to cook her a special meal when he visits her during the weekends.

It was also identified that Mr Pen felt that his mother was lonely and could benefit from someone to talk with her and provide some company, but it was difficult for him to go and visit her during the week as he works full time and lives more than an hour away. Mr Pen feels worried that his mother has to spend long periods of time alone and without anyone to talk with her.

#### **How Carers Support Merton supported Mr. Pen:**

Carers Support Merton signposted Mr Pen to Merton Welfare Benefits Service for more detailed information about applying for Attendance Allowance for his mother.

Mr Pen was also signposted to Age UK to enquire about the possibility of arranging a volunteer to visit his mother during the week.

During the Wellbeing Assessment Review stage, it was identified that Mr Pen had contacted Merton Welfare Benefits Service and, with their support, he has successfully applied for Attendance Allowance for his mother, which she is now receiving. With the extra income from the Attendance Allowance, Mr Pen's mother is now able to support the costs of the special meal on weekends.

It was also noted that Mr Pen had liaised with Age UK and his mother is now receiving the visits of volunteers to keep her company during the week. Mr Pen now feels reassured that his mother has someone to visit her during the week, which has made it easier for him to maintain his job.

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## Adapting our digital project to meet the needs of Carers

The world is becoming more digital, and we know this brings opportunities for many, but challenges and exclusion for others.

We have continued to develop our own digital capacity as a means of reaching more Carers with our specialist information, advice and guidance.

We know that many Carers need to be able to get information or guidance outside our office hours, either because of their caring responsibilities or because they are trying to work. This year we have developed a new website to ensure that our expert information, advice and guidance is available to Carers at any time of the day or night online. We have developed our skills in developing short videos and are in the process of developing podcasts so that information is available in a variety of formats.

However, we know that advancements the use of digital across organizations has cut some Carers off from accessing the services and finding the information they need. We believe that no Carer should miss out on support because they don't have digital skills or access to the internet. Therefore, we have committed to supporting Carers in Merton to develop the digital skills that they need.

We have found that it is difficult for Carers to commit to a series of meetings – even when those meetings are offered flexibly in terms of venue and timing. Carers told us that they need to be able to call on bespoke support for specific problems, as and when they need the support.

We adapted the digital skills support we offer Carers to reflect this need. Carers can refer themselves or be referred by a professional to learn just what they need. So whether it is using a NHS app, booking an appointment, setting up emails, joining a Zoom call or connecting with friends and family we have been able to help. Many Carers do have devices, either new ones or second-hand ones given by friends and family, but they don't always know where to start in setting them up or deleting apps set up by a previous user.

In this year, we have worked with over 25 carers in Merton with a range of issues. Carers come back to us when they want to learn a new skill or they face a specific issue.

We run monthly 'digital skills drop-ins' over Zoom where any Carer can join. It's been useful for Carers who want to practice their Zoom skills and also for others who have general questions. At the drop-ins and in one-to-one work we have found that Carers are often worried about online safety. We have supported Carers to think through the issues and to set up online banking or do online shopping if they think it's for them.



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## Supporting unpaid Carers in Merton with digital skills

Since the conception of our digital project during Covid-19, we have supported over 65 unpaid Carers one-to-one in their own homes or local libraries with a variety of issues.

The theme that runs through all the support we give is confidence: confidence to use a device, to use a particular app, confidence in their own ability, confidence to ask a question which they might consider foolish. An example of this is the monthly Zoom meeting we run for Carers who are interested in digital photography. We have a lot of fun and share photos on different themes. All the participants have said how joining the group has helped with their confidence in using IT generally.

Here is what they told us:

"I'd been told to attend a meeting online – but I was scared that I wouldn't know how to use Teams. I know what I'm doing now."

"My smart phone is enough for most things I do, but I didn't know how to complete the forms the dentist sent me via email. Having someone come to my house to explain was so helpful."

"I had been given a new iPad which confused me and I had a Zoom meeting with Alzheimer's Society that week. Having someone come to show me the basics so quickly was brilliant."

"My eyesight is very bad. It was great to have someone change the settings on my computer so I can see the text now."

"The best thing is knowing that I can contact you again if I need you"

"I am loving yoga online via Zoom at home. It really helps me relax. I couldn't attend classes before as I can't leave the person I am caring for. Now I can join in knowing I am not very far away if I am needed."



