

# Draft Carers' Strategy Action Plan - Narrative

---

Draft for Consultation – November 2025. Not Government Policy.

# Who are carers?

Family, whānau, aiga, and individual carers (carers) provide care for someone close to them who needs additional assistance with their everyday living because of a disability, health condition, illness, or injury.

**Almost 500,000 New Zealanders provide informal or unpaid care** (Census, 2023), although the number is likely much higher as many do not recognise themselves as a “carer” but may at times need access to targeted carer support.

The term “carer” is used in line with the New Zealand Carers’ Strategy and international examples,

- Words such as ‘supporter’ or ‘manaakitanga’ may better describe how people see caring as a natural part of what they do for the people they love.

There are many approaches to caring:

- Te ao Māori models of care, such as manaakitanga and whanaungatanga, can emphasise care through the importance of family relationships and Hauora.
- Many Pacific and Asian communities prioritise intergenerational family care, especially through a deep value and respect for elders.

72vh7ewzmz 2025-11-13 10:21:15

## They are family, loved ones, partners, grandparents, children, neighbours and friends who are...

...caring full-time, part-time, or at different points throughout life

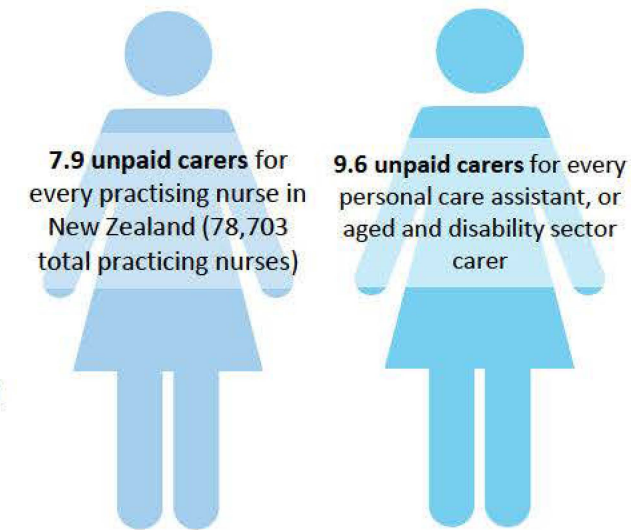
...caring for one or multiple people

...playing a range of roles in addition to being a carer, which may include personal care, finances, preparing meals, doing household chores, providing transport etc

...caring alone or as part of a family/whānau or care team

...often navigating and balancing complex responsibilities including:

- work and/or learning
- raising a family
- navigating their own health, disability or ageing.



**Informal and unpaid family carers were estimated to provide a value of \$17.6b per year, or 5.4% of GDP, in 2022.**



# New Zealand Carers' Strategy

The New Zealand Carers' Strategy (the Strategy) was launched in 2008 in partnership with the NZ Carers Alliance – a collective of over 60 charitable and non-governmental organisations concerned with the needs of family, whānau, and aiga carers.

The Strategy's vision is to ensure that: "New Zealand Aotearoa, is a society that values individuals, families, whānau or aiga who support others who need help with their everyday living".

## Focus is on developing a new Action Plan

Led by MSD, a draft Action Plan (Action Plan) has been developed and has involved:

- government agencies partnered to the Carers' Strategy
- NZ Carers Alliance
- Carers' Strategy Advisory Group, which includes representatives from the Carers Alliance and non-governmental organisations that work with and represent carers.

The new Action Plan:

- aims to support, value, and recognise the contributions of family, whānau, aiga and individual carers that care for someone close to them who needs additional assistance with their everyday living because of a disability, health condition, illness or injury
- sets out ambitious outcomes to make a material difference for carers over the long term by outlining an initial set of actions and immediate deliverables government will take in partnership with communities, laying the foundation for future work.

