

# NSW Health Recognition and Support for Carers

Key Directions 2024 - 2028

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## Acknowledgements

NSW Health would like to acknowledge and thank the numerous carers, clinicians, service providers, consumer groups, peak bodies and other individuals and groups who shared their views, knowledge and expertise towards the review and update of the *NSW Health Recognition and Support for Carers: Key Directions 2024-2028*. The Key Directions builds on the previous *NSW Health Recognition and Support for Carers: Key Directions 2018-2020* and its action plan.



# Acknowledgement of Country

We acknowledge that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are the First Peoples and Traditional Custodians of Australia, and the oldest continuing culture in human history.

We pay respect to Elders past and present and commit to respecting the waterways and the lands we walk on, and the communities we walk with.

We celebrate the deep and enduring connection of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples to Country and acknowledge their continuing custodianship of the land, seas and sky.

We acknowledge the ongoing stewardship of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and the important contribution they make to our communities and economies, including the unique historical, cultural and spiritual needs of Aboriginal people providing and receiving care within the NSW Health system.

We reflect on the continuing impact of government policies and practices and recognise our responsibility to work together with and for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, families and communities.

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# 1

# Background & Scope



# Purpose

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**The *NSW Health Recognition and Support for Carers: Key Directions 2024 – 2028 (Key Directions)*** provides a framework for NSW Health’s response to the needs of carers across the NSW public health system.

The Key Directions identifies statewide actions and will inform local health districts and specialty health network planning and activities to support carers.

## Key Direction 1

- NSW Health will recognise, respect and empower carers as partners in patients care

## Key Direction 2

- NSW Health will support patients who are carers to have better health and wellbeing

## Key Direction 3

- NSW Health will support its employees who are carers

## Key Direction 4

- The NSW health system will enable support for carers

# Background

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## Who is this document for?

The Key Directions is intended for the NSW Health system, including service providers, policy makers, clinicians and program managers. The principles in this document apply to various settings and touchpoints for carers across the health system. This ranges from care provided in the home, community, or inpatient settings, as well as within NSW Health and its agencies as workplaces.

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## Who are carers?

A carer is defined in the NSW *Carers (Recognition) Act 2010* (the Act), as a person who provides **ongoing, unpaid personal care, support and assistance to another person who needs help due to:**

- **disability**
- **a medical condition**
- **a mental illness**
- **being frail or aged<sup>1</sup>**
- **dementia**
- **drug or alcohol dependency.<sup>2</sup>**

Many carers might not see themselves as a 'carer'. Caring can range from a few hours of support per week to sustained full-time care. It may also involve balancing full-time or part-time work or study with caring responsibilities. Carers may provide care for multiple people or have their own health condition requiring support.

Carers help with activities such as:

- showering or dressing
- mobility
- transport
- social and emotional support
- communication
- meal preparation
- domestic assistance
- medication management
- financial management.

In this context a person is not a carer if they provide care as part of paid employment, formal volunteering, education or simply because they are a spouse, parent or guardian to another person.

Intersectionality recognises that an individual's health is shaped by compounding and overlapping physical, social and cultural factors, such as gender, culture and socioeconomic status<sup>3</sup>. Women are more likely to be underemployed, spend longer periods of time out of the workforce than men and have unequal division of household tasks and caring responsibilities<sup>4</sup>. Caring can have a two-fold impact on

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<sup>1</sup> The Carers (Recognition) Act 2010 No 20 NSW (NSW Legislation, 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Department of Communities and Justice NSW Carers Strategy: Caring with New South Wales 2020-2030. Accessed via <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/community-inclusion/carers/nsw-carers-strategy/nsw-carers-strategy-caring-in-nsw-2020-2030.pdf>

<sup>3</sup> NSW Health LGBTQI+ Health Strategy 2022-2027. Accessed via <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/lgbtiq-health/Publications/lgbtiq-health-strategy.pdf>

<sup>4</sup> NSW Women's Strategy 2023-2026. Accessed via <https://www.nsw.gov.au/women-nsw/nsw-womens-strategy-2023-2026>

women's economic equality, as women make up a large majority of carers and are more likely to provide informal care when formal services are not available<sup>5</sup>. The Key Directions aims to capture the diversity of carers and their unique needs to improve carers' experiences with the health system and their overall wellbeing.

