

# Carefree



# A Lifeline, not a Luxury

The Value of Carefree Breaks for Unpaid Carers



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## CHAIR'S FOREWORD

# The value of investing in rest

Dear reader,

Since our founding in 2017, Carefree's mission has been to give unpaid carers, without whom our society would not function, a much-needed break. Thus far, we've delivered 20,000 breaks and signed up over 50,000 carers. Our aim is to make breaks possible for each of the U.K.'s 5.8 million carers, allowing them to keep doing their invaluable work while giving them the respite they deserve.

This mission is personal for me and for many of Carefree's staff members. I co-founded Carefree in memory of my two sisters who passed away from breast cancer far before their time. Over the course of my family's caring journey, we came to acutely understand the difference breaks make – allowing carers to have a rare moment for themselves in the midst of often heartbreaking personal circumstances. In all our lifetimes, we are very likely to care for someone, to need care ourselves, or both.

We've always believed that breaks help both carers themselves and our society at large.

In 2025, we engaged Just Economics to quantify the impact of a break, which is what this report does. The findings show what carers have long told us: The breaks Carefree provides make the difference between continuing to provide care and having to hospitalize a loved one or put them in paid care. They save carers and their partners money, but also the NHS, councils, and community organisations. They provide financial benefit to the hotels that donate space. They serve as a recognition of the value of carers' work, allowing them to take time for themselves when so much of their life is devoted to others.

Often in the care space it's tempting to simply ask that the State provide carers additional financial support, for breaks or otherwise. We support much-needed reform

in Parliament, but we also believe money alone isn't the solution. Leveraging the capacity of the private sector – and using AI-powered technology – allows us to provide breaks at a low cost and in a way that's convenient for carers themselves. It doesn't rely on the vagaries of government budgets, and indeed it even saves the State money and time.

I'd like to thank the team at Just Economics, led by Dr Eva Neitzert; the team at Carefree, led by our CEO Charlotte Newman; Dr David Janner-Klausner, who acted as rapporteur for this report; and the many others who have provided valuable input on this project. It's been gratifying to see in hard numbers how big a difference our breaks make, creating £21 in value for each pound spent on Carefree and creating £294 in value to the State per break delivered.

There is no silver bullet to ensure the sustainability of the care sector in our ageing and complex society. We need multiple solutions, ones that engage both public and private resources. The care sector needs all the ideas, talent, and, yes, money, it can get. But as this report shows, Carefree's model is a major step in the right direction. We look forward to expanding in the months and years to come and to taking part in creating a fairer, stronger, and more resilient care system. It's for carers and for us all.

Sincerely,



**Charlie Ricketts**  
Chair of Trustees and  
Co-founder, Carefree

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Charlie Ricketts', written in a cursive style.

# Introduction

## Carefree

### About Carefree

Carefree is an innovative intervention that utilises the spare inventory of hotels to provide short breaks for unpaid carers, with the aim of improving their wellbeing, resilience and capacity to care.

The model is simple: Hotels donate unsold rooms, which can then be requested by carers aged 18+ that are providing more than 30 hours of unpaid caring per week. Carers can access two breaks per year and are able to bring a companion, who cannot be the person they care for. The cost to the carer is £38 for a 1- or 2-night stay, with breakfast included for themselves and their companion.

As a start-up, Carefree has had impressive growth. It has delivered more than 20,000 breaks and has more than 50,000 carers registered on its system.



Click or scan the QR-code to visit the **Carefree website**.



### About This Research

Just Economics was commissioned in February 2025 to undertake an impact assessment and economic analysis of the value created by Carefree for carers, their families, the community, and State.

This report summarises the key research findings. The full report, including methodology and technical appendix to the economic model, is available below.

The authors would like to acknowledge the support of all the carers that participated in the research, giving so generously of their precious time, and also to the hotels and community partners who shared their experiences of working with Carefree. Finally, thank you to the staff of Carefree and to Dr David Janner-Klausner for his input throughout the project.



Click or scan the QR-code to **Read the full report**.

<sup>1</sup> This has increased to 2 breaks per year from January 2026 in line with the recommendations from this evaluation.

## CASE STUDY

# Tulay's story

Even before the death of her father in February 2007, Tulay had been caring for her parents, but after her father passed away, she became her mother's full-time carer and support system. "Losing my father turned my life upside down," Tulay explains, "I had my own child to care for while also taking on full responsibility for my mother". Her days became filled with care for her family: appointments, medication management, cooking, cleaning, shopping, and handling all communication on her mother's behalf, as she does not speak English.



