

A young man with short dark hair, wearing a dark green polo shirt and large blue and yellow headphones, is walking and smiling. He is holding the arm of an older man with white hair and glasses, who is wearing a light purple button-down shirt and a watch. They are in a bright, modern living room with a sofa and a striped rug in the background.

# Caring is personal

Campaign toolkit  
September 2025

**CROYDON**  
[www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk)

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# 1. Introduction

**When we care for someone, we do it because of our relationship.**

**But that doesn't mean it doesn't get hard.**

**What if you could speak to someone who gets it? A real person, who can connect you with practical ways to keep doing what you do?**

**No forms. No being passed around. Just a conversation to figure out what's next.**

We're launching a campaign to encourage people who care for someone to pick up the phone to a supportive helpline, operated by Carers First Croydon.

You can help us reach more people in Croydon who care for someone. With your help, we can inspire more people to take the first step towards support for themselves and the person who is experiencing care.

This campaign draws on conversations with unpaid carers from a diverse range of local communities about what would encourage them to seek support. Everything you need to be a partner in the campaign is in this toolkit.

The more of us who get involved as campaign partners, the more people in Croydon we can support.

This campaign is in a special pilot testing phase, where across Croydon – alongside our partners and stakeholders – we will be spreading the word within communities: posting messages, putting up posters and having conversations about the campaign for just four weeks. Running from the 1st October to the 29th October, Croydon will be the first area in South-West London to be able to champion this campaign and learn as much as possible, before it is shared with our neighbouring areas.



## Why this campaign now?

Many people who provide unpaid care, because of a disability, condition or illness, need support themselves. This can include financial and practical support to cope with day-to-day caring responsibilities, or emotional support to cope with exhaustion and isolation.

Almost 30,000 Croydon residents care for someone, but most go unsupported. Around 7,000 are registered with the local adult carers service, Carers First Croydon. Thousands who would benefit from support are continuing alone – in particular, carers from global majority communities, older male carers and younger carers.

As part of a programme of work by South West London boroughs, grant-funded via the Department of Health and Social Care's Accelerating Reform Fund (ARF), we want to raise awareness and improve identification of unpaid carers.

The aim of this campaign is to encourage more residents who care for someone to find out about the support they can access to manage their caring role.

Carers First is the commissioned lead organisation in Croydon and acts as the central access point for unpaid carers seeking support. They work in close partnership with a wide range of local organisations who also provide vital services to carers. The campaign recognises and values the ongoing efforts of all carers organisations in Croydon, whose work continues to make a meaningful difference in the lives of unpaid carers. By directing carers to the Carers First helpline, we aim to offer a clear and accessible starting point – with the understanding that support may be delivered by Carers First or one of their trusted partners.

## In this toolkit

This toolkit includes:

- Information on the groups of carers we want to reach
- Guidance on how to encourage them to take action including:
  - Messages
  - Channels
  - Conversation guide
  - Timeline
- The background to the campaign, setting out why we've designed it the way we have
- How we'll evaluate the campaign, and how you can help
- Campaign assets, including links to downloads and copy you can cut and paste, or adapt

## How to use it

You should find everything you need here to be part of our campaign.

**For advice or guidance, please contact:**  
**[victoria.blinks@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:victoria.blinks@croydon.gov.uk)**

## 2. Who do we want our campaign to reach?

### Support-ready carers

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The primary audience for this campaign – the people we want to reach most – are a group of carers not currently accessing support, who we call ‘support-ready carers.’

- They need support, because caring takes up a lot of their time and energy – often they’re doing it alone
- They’re time-poor or financially struggling, often linked with their caring responsibilities
- They can be consumed by their caring role – so they’re ‘head down’ – or juggling care alongside work or other obligations
- They don’t think of themselves as ‘carers’ or recognise the word, but wouldn’t resist if there was a good reason to adopt it

We know support-ready carers can be found in all demographic groups, especially those we know are least likely to access support, and who we want this campaign to reach:

- Carers from the Global Majority, particularly from Black or South Asian backgrounds, especially women
- Older male carers
- Young adult carers

We’ve spoken to residents of Croydon and surrounding boroughs who fall into the category of support-ready carers. They’ve told us why they don’t currently access support or consider themselves ‘carers’, and what kinds of offers of support might change their mind.

You can read more about this in the campaign background on p.10.

### Who else is important to this campaign?

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You are.

We know from research that the difference between a carer struggling alone and reaching out for support can be as simple as a conversation with someone who recognises what they do.

That’s why this campaign encourages people to call the helpline run by Carers First Croydon and speak to a helpline operator – rather than, for example, visiting a website or filling in a form.

We know that the job of encouraging people to pick up the phone is itself best done as a conversation.

We’re asking anyone in Croydon who is likely to know support-ready carers within your own communities and networks to spread the word and be ready to suggest this small step.

