City of London Corporation Committee Report

Committee: Community and Children's Services Committee	**Dated:** 30/06/2026
Subject: Carers Strategy 2023-27 update	**Public report:** For Information
This proposal: • **delivers Corporate Plan 2024-29 outcomes** • **provides statutory duties** • **provides business enabling functions**	Delivering excellent services. Diverse engaged communities.
Does this proposal require extra revenue and/or capital spending?	No
If so, how much?	N/A
What is the source of Funding?	N/A
Has this Funding Source been agreed with the Chamberlain's Department?	N/A
Report of:	Judith Finlay, Executive Director of Community and Children's Services
Report author:	Hannah Dobbin, Strategy and Projects Officer

Summary

This report presents to Members a progress update against the Carers Strategy for 2023–2027.[1] The Strategy sets the strategic priorities for the City of London Corporation (City Corporation) and guides our activities in relation to carers.

In this context, the term 'carers' refers to adult unpaid carers of other adults or of children and young people with special educational needs and disabilities (SEND) where these needs are similar. The needs of parent carers of children with SEND that specifically relate to their individual caring experience and the SEND system are addressed in the Local Area Partnership's SEND and Alternative Provision Strategy 2025-29. Young carers are considered in, and supported through, our Early Help Strategy.

Carers were involved in the development of the Strategy and subsequent reviews of the action plan. A key completed action is the commissioning of the City of London's carers support service which was done in partnership with carers. Other activities

[1] City Corporation (2023) https://www.cityoflondon.gov.uk/assets/Services-DCCS/carers-strategy-2023-27.pdf

include: the piloting of the Carers Card UK Carers Card which has an emergency plan function; the start of the Shoreditch Park and City Primary Care Network and Neighbourhood Health Inequalities Carers Project; annual Carers Week and Carers Rights Day activities; direct responses to carers' requests for information; and the continuous review of carers' involvement.

Recommendation

Members are asked to:

- Note the report.

Main Report

Background

1. There is no statutory duty on local authorities to produce a carers strategy, but the City Corporation followed many other local authorities in producing one. This reflects the City Corporation's recognition of the vital role that carers play and commitment to delivering the best possible support for them.

2. Carers were involved in the development of the Strategy through a range of activities including a Carers Strategy Implementation Group involving five carers, a public consultation exercise and focus groups. A peer-led research project explored the impact of informal caring and this also informed the development of the Strategy.

3. The Strategy has five priority areas:

    - tailored and universal services that work for carers
    - the health and emotional wellbeing of carers
    - early identification of carers
    - information and advice for carers
    - engaging with carers.

4. An action plan sits below the Strategy setting out actions under each priority. Carers have been involved in reviewing and updating progress against the action plan at six- and 12-month review points. Carers have helped to refine actions, set priorities for each year and continue to hold the City Corporation to account for delivery against the actions that were committed to. 'You said, we did' documents have been produced to provide a feedback mechanism to carers.

Current Position

Tailored and universal services that work for carers

5. A key action under the 'tailored and universal services that work for carers' priority was to recommission the City of London carers support service reflecting carers' views and needs. This was successfully achieved with carers directly involved in the development of the service specification, helping to identify what

should be provided as primary and preferred requirements. This ensured that the specification reflected their input and met their needs. Carers were also involved in interviewing potential providers, so were able to have their voices heard and contribute to decision-making. Carers shared that they felt their views were valued and heard and provided feedback on some areas of improvement. Learning from this process has been shared internally to support the co-production of other services. Imago was appointed as the commissioned provider in October 2024.

6. Imago has embedded itself within the City of London and has seen an increase in the number of carers registered with its service – rising from 89 in August 2025 to 97 in March 2026. Key areas of support include onward referrals and signposting, emotional support, financial support (including benefits, grants and debt), facilitating the Carers Forum and regular support groups, and distributing the Household Support Fund. Feedback from carers using the service includes:

   "I am so grateful that you [Imago] are here to support me. I don't understand everything and it helps that you can explain to things to me."

   "This session has been so good for me. I love seeing everyone's creations and just watching us all relax and do something nice that isn't about the person we look after. A few months ago, I would never have been able to do anything like this as I didn't have the mindset for any of it."

   "I am feeling more positive and no longer feel like I need to hide how I am coping as my co-ordinator has explained that I just need some more help and now it's my turn to be cared for and there is no shame in that."

