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Carers “left with nowhere to turn” after Surrey cuts support services?

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Charity warns of risks to 1,500 carers as safety net withdrawn

A Surrey charity has warned that unpaid carers across the county are being pushed “beyond breaking point” following the withdrawal of key support services by Surrey County Council (SCC), a move it says could leave vulnerable residents at risk and increase pressure on hospitals and emergency care.

Crossroads Care Surrey says two critical services — Emergency Care Provision and End of Life support — are being removed, alongside the ending of the Carer Emergency Planning service at the end of March, affecting around 1,500 carers who rely on it as a safety net in times of crisis.

The charity says the decision was made with little notice and without consultation, leaving carers uncertain about what will happen if they are suddenly unable to provide care.

Under the existing system, carers can create emergency plans with named contacts and a guaranteed back-up response if those contacts are unavailable. Crossroads says it is this final layer — the guaranteed emergency response — that is now being removed.

Terry Hawkins, CEO of Crossroads Care Surrey, said: “In an emergency, carers don’t need signposting, they need someone to step in.”

“A false economy” and fears of increased hospital admissions

The charity argues the cuts risk shifting pressure onto already overstretched NHS and social care services, warning that without preventative support, more vulnerable people could end up in hospital or crisis care situations.

It says the current emergency planning service costs around £200 per carer per year, compared with more than £1,200 for a single day in a hospital bed, describing the move as a “false economy”.

Concerns have also been raised about the reliability of alternative arrangements. Crossroads says that in some cases the council’s Emergency Duty Care Team has failed to respond to emergency requests, even with advance notice, citing lack of available resources.

The charity is now launching its own paid-for emergency support scheme, but warns this risks creating a two-tier system where only those who can afford to pay will have access to reliable back-up care.

Human impact: “Without support, families reach breaking point”

The potential consequences are illustrated by the case of Eleanor, 53, who cares for her 13-year-old son Tom, who has severe autism and OCD.

Under intense pressure, Eleanor attempted suicide, triggering an emergency response from Crossroads Care Surrey, which stepped in within hours to care for Tom for over two weeks while she recovered. Without that intervention, Tom would likely have entered emergency social care.

The charity says this is not an isolated case but an example of how quickly carers can reach crisis point without adequate support.

Council response: “Services did not achieve expected impact”

Surrey County Council has defended its decision, saying the contracts with Crossroads Care Surrey are not being renewed because they “failed to achieve the impact we expected” and had lower-than-anticipated take-up.

Sinead Mooney, Deputy Leader and Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care, said: “After careful review, we’ve decided to end – or not renew – contracts with Crossroads Care Surrey for carer support services because the contracts have failed to achieve the impact we expected. Take-up has been lower than we intended and we can’t justify continuing to fund the arrangements.”

She added: “We’re absolutely committed to making sure that the transition from these contracts for carers is smooth,

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responsive and supportive, and we encourage any carer with questions to contact the council directly. In Surrey we go above and beyond our statutory duty to support carers and are committed to using our resources as effectively as we can."

The council says it will introduce a revised approach, including a one-off £300 wellbeing payment for carers and closer working with NHS partners, and maintains that emergency support will continue through existing social care processes.

Questions over consultation and transparency

Crossroads Care Surrey has questioned how decisions affecting thousands of carers could be made without public consultation or Cabinet scrutiny, and is calling on the council to explain how the changes align with its duties under the Care Act.

The charity warns that unpaid carers — who collectively provide care valued at an estimated £162 billion annually across the UK — are an essential but often overlooked part of the health and care system, and that reducing support risks undermining that foundation.

With the changes due to take effect imminently, carers across Surrey now face uncertainty over what support will be available when they need it most.

Sam Jones – Reporter



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