We’ll be backing up our campaign partners through Council publicity channels, like our social media and newsletters. But we know we can only do so much to reach people who don’t necessarily engage with our channels. They are much more likely to pay attention to trusted community groups and leaders – to you.

## 3. How to encourage action

Ready to help? This section includes advice on messages (what to say), channels (how to say it), and timeline (when to say it).

### **The creative campaign**

Our campaign is called Caring is Personal. That is:

- A personal relationship between two people
- A relationship best understood by those individuals
- A different and unique experience within every relationship
- Often a private and even family matter

Caring is personal is always accompanied by the message 'so we won't tell you what to do' this is about us recognising that carers are the experts in providing support, they know that person far better than we do, and they don't want to be told what to do.

We want to reassure them that we won't do that, but we will help them to find helpful support, if, and when, they need it.

## Campaign messages

Underpinning this consistent line, that you will see on the posters, leaflets and in our suggested messages for social media amplification etc. that we've developed a set of key messages which underpin this and link everything we say and do. You can use this message as well as the messages written here or come up with your own way to say the same thing, to feel most relevant to your community. You might also take inspiration from the drafts in the appendix.

Message 1:

### **Everyone needs support to care well.**

The right support can make things easier for you and your loved one. That might be a respite practical or financial support, or help to navigate the system.

#### **Why this message?**

- 'Care', 'caring' and 'care well' work better than the word 'carer' to reflect how our audience describe what they do – it's about the act of caring, not the label.
- Support is most valued when it's positioned as making caring easier – respecting the relationship and not telling carers what to do or suggesting they're failing or at crisis.
- Naming the tangible benefits of support, in relatable terms, can increase motivation to act.

Message 2:

### **One call is all it takes to figure out what's next.**

No forms or being passed around. Just one call to our helpline and you'll be in touch with a real person who 'gets it' and knows what's out there.

#### **Why this message?**

- We know from research that accessing support needs to feel easy and helpful: a simple first step that starts to build trust.
- The 'system' can feel overwhelming and complex, so support to navigate it can increase a sense of efficacy in taking action.
- In testing, support-ready carers responded best to the invitation to call a number and speak to a real person.

Message 3:

### **Connect with support that works for you and your loved one.**

You might find support you didn't know existed: whether that's opportunities to re-charge, activities for both of you to enjoy, or advice on juggling caring with work.

#### **Why this message?**

- Support-ready carers respond positively to messages that acknowledge their primary focus on the person they care for, and the importance of the relationship.
- As above, specific examples of support and its benefits can increase motivation to take action.

## Channels

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You can talk to lots of people at once about the campaign (one-to-many channels) or have individual conversations (one-to-one) – or combine both at in-person events.

### One-to-many channels

You can include campaign messages in channels that help you communicate with many people at once. This might include:

- Printed material in physical locations where support-ready carers come
- Social media sites and groups
- E-newsletters or mail-outs
- Presentations and announcements at meetings and gatherings
- Website news pages

See p.15 and on for example wording and links to download social media posts and flyers and posters for printing.

### One-to-one channels

We're much more likely to pay attention to something when we trust or respect the person telling us, and when it feels as if they know what life is like for us.

You can use the messages above as the basis of a conversation with someone you think might be (or knows) a support-ready carer. We've provided more guidance on how to hold a conversation about caring – see 'Having the conversation' below (p.8/9).

## Timeline

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People generally need to hear or see a message many times before they notice and act on it. If we all communicate about this campaign together, over a concentrated period, it will increase our chances of really reaching busy support-ready carers.

### Testing phase

The initial campaign period is the 1st October to the 29th October. This is when you should be spreading the word within your communities – posting messages, distributing materials and having conversations.

This four-week testing phase means we can run the campaign as a 'proof of concept' test and then evaluate. It's a way to learn what went well and what should be changed or added to make it more effective, both in Croydon and beyond – in other South West London boroughs, for example.

Part of our evaluation will be learning from you about what being part of this campaign was like: for example, what has worked well, and what you would suggest we do differently in future. This might include the guidance and support we give campaign partners like you. See 'Evaluation' on page 12 and 13 for more details on how you can help this process.

### After the testing phase

You're welcome to continue to deliver the campaign after the initial four weeks is up.



# Having the conversation

Support-ready carers often don't think of themselves as 'carers.' They might just say '*it's what you do for family*' or '*I'm just helping out*'. That's why a simple, everyday conversation can make a big difference.

You don't need to be an expert or use special language. You just need to notice when someone might be taking on a caring role and gently help them see that support is available.