Over time, full-time caregiving became her whole life, and she realised that she no longer had any time for herself. "I had stopped meeting friends and forgotten what it felt like to have a social life. I felt alone and constantly under pressure". As the years passed, she was able to adjust by keeping a daily routine, and learning to stay organised to manage the demanding responsibilities of caring. She worked hard to bring in balance and was determined to carve out some space for herself again. Even so, it had been many years since she had been able to take an overnight break away from care.

She learned about Carefree through a friend, registered, and in May 2025 she took the opportunity to take a two-night break at Hampshire Court Hotel & Spa. "The process was smooth, and anytime I had a question, Carefree's online support team was helpful and responsive". While Tulay took her break, her family stepped in to take on her caring responsibilities.

"Knowing that my mother was cared for by my family while I was away gave me peace of mind and allowed me to fully rest". During her stay, she enjoyed the use of the hotel spa, sauna, pool, gym, and the calm environment. She found the staff to be kind, understanding, and welcoming towards her and her cousin, whom she took on the break with her as her companion.

Of her experience on the break itself, Tulay shared that she felt "the break reminded me of how I felt as a child when my parents took us on holiday — free, happy, and light. Sometimes in life, we move so fast that we forget to pause. But taking a break is not a luxury; it is a necessity, especially for carers. I didn't want the break to end".

Most importantly, when Tulay returned home to her caring responsibilities, she reports that she felt refreshed, and that she had more energy, more clarity and more patience with which to approach her caring role. The break has also had a longer-term impact on her well-being as a full-time carer, "The break helped me realise that for many years, I hadn't done anything just for myself. Now, I make time for self-care, exercise, and personal space".

“

**Carers deserve to breathe too. We have feelings, thoughts, and limits, and this break reminded me that I matter.**

By transforming vacant hotel rooms into vital breaks for full-time unpaid carers, Carefree was able to give Tulay the chance to take the rest she needed and deserved. Reflecting on her break, Tulay shared, "I learned that carers deserve to breathe too. People often assume that the carer is the one who 'should' manage everything, without recognising that we also have feelings, thoughts, and limits. We are human, and we need rest like anyone else. This break reminded me that I matter too".

# 1. Why Carefree?

Unpaid carers are a vital part of the UK's healthcare infrastructure, providing essential care and support for individuals with chronic illnesses, disabilities, and age-related conditions. With social care budgets at breaking point, society depends on unpaid carers.

≈ **5.8M**

unpaid carers live in the UK, with 1.7 million people providing 50 or more hours of care per week.<sup>2</sup>

**59%**

of all unpaid carers are women<sup>3</sup>

Driven in part by an ageing population, the number of unpaid carers is set to increase. Projections suggest that by 2037 the number of unpaid carers in the UK could rise to over 10 million.<sup>4</sup>

Many carers feel overwhelmed and are at crisis point. In the State of Caring 2024 report, **57% of carers reported feeling overwhelmed "often or always"**.<sup>5</sup> The most common reason for feeling overwhelmed (given by 65% of respondents), is that they "haven't been able to take a break from caring" and **49% said they needed "more breaks or time off from caring"**.<sup>6</sup>

Carefree is designed to address this urgent need.



Being a carer often has significant mental and physical health impacts, as well as impacting personal finances:

**1 in 4**

carers report being in 'not good health' compared with fewer than 1 in 5 non-carers (after adjusting for age).<sup>7</sup>

**70%**

of carers said they have a long-term physical or mental health condition, disability or illness compared to 59% of non-carers.<sup>8</sup>

**50%**

higher poverty rate for unpaid carers than for those who do not provide care.<sup>9</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Carers UK (2025) [Facts about carers \(updated March 2025\)](#)

<sup>3</sup> Ibid.

<sup>4</sup> JRF (2024) [The future of care needs: a whole systems approach](#)

<sup>5</sup> Carers UK (2025) [State of Caring: The impact of caring on carers' mental health and the need for support from social care services](#)

<sup>6</sup> Ibid.

<sup>7</sup> Carers UK (2025) [Facts about carers \(updated March 2025\)](#)

<sup>8</sup> Ibid.

<sup>9</sup> WPI Economics/Carers UK (n.d.) [Poverty amongst unpaid carers in the UK](#)

# 65%

of carers say they haven't been able to take a break from caring

# 49%

of carers say they need "more breaks or time off from caring".<sup>10</sup>

Against the backdrop of declining Local Authority provision of respite and support<sup>11</sup>, Carefree leverages spare capacity in the hotel industry to make breaks possible for unpaid carers. The aim is to improve the mental and physical health of carers, build resilience, and restore their capacity to continue to provide care.

This holds substantial value to carers and their families, but also to society and the State, who depend on the free care provided by the often invisible army of unpaid carers. The costs to the State of crisis breakdown in a care relationship are substantial.