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## Carers and NSW Health

The health of carers and people they care for is vital to the broader NSW health system. Carers contribute an estimated \$25 billion in unpaid care each year<sup>6</sup>. Involving carers as **partners in care** benefits the health system and improves outcomes, health and wellbeing of both carers and the people they care for.

Carers can often provide unique insights into a patient's health and care needs. This can include assisting in communicating complex information to patients, supporting patients' daily activities or facilitating the treatment process. Partnering with carers involves valuing their unique understanding of the person they care for and facilitating a two-way sharing of information between carers and healthcare professionals. This may look like:

- Involving carers in treatment, discharge planning, education and supporting carers in care tasks.
- Scheduling appointments or medical team discussions to include carers and families or offering alternate times for discussions with carers.
- Involving carers in statewide and local co-design of policies, processes and models of healthcare.
- Involving carers in reporting, monitoring, quality improvement, evaluation and governance processes.
- Respecting the needs, diversity and practices of carers, including cultural and spiritual practices.

Research shows that carers experience lower health and wellbeing outcomes than the general population<sup>7</sup>. Carers have a higher incidence of chronic health conditions, and they often have little time to prioritise their own health. Caring can also have a significant impact on mental health. The NSW Carers Charter states that 'carers should be supported to enjoy optimum health and wellbeing'. NSW Health plays a pivotal role in enabling this, both for carers interacting with the health system and NSW Health staff who are carers.

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## How did we get here?

This document builds on the *NSW Health Recognition and Support for Carers: Key Directions 2018-2020* (the Key Directions 2018-2020). The updated Key Directions complements policy and legislation and aims to expand on the broader NSW Health approach.

The Key Directions has been informed by system-wide consultation, with responses from carers, consumers, community partners, non-government organisations, along with key stakeholders from across NSW government sectors. Statewide actions to support the Key Directions for 2024 – 2028 have been included at the end of this document.

<sup>5</sup> Australian Government Department of the Prime Minister and Cabinet. Accessed via <https://www.pmc.gov.au/resources/care-and-support-economy-state-play>

<sup>6</sup> Department of Communities and Justice, 2020. NSW Carers Strategy: Caring with New South Wales 2020-2030. Accessed via <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/documents/community-inclusion/carers/nsw-carers-strategy/nsw-carers-strategy-caring-in-nsw-2020-2030.pdf>

<sup>7</sup> Cares NSW Australia. Impacts of caring. Accessed via <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/about-caring/impacts-of-caring>



## Carers Snapshot<sup>8</sup>

# 3 million

Australians provided unpaid assistance to others with a disability, long-term health condition or due to old age

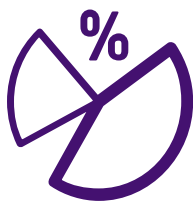
# 13%

of carers were under the age of 25 in Australia

## Carers in New South Wales

# 53%

Identify as women<sup>9</sup>



# 15%

of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander people identify as carers<sup>10</sup>

# 11.8 million

is the number of hours per week is provided by carers in NSW<sup>11</sup>

# 958,500

is the number of carers in NSW<sup>12</sup>

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) 2022, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. Accessed via <https://www.abs.gov.au>

<sup>9</sup> ABS 2024, as cited by Department of Communities and Justice 2024. Accessed via <https://dcj.nsw.gov.au/community-inclusion/carers/about-carers>

<sup>10</sup> ABS 2021, New South Wales, Census Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander people. Accessed via: <https://www.abs.gov.au/census/find-census-data/quickstats/2021/IQS1>

<sup>11</sup> ABS 2024, as cited by Carers NSW Australia. Accessed via <https://www.carersnsw.org.au/>

<sup>12</sup> ABS 2022, Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers. Accessed via <https://www.abs.gov.au>

# 2

# The Key Directions



# Vision

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The vision of the Key Directions is that carers feel valued, respected, engaged and supported during their interactions with NSW health. To enable this, the needs and experiences of carers must be considered within policymaking, service development and delivery, along with workforce development and support. The Key Directions seek to provide a roadmap for implementation across all levels of the health system, allowing flexibility for local approaches.