# Having the conversation

## It's usually best to have the conversation when:

- The person is talking about someone they're helping or supporting regularly
- They're mentioning being tired, stretched, stressed, or complaining about having to deal with navigating bureaucracy
- You're in a setting that feels private or relaxed, like a one-to-one chat or a moment of connection during a group activity

It can just be a natural response to what someone is saying. You don't have to plan it in advance.

## How to set the scene

Looking after someone is personal, so it's important the conversation feels safe, kind and not judgmental. Try to:

- Start with empathy: 'That sounds like a lot to manage.'
- Be curious, not directive: 'Do you ever get a break from it?' rather than 'You should get help.'
- Normalise support: 'There's a lot to navigate. There are people out there who can help cut through all that admin.'

## How to spot a support-ready carer

Look out for someone who:

- Talks about helping a loved one manage an illness, condition, disability or addiction.
- Mentions feeling tired, stressed, or overwhelmed by what they have to do as part of caring for someone else
- Says they don't have much time for themselves
- Is juggling work, family life, and ongoing care responsibilities

## What to say

You don't need to persuade someone to adopt a label. Just let them know that support exists and that it starts with one phone call. Try:

- 'Sounds like you do a lot. Did you know there's someone you can speak to – no forms, just a chat about what's out there, so you can spend less time on the admin?'
- 'I heard you can phone a helpline and just talk to someone. You don't have to agree to anything – you can just see what's out there.'
- 'They'll listen and help you figure out what could make things easier – for you and the person you look after.'

## What not to worry about

- You don't need to have all the answers. Encouraging the first step is enough.
- You don't need to convince someone to say: 'I'm a carer'. Helping them describe what they do can open the door.

# 4. Campaign background

**This section is for anyone who wants to understand more about why we've designed this campaign in the way we have. If you would like to find out more a more detailed report is available from [victoria.blinks@croydon.gov.uk](mailto:victoria.blinks@croydon.gov.uk)**

## Our aim

To develop and deliver a communications campaign to increase the identification of carers, to better access available support and services.

## Informing this campaign

We undertook research to understand from carers themselves, and those with knowledge around carers and community engagement, that would drive campaign success.

We explored motivations and barriers to identification, and how far these were distinctive to or shared between different groups of carers, based on demographics, carers experience, or other factors.

## Key themes from research

The most significant barriers to identifying as a carer we found:

There's no 'social norm' around calling yourself a 'carer'. It's a set of responsibilities that you take on as part of being a daughter, or a husband etc. – an expected role, not an identity.

There's low trust in statutory services – so people assume support isn't there, or they won't be eligible, or it won't make a difference.

They can't afford to waste their time – life's busy enough without jumping through hoops or being passed by service providers from 'pillar to post', only to find that support isn't available.

## The campaign objective

These findings led us to define this as:

**More unidentified carers are willing to identify themselves as carers to service providers in Croydon following experiences of contact and support that shore up their trust in the system.**

We want to shift how audiences feel:

**From**

**'Carer support is not for me – I'm not a carer, I am a daughter, sister, mother, partner.'**

**'It's not worth the effort.'**

**To**

**'Accessing support means I have xx, that helps me provide good care for the person I love.'**

**'It was simple, easy and helpful.'**

Achieving these shifts

Taking into account what we want to change, and the potential barriers, the principles behind this campaign are to:

- 1. Target those ‘support-ready’ carers who currently don’t identify as carers
- 2. Focus on what matters to them when defining what’s worthwhile: providing good care
- 3. Focus on the support, not the label of ‘carer’
- 4. Design an easy and supportive way for them to engage with support
- 5. Build trust through experience by providing a valuable, simple first step into carer services