7. Imago has shared a case study of one carer's experience of engaging with them. A person who cares full time experienced significant isolation in their caring role. They started to attend Imago's weekly drop-in sessions where they benefited from ongoing support from the Carers Co-ordinator and interaction with other carers. The Carers Co-ordinator was able to support them to communicate in their first language and helped them to understand and complete forms and other paperwork. A need was identified around broken household appliances so the Carers Co-ordinator identified an appropriate grant and supported the carer to successfully buy new appliances. The carer has become more connected with their community and attended various activities and events organised by Imago. They have shared information about Imago with others on their estate, helping to identify and refer additional carers. The carer was also supported to explore their interest in volunteering and has since been involved in local projects, helping to bridge communication gaps.

8. Imago was awarded the Excellence for Carers Award by the Carers Trust in May 2026 (covering all its services including the City of London). This is a quality standard for best practice in services, advice and information for unpaid carers.

9. Another key action for carers under this priority was around a carers emergency card and associated emergency plan, and exploring a discount card for carers in the City of London. In response to feedback from carers and following the

consideration of options, a Carers Card UK Carers Card pilot ran between February 2025 and February 2026. The Carers Card is a national ID card providing access to discounts, free carer tickets and wellbeing support for over one million carers across the UK. Imago has promoted the Carers Card and supported carers to sign up if they wanted to.

10. As of April 2026, 23 City of London carers had registered for a Carers Card and Imago has received positive feedback from carers around accessing discounts and other features of the app. Imago has flagged concerns about the Carers Card raised by a small group of carers directly with Carers Card UK and continues to engage with Carers Card UK on these issues, (e.g. having the date of birth on the front of the card).

11. The Carers Card UK enables carers to set up an emergency plan within the app if they choose to do so. This was a key element that carers said they wanted. Carers Card UK shared that the benefit of the emergency plan in the app is that carers have ownership and control of what is written and can share it if they want to. The City Corporation is now considering how to embed the Carers Card UK as part of its ongoing offer, and continues to work with Imago and Carers Card UK to share carers' feedback and try to maximise the benefits to carers.

12. For carers who are known to Adult Social Care, carers can choose to share their Carers Card UK emergency plan with that team at any time by downloading it, printing it out or sharing a URL. In addition, contingency plans are talked about during a carer's assessment. Contingency planning is also discussed at the carer's annual review (unless there are changes before the end of year point and the carer requests that it is reviewed). Adult Social Care can make a referral to Imago for help with completing an emergency plan via Carers Card UK and thinking about contingency planning.

13. In addition, Imago's new Carers conversation document across its adult services includes a contingency plan which carers can share themselves, or request the service to share.

14. Imago is reviewing the Universal Social Care Plan on the NHS app which now includes a carers contingency plan. This will be linked across health partners. Imago will involve carers across its London services, including the City of London, in looking at this in more detail.

15. It was not considered viable for the City Corporation to produce its own carers ID and discount card. However, residents can get a City Living Resident Card, which was launched in September 2025 and promoted with carers through Imago and City Corporation resident communications channels. This provides residents with further access to discounts in the City of London.

16. Carers wanted clarification around support for carers whose cared for is in residential care. An open session with the Head of Adult Social Care was held and attended by one carer. Updated information on the City Corporation website was promoted in Imago's carers newsletter. Carers can also speak to a social worker about this if they have one.

The health and emotional wellbeing of carers

17. As part of the priority on the health and emotional wellbeing of carers, an action was to work with Imago to develop provision within the Square Mile as part of the commissioned contract, (e.g. new activities). Imago delivers a broad information, advice and support offer. New activities they introduced in response to carers' feedback include a pilot music-based programme, a joint visit to the British Museum, and creative workshops.

18. A key focus has been around the emotional wellbeing of carers. The City Corporation is working with the Shoreditch Park and City Primary Care Network (PCN) as part of its Neighbourhood Health Inequalities Carers Project to better understand the emotional wellbeing needs of carers in the City of London. A survey and focus groups are being developed to hear directly from carers about their needs, and to work together to explore options around how to best meet those needs building on existing provision. Further information will be shared with carers soon.

19. The London Borough of Hackney provided a list of commissioned services indicating which can be accessed by City of London carers. This was shared with Imago and the peer-support group City Carers Community to facilitate understanding and signposting to services. City and Hackney Carers Centre confirmed that its counselling and Listening Ear services are open to City of London carers, although these services may close while the Centre works through the waiting list. Signposting to NHS Talking Therapies is given if that is the case. City of London carers can also engage with Mind in the City, Hackney and Waltham Forest and visit their GP for support around mental health and wellbeing.

20. Providers of support for carers, including Imago, met to talk about a potential new carers group organised by Together Better at the Neaman Practice. However, it was agreed that this would duplicate existing groups, so the idea was not taken forward. An output of that meeting was the production of a flier that promoted and clarified the different services available for carers in the City of London. This was shared directly with carers and through partners including Imago, Healthwatch City of London, and the Neaman Practice.