It takes only eight avoided residential care admissions to match Carefree's full annual budget.



## It takes only eight avoided residential care admissions to match Carefree's full annual budget.

### About the study methodology

The research followed a mixed-methods study design and was conducted between February and July 2025 across four phases.

**Phase 1:** Literature and document review of unpaid caring, its impact, and costs as well as the evidence base around respite and break services.

**Phase 2:** Interviews with carers, their family members, hotels, community partners, and hospitality industry experts (23 in total).

**Phase 3:** Quantitative data collection comprising:

- Surveys with carers at three moments: baseline (prior to break, N=339), post-break (N=180), and at follow-up (6-months after they had taken a break, N=132)
- Surveys with family members of the carer (N=116)
- Surveys of the community partners (N=32, out of a possible 60)

**Phase 4:** Economic modelling in line with HM Treasury Green Book<sup>12</sup> and HM Treasury's supplementary guidance on wellbeing valuation<sup>13</sup>.

Full details of the methodology are available [in the full report.](#)

<sup>10</sup> Carers UK (2025) [State of Caring: The impact of caring on carers' mental health and the need for support from social care services](#)

<sup>11</sup> Nuffield Trust (2022) [Falling short: How far have we come in improving support for unpaid carers in England?](#)

<sup>12</sup> HM Treasury (2025) [The Green Book and accompanying guidance](#)

<sup>13</sup> HM Treasury (2021) [Wellbeing guidance for appraisal: Supplementary Green Book Guidance](#)

# 2. The Impact on Carers

## A lifeline at crisis point

Carefree was universally described as an effective intervention that, in the words of one carer, just ‘makes sense’.

To be eligible for a Carefree break, carers need to be providing at least 30 hours of unpaid care per week. Many are providing much more than this, with nearly half those responding to the post-break survey providing more than 61 hours per week.

Carers repeatedly described the breaks as a vital lifeline that provide respite from the relentless demands of unpaid caring, particularly in a context where there is little in the way of other provision for carers.

**71%**

of carers said they were ‘extremely satisfied’ overall with their break and 23% said they were ‘satisfied’.

The impact assessment found evidence of substantial improvements across three key domains:

- Life satisfaction and wellbeing
- Preventing crisis breakdown
- Improved relationships

“  
**Being myself again rather than an extension of others. You lose your idea of self when caring.**

*unpaid carer*



“  
**Gives me a lift even to just think about booking a break.**

*unpaid carer*

### Life satisfaction and wellbeing

The impact on carer life satisfaction, consistent with the secondary literature on respite, is significant.

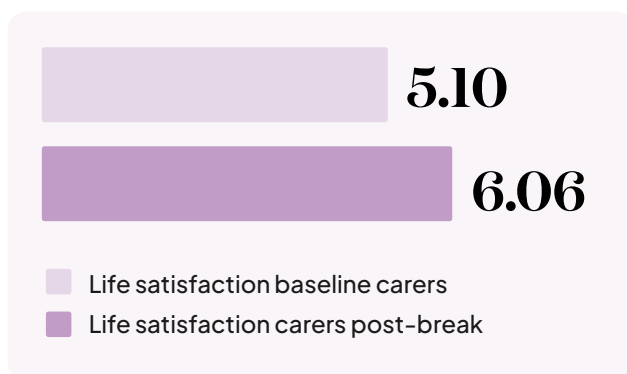
The average life satisfaction of the UK population is 7.4 (out of 10). By comparison, on the baseline survey of carers that had recently registered on the Carefree platform (but not yet taken a break), average life satisfaction was 4.96.

In the interviews, carers repeatedly told us that going on a Carefree break gave them a ‘boost’ or ‘lift’. Carers described feeling a sense of freedom and having a sense of their own identity or self restored.

In the quantitative measurement, this translates into substantial improvements in life satisfaction immediately post-break, with average life satisfaction on the post-break survey rising to 6.06.

The data from the follow up survey at 6-months post-break shows us that the increase in life satisfaction for carers is temporary, with average life satisfaction reverting to a near-baseline level of 5.10.

The temporary nature of the uplift is understandable when viewed in the context of the challenging reality that unpaid carers face daily. This suggests that breaks twice a year are key to maintaining carer wellbeing and preventing costly crisis breakdown. Carefree has committed to implementing this change from 2026 onwards.



### Understanding changes in life satisfaction

While this movement of 1.10 in average life satisfaction from baseline to post-break may seem small, it should be noted that overall life satisfaction is notoriously resistant to change. So much so that the HM Treasury guidance places a value of £15,820 on a 1-point movement in average life satisfaction that is maintained for 12 months (known as the WELLBY).