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## **Key Direction 1**

NSW Health will recognise, respect and empower carers as partners in patients care

## **Key Direction 2**

NSW Health will support patients who are carers to have better health and wellbeing

## **Key Direction 3**

NSW Health will support its employees who are carers

## **Key Direction 4**

The NSW health system will enable support for carers

## Policy Context

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### The NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010

The Act requires public sector agencies to increase the awareness of the valuable contribution that carers make to our community and uphold the principles of the Carers Charter. Under the Act, NSW Health is obligated to:

- Take all reasonable steps to ensure that staff have an awareness and understanding of the NSW Carers Charter.
- Consult with carers or bodies representing carers when developing policies that impact carers.
- Ensure internal human resources policies are developed with regard for the NSW Carers Charter.

The principles of the NSW Carers Charter include:

1. Acknowledgement of carers' unique knowledge and experience, along with their valuable contribution to the community.
2. Supporting carers to have optimum health and wellbeing, and to balance their caring roles with other parts of life, such as work, family, community and education.
3. Recognising the diverse needs of carers in policy, program and service delivery, ensuring consideration for culture, language, age, disability, religion, socio-economic status, location, gender identity and sexual orientation.
4. Involving carers as partners in care with regards to assessment, planning, delivery and review of services provided to the people they care for.

The Key Directions outlines how NSW Health agencies can demonstrate the requirements of the NSW Carers Charter in a health context. NSW Health must report on compliance with the Act in the Annual Report.

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### The NSW Carers Strategy 2020-2030

The *NSW Carers Strategy: Caring in NSW 2020-2030* (the Strategy) is a whole of government and community commitment to better recognising and supporting carers across NSW. It provides a framework for the community, service providers, government and private businesses, to improve outcomes for carers, their families and the people they care for.

The strategy commits to four priorities:

1. Carers have better access to information, services and supports
2. Carers will be recognised, respected and empowered
3. Carers have improved financial wellbeing and economic opportunities
4. Carers have better health and wellbeing

The Strategy is supported by an action plan, which is updated every 2 years. Publishing the Key Directions is a key action under the *Carers Strategy 2nd Action Plan 2023-2024*. This action plan outlines NSW Health's plans to achieve broader Ministry priorities under the Strategy, including:

- Ensuring that accurate and complete data is collected to better understand the needs of carers interacting with the NSW Health system.
- Provide NSW Health information and resources to meet carers' needs and review, update and support consistent provision of resources to carers across NSW Health.

## Future Health 2022-2032 - Guiding the next decade of care in NSW

Future Health is a whole-of-health-system roadmap for how NSW Health will meet the increasing health demands and needs of our community over the coming decade. It aims to deliver a vision for a sustainable health system that provides outcomes that matter most to patients and the community, is personalised, invests in wellness and is digitally enabled.

Support for carers through the Key Directions aligns with several outcomes identified in Future Health:

- Outcome 1: Patients and carers have positive experiences and outcomes that matter
- Outcome 3: People are healthy and well
- Outcome 4: Our (NSW Health) staff are healthy and well

Caring for carers is fundamental to meeting the strategic outcomes outlined in Future Health, and a necessary part of meeting Future Health's person-centred approach to care.

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## Elevating the Human Experience

Elevating the Human Experience – Our Guide to Action outlines what the NSW health system can do together, in partnership with carers, patients and families to ensure that those interacting with the health system have the best possible experience during a time that can be daunting and stressful.