21. Some residents experience social isolation and, although not specifically for carers, the City Corporation grant funded the Volunteer Centre Hackney Community Befrienders project from the Community Infrastructure Levy Neighbourhood Fund. This provides companionship to City of London residents who are experiencing loneliness and social isolation by matching them with volunteer befrienders. The service has been running successfully in Hackney since 2015 and expanded into the City of London from November 2025. The project recruits, trains and supports volunteers as befrienders, carefully matching them with an isolated person that has similar interests. For carers, the volunteer can attend to give the carer the opportunity to have some time to themselves or be a befriender for the carer.

Early identification of carers

22. Linking to the third priority area of the early identification of carers, the Shoreditch Park and City PCN's Neighbourhood Health Inequalities Carers Project aims to ensure that the needs of carers living and registered with GP practices within the Neighbourhood are being met both socially and in the healthcare context. Part of this is case-finding carers that have been going unnoticed and unsupported through reviewing numbers of carers and coding on GP patient record systems.

    'I didn't even realise I was a carer until I was told by my GP' (carer)

23. There are currently 181 coded carers at the Neaman Practice, 175 of which have City of London postcodes. Between 8 October 2025 and end of May 2026, the Neaman Practice identified 32 extra carers. They also proactively contacted identified carers to validate the coding and improve the accuracy of its carers register. This has resulted in a more proactive approach in offering support, signposting and recognising carers' needs during their interactions with the practice. Identified carers were contacted in early January 2026 and actively signposted to available support services – including for mental health, debt advice, food club and specialist charities. Neaman Practice has seen an increase in referrals to Imago. Other impacts include some carers being added to the Diabetic and Hypertension Registers.

24. Another action under the early identification of carers priority was around training for a range of professionals that embed recognition of carers, including Making Every Contact Count (MECC) training. The MECC approach encourages professionals to use the opportunities arising during their routine interactions with people to have conversations about how they might make positive improvements to their health or wellbeing.

25. The MECC City of London resource pack ensures that anyone completing the training has the right information about services available to City of London carers. MECC is already part of the standard workforce learning offer across the People's Directorate in the Department for Community and Children's Services (DCCS) and is mandatory training for new junior staff. In addition, City Corporation HR training for managers includes recognising staff who are carers to support the identification of carers within the City Corporation.

26. Imago has helped strengthen carer awareness across DCCS and partner organisations through activities including:

    - working in partnership with the City Corporation's Housing team for outreach and new staff inductions, supporting housing colleagues to be aware of carers and Imago
    - attending the People's Directorate Induction session to gain a better understanding of the Directorate and promote carer and service awareness
    - presenting on co-production at the Adult Social Care Partnership event
    - having a presence with the Adult Social Care team in the Guildhall to help build relationships and joined-up services

- having an Imago stand at community events including a HealthWatch City of London AGM and City Question Time.

27. City Corporation officers have introduced Imago to the City Corporation's City Belonging team to explore opportunities around the new City Belonging Parent Carer Network which will be launched on 5 June 2026.

Information and advice for carers

28. We know that accessible, accurate information and advice for carers is important. As part of priority 4, and in response to requests from carers, Adult Social Care produced a document on crisis and emergency information to help carers know who to contact when. Imago was provided with a copy to share with carers. We also continue to update the City Corporation website and amend it in response to feedback from carers.

Engaging with carers

29. The City Corporation continues to value the feedback and involvement of carers in implementing our strategy and wider activities. Officers spoke to carers at the start of the Strategy implementation about how they would like to be involved and continue to offer optional activities, conscious of not overwhelming carers.

30. The priority around engaging carers covers the previously mentioned co-designed recommissioned carers support service. Building on this, the Commissioning team is exploring how to involve carers in the contract monitoring of the commissioned carers service, building on learning and feedback from carers and learning from other local areas.

31. The City Corporation continues to work with Imago and carers to examine different ways to build and expand the network of carers who want to be involved in engagement activities. Imago continues to build relationships on the East side of the City of London. Recruitment for one of Imago's team was targeted to include a member of staff that can communicate in Bengali to facilitate this engagement.

32. In December 2025, officers tried a different approach to the Carers Strategy annual review in response to feedback from carers. The sessions moved away from more formal, strategy-focused sessions to an informal lunch and conversation session with the Head of Strategy and Performance and the Strategy and Projects Officer. Imago also joined the session to help with engagement and translation. Ten carers from across the City of London attended; an increase from four or five at previous sessions. A 'You said, we did' document was produced and shared with the carers (see Appendix 1).