Its development draws on:

- years of engagement, evidence, and insights since the Strategy's launch, including previous action plans
- the principles of the Strategy – to recognise diversity, be proactive, enable carers, and be inclusive.



# Overarching Considerations

Drawn from our engagements with the Carers Alliance and working with the Carers Advisory Group and other agencies, the following considerations have guided the development of the Action Plan:

- Focus on a targeted set of long-term outcomes supported by a few immediate deliverables.
- Carers should not be disadvantaged by caring, and support for carers should be sustained over the long term.
- Carers are diverse; their experiences should shape design.
- Support needs to be culturally inclusive and safe for both carers and care recipients. This includes integration of te ao Māori models of care, and targeted support.
- Service navigation should be proactive, coordinated, easily navigable and accessible.
- Carers should have autonomy and choice, and person-centred, family and whānau-centred, and situational approaches should inform support.

72vh7ewzmz 2025-11-13 10:21:15

## The Rolling Action Plan reflects a new approach

### WHAT WE ARE TRYING TO ACHIEVE

To date, the Strategy has been implemented through three five-year Action Plans. The latest, Mahi Aroha Carers' Strategy Action Plan 2019-2023, expired in 2023 with many actions still unmet and key challenges for carers ongoing.

The new Action Plan is rolling, rather than time-bound, to reflect a 'test and learn' approach to what works for carers and how the government can contribute over time.

This allows agencies to regularly update progress and align actions with government priorities to better support carers.

### WHY THIS IS IMPORTANT

Carers help support people to live full lives within their homes, cultures and communities. This often leads to better wellbeing for people receiving care and may help to reduce the need for more intensive government services, such as reducing hospitalisation or residential care placements, and allowing people to live at home for longer.

As New Zealand's population ages, and our health needs grow, demand for carers will intensify, carers will support loved ones for longer and manage more complex needs.

**The next Action Plan needs to be agile and responsive to changes in the NZ population and society, and the country's health, disability, and social systems**



<p><b>The New Zealand Carers’ Strategy</b></p> <p>Vision: New Zealand Aotearoa is a society that values individuals, families, whānau or aiga who support others who need help with their everyday living</p>		
<p><b>Overview of the Draft Carers’ Strategy Action Plan</b></p> <p>Purpose: To make a material difference for carers by laying out a framework of rolling actions to make progress now and lay the foundation for future work.</p>		
<p><b>Recognition and Appreciation</b></p> <p>Ensuring carers are recognised and appreciated values their contributions and fosters inclusion, belonging, and support.</p>	<p><b>Health and Wellbeing</b></p> <p>Improving early targeted support and flexible respite and break options help carers stay well and value caring.</p>	<p><b>Financial Security</b></p> <p>Recognising care skills, improving access to paid work and learning, and providing financial support where needed.</p>
Outcomes		
<p><b>Carers are valued and the support they require is recognised and protected</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ National recognition and appreciation of carers and their contributions.</li> <li>➤ System-level recognition and protection of carers.</li> <li>➤ Strengthened data collection and dissemination on carers.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Health and wellbeing outcomes are equitable between carers and non-carers</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Carers have a wide range of options and pathways across all stages of life for taking a break from caring.</li> <li>➤ Carers' needs are considered early and fully.</li> <li>➤ Carers have improved physical health and mental wellbeing, across all phases of life.</li> </ul>	<p><b>More responsive financial supports and improved educational and employment pathways to enable carers to meet their needs and plan for the future</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>➤ Carers know how to access, and can access, the financial support they are entitled to.</li> <li>➤ Financial supports are more responsive to carers’ needs and situations and are fiscally sustainable.</li> <li>➤ Educational and paid work opportunities are supported.</li> </ul>
Actions and Immediate Deliverables		
<p><b>Public awareness and outreach</b> – Launch a National Carers Appreciation Day in 2026.</p>	<p><b>Respite and taking a break from caring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• National outreach to promote the availability, diversity, flexibility and importance of respite and break options for carers, and what these mean for carers.</li> <li>• Establish a national picture and assess current levels of available respite services and break options.</li> </ul>	<p><b>Financial wellbeing</b> – Develop a picture of available financial assistance for carers and build the evidence base to inform potential options development to improve financial support.</p>
<p><b>Culturally safe and relevant services</b> – Consider how cultural safety, including Te Ao Māori considerations, can be better integrated into the delivery and promotion of existing services for carers, family, whānau, and aiga.</p>		<p><b>Carers have pathways to and from caring</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Map out the potential pathways available to different carers, family, whānau, and aiga.</li> <li>• Develop an understanding of the supports provided by employers to carers to inform potential government actions.</li> </ul>
<p><b>Services are accessible and easy to navigate</b> – Explore targeted approaches for improving service access and navigation for carers.</p>	<p><b>Carers’ needs are considered early and fully</b> – Expand community pathways to better support frontline professionals to direct and refer carers, family, whānau, and aiga to appropriate, tailored, culturally appropriate, regional- and community-level supports and networks (e.g., GPs, NASCs).</p>	
Monitoring and Reporting		
<p><b>Monitoring and reporting</b> – Develop a monitoring and reporting framework for the Action Plan.</p>	<p><b>Improved data collection</b> – Develop a government data and evidence strategy for carers.</p>	