**Table 1:** Family member survey results

To what extent do you feel the break and the potential for future breaks with Carefree:	A lot	A little	Not at all
Prevent crisis breakdown?	77.22%	20.56%	2.22%
Reduces the need for starting paid care or accessing additional paid care?	52.22%	36.11%	11.67%



### Preventing crisis breakdown

One of the most significant impacts that carers told us about in the interviews was that the Carefree break restored their ability to continue caring. We were repeatedly told by carers that, prior to the break, they were under significant strain and, in some cases, at breaking point. Many had not had an overnight break for several years.

This was corroborated by the post-break survey, in which 77% of respondents said that the break with Carefree and the potential for future breaks had contributed ‘a lot’ to preventing crisis breakdown (see Table 1).

In this way, Carefree contributes to reducing the need for starting paid care or accessing additional paid care. Some 52% of post-break survey respondents said Carefree had contributed ‘a lot’ to this and 36% said it had made ‘a little’ contribution (see Table 1).

# If Carefree didn't exist...

“

**I've been a carer for 10 years. I had an assessment at first, but then nothing. There's nothing here.**

“

**There is not enough around for carers, have tried to look for things before and never found anything.**

“

**First bit of respite I've had. Well appreciated. It came at a difficult time when I was feeling really low.**

*(Quotes from unpaid carers)*

Carefree is unique. But not only is Carefree the only service of its kind, there is very little support for unpaid carers in general. Without Carefree, most would have nowhere else to turn.

This means that the observed outcomes around preventing crisis breakdown are unlikely to have happened, if Carefree did not exist.

When we asked carers in the post-break survey whether they would have been able to go away for an overnight stay without the person they care for if Carefree didn't exist, 75% of post-break survey respondents selected either 'unlikely' or 'definitely not' (see Table 2).



**Table 2:** Likelihood of an overnight stay without cared for person

If you had not been able to go on a Carefree break:	Definitely	Maybe	Unlikely	Definitely not
Would you have gone away anyway for an overnight stay without the person you care for?	6.11%	18.89%	50.56%	24.44%

**Table 3:** Family member survey results

Since your family member went on a Carefree break:	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
There is less strain in our family	40.52%	32.76%	21.55%	4.31%	0.86%
My relationship with the person who went on the break is better	45.69%	24.14%	25.00%	2.59%	2.59%
My stress levels have reduced since my family member went on the break	45.69%	26.72%	19.83%	5.17%	2.59%

### Improved relationships and impacts on family members

The final area where significant improvement is evident is in the quality of relationships carers have with those around them.

Figure 1 shows how carers rated the quality of their relationships with the person they care for, their partner, other family members, and friends. Across all these categories, there is a significant increase in the proportion rating the quality of their relationship as ‘excellent/good’. As with life satisfaction and wellbeing, this effect is temporary, with levels reverting to near baseline by the 6-month follow up survey. Carers attributed these improvements in their relationships primarily to being less stressed.

Family members of carers corroborated these findings, reporting that the carer benefitted from their break and that there had been an improvement in family relationships as a result.