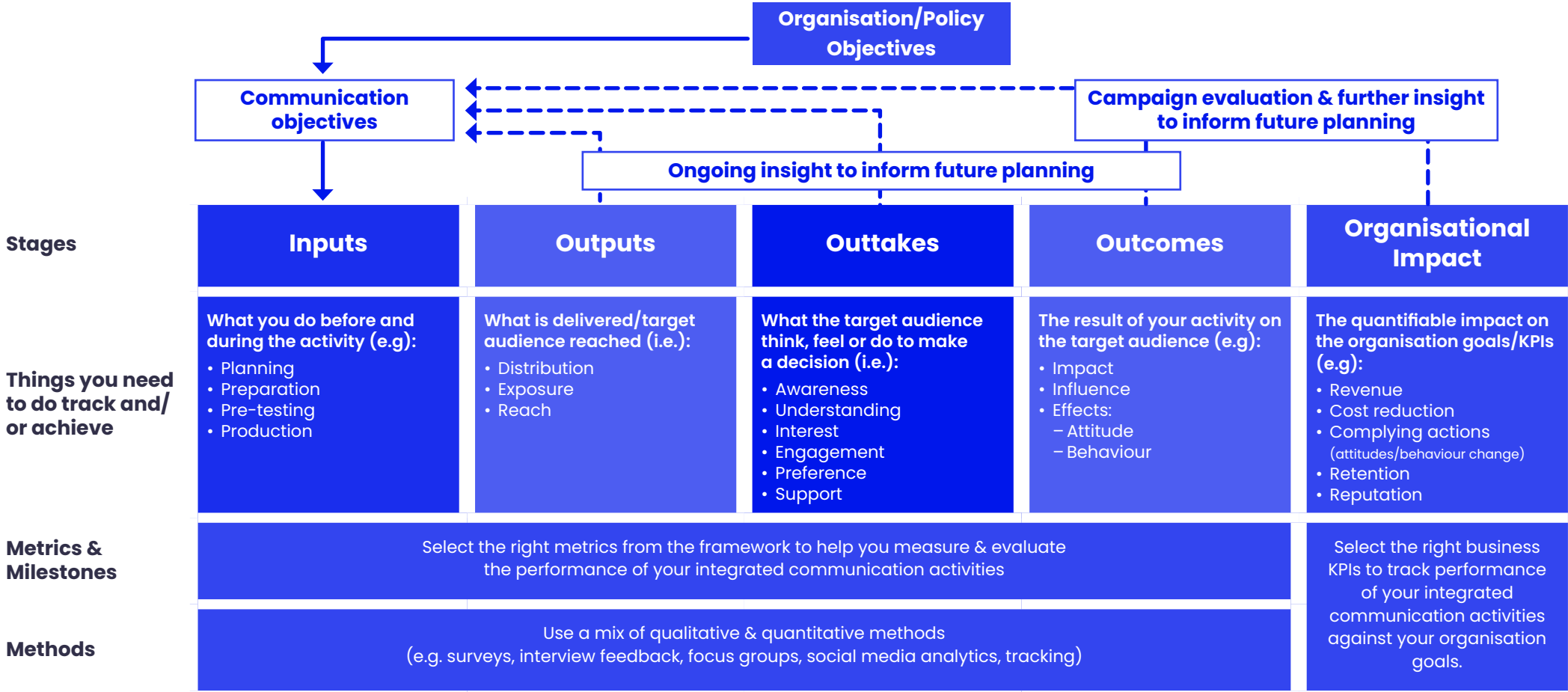
Designing the campaign

Further testing of alternative campaign ‘call-to-actions’ and framing approaches led us to the design of the campaign:

Campaign element	Campaign plan	Rationale
Call to action (what we’re asking people to do)	Call the helpline operated by Carers First Croydon	Performed best in testing: it felt, personal, flexible and kept the carer in control.
Channels (how we will reach them)	Focus on trusted intermediaries: community channels such as local VCFS organisations, amplified through Council-owned channels	Low trust in statutory service providers including Croydon Council  Helps reach people in their own ‘worlds’ and overcome assumptions about whether support is culturally appropriate  Learn from previous success in engaging groups via grassroots organisations
Creative (messaging and visuals)	Simple and direct on the call to action and practical benefits  Focused on care as an act, not as a label  Respectful of the relationship, and the motivation behind people providing care	Research participants responded positively when material was presented in this way or evoked these values and experiences.

This proof-of-concept campaign will be evaluated following the live testing phase, and future iterations of the campaign adapted in line with what we learn.

# 5. Evaluation





The campaign is initially running in Croydon in a four-week testing phase as a 'proof of concept' test. To capture as many learnings as possible we will be following the GCS Evaluation model – this is a framework developed by the Government Communication Service to measure the success of public sector communications. This was designed to track communication effectiveness as well as encourage continuous learning, to reflect on the campaign ahead of wider SW London roll-out.

### **Put simply, this is a cycle with 5 stages:**

1. Inputs – What resources were used?
  - For example, in planning, and production
2. Outputs – What was delivered?
  - For example, leaflets handed out, posters put up, reach of social media posts, number of people on a newsletter etc.
3. Outtakes – What did people notice or understand?
  - For example, social media engagement (likes / comments / feedback), stakeholder feedback on the campaign itself
4. Outcomes – What changed in behaviour or attitude?
  - For example, the perceived carer response

reported by stakeholders e.g. prompting new conversations, engagement with the helpline

5. Organisational Outcomes – What was the broader effect?
  - For example, how many calls were made to the Croydon First Helpline, or as a secondary impact, how many visits were made to the website page.

All of these are devised to feed into our understanding of Learning & Innovation – to get an understanding of what can be improved next time and would be amended or tweaked to resonate more with our audience and deliver the support that they need.

### **How you can help us to evaluate**

We hope to speak directly to some community organisations, but please also help us in supporting this campaign and keeping track of what you did to help share this with the local area. Specifically, we would like to hear from you in relation to:

#### **Outputs:**

- How many assets did you print?  
Leaflets / Flyers?
- How many people typically come to your community space?

