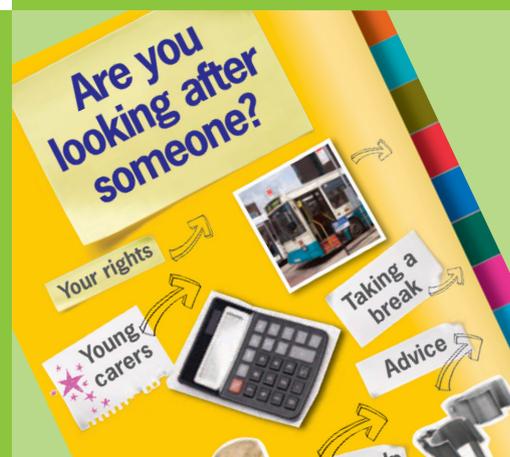


A handbook to all services and support for adult carers and young carers



**What is the initiative?**

Norfolk Carers Handbook

**Who runs it?**

Carers Council for Norfolk

**Who does it benefit?**

The handbook is aimed at the approximately 80,000 carers in Norfolk, of which 10,000 are young carers. It is also an invaluable reference tool for health and social care professionals.

**What does it do?**

Norfolk Carers Handbook is a free and complete reference guide for young carers and adult carers that raises awareness of caring issues and promotes a range of statutory and voluntary services and support available to carers.

**When did it start?**

2000.

**Why was it started?**

A predecessor of the Carers Council for Norfolk partnership, and staff at the local authority, felt it would be useful to provide a comprehensive guide for carers and young carers, centralising information about all of the possible voluntary organisations, council services and benefits that might help them. This is especially important because Norfolk has a highly dispersed rural population which can make carers' knowledge of support and access to services a particular challenge. The handbook and website of information have been the result of a collaborative effort of statutory and voluntary organisations.

## What are the aims and objectives?

### Aim:

- To ensure that young carers and adult carers are aware of all the services and support available to them.

### Objectives:

- To provide a complete guide to all carers about the range of services and support available in the voluntary and public sector.
- To make this information easily accessible by providing handbooks in GP surgeries, council buildings, voluntary groups and other places carers are likely to visit.
- To provide an associated easy to navigate website for all carers to find support relevant for them.
- To provide information which is accessible to carers who do not necessarily realise they are carers.

## How is it funded?

The handbook is funded by Norfolk County Council, Adult Social Care.

## What has it achieved?

“Essential information in one booklet.”

Carer

“So much information I did not know about – thank you.”

Carer

The handbook is held in very high regard by young carers, adult carers and health professionals alike, as is evidenced by personal comments from individual carers and carers organisations and from the feedback forms in the handbook itself. Feedback surveys conducted by the Carers Council for Norfolk indicate that the publication continues to meet the needs of carers, is comprehensive in scope and is presented in a well-received, accessible format.

In excess of 60,000 copies of the handbook are distributed annually to GP surgeries, hospitals, council buildings and youth clubs. A recent distribution survey indicated that some care professionals keep copies at their surgeries and clinics to enable them to advise their clients who are carers. The end users of the vast majority of the handbooks are carers, and it is estimated that around 75% of all carers in Norfolk – young and adult – have seen a copy of the handbook.

Due to its high profile, there are now even more organisations in Norfolk who wish to be featured in the handbook. As there is now not enough space to feature all of these organisations in the 70 page booklet, some are featured on the new website only.

The website is intended to form the hub of information for carers in Norfolk, and information will be drawn from it to update future editions of the handbook. It is

intended that each information source will complement the other. While the website is likely to be used by younger carers, carers who are older and not so computer literate may prefer the handbook. The handbook in booklet format, as displayed in facilities used by voluntary groups, clinics and council buildings, is also better for engaging carers who do not realise they are carers or do not know where to turn. The website however, offers a greater degree of interactivity for carers, including the ability to search for support groups near where they live, and find out about carers events.

## How have carers been involved in planning and delivering this work?

There are feedback forms in the handbook so that carers can send in suggestions that may then inform the next year's version of the handbook. The website additionally allows interaction from organisations and carers themselves. Users may leave online feedback and ratings as to how they found the navigation, design and layout of the website.