# How this works

## DELIVERY AND OVERSIGHT OF ACTIONS

To respond to the distinct diversity of carers and caring, actions and immediate deliverables are designed to be able to be:

- **tailored** to different agency roles, population groups and responsibilities
- **responsive** to specific groups at different ages, transitions or life stages
- **reflect varied communication** needs.

Options for a governance structure to oversee the Action Plan's progress are to be developed over the coming months.

## MONITORING AND REPORTING

A strong monitoring and reporting framework will be essential to ensure progress can be achieved and maintained.

A critical component is strengthening the data and evidence on carers, including their interactions with government, which will:

- improve understanding of what works for different carer groups and how to improve support
- enable better tracking of progress against the desired outcomes
- inform on changes to carers' wellbeing while, in a mana-enhancing way, recognise carers' insights into their strengths, challenges, and needs.

**Propose to review and amend the Action Plan on a recurring basis to ensure progress against the desired outcomes while aligning with Government and Ministerial priorities (subject to Cabinet decisions)**



# Have your say

Your feedback on the draft Action Plan, which is expected to be released in 2026, is important.

Your input will help inform the priorities and potential actions in the short, medium, and long terms, thus ensuring the Action Plan can be a “living” document that is continuously updated.

## Questions to help guide your feedback

1. Do you agree with the proposed change to a rolling Action Plan, which aims to make a difference for carers over the short and long-term?
2. Do you agree with the proposed actions, outcomes, and immediate deliverables? How often do you think these should be reviewed?
3. What should agencies consider when developing and implementing actions to ensure what is delivered meets the needs of family, whānau, aiga and individual carers?
4. What other areas actions do you think should be considered either immediately or in the future? Why?
5. What are some initiatives underway within the government or community that can be built on to help advance progress against the outcomes?



# Appendix – Details of Draft Action Plan

---

Draft for Consultation – November 2025. Not Government Policy.