- How many social media followers do you have?
- If you have a newsletter, how many people are signed up to this?

#### **Outtakes:**

- Social media engagement: number of posts, likes, comments, feedback
- Stakeholder reflections on the campaign

#### **Outcomes:**

- What have people said having seen any of the printed assets?
- Has it prompted new conversations on care?
- Did people talk about calling the helpline?
- Did people talk about whether or not they identified as a carer?
- Did you feel more open to starting conversations with those who might care for a loved one?

Getting the richest information on these points will help to inform future stages and roll-out of this campaign and better support carers.



# Appendix: Campaign tools





## Printable leaflet and poster

To encourage support-ready carers in Croydon to know where to find support and engage with the campaign we have produced printable assets that we hope that you will use to distribute locally and put up in community spaces. You can download these here.

Please try to put the posters up at the start of the campaign, to give people the best opportunity to see them and be able to read, share and engage with the message.



One phone call connects you to a real person who listens and understands.  
No forms. No judgement. Just a conversation to help you keep doing  
what you do - with support.

Call Carers First Croydon: 0300 303 1555  
[www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal](http://www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal)

**CROYDON**  
[www.croydon.gov.uk](http://www.croydon.gov.uk)

## Newsletter copy examples

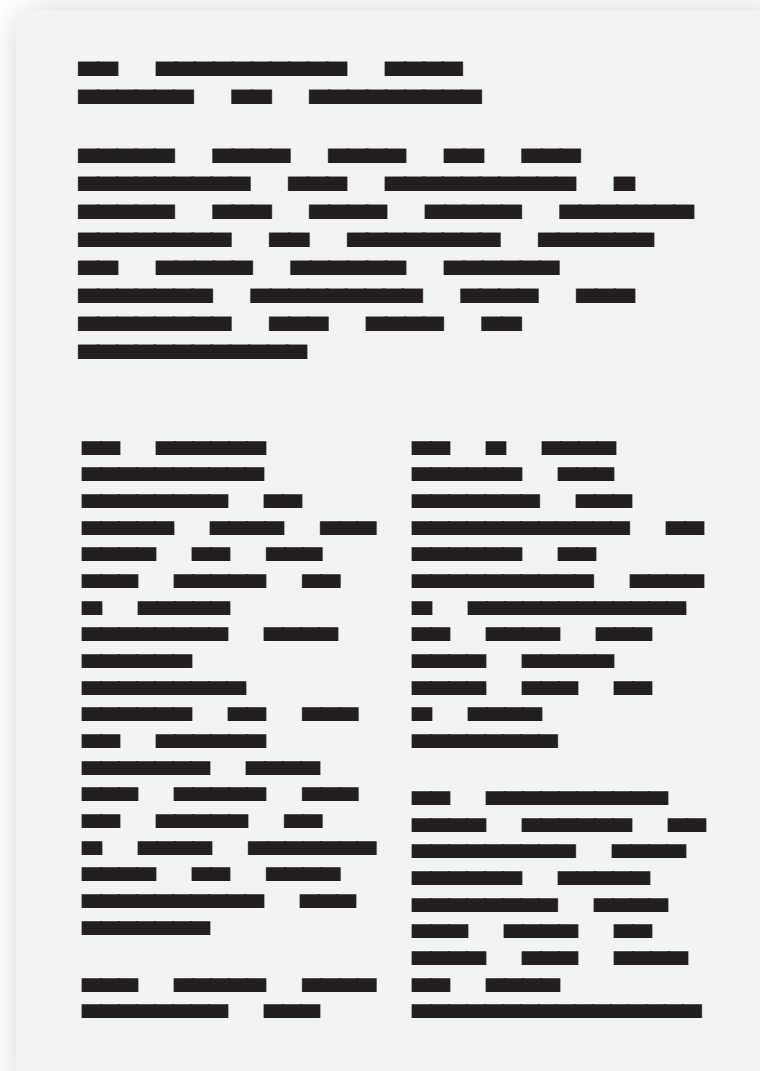
We understand that Caring is Personal.

Right now, many in our community are supporting a loved one with their health, mobility or everyday needs. In fact, almost 30,000 Croydon residents care for someone, but most go unsupported.

If you're supporting someone, we won't tell you what to do. But there is a helpline that offers practical advice on how to access support that you might not be aware of – like respite care or help navigating the system.

One phone call connects you to a real person who listens and understands. No forms. No judgement. Just a conversation to help you keep doing what you do – with support.

We understand that Caring is Personal. Call Carers First Croydon: 0300 303 1555 or find out more at [www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal](http://www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal)



## Whatsapp message examples

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### **We understand that Caring is Personal.**

If you're supporting someone, we won't tell you what to do. But we can help you find additional support you may not know existed.