This Guide advocates that working in partnership with carers is an important policy objective as well as a key principle in understanding human-centred care. The Guide highlights that many carers are not receiving the support they need.

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## National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards

The National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards (NSQHS) are set out by the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. The standards were developed in collaboration with the Australian Government, states and territories, along with various clinical and consumer stakeholders. It provides a quality assurance mechanism, to ensure adequate systems are in place to protect the public from harm and improve the quality of health service provision.

Actions to better support and engage with carers will assist districts in fulfilling accreditation requirements under the NSQHS. This includes opportunities to build evidence to demonstrate compliance with Standards, especially Clinical Governance, Partnering with Consumers, Comprehensive Care, and Communicating for Safety.

# Key Direction 1

## NSW Health will recognise, respect and empower carers as partners in patients care

Carers have a unique understanding of the person they care for. Carers should be recognised in healthcare settings and engaged in co-design across the system. Engaging carers as **partners in care** supports a trauma-informed approach and aligns with the *NSW Health Integrated Trauma-Informed Care Framework* by offering carers increased collaboration, empowerment and choice during their journey through the health system.

### What you told us:

A strong theme emerging from consultation was the need to partner with carers across the health system. This involves clinical settings, policymaking, planning, monitoring and evaluation of services. Including a two-way sharing of information between carers, health professionals and the broader system.

### NSW Health organisations will demonstrate this by:

- Actively communicating with patients, families, friends and visitors to identify whether a patient has a carer.
- Ensuring carers are recorded in the patient administration system (PAS) and displayed in the electronic medical record (eMR), or equivalent systems.<sup>13</sup>
- Maintaining buildings, rooms, spaces and environments that allow a carer to attend to the person they care for.
- Acknowledging carers as more than 'visitors,' and recognising that they are integral members of the patient care team. This includes enabling visitation and access to clinical spaces wherever possible, and as desired by the carer and patient.
- Involving carers in planning a patient's discharge, including providing them with appropriate information, support and follow-up care and linking with appropriate services.
- Referring carers to appropriate information and support services, including Carer Gateway or other relevant local services and resources.

### Examples:

- Recognising former carers as 'hidden' carers and providing appropriate referral to bereavement counselling and support when the person they care for dies or is approaching end of life.
- Creating an environment where carers will feel safe to ask for help, support and to provide feedback through collaboration, openness, respect and empowerment.<sup>14</sup>
- Including carers in a patient's care when they wish to be involved, including hands-on care.
- Allowing open, bidirectional communication between carers and healthcare teams, particularly regarding changes to a patient's condition, treatment or discharge planning.
- Addressing carers' own needs in addition to those of the person they care for.

### Statewide Actions:

- Maintain the statewide Carer Support Program
- Maintain the Family and Carer Mental Health Program

<sup>13</sup> Health and Social Policy Branch. Identifying the Carer at Patient Registration, 2019 [https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/Pages/doc.aspx?dn=IB2019\\_031](https://www1.health.nsw.gov.au/pds/Pages/doc.aspx?dn=IB2019_031)

<sup>14</sup> NSW Health. Core Values 2021 <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/careers/ministry/Pages/CORE-values.aspx>

## Key Direction 2

### NSW Health will support patients who are carers to have better health and wellbeing

Carers provide invaluable support to the health system. Whilst caring can be rewarding, caring can have significant impacts on carers' wellbeing, including effects on employment, superannuation, physical and emotional health<sup>15</sup>. When accessing the health system themselves carers experience additional complexities in managing the needs of the person they care for.

#### What You Told Us

To support carers, particularly patients who are carers, carers must be accurately identified. Carers often report not being asked if they are a carer when engaging with NSW Health. Certain types of carers may also be less visible, such as young carers, or those from diverse cultural backgrounds. Consent, recognition and recording appropriate information about carers, will help healthcare teams provide support and reduce the need for carers to reshare their stories.