**THANK YOU TO A  
MEMBER OF THE DIGITAL  
SKILLS PHOTOGRAPHY  
GROUP FOR SHARING  
THEIR IMAGES ON THE  
THEME, ADAPTIBILITY**



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## Helping the Excluded to be Included

### Supporting a complete beginner

David was referred to the project by a Carers Needs Assessor in April 2023. He had recently left his job to care for his mother and had been told that he couldn't apply for benefits unless he had an email address. He was a total beginner. He had never touched a computer before and does not have a mobile phone. We arranged for him to borrow a laptop with a mobile hotspot for internet access from Merton Libraries.

David picked up the basics of using the touchpad, clicking and scrolling very quickly. We set up an email account with him. Unfortunately, when he talked to the Carers Needs Assessors at Carers Support Merton further, it became apparent that David is not eligible for benefits. However, he has been totally sold on the benefits of using technology – he has had 6 sessions of support and he has been surfing the internet, working his way through Learn My Way courses online and using Zoom with the digital skills coordinator. He has been helped to understand security online and the pros and cons of buying different devices and connectivity, should his financial situation improve.

### Support with online shopping

Sarah was referred via a Carers Needs Assessor. She has a mobile phone and cares for her mother. She was finding shopping difficult as she had to carry heavy bags home. The Carers Needs Assessor suggested online shopping. One visit at home was enough to enable her to download the app, and go through the process. Sarah now has the confidence to do the supermarket shopping online via her phone.

**Thank you to the Carers from our Digital Photography group who took the wonderful images below which represent the joys and challenges of Caring**





Many Carers are just children themselves and care for a parent and/or sibling with disabilities, or mental or physical ill health. Their caring role is often unidentified, and it is well documented that Young Carers achieve less well academically, miss more school, and suffer more ill health and bullying than their peers. Our aim is that Young Carers will have the same access and opportunities as their peers to education and positive activities, have their voices heard and do not undertake inappropriate levels of care.

We have continued to deliver assessments and short-term family support to Young Carers and their families on behalf of the London Borough of Merton. Our service delivery model has returned to as it was pre-pandemic, working face-to-face in the community. However, a larger proportion of assessments now take place in schools, as this appears to be the preference for the families we work with. It does also have the advantage of staff building relationships with school staff to help to increase their awareness of both identifying and supporting young Carers in school.

This year we received 74 new referrals (compared to 107 last year). The drop in referrals may have come as a result of a reduction in Young Carers Family Support Workers which was made towards the end of last financial year (2021 – 2022) due to static funding. This has led to fewer staff networking in the community or visiting Young Carers in school, which is a way in which referrals are naturally generated. The majority of referrals were received from Children's Social Care (27) and schools (21).

The reduction in referrals does not mean that Young Carers do not need our support. In our research this year we scrutinised local and national data along with data obtained through schools. We found that there are a very large number of Young Carers who remain unidentified by their Schools, and thus may not be receiving the support that they need. Moving forwards, we will look at how we can build capacity to increase identification and support to Young Carers in Merton.

We have focused our resources on supporting Young Carers to access outside activities and respite on an individual basis, which has the advantage of engaging them in community activities which may be more sustainable for them to continue when we complete our work with them. Where finance has been a barrier, we have been able to help through individual grants. Grants have funded martial arts and dance classes, as well as books, art materials and laptops. We continue to support vulnerable families with emergency food and fuel vouchers and were able to signpost Young Carers to access the Holiday Activity and Food programme for Summer 2022 run by the Local Authority. We worked with Polka Theatre to offer family theatre experiences.