33. Involvement activities include the Carers Forum which has been developed based on feedback from carers. For example, carers said that they wanted it to be owned by carers and facilitated by Imago, and they didn't want the City Corporation to be involved or have external speakers. Imago gathers responses to any questions from City Corporation officials and shares updates with carers

to ensure a feedback loop is in place. Updates are also shared with carers in the Imago newsletter and at groups if appropriate. The terms of reference of the Forum has been co-produced with carers and an ‘easy read’ version produced in response to a request from one carer. Minutes are circulated with actions and progress revisited in every Forum. An action tracker has been produced following feedback from a carer.

34. The Carers Forum continues to evolve, and challenges remain around repeated actions and attracting a wider, more diverse group of carers. In response, feedback loops include City Corporation ‘You said, we did’ documents which Imago circulates across its network. Imago has also been actively looking to engage more carers, and time credits are used to compensate carers for their time. Imago has hired rooms for Forum sessions but, as most carers want to attend remotely, it was agreed that the next meeting would be online only.

35. A Reward and Recognition for Involvement Policy for the DCCS was introduced in May 2025. This provides more consistency and clarity around reward and recognition. Although this isn’t specific to carers, it applies to activities involving carers.

Additional actions

36. Additional actions that the City Corporation continues to work on include:

- celebrating and recognising carers – annual Carers Week and Carers Rights Day activities continue to celebrate and recognise carers in the City. Carers are involved in the planning of Carers Week (8-14 June 2026), with lessons taken from previous years. We have also promoted the launch of the City Belonging Parent and Carer Network with carers. We have linked Imago with the City Belonging team to explore opportunities around its Carers Champion scheme
- exploring accessible digital and internet training for carers – digital support promoted through Imago includes City of London libraries and information on Adult Skills basic digital training courses
- develop and deliver a programme of awareness-raising activities so people can identify themselves and others as carers – the City Corporation will continue to work with Imago, partners and carers, building on activity already referenced in this paper
- edit information and advice for carers on the City Corporation website and explore the use of case studies – activity will continue to ensure that carers have access to accurate, up-to-date information.

Next steps

37. The Carers Strategy will be reviewed again in December 2026. The City Corporation will continue to involve carers in this process, taking on board learning from previous review points.

38. Priorities for the next six months include:

- working with the Shoreditch Park and City PCN to better understand and explore how to best meet the emotional wellbeing needs of carers
- embedding the Carers Card UK Carers Card into the Adult Social Care offer and supporting carers to share their emergency plans as they choose to
- involving carers in the contract monitoring of the commissioned carers support service
- continuing to develop the Carers Forum
- continuing to work with partners to raise awareness of and reach more carers in the City of London.

39. The Carers Strategy runs from 2023 to 2027. City Corporation officials will start planning for the revision of the strategy during 2027. This will be done in partnership with carers, Imago and other stakeholders to ensure a joined-up approach, and that the voices and experiences of carers remain central.

Adult Social Care statutory duties

40. The Carers Strategy runs alongside the delivery of the City Corporation's statutory duties by Adult Social Care. At the end of March 2026, there were 26 carers open to Adult Social Care. All of these carers had a review within the last 12 months.

41. In 2025, an audit of Carers Assessments and support was conducted by the City Corporation's Principal Social Worker and the Independent Chair of the Adult Social Care Quality Assurance Board. The results indicated a strong person-centred approach with clear recording of carers' voices, and work being completed within timescales. Areas for development were identified in articulating professional judgement, more specific assessment of the impact of caring, and linking carers' payments more closely to identified needs. The Adult Social Care team will continue to focus on making progress against these areas for development over the coming months.

Corporate & Strategic Implications

42. Strategic implications – delivery of the Carers Strategy continues to align with the Corporate Plan 2024-29 objectives of delivering excellent services and diverse engaged communities.
43. Financial implications – none.
44. Resource implications – none.
45. Legal implications – none.
46. Risk implications – none.
47. Equalities implications – an Equality Impact Assessment (EIA) was completed for the Strategy.
48. Climate implications – none.
49. Security implications – none.

Conclusion

50. Significant progress has been made against the Carers Strategy 2023-27 with a key achievement being the involvement of carers in the commissioning of the carers support service. A range of other activity shared in this report demonstrates the City Corporation's commitment to continuing to develop support and services for City of London carers. However, there is more to be done and the City Corporation will continue to work with partners to deliver against the Strategy during 2026 and 2027. The City Corporation will remain open to a 'test and learn' approach to involvement activities with carers to try and increase reach and the diversity of those engaged.

Appendices

- Appendix 1 – Carers conversation and lunch 'You said, we did' (December 2025)

Background Papers

- Carers Strategy 2023-27 at Community and Children's Services Committee 13 December 2023, item 7

Hannah Dobbin
Strategy and Projects Officer, Department of Community and Children's Services

T: 020 3834 7622
E: hannah.dobbin@cityoflondon.gov.uk