#### NSW Health organisations will demonstrate this by:

- Assisting carers to find and access support to manage their own health and wellbeing, along with support for the person they care for.
- Creating an environment where carers feel safe, supported and empowered to ask for help and to provide feedback.
- Considering an individual's unique needs as a carer, including acknowledgement of the diversity of carers to enable equitable access. This includes students and young carers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and those from diverse cultural backgrounds or rural and regional areas.
- Involving and empowering carers in discharge planning discussions, from the earliest practicable point during an inpatient admission.
- Providing appropriate information, resources and follow-up support, including referring carers and people they care for to relevant services such as Carer Gateway.

#### Statewide Actions:

- Maintain the statewide Carer Support Program
- Provide information and resources to meet carers needs

<sup>15</sup> House of Representatives. Recognising, valuing and supporting unpaid carers: Inquiry into the recognition of unpaid carers. Accessed via [https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary\\_Business/Committees/House/Social\\_Policy\\_and\\_Legal\\_Affairs/UnpaidCarers/Recognising\\_valuing\\_and\\_supporting\\_unpaid\\_carers](https://www.aph.gov.au/Parliamentary_Business/Committees/House/Social_Policy_and_Legal_Affairs/UnpaidCarers/Recognising_valuing_and_supporting_unpaid_carers)

## Key Direction 3

### NSW Health will support its employees who are carers

NSW Health is the largest public health system in Australia, employing approximately 176,000 people<sup>16</sup>. Working in healthcare can be rewarding but presents unique physical and emotional challenges. NSW Health employees with caring responsibilities may need to balance their clinical care, with the needs of those they care for outside of work. Supporting workers who are carers is a key priority across the health system and aligns with Future Health.

#### What You Told Us

Carers and organisations both within and outside of NSW Health identified the need for stronger recognition of carers in the workplace, both in workforce policies and procedures and through additional resources and peer networks.

#### NSW Health organisations will demonstrate this by:

- Considering a staff member's unique needs as a carer, including acknowledgement of the diversity of carers and their needs to support equitable access, including students and young carers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers and those from diverse cultural backgrounds or rural and remote areas.
- Providing information so that NSW Health employees who are carers know and understand their rights and available supports.
- Establishing environments that are physically and psychologically safe for employees who are carers.
- Promoting and supporting flexible work practices and other workforce policies that support carers to balance their careers with caring responsibilities.
- Offer and promote flexible working arrangements related to hours, patterns and locations, for students with caring responsibilities completing placements with NSW Health services.
- Invest in carer-focused employment initiatives aimed at supporting 'hidden carers' to enter and remain in employment. This should include consideration for gender equity and initiatives that identify and support opportunities for economic and employment gender equality.

#### Examples:

- Promoting and enhancing opportunities for NSW Health employees to identify themselves as carers.
- Publicly communicating support for staff who are carers and connecting them to relevant policies, resources and services, such as peer networks or Carer Gateway.
- Building the capacity of NSW Health managers and executives to promote the principles of the NSW Carers Charter to all staff.

#### Statewide Actions:

- Obtain Carers + Employers Accreditation
- Provide information and resources to meet carers' needs

<sup>16</sup> NSW Health. Annual report 2022-23. Accessed via <https://www.health.nsw.gov.au/annualreport/Pages/default.aspx>



## Key Direction 4

### The NSW health system will enable support for carers

Navigating the NSW Health system can be a complex task for patients and carers. Caring responsibilities often require coordination of a patient's care across multiple facilities and services. This can include carers making phone calls, emails, record keeping and supporting implementation of treatment recommendations for the person they care for. Systems and services need to be streamlined, coordinated and digitally enabled to support carers with their caring responsibilities and improve their experience with the health system.