**We were kind of at breaking point. Just to see him more relaxed helped.**

*(Quote from a family member)*

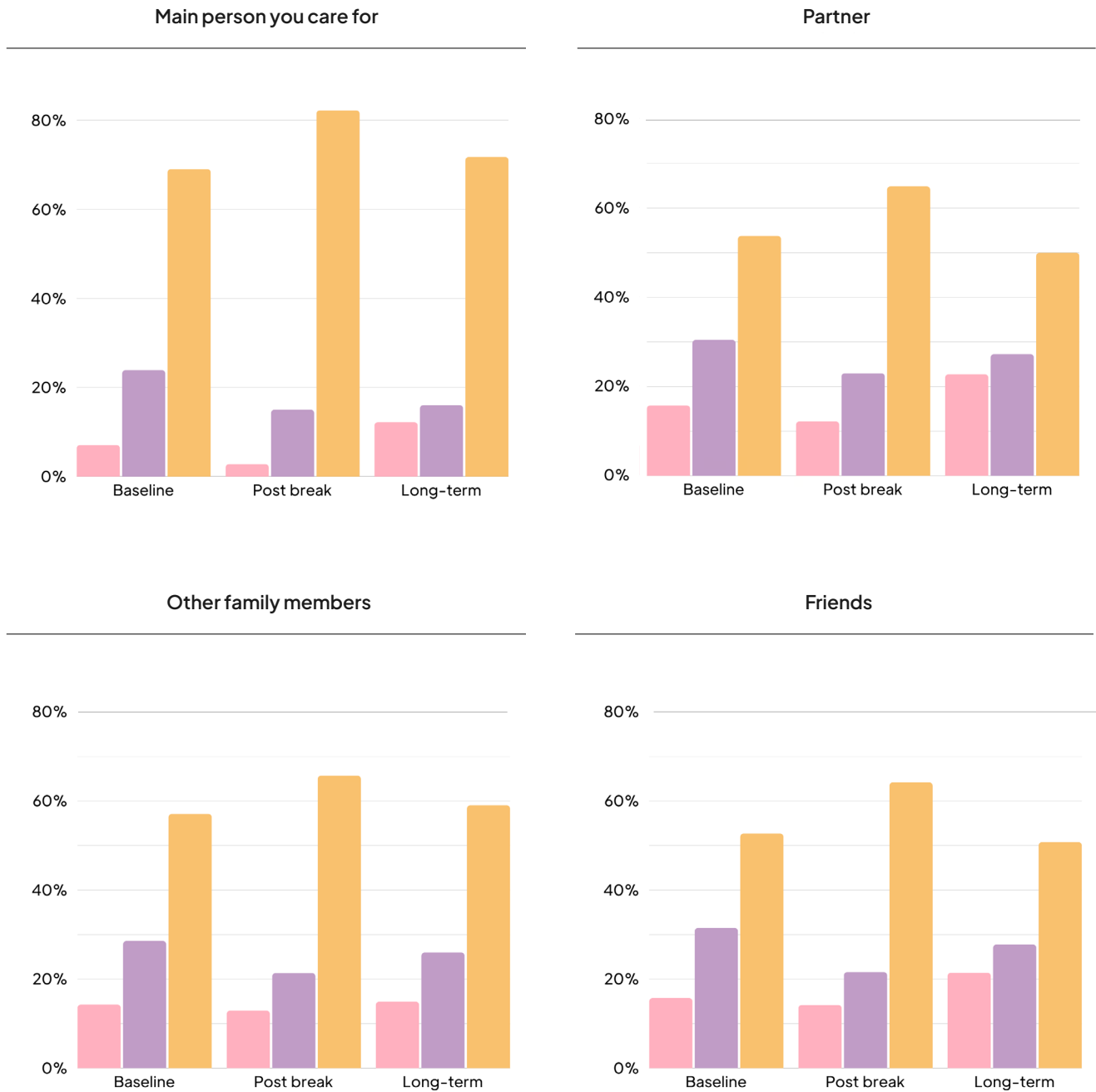
Some 45.7% strongly agreed that their relationship with the person who went on the break is better and 40.5% strongly agreed that there is ‘less strain in our family since the break’ (see Table 3).

Family members also reported that their own stress levels had reduced as a result.

## Reported post break impacts on carer relationships

Figure 1: Quality of relationships

■ Poor 
 ■ Neutral 
 ■ Excellent/Good



# 3. Valuing Carefree

A cost-effective way of preventing crisis breakdown

Unpaid carers play a vital role at a time when social care budgets are at breaking point and needs are rising year on year. Yet many unpaid carers are under significant strain and there is a lack of support available to enable them to continue to provide care.

When care breaks down, the costs are substantial: to those that they care for, the carer, and to the public purse. In this economic analysis, constructed in line with [HM Treasury Green Book guidance](#), we have calculated the value that Carefree creates through its breaks for all its material stakeholders.

The three headline findings are:

## £2.38

of value is created for the State for every £1 spent on Carefree operating cost, equating to £294 of value to the State per break

## 8 carers

being enabled to continue caring creates the equivalent in value to the State as the entire Carefree annual operating costs

## 5.56%

of break recipients avoiding the need for publicly-funded emergency respite care generates savings equivalent to Carefree's annual operating costs

1.

### High Return on Investment

Every pound of Carefree operating cost yields at least **£2.38 in value to the State from avoided social care and NHS costs**. This equates to **£294 in value to the State per break delivered**.

2.

### The Impact of Just 8 Carers

The value of just eight carers being able to continue to provide care (and avoiding publicly-funded residential care) is equivalent to Carefree's entire operating costs. This requires preventing care breakdown for only 1 out of every 1,000 carers that went on a break in 2024.

3.

### Reducing Emergency Respite

The cost of 358 episodes of short-term (1.5 weeks) emergency respite care is equivalent to Carefree's operating costs. This means that if just 5% of users avoid this care, the savings will cover the total operating cost of Carefree.

