

Ryedale Carers Support

Ryedale Carers Support is a local voluntary organisation and registered charity based in Kirbymoorside providing practical and emotional help for Carers and the people they care for, as well as older people living on their own. The service relies on volunteers who visit weekly, fortnightly or monthly for a couple of hours or so. Funding comes mainly from North Yorkshire County Council Health & Adult Services and also NHS Clinical Commissioning Groups; but the organisation operates independently of other agencies.

The group's activities address the problems of loneliness and isolation that are prevalent in an ageing population, and help to relieve the pressures that bear upon those who care for them. Benefits are real and, on the evidence of a recent survey, the recipients value them very highly.

At the time of the assessment, Ryedale Carers were looking-after 209 beneficiaries, comprising 112 carers in need of respite and support, and 97 elderly people living alone. The demand for Ryedale Carers' services has almost doubled in the past 5 years, from 115 clients in 2010 to 209 in 2015.

This outstanding voluntary organisation provides invaluable support to elderly and isolated people and those that care for them in a sparsely populated rural area. Ryedale is one of the largest rural districts in England and has the second lowest population density at 90 persons per square mile. Many of the inhabitants live in villages and isolated agricultural hamlets with poor facilities, public transport and employment opportunities. Ryedale's population is also 5 years older than the UK average. Together these factors distort social structures and diminish family support of the elderly and those who care for them, leading to loneliness, isolation and stress. The wide dispersion of those needing support in the outlying areas of Ryedale poses severe challenges that publicly funded care services have difficulty in meeting outside the towns and larger villages. Ryedale Carers' Support came into existence in 1995 to fill that gap and it remains the only organisation of its type in the area.

The role demands much of the volunteers, who drive long distances on country lanes, day and night and in all weathers. Despite those demands they demonstrate admirable commitment and length of service. Not only do the volunteers deliver a direct benefit to those in need, but their work provides the community with exemplars of selfless service, as well as saving substantial public resources which can be applied to other care needs.

The Assessors found that the group were providing all the services described, and were doing so to a very high standard. Currently the demand for the group's services outstrips their ability to recruit, screen and train volunteers, and to raise the necessary funds to support and expand their activities.

Ryedale Carers' volunteers are the heart of an outstanding organisation that meets a substantial community requirement by delivering an exemplary service, which merits public recognition. Their Queen's Award for Voluntary Service is richly deserved.