#### What You Told Us

A key theme that emerged from feedback was around support services and systems, and how carers access these. This was multi-faceted and included the need to support carers in how they are referred to, and engage with support services and systems, but also the nature of the systems and services available and how these can be better integrated. It's acknowledged from the feedback, that there are often challenges and carers can be overwhelmed, making it difficult to access the right types of support, at key times during their journey through the health system.

#### NSW Health organisations will demonstrate this by:

- Supporting the development of the Carers Support Program in each district or speciality health network, to enable implementation of local programs and initiatives e.g. crisis and peer support, along with respite, travel and accommodation assistance.
- Supporting the development, distribution and sharing of information and resources that are culturally sensitive, accessible and relevant to the diverse needs of carers across NSW.
- Identifying system gaps and inadequacies that impact carers and engaging carers in solution co-design across the NSW Health system and its services.
- Developing and implementing systems to collect and use data to understand, address and respond to carers' needs.
- Promoting the principles and capacity to act in alignment with the NSW Carers Charter, to NSW Health employees.
- Promoting relevant education and training for NSW Health staff to increase understanding and awareness of carers needs, identification of carers, and support inclusive and respectful work practices.
- Ensuring that NSW Health employees and volunteers are aware of the diverse needs of carer groups. This includes Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander carers, young carers and carers in rural and remote areas or from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Promoting the use of correct and consistent language when referring to carers in NSW Health policies, procedures, media and other documentation, in-line with the Act.

#### Examples:

- Building relationships with key carer stakeholders across the health system and beyond, including across NSW Health and its pillar organisations, other government agencies, community and not-for-profit organisations.
- Supporting and leading initiatives that increase carer awareness, such as National Carers Week.
- Supporting improvements to integration and functionality of digital systems, to streamline coordination of care and reduce burden on carers having to reshare distressing information.

#### Statewide Actions:

- Improve data collection and interpretation.

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# Implementation & Monitoring



## Implementation – Statewide Actions

All levels and agencies of NSW Health have a duty to engage with carers. Collaboration and partnership with carers, government and non-government organisations is encouraged to promote a more inclusive and integrated health system and support enduring outcomes for carers.

This action plan intends to capture suggested indicators of success only, it is not intended to be an action plan for all of NSW Health. Districts and networks should use the Key Directions in developing their local approach. Actions in the plan below are intended to be a starting point for the Key Directions activity period, further scoping and planning may be needed to further support and realise outcomes under each action.

Action	Relevant KD	Benefits	Responsibility	Indicators of success
<b>1 Maintain a Carer Support Program (CSP) in each district or network and facilitate the statewide CSP Network</b>	All	<p>The CSP provides support for carers, by providing direct support to carers, supporting access to services and facilitating communication between carers and health professionals.</p> <p>The statewide CSP Network provides opportunities for networking and collaboration. It is a forum for raising issues and showcasing best practice through regular meetings and a biannual statewide workshop.</p>	Districts and networks, Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Statewide representation at network meetings.</li> <li>Regular CSP Network meetings to share ideas, developments and issues.</li> <li>Each CSP can report on activities and outcomes that support carers, including how CSPs are culturally safe, trauma-informed and support the diversity of carers across the health system.</li> <li>Additional activities and initiatives throughout the year that aim to implement the Key Directions.</li> </ul>
<b>2 Maintain the Family and Carer Mental Health Program</b>	1	Support for people who care for those with a mental illness is pivotal to achieving strong outcomes in mental health care. The Family and Carer Mental Health Program supports the delivery of family-friendly mental health services across 15 districts in NSW.	Districts and networks, Ministry and community-managed organisations (CMOs)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Districts and networks enhance the skills of mental health service staff to work with families and carers as partners in care.</li> <li>CMOs provide training and education, 1:1 support, group support and advocacy services for families and carers of people with mental health.</li> </ul>
<b>3 Improve data collection and interpretation</b>	4	There is a need for more comprehensive data to inform policy and to track outcomes for carers across NSW Health.	Ministry, working with LHDs and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Carers are consistently and accurately identified in medical record systems.</li> <li>Data collected through eMR and PAS is available, and systems are in place to gather</li> </ul>