**Table 4:** Calculating 'break even' point where savings from avoided entry into residential care equal Carefree's operating cost

Average monthly cost in residential care	£5828 <sup>14</sup>
Median time spent in residential care	1.5 years <sup>15</sup>
Cost of 1.5 years in residential care	£104,901
Carefree operating cost, 2025	£794,793
'Break even': number of avoided entries into residential care required for savings to equate to Carefree operating costs	7.58
Percentage of all breaks in 2025 (6,446) that would need to avoid care breakdown to reach break even point	0.12%

**Table 5:** Calculating the 'break even' point where savings from avoided short-term (1.5 weeks) emergency respite care equal to Carefree's operating cost

Average cost of short-term (1.5 weeks) emergency respite care	£2,219 <sup>16</sup>
Carefree operating costs, 2025	£794,793
'Break even': number of episodes of avoided emergency respite care required for savings to equate to Carefree operating costs	358
Percentage of all breaks in 2025 (6,446) that would need to result in avoided emergency respite care	5.56%

<sup>14</sup> PSSRU (2024) [Unit costs manual 2024](#)

<sup>15</sup> Nuffield Trust (2012) [Estimating length of stay in publicly-funded residential and nursing care home](#)

<sup>16</sup> PSSRU (2024) [Unit costs manual 2024](#)

# Exploring the economic value of Carefree

In 2025, Carefree delivered 6,446 breaks with an operating budget of £794,793 and an additional £1.8m of value leveraged in the form of the donated hotel room inventory.

The economic analysis<sup>17</sup> finds that total social value created by Carefree in 2025 for all its material stakeholders<sup>18</sup> is 16.87 million.

Comparing the total social value to Carefree's operating cost, results in a return on investment (ROI) ratio of 1:21 (see Table 6). This means that every pound invested in Carefree generates £21 in benefits to carers, their partners, the community and State.

Table 6 sets out the total value across all breaks in 2025 by outcome and stakeholder, as well as the ROI calculation.



**Table 6:** Breakdown of value by stakeholder and outcome and overall ROI calculation

Stakeholder	Outcomes	Value of outcome (all breaks, 2025)	Total value to stakeholder (all breaks 2025)
Carer	Increased life satisfaction	£10,860,551	£11,882,207
	Avoided cost of paid for emergency care	£324,366	
	Avoided cost of residential care	£697,289	
Carer's partner	Increased life satisfaction	£2,935,308	£2,935,308
Community Partners	Net gain (efficiency gains – cost of membership)	£158,488	£158,488
State	Local Authorities: avoided emergency respite due to avoidance of care relationship breakdown	£552,299	£1,894,241
	Local Authorities: delayed entry into residential care due to avoidance of care relationship breakdown	£1,187,277	
	NHS: avoided mental and physical health costs due improved carer health and wellbeing	£154,665	
<b>Total value across all stakeholders, 2025</b>			<b>£16,870,243</b>
<b>Carefree operating costs, 2025</b>			<b>£794,793</b>
<b>ROI (total value/cost), 2025</b>			<b>21:1</b>

<sup>17</sup> For full details of the economic model, including key assumptions, see Appendix 1, in the full report.

<sup>18</sup> For the purposes of the value for money appraisal, hotels have been excluded as a stakeholder as they are gaining private financial benefit. The gain to hotels is separately in Box 1, in the full report.

# Scaling Carefree

Given that there are over 1.7 million carers in the UK providing more than 50 hours of care per week, there is considerable scope for Carefree to scale and for the State to reap even greater savings from improved carer resilience.

Carefree's ability to scale is primarily influenced by the number of rooms that hotels make available. The unit cost of breaks will decline significantly as the operation scales, given that the majority of Carefree costs, such as its platform, are relatively fixed and so independent of the volume of breaks delivered. Between 2025 and 2026, for example, the number of breaks is set to rise by 49% but operating costs will only increase by 11%.

With a declining unit cost as it scales, the cost-effectiveness of Carefree is projected to increase significantly. Table 7 sets out the projected cost-effectiveness based on Carefree's 4-year growth forecast to 2029.

If these forecasts are achieved, by 2029:

**-£87**

The delivery cost per break will have dropped from £123 to £36

**£11,75m**

Total value to the State will be £9.99 million, representing a return of £8.17 for every £1 of Carefree operating cost

**£10.2m**

The annual value of leveraged hotel rooms will total £1m

Table 7: 5-year growth forecast and cost-effectiveness projections

Year	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
Breaks	6,466	12,750	19,125	25,500	34,000
Operating cost	£794,793	£872,929	£1,074,137	£1,155,533	£1,223,079
Cost/break	£123	£68	£56	£45	£36
Total value	£16,870,243	£33,213,853	£49,741,535	£66,269,218	£88,306,128
Value to the State	£1,894,241	£3,746,753	£5,620,130	£7,493,506	£9,991,341
ROI (total)	21.23	38.05	46.31	57.35	72.20
ROI (state benefits)	2.38	4.29	5.23	6.48	8.17
Value per break	£2,617	£2,605	£2,601	£2,599	£2,597
Value of leveraged hotel rooms	£1,832,920	£3,825,000	£5,737,500	£7,650,000	£10,200,000

# 4. Spotlight on Hotels

Hotels are integral to the Carefree intervention, with their donated spare inventory enabling the delivery of breaks to carers.