After assessments and services from Carers Support Merton, Young Carers report that they:

- Understand more about their caring role and the conditions of the person they care for
- Know who to talk to in school if they are feeling sad, angry or worried
- Are getting on better with friendship groups
- Enjoying respite by attending out of school activities/clubs or Honeypot residentials
- Getting on better with family members
- Eating more healthily now
- Feel less alone and isolated

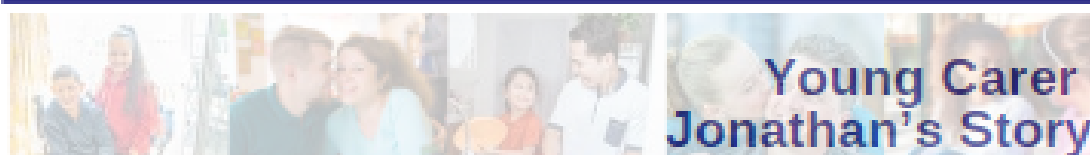
Young Carers said:

*"I love the Afrobeats classes, they're fun and the teachers are really good and nice. I hope I can perform at the Wimbledon Theatre next year (even though I'm nervous)."*

*"Thanks so much for the nail and beauty products. I use them every day, for me and my little sisters! It helps me to relax and feel better about myself."*

*"Thanks! I love this series, so will probably finish reading them in a few weeks! I've read the first two books already, but will read them again and again."*





Jonathan is 10 years old lives with his mother, who suffers severe mental ill health. He also has an infant sister. He receives daily support from his maternal grandmother and extended family.

Jonathan was referred to CSM's Young Carers team due to concerns about his wellbeing with the summer holidays approaching. As he was previously registered as a Young Carer with CSM, we were able to signpost him and his family to Holiday Activities and Fun activities over the summer.

CSM completed an initial assessment with Jonathan, which gave us a deeper insight into his caring role and how it impacts on his wellbeing (both positively and negatively). It showed us that he was undertaking a moderate caring role, and that he recognised himself as a young Carer, with a fair understanding of his mum's mental health issues. He felt that she had improved a lot and was now largely stable, however he continued to keep an eye on her and liked to spend time with her to keep her spirits up. He admitted that he would often avoid speaking about his worries, instead focusing on the positives, as he worried about his own mental health declining as a consequence of focusing on the 'negatives'.

CSM completed a detailed assessment with Jonathan, which highlighted his need for support around sharing his feelings about his caring experience with an appropriate professional. CSM's Family Support Worker conducted a series of one-to-one support sessions with Jonathan, and sensitively explored his caring role, interests and worries. To build rapport and to ease communication, the sessions were spent either drawing together, or playing board games. This also helped Jonathan to build a supportive relationship with designated support staff in school.

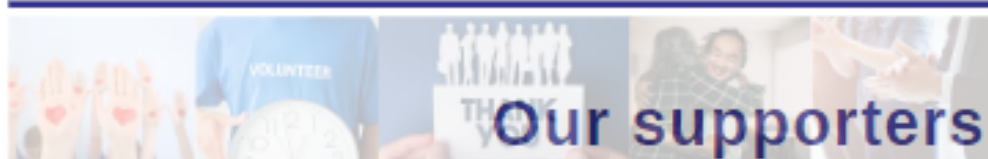
CSM also maintained regular contact with adult family members as well as school professionals to ensure continued support for Jonathan.

CSM referred Jonathan for a short break through Honeypot Children's Charity (based in Hampshire) and signposted him and his family to available activities in the borough, including sessions run through the Easter break. Jonathan was also invited to attend a bespoke respite session which was delivered by our service in mid-June to mark Carers Week. This took place after his case review but was a great opportunity for him to meet other Young Carers his own age. Jonathan attended the 'Pizza and Games Night' and even made a friend!

During the review process, Jonathan recorded a greater number of positive impacts of his caring role. He also appeared more open and honest at this stage and was able to share his feelings and open up about his caring role.

*\*Name has been changed*





We could not have achieved any of this without our funders, staff, trustees and other volunteers.