Recognition and Appreciation			
<p><b>Outcomes</b></p> <p>Carers are valued and the support they require is recognised and protected.</p>			
➤ National recognition and appreciation of the contributions and roles played by carers.		➤ System-level recognition and protection of carers.	➤ Strengthened data collection and dissemination on carers.
Actions			
Action name	Current State	Future State	Immediate Deliverables
<b>Public awareness and outreach</b>	<p>People providing care do not always recognise themselves as carers and may miss out on necessary support.</p> <p>Public awareness of caring work could be improved. Frontline staff and government agencies may not recognise carers as a client group needing support.</p>	<p>Greater public awareness and improved recognition of diverse family, whānau, aiga, and individual carers and their contributions, including people who provide care but do not identify as carers.</p> <p>Frontline staff and agencies have greater awareness of carers as a client group potentially in need of support.</p>	<p><b>Launch a National Carers Appreciation Day in 2026.</b></p>
<b>Culturally safe and relevant services</b>	<p>Existing services may not be culturally targeted or relevant for all groups of carers.</p>	<p>Targeted and culturally appropriate services are provided to different carer groups, which enable cultural safety.</p> <p>Culturally appropriate descriptions of carers and caring are promoted and used in government services and communications.</p>	<p><b>Consider how cultural safety, including Te Ao Māori considerations, can be better integrated into the delivery and promotion of existing services for carers, family, whānau, and aiga.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>For example, through engaging with Māori, Pacific, and other ethnic communities to improve our understanding of concepts of caring and consider how cultural safety can be better integrated into services for carers.</li> </ul>
<b>Services are accessible and easy to navigate</b>	<p>Feedback has emphasised a need for more proactive government services to support carers. There is a need for services to be easier to find and navigate (both for carers and the frontline staff who support them), and for better information on services which carers, family, whānau, and aiga are eligible for.</p>	<p>Carers, family, whānau, aiga, and frontline staff can easily access clear, local, and national information on supports and services available.</p> <p>Government programmes and services are easy to navigate, and frontline staff proactively support carers, family, whānau, and aiga to navigate these, including health and wellbeing and financial supports.</p>	<p><b>Explore targeted approaches for improving service access and navigation for carers.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Explore the development of a website, revised Carers Guide or other portal to improve navigation of government-funded supports and services, and enable frontline staff to better engage with carers, family, whānau, and aiga.</li> <li>Identify and consider options to build on existing local, regional, and community information, where applicable.</li> </ul>



Health and Wellbeing			
Outcomes			
Health and wellbeing outcomes are equitable between carers and non-carers.			
➤ Carers have a wide range of options and pathways across all stages of life for taking a break from caring.		➤ Carers' needs are considered early and fully.	➤ Carers have improved physical health and mental wellbeing, across all phases of life.
Actions			
Action name	Current State	Future State	Immediate Deliverables
Respite and taking a break from caring	Carers face barriers to accessing support, with limited appropriate options available at the right time, region or place.  Many carers feel the current respite system is “broken” and not meeting their needs. Respite options are typically geared toward aged care and don’t always meet the needs of children or people with complex needs.	Respite and break options are more available to carers, including in-home, out-of-home, emergency, informal, and planned short and long-term options for respite.  Carers and care recipients are supported to have breaks and better pathways to services and supports that are flexible, age-appropriate, culturally responsive, and reflect their choices and needs.	National outreach to promote the availability, diversity and importance of respite and break options, and what these mean for carers, by developing: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a range of examples of ‘respite’, taking a break, and family/whānau/aiga-centred care in carers' own words to demonstrate the importance of taking a break from caring</li> <li>a series of personal journeys or pathways to show how different carers use, navigate and experience respite.</li> </ul>
			Establish a national picture and assess current levels of available respite services and break options to inform a strategic business case for investment. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Potential focus: older peoples, people with long-term chronic conditions, palliative care, medically fragile children, disabled people, young carers, mental health and addictions, injury, rural and remote areas, Kaupapa Māori options, and respite and break alternatives.</li> </ul>
Carers’ needs are considered early and fully	Carers face multiple complicated and sometimes ‘siloed’ or fragmented systems to access support.  Frontline staff, agencies and care assessments do not always provide targeted early assistance or pathways that recognise the importance of caring to family and community wellbeing.	Targeted and culturally appropriate assistance supports the diversity of carers and care needs.  Agencies and frontline staff provide proactive early support to carers, including through the health and disability workforce, care assessments, social services, learning and educational environments.	Expand community pathways to enable frontline professionals to direct and refer carers, family, whānau, and aiga about appropriate support. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Building on existing and new approaches, such as targeted carer assessments through Disability Support Services (DSS) and Whānau Ora, this will include strengthening community pathways and tools to help frontline staff identify and connect carers with local, tailored, and culturally appropriate supports.</li> </ul>