Satisfaction with Carefree was extremely high among the hotel owners and managers participating in the research. There was repeated praise for the Carefree team and its platform. One described it as a ‘**ready-made solution**’ to their ‘**ESG headache**’. The level of control over when and how many rooms they are donating at any given time was especially valued.

The cost of donating spare rooms was perceived to be marginal by the majority and likely to be offset by in-hotel spending on food and beverages.

Data from the post-break survey backs this up, suggesting that hotels are likely to have a net financial gain when donating spare inventory.



**Super easy – everything works very smoothly.**

*(Quote from a Hotel Partner)*



**... felt like a no-brainer. Very little cost to us and a nice thing to do.**

*(Quote from a Hotel Partner)*

## Creating net value for hotels

The survey data suggests that, on average, there is a net gain to hotels from partnering with Carefree.

Interviews with hotels and hospitality industry experts put the **cost of offering unsold inventory at around £20 per room per night**.

This cost is offset by:

- **In-hotel spending:** Carers, on average, reported spending £54 in the hotel, yielding £40.20 in profit.<sup>19</sup>
- **Word-of-mouth recommendations:** 75% of carers recommended the hotel to friends, family, or colleagues, with 4% of these recommendations resulting in a confirmed paid-for booking. Spread across all breaks, the value of these word-of-mouth recommendations is estimated to be £3.48 per break.<sup>20</sup>

**+£23.80**

Taken together, hotels, on average, have a net financial gain of +£23.80 per break.



Explore the social value and financial impact using our interactive calculator.

<sup>19</sup> Assuming Food & Beverage profit margin of 75% (Hotstats 2025).

<sup>20</sup> Based on a 36.2% profit margin for full service hotels (BDO 2024), and Carefree data on the average cost of hotel rooms donated (£275).

## CASE STUDY

# The Q-Hotels Collection

Starting with two hotels in 2003, The QHotels Collection now has 19 hotels across Great Britain. Since the beginning of their partnership with Carefree, over 5000 unpaid carers have been gifted a break by The QHotels Collection.

### Why partner with Carefree?

In the UK one million hotel rooms sit empty every single week. Rather than seeing lost potential, many hotels like The QHotels Collection have been donating them so they become a powerful engine for social good.

The beauty of this model is its simplicity as there's no significant financial burden. Donating these rooms is, therefore, the most low-effort, high-impact way a hotel can give back to its community and turn a loss into immediate, meaningful benefit. With Carefree, there's no minimum or maximum room requirement so hotels can give as many or as few as they would like, depending on whether it is quiet or busy period.

The QHotels collection saw this opportunity and have been donating rooms to support their ESG efforts since 2021.



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“

**Proud to partner with Carefree to offer unpaid carers respite, thanks to a simple and flexible process.**

*Gail Peters, Head of Revenue Management at The QHotels Collection.*

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“

**Being a full-time carer is tough. A 2-night break was amazing, just me time in a lovely hotel. Can't wait for next year's break.**

*Joanne, An unpaid carer who stayed at the Hampshire Court Hotel.*

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“

**A peaceful break away from caring duties was a true gift for my mental health.**

*Heidi, An unpaid carer who stayed at Belton Woods Hotel.*

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# 5. Spotlight on Community Partners

Carefree's community partners are local carer support services that have signed up via a membership fee to refer carers for breaks and to be notified by Carefree of 'hidden carers' in their area that have self-referred to Carefree.

Some community partners are local authorities, while others are independent organisations that are mandated by local authorities to provide support to carers, including Carer Assessments.

Community partners echoed what carers had said regarding the lack of support available to carers. In the survey, 91% of community partners said that Carefree had 'increased access to carer breaks in their area'.

Satisfaction with Carefree was extremely high (see Table 8), with an average rating of 9.25 out of 10 for their overall experience of Carefree. Reflecting on this impact, community partners shared:

“

**So valued... there is nothing else like it.**

“

**It's been a really perfect experience.**

*(Quotes from Community Partners)*

## 10.5 hours

per month is the average time organizations estimate they save through Carefree membership.