Members of the Carers Council for Norfolk also obtain continuous feedback on the handbook. They ask a range of stakeholders (such as outreach workers, staff involved in the production of the publication, carers and carers organisations) their opinion about the user experience and the value of the handbook. The content of the handbook is overseen by a Carers Information Group, which is composed of carers and representatives from carers organisations who belong to the Carers Council for Norfolk. At present, young carers do not have any direct representation on the Carers Information Group, but as young carers have more of a direct say on the content on the young carers pages of the website, through their Young Carers Forum, it is anticipated that they will have greater influence on what is included in the future.

## How is the initiative run?

The Carers Council for Norfolk, which is a stakeholder-led organisation comprising of carers, carers organisations and commissioners, oversees the production of the Norfolk Carers Handbook. The Carers Information Group subgroup is consulted on what goes into the handbook.

A new edition of the handbook comes out each year. At present it is printed by a private company, but in the past it was published in house by the county council. In 2012, 65,000 copies were initially printed. However, demand was so high that an extra 20,000 copies had to be ordered. It costs about 40–50p a copy to design, publish and distribute 85,000 copies of the handbook.

Carers can pick up the handbook free of charge at GP surgeries, hospitals, a range of voluntary organisations, Norfolk County Council and the Norfolk Carers Helpline. In 2012, the supporting website [www.norfolkcarersinfo.org.uk](http://www.norfolkcarersinfo.org.uk) was launched to offer extended information and to give the handbook a wider reach.

The website has pages especially for **young carers** and **young adult carers**. All organisations and support which are specifically for carers are featured in the handbook and the website, whereas organisations and services which are more general or may be of help to some carers, such as a group for disabled people, feature only on the website.

Feedback from carers, carers organisations and other users of the handbook is continuously collected – both in anecdotal form by members of the Carers Council

and more formally through feedback forms. This information is used by the Carers Information Group when they update the content of the handbook. A distribution survey is also conducted with carers organisations so that the Carers Council for Norfolk can understand and improve how the handbook reaches carers.

After the tenth edition of the handbook, an independent review was undertaken to ensure that the publication was still meeting the needs of both carers and professionals. It was after this that it was decided that an outside design company should be hired to revamp the publication. The company held two workshops with representatives from the Carers Council for Norfolk and the information obtained from these, along with the information from the feedback questionnaires, guided the design and structure of the current 11th edition.

## What methods have been particularly effective?

The Carers Council for Norfolk has found the local expertise of its stakeholders useful for developing and reviewing the scope and format of the handbook, its content, distribution methods and audience identification.

Wherever possible, existing channels employed by stakeholders have been used to get bulk deliveries to organisations (for example, a voluntary group might deliver copies to their local branch in rural Norfolk). The organisations which give away the handbook to carers then assume the responsibility for further publication requests.

Having stakeholders and a range of knowledgeable public and voluntary sector workers involved also means it has been relatively easy to identify and recruit contributors to write and review sections of the handbook.

## Have there been any challenges along the way?

Setting an appropriate timescale for production has been something of a challenge, ensuring enough time to get all the work completed, while making sure that information does not become outdated before it is published. It is therefore important to keep up to date with changes and potential changes. It is important to consider whether the organisations listed will be funded for the full duration of each publication. An advantage with the website is that it is easier to keep information current.

In working with an external funder, it has been necessary to make sure that any procurement procedures regarding possible designers, printers or distribution organisations have met approval well in advance.

## What hints and tips might help me get started?

- Identify all possible stakeholders and work with them to ensure the publication is fit for purpose.
- Identify and enlist the help of expert contributors.
- Leave sufficient time to thoroughly check the publication proof – including ringing every phone number to check it is correct.
- Maintain an electronic version of the publication, or have the information on a website, where it can be regularly updated in advance of the publication of the next edition.

## Are there any useful documents or resources that could assist me?

View the PDF version of the **handbook**.

Visit the Norfolk Carers Information **website**.

The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and the Children's Society have developed some **recommendations** for content to be included on a local authority portal providing information about young carers and their families. Carers Trust is a new charity formed by the merger of The Princess Royal Trust for Carers and Crossroads Care.

### Where can I get further information?

Email: [trudie.dockerty@crossroadseastanglia.org.uk](mailto:trudie.dockerty@crossroadseastanglia.org.uk)

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