No forms. No judgement. Just a conversation to help you keep doing what you do - with support.

Carers First Croydon 0300 303 1555

Let's talk

### **Caring is personal, so we won't tell you what to do.**

But there is a helpline you can call for straight-up support - from navigating the system to organising respite care.

Carers First Croydon 0300 303 1555

Real person, real help. One call.





## Social post examples – Instagram post (using campaign imagery)

**Caring is personal, so we won't tell you what to do.**

But we could help you find support you didn't know existed.

One quick phone call could connect you to a real person who listens and understands.

No forms. No judgement. Just a conversation to help you keep doing what you do – with support.

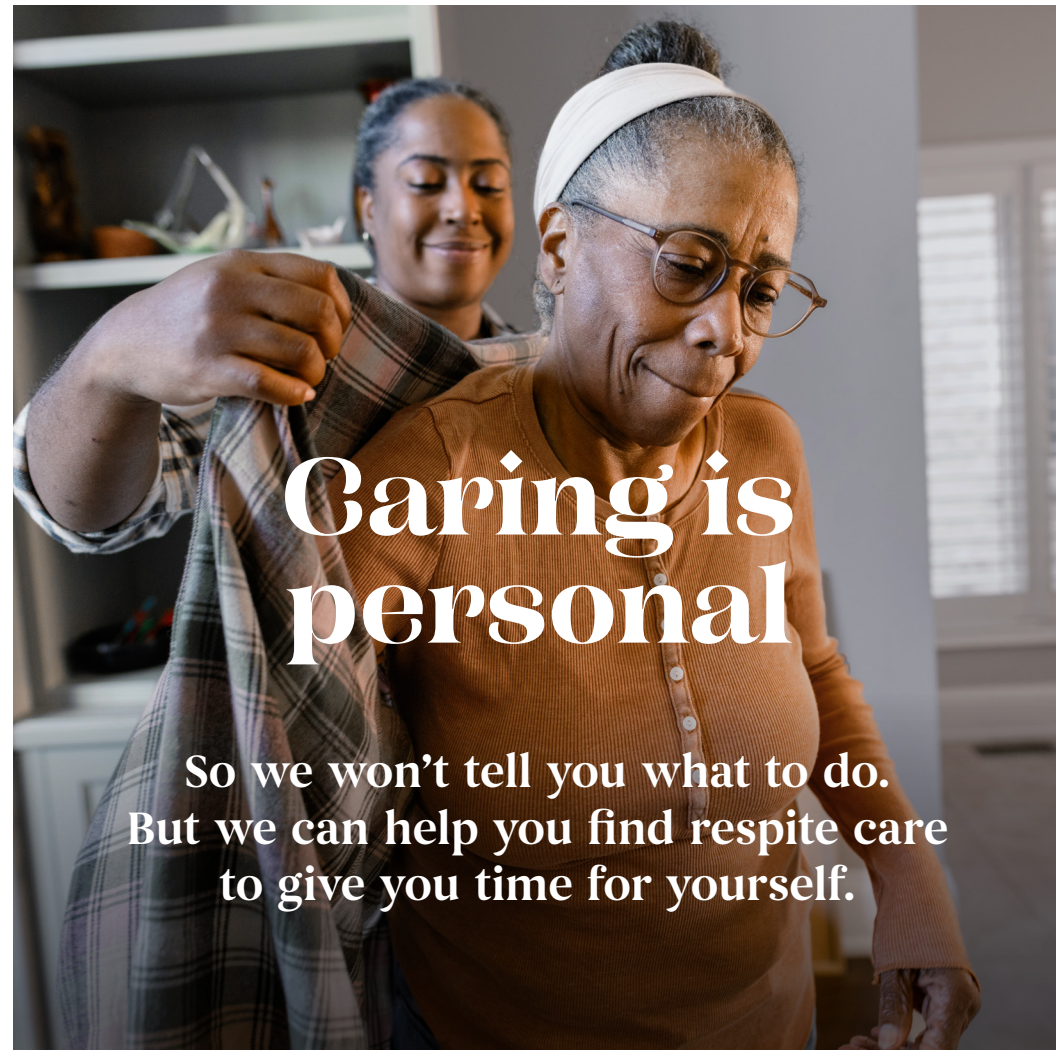
Call Carers First Croydon: 0300 303 1555

[www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal](http://www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal)

#CroydonCarers #CaringIsPersonal  
#SupportForCarers #CarersFirst  
#CarersMatter

### Recommended alt text to help with accessibility and for people using screen readers:

An older person wearing glasses and a headband is being gently helped into a plaid jacket by a younger person in a cosy home setting. Shelves and decorations are visible in the background. Overlaid text reads: "Caring is personal. So we won't tell you what to do. But we can help you find respite care to give you time for yourself."