**7**

Volunteer Trustees  
setting the strategic  
direction



**11**

Equivalent full-  
time staff



**167**

Volunteer hours  
given

## 933 CARERS WORKED WITH

THANK YOU TO THE  
FOLLOWING FOR  
PROVIDING FUNDING,  
DONATIONS, 'GIFTS IN  
KIND' OR OTHER  
SUPPORT

**£595,329**

LONDON BOROUGH OF MERTON

SOUTH WEST LONDON & ST GEORGE'S  
MENTAL HEALTH NHS TRUST

WIMBLEDON FOUNDATION

WIMBLEDON WIMBLEDON DISTRICT  
NURSING AND MIDWIFERY BENEVOLENT  
SOCIETY

**From all at Carers Support Merton  
THANK YOU!**

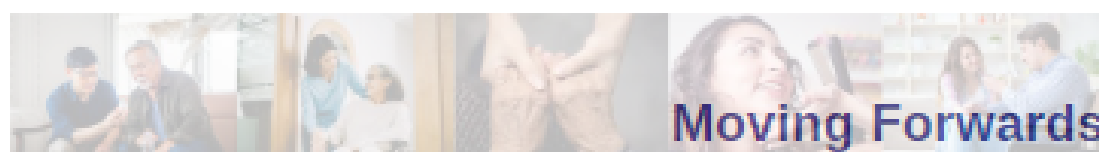


This is a financial summary (see note on page 14). The total income for the year has slightly increased at £598,820 (2022: £546,779). Within this total there was an increase in unrestricted income to £18,167 (2022: £5,647).

Restricted income has increased to £580,653 as compared to last year (2022: £541,132). Total expenditure for the year was £595,660 (2022: £535,041). The increase in expenditure was largely due to planned increase in staffing costs to meet demand in response to increased funding from the Local Authority. Grants made to individuals during the current year, a total of £56,800 increased from the previous year (2022: £49,247). This was largely due to an increase in awareness and take-up of the Local Authority Carers Discretionary Grant.

Overall reserves are £326,215 (2022: £324,950) with unrestricted reserves being £113,489 (2022: £105,430). In line with our policy unrestricted reserves are sufficient to cover our 'shut down' costs, but we continue to strive to increase them to 3 - 6 months running costs.

	Unrestricted funds	Restricted funds	Total 2023	Total 2022
Total incoming resources	£18,167	£580,653	£598,820	£546,779
Total resources expended	£8,213	£587,447	£595,660	£535,041
Actuarial gains on defined benefit scheme	-	-	-	-
Unrestricted gains on defined benefit scheme	-£1,535	-	-	£7,264
Net income for the year	£8,419	-£6,794	£1,625	£25,905
Transfer between funds	-	-	-	-
Total funds brought forward	£105,430	£219,160	£324,590	£298,685
Total funds carried forward	£113,849	£212,366	£326,215	£324,590



The year ahead will be particularly challenging for Carers Support Merton because the Local Authority are in the process of recommissioning the services that we currently provide. We know that this will bring a period of turbulence for the organisation. However, given our prudent financial planning and our track record in supporting Carers we are optimistic it is a storm which we will weather. The world does finally seem to be waking up to the needs of Carers, and it is exciting to think that this growing public sector awareness may well bring some significant opportunities for the growth and development of services for Carers over the next few years.

There are more Carers than ever recognising their role and reaching out for help. However, we know that there is more to do to promote the identification of Carers. We want to build on our work with health colleagues, including GPs so that Carers receive the support and guidance they need from these services. We will learn from our pilot with St George's Hospital and will look to work collaboratively to ensure Carers are better supported when their loved one is in hospital.

We want to develop training and resources to help everyone in Merton to understand the barriers and challenges that Carers of all ages face, the impact caring has on their lives, and how they can help more. We want to develop the confidence of volunteers and staff across all organisations in speaking to people about their caring role, so that more Carers can be identified and given the help they need.

We continue to build on our digital capacity. This is not to replace the human touch, but to enable those Carers who can access online information for themselves to do so easily. This will enable staff more time to support Carers who are in the most challenging situations or need more support to access information. We will continue to help Carers to develop their own digital skills to keep pace with the changing world we are living in.

We know there needs to be more support for Young Carers and Parent Carers of children under 18 and we plan to focus on service development for these specific groups of Carers.

We would like to thank everyone for their support in 2022 – 2023 and look forward to building on yet another successful year.



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## REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

### Registered Company Number

4164966

### Registered Charity Number

1085761

### Registered Office

Carers Support Merton  
The Vestry Hall  
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## FINANCIAL SUMMARY NOTE

The summary financial information included in this Annual Review shows the income raised from our activities and the amounts spent. It is intended to give a broad overview only and is taken from the full financial statements which were approved by the Trustees on 17th August 2023. In order to gain a full understanding of the charity, the independently examined financial statements, trustees Annual Report and Independent Examiners Report should be consulted. Copies can be obtained from Carers Support Merton.

Once again thank you to all our funders & supporters.