		Improved data will provide an evidence base for understanding, advocacy and ongoing decisions around carers and support for carers across the health system.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>and analyse carer data and feedback at local and statewide levels.</li> <li>Needs, opportunities and gaps in data collection systems and processes are assessed across the NSW health system.</li> <li>Avenues for identifying NSW Health staff that are carers are identified and implemented.</li> </ul>
<b>4</b>	<b>Obtain Carers + Employers accreditation</b>	3, 4 Carers + Employers is a nationally recognised accreditation program. Obtaining accreditation will show that NSW Health values and supports its employees who are carers and provide a platform for promoting carer matters to staff.	Ministry, districts, networks and other NSW Health entities and agencies	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Level 1 or above accreditation obtained by NSW Health entities.</li> </ul>
<b>5</b>	<b>Promote National Carers Week</b>	1, 2, 3, 4 National Carers Week activities will raise the profile of carers across NSW Health’s work.	Districts and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW Health districts, networks and entities can report on and showcase activities and initiatives implemented to support Carers Week.</li> </ul>
<b>6</b>	<b>Provide information and resources to meet carers’ needs</b>	1, 2 This work will identify and fill any gaps and opportunities to provide statewide NSW Health resources for carers. This will support consistency of resources across the state and improve equity of resources for priority populations groups.	Ministry, districts and networks	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW Health resources use consistent and accurate terminology for carers.</li> <li>Gaps, needs and opportunities for carer resource availability are identified.</li> <li>Opportunities explored for other carer-focused programs across NSW Health</li> </ul>
<b>7</b>	<b>Establish Key Directions steering committee to guide implementation of statewide and local initiatives</b>	All Creation of a Key Direction Steering Committee will support collaboration and engagement from key stakeholders needed to achieve Key Direction priorities.	Ministry	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Steering Committee established with key stakeholders from across NSW Health.</li> <li>Implementation of Key Directions principles and statewide actions.</li> </ul>

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## The role of local health districts and speciality health networks

The Key Directions is designed to allow flexibility for local approaches. Local actions and programs should align with principles of the Key Directions. Support for carers should occur at all levels of the district or network and broader health system, from clinical care, management, policy and program development.

Each district and network have a local Carers Support Program (CSP) to enhance the responsiveness of the health system to the needs of carers. The CSP in each district acts as a link to the strategic principles outlined in the Key Directions, guiding their implementation at the local level. NSW Health is responsible for promoting and implementing the Key Directions across all levels of the health system, aligning with the Act and the principles of the Carers Charter.

The CSP varies across each district or network, according to local and community needs. However, as a minimum, CSPs:

- Build the capability of NSW Health staff to identify, engage and work with a range of carers, including Aboriginal & Torres Strait Islander carers, young carers and carers from diverse cultural backgrounds.
- Promote the interests of carers through co-design to develop inclusive policies, programs and information.
- Provide culturally safe, trauma-informed and accessible information, resources and support to carers.
- Actively engage with carers at all levels of care, including clinical care, service planning, monitoring and evaluation and offer avenues for carer feedback.
- Support NSW Health staff who are carers within that district or network, through staff training, resources and awareness initiatives and inclusive workplace policies and procedures.
- Engage with the Ministry and statewide work as needed, advising on local initiatives and raising any issues of concern.

CSPs are also encouraged to consider providing direct support for carers where capacity allows.

The CSP Network, includes CSP managers from each district, and meets regularly to enable the sharing of ideas at a state level. This provides the opportunity to support and enhance best practice and raise emerging issues or opportunities. The CSP Network is led by members and supported by the Ministry.

Districts and networks will be expected to report to the Ministry on how the Key Directions have been put into action throughout the district. This includes the CSP and along with broader activities and initiatives across districts that impact carers. There should be ongoing open communication between districts and the Ministry, to raise emerging and systemic issues and develop solutions.