**So we won't tell you what to do.  
But we can help you find respite care  
to give you time for yourself.**

## Social post examples – Instagram post (using campaign imagery)

### We understand that Caring is Personal.

Many in our community are supporting someone with their health, mobility or everyday needs.

By calling the Carers First Helpline, they won't tell you what to do, but they could help you with:

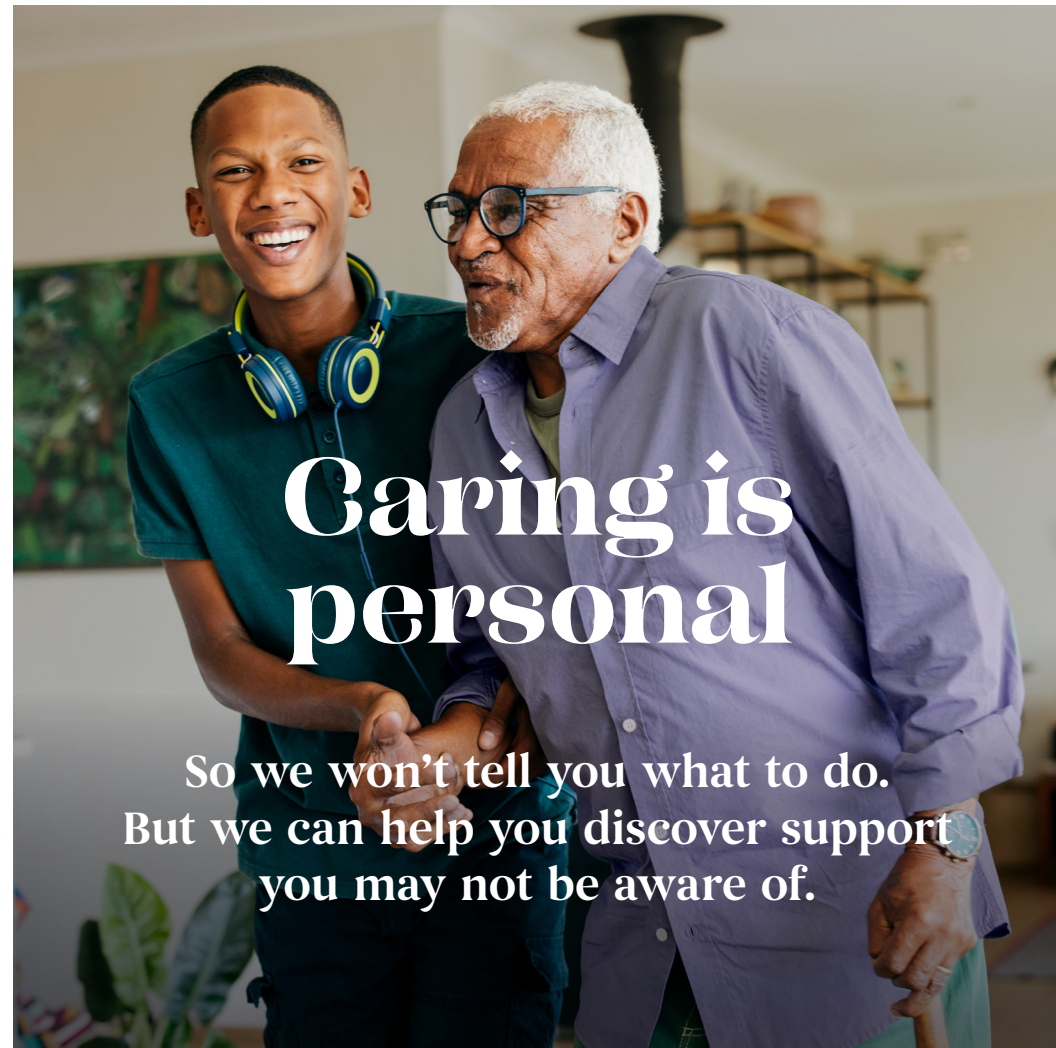
- Practical advice
- Taking a break
- Local community groups
- Call: Carers First Croydon 0300 303 1555

[www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal](http://www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal)

#CroydonCarers #CaringIsPersonal  
#SupportForCarers #CarersFirst  
#CarersMatter

### Recommended alt text to help with accessibility and for people using screen readers:

An older person wearing glasses and a purple shirt is being supported to walk by a younger person with headphones around their neck, smiling. They are in a warmly lit room. Overlaid text reads: "Caring is personal. So we won't tell you what to do. But we can help you discover support you may not be aware of."





## Facebook / Nextdoor post examples (using campaign imagery)

**Caring is personal, so we won't tell you what to do.**

But by making one simple phone call you could speak to a real person who listens and understands.

No forms. No judgement. Just a conversation to help you keep doing what you do – with support.