## £2,476

per year is the average saving for each community partner calculated in the economic model.<sup>21</sup>

In the interviews, community partners said that their partnership with Carefree leads to efficiency savings from referral, through to booking, and reporting (via the community partner portal) as, without Carefree, they would have to find other ways of providing a service to carers. In the survey, organisations estimated that membership of Carefree saved them, on average, 10.5 hours per month. In the economic model, we calculate this amounts to £2,476 in savings across a year per community partner.<sup>21</sup>

Table 8: Satisfaction with Carefree

How would you rate your overall experience with Carefree?	9.25
How would you rate the useability of our platform?	8.69
How would you rate your Carefree membership in terms of value for money?	8.84

<sup>21</sup> Based on average annual hours saved (126 hours) x hourly cost of a support and outreach work (incl. on-costs, PSSRU data) (£31.02/hour).

CASE STUDY

# Carers Oxfordshire

Carers Oxfordshire are a free service that offers information, advice, and personalised support to unpaid adult carers—those aged 18 or over who look after someone living in Oxfordshire.

Carers Oxfordshire have partnered with Carefree since 2022. They've made Carefree breaks a core part of their offering, referring more than 1000 carers. The value of all the breaks taken as a result of these referrals comes to over £182,600.

**1000+**

Carers referred since 2022

**£182,600**

in financial value delivered through carer breaks by Carers Oxfordshire

## Why did they partner with Carefree and how does it work?

Every member of the Carers Oxfordshire team is aware of Carefree so that, if a carer meets the eligibility criteria during an assessment, they will have the opportunity to be referred for a break.

For Matt, the designated breaks coordinator for Carers Oxfordshire, the platform's ease of use is a major win. Matt notes, "It saved me so much time thanks to the videos and the FAQs," and what "used to be such an admin-heavy job is now much easier," as the number of breaks taken can be directly downloaded.

The benefits for the carers themselves are profound. Because Carers Oxfordshire purchases Carefree credits, they are often able to waive the booking fee, a crucial lifeline since "the cost of living is high for many right now and not paying the booking fee is a real bonus for a lot of

our carers." He also notes that since the partnership has gone on for many years, most of the promotion is now done by word-of-mouth as carers have been very pleased with their breaks.

Matt was proud to share that "we've had carers who hadn't been able to take a break for 8 years now able to take a break through Carefree," calling the chance for even a couple of days away "game changing." These breaks are not just about rest; they're an opportunity for self-care. Some hotels also have spa facilities which the carers book to use. "They wouldn't have the time to do that if it weren't for Carefree."

Ultimately, the partnership has allowed Carers Oxfordshire to significantly expand its impact. The administrative ease of the platform means Matt can now "offer carers a much wider variety of breaks now than I did before."

“

**Great service, helpful, clear guidance and an amazing offer for unpaid carers - genius.**

*Michelle Evans, Carers Oxfordshire*



# 6. Four Calls to Action

## Working together to give unpaid carers a break

The UK's 5.8 million unpaid carers are the backbone of our health and social care system, yet 57% feel overwhelmed, and 65% cite simply not getting a break as the main cause. The hidden cost of this is profound: to carers' mental and physical health, to family relationships, and to the public purse.

This research shows that a short hotel break with Carefree is not a luxury - it is a cost-effective intervention that prevents crisis breakdown, saves significant public money, and gives carers the resilience to keep going. These four stakeholders must act to scale carer breaks:

1.

*the National government:*

### Explore options for incentivising hotels to donate spare rooms

Carefree depends on hotels donating spare inventory. Given that every break generates £294 in avoided NHS and social care costs, HM Treasury should explore mechanisms to incentivise donations - including a Gift Aid-style write-off against the value of donated rooms.

→ £294 saved per break in NHS costs

2.

*Local authorities, carer support organisations, Integrated Care Boards & NHS Trusts:*

### Fund the £38 break admin fee for carers

Funding the £38 admin fee (currently paid by carers) is a cost-effective way of delivering on responsibilities to carers under the 2014 Care Act. 91% of signed up organisations say working with Carefree had 'increased access to carer breaks in their area'. This research proves Carefree breaks deliver savings from avoided emergency and residential care costs.

→ every £1 invested returns £7.10

3.

*Hotels:*

### Partner with Carefree to donate spare rooms

Existing Hotel partners describe partnering with Carefree as "the right thing to do" and a "ready-made solution" to their ESG commitments. The marginal cost of a donated room offset by the profit from carers' in-hotel food and beverage spend, plus word-of-mouth bookings from the 75% of carers who recommend the hotel to friends and family.

→ Net financial gain of +£23.80 per break

4.

*Carefree:*

### Allow carers access to two breaks per year

This research shows that Carefree breaks improve wellbeing and restore the capacity of carers to continue to provide care. However, the daily challenges of caring mean that regular access to respite is needed, and carers should be able to access up to two breaks per year. Carefree has implemented this recommendation, effective from January 2026.

→ Implemented from Jan 2026

# Carefree

Transforming vacant hotel rooms  
into vital breaks for unpaid carers

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