Financial Security			
Outcomes			
More responsive financial supports and improved educational and employment pathways to enable carers to meet their needs and plan for the future.			
➤ Carers know how to access, and can access, the financial support they are entitled to.		➤ Carers receive appropriate financial support to meet their immediate financial needs and plan for the future.	➤ Educational and paid work opportunities are supported.
Actions			
Action name	Current State	Future State	Immediate Deliverables
<b>Financial wellbeing</b>	<p>Many carers report they are struggling financially and face material hardship due to their caring work.</p> <p>Some carers feel they are missing out on financial support. Navigating the current system of financial supports with complex requirements across multiple agencies and organisations is difficult.</p>	Financial supports are more responsive to carers' needs and situations and are fiscally sustainable.	<p><b>Develop a picture of available financial assistance for carers, focusing on levels of support and coverage and including analysis on any gaps and inconsistencies.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The assessment would provide the evidence base for the development of a range of options to improve financial support for carers.</li> </ul>
<b>Carers have pathways to and from caring</b>	<p>Many carers face barriers to paid employment and learning opportunities which could contribute to their long-term financial security. Many carers also have skills developed as part of their caring responsibilities that are not formally recognised.</p> <p>While paid work or education leading to paid work is not appropriate for all carers and should not be an expectation, enabling clear pathways to and from caring could provide additional options for carers to support their financial security.</p>	Carers have clear pathways to and from caring and receive appropriate targeted supports for training, learning and recognition of their skills throughout their caring journey.	<p><b>Map out the potential pathways available to different carers, family, whānau, and aiga.</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>This could include consideration of a suite of targeted supports for training, learning and recognition of their skills gained throughout their caring journey.</li> </ul>
		Carers are supported to pursue their chosen employment and education opportunities to support their financial security during and after caring.	<p><b>Develop an understanding of the supports provided by employers to carers to inform potential actions government could take, to ensure:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>awareness and visibility of carers in paid employment</li> <li>flexibility for carers to manage their caring responsibilities and paid work</li> <li>increased visibility and uptake of employers' support programmes</li> <li>recognition of existing supports and the work already completed by non-government agencies.</li> </ul>



Monitoring and Reporting			
Outcome			
➤ Improved monitoring of the Action Plan and carer data collection to inform services and supports over time.			
Actions			
Action name	Current State	Future State	Immediate Deliverables
Monitoring and reporting	Previous Action Plans did not include a monitoring and reporting framework to measure progress and ensure accountability.	The rolling Carers’ Strategy Action Plan is informed by a monitoring and reporting framework linked directly to progress against outcomes.	<b>Develop a monitoring and reporting framework for the Action Plan</b> , which includes identification of core indicators, for the success of the rolling Action Plan with a core focus on measuring progress against outcomes.
Improved data collection	<p>There is a need for a consistent government evidence base on carer demographics and needs, to improve services and supports over time.</p> <p>With the discontinuation of the Census, information on carers will soon rely on administrative data capture, which may not be consistently collected.</p>	<p>An overarching government data and evidence strategy for carers is developed and implemented.</p> <p>Administrative data, where feasible, captures key information on all carers in New Zealand and is used to inform a consistent government evidence base on carer demographics and needs.</p>	<p><b>Develop a government data and evidence strategy for carers</b>, with the aim of building a consistent evidence base on carer demographics and needs to improve services available over time. This could include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>reflecting the Crown’s obligations through te Tiriti o Waitangi, for example through the Māori Data Governance Model</li> <li>exploring the development and use of a specific carers’ marker in administrative data.</li> </ul>