Call: Carers First Croydon 0300 303 1555

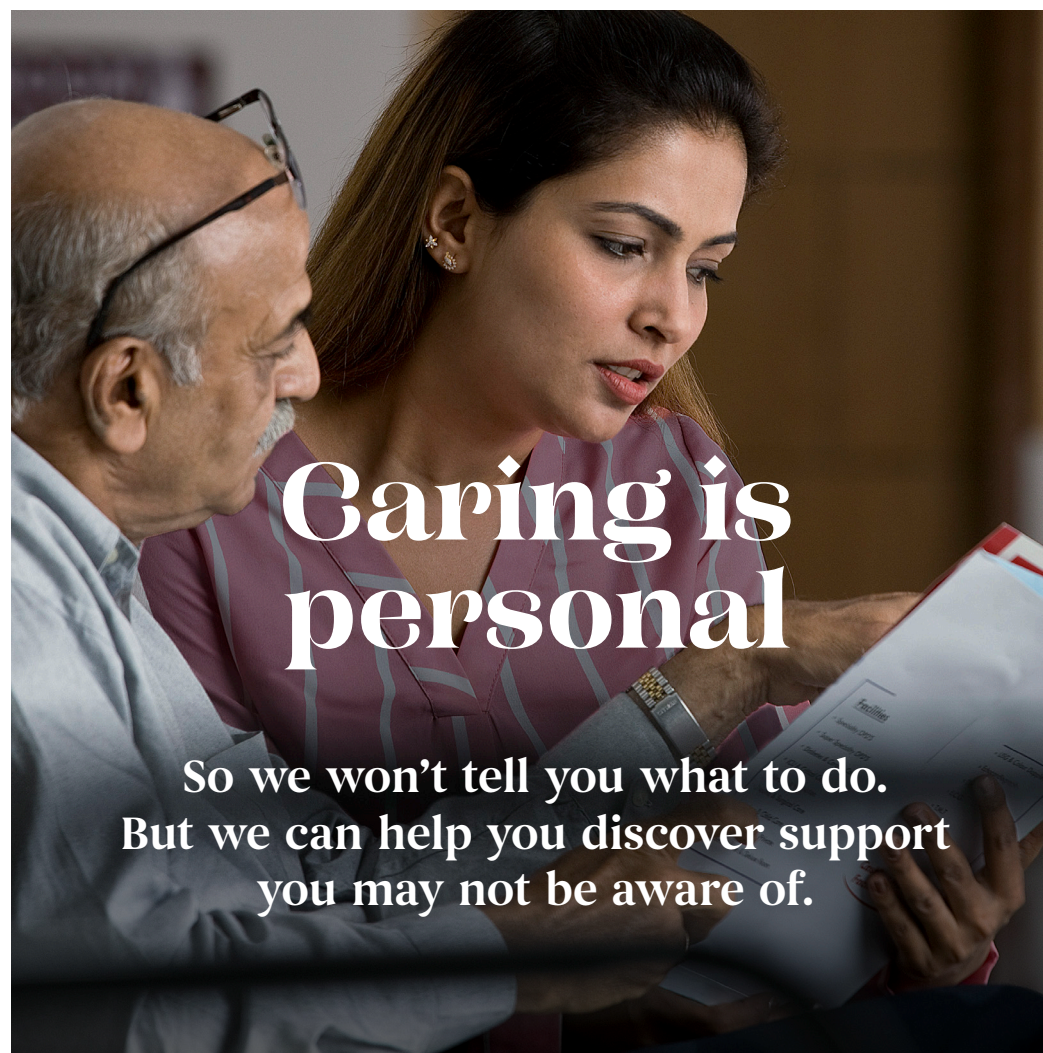
[www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal](http://www.carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal)

#CroydonCarers #CaringIsPersonal

#SupportForCarers #CarersFirst

### Recommended alt text to help with accessibility and for people using screen readers:

A person wearing glasses is getting help from another individual looking at a document together. Overlaid text reads: "Caring is personal. So we won't tell you what to do. But we can help you discover support you may not be aware of."



## X examples (using campaign imagery)

Caring is personal. So we won't tell you what to do. But one simple call could help you discover respite care when you need it.

No forms. No judgement. Just a real conversation to help you keep doing what you do—with support.

Carers First Croydon: 0300 303 1555

[carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal](https://carersfirst.org.uk/caringispersonal)

#CroydonCarers #CaringIsPersonal  
#SupportForCarers #CarersFirst

### Recommended alt text to help with accessibility and for people using screen readers:

Two adults walk up a staircase together. The older adult holds the handrail while the younger adult supports them by holding their arm. Overlaid text reads: "Caring is personal. So we won't tell you what to do. But we can help you discover support you may not be aware of."



So we won't tell you what to do.  
But we can help you discover support  
you may not be aware of.