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## The role of the NSW Ministry of Health

The Ministry will provide support and leadership on issues impacting carers across NSW. This includes consideration of what systems and processes are needed to allow for better co-design, reporting, monitoring and governance.

The Ministry will connect and support collaboration between stakeholders, initiatives and programs across the state. This includes within the Ministry, NSW Health pillars, other government agencies such as Department of Communities and Justice, Federal government initiatives and non-government organisations, such as Carer Gateway and Carers NSW.

The Ministry will continue to administer programs specific to carers, such as the Carer Support Program, the Family and Carer Mental Health Program and other programs or initiatives across the Ministry relevant to carers.

## Reporting, monitoring and governance

Projects and initiatives for carers should be evidence-based and developed in co-design with carers. Evaluation and monitoring should be considered in the design of all carer services and projects, across all levels of the health system.

The Ministry and NSW Health pillars will drive and develop data, systems and technology to better understand, and support carers' needs. The Health and Social Policy Branch within the Ministry will coordinate annual reporting against the strategic priorities in the Key Directions. This information will be published in the NSW Health Annual Report, as required by the Act. This will enable the Ministry to collect and showcase examples of best practice initiatives from each district and network. Additional reporting will also be provided to the Department of Communities and Justice, as required under the NSW Carers Strategy 2020-2030.

The Key Directions aligns with broader statewide policies and priorities, including the Future Health 2022-2032 and reportable actions under the Regional Health Strategic Plan 2022-2032.

Implementation of the Key Directions will include improved statewide approaches to elevate and include carer voices across the system. This will acknowledge existing local initiatives and provide support for enhanced coordination with carer engagement groups and other key stakeholders.

# Abbreviations & Glossary

## Abbreviations

<b>District</b>	NSW Local Health District e.g. Sydney Local Health District
<b>eMR</b>	Electronic Medical Records
<b>LGBTIQ+</b>	Lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgender and gender diverse, intersex, queer, and other diverse sexualities and genders
<b>The Ministry</b>	The NSW Ministry of Health
<b>Network</b>	Specialty Health Network
<b>NSQHS Standards</b>	National Safety and Quality Health Service Standards
<b>PAS</b>	Patient Administration System
<b>The Key Directions</b>	NSW Health Recognition and Support for Carers: Key Directions 2024-28 (report)
<b>the Act</b>	NSW Carers (Recognition) Act 2010
<b>CSP</b>	Carer Support Program
<b>NGO</b>	Non-government organisation

## Glossary

<b>Partners in care*</b>	<p>Across the health system, 'partner in care' describes a patient's essential support person. Partners in care support patients' care, wellbeing, and may also assist with information sharing and decision-making. In-line with the NSW Carers Charter under the Act, all carers "are partners in care."</p> <p>*The above definition reflects the use of 'partners in care' terminology throughout the Key Directions, noting that this term may be used for other context or roles more broadly across NSW Health.</p>
<b>Carers</b>	The Act defines a 'carer' as an individual who provides ongoing personal care, support or assistance to any other individual who needs care because they have a disability, medical condition, mental illness or is frail and aged.
<b>Carer Gateway</b>	Carer Gateway is an Australian (Federal) Government program providing free services and support for carers. A range of services are available to support carers in their caring role including peer support, tailored support packages, counselling, online courses and emergency respite.
<b>Carers + Employers Accreditation</b>	Carers + Employers is a workplace accreditation program that defines best-practice standards for supporting employees with caring responsibilities.
<b>Hidden carers</b>	This phrase may be used to refer to people that do not necessarily identify as carers. Because of this, hidden carers are usually not aware of supports and services available for carers.

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NSW Ministry of Health  
1 Reserve Rd  
ST LEONARDS NSW 2060  
Tel. (02) 9391 9000  
Fax. (02) 9391 9101  
TTY. Tel. (02) 9391 9000  
[www.health.nsw.gov.au](http://www.health.nsw.gov.au)

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