

The Last Ten Years

Why a simple session, backed by continuing online help, can make families better prepared for ageing, care and the decisions that follow.

Doing nothing is a decision.

The central idea: give people a useful first conversation before a crisis, then give them somewhere practical to go when they are ready to do something about it.

Prepared for funding and partnership
discussions

West Sussex pilot, with UK-wide potential

Research base reviewed: August 2026

The problem is not a lack of information. It is knowing what to do before something goes wrong.

Most families know, in a vague way, that there are things they should sort as parents age or as they themselves get older. Wills, powers of attorney, care, money, wishes, passwords, benefits, family roles and emergency contacts all matter. Yet these subjects are easy to postpone because no single problem feels urgent enough today.

Then something changes. A parent falls. A partner has a stroke. A hospital wants to discharge someone. A care package fails. Memory starts to slip. What had been a collection of small jobs becomes one large family problem, and the people dealing with it often have to learn several systems at once while frightened, tired and short of time.

The Last Ten Years is designed to intervene earlier. Its starting point is a short, practical session delivered where people already are: at work, in a community group, club, church, social group or local organisation. The session is not intended to turn people into experts. Its job is to make the subject easier to face, show what usually goes wrong, help people spot gaps in their own family arrangements, and give them a small number of useful next steps.

The session then leads somewhere. Participants would be able to continue through simple online help, training and education at their own pace. They could return when a parent becomes frail, when a document needs checking, when care becomes a live issue, or when the family wants to do The Rehearsal. A future helpline or appointment service could add a human route for people who understand the problem but are still unsure what to do next.

This creates a different kind of community service. It does not replace solicitors, regulated financial advisers, Citizens Advice, carers organisations, councils or health services. It helps ordinary people become better prepared to use those services. It can give a person enough understanding to ask the right question, enough confidence to have a family conversation, and enough structure to take the first action before pressure removes the time to think.

The personal benefit is greater confidence and less uncertainty. The family benefit is clearer roles and earlier conversations. The workplace benefit is support for employees who are often dealing with ageing parents while still working. The community benefit is a population that is more able to prepare, find the right help and support one another before avoidable confusion becomes a crisis.

The demographic evidence supporting the scale of need is kept in Appendix A. It shows why the programme has a national audience and why West Sussex is a strong place to begin.

A workshop is the front door. The value comes from what people understand, discuss and do afterwards.

1. What someone should get from attending a session

A useful session should leave a participant in a different position from the one they arrived in. They may still have work to do, but the subject should feel smaller, clearer and more manageable.

- A clear picture of the main areas families need to think about: care, money, key documents and family decisions.

- A chance to recognise gaps before those gaps become urgent.
- A simple order for dealing with things, rather than a long list of unrelated tasks.
- Permission to start conversations that families often avoid.
- A better idea of when general information is enough and when specialist advice is needed.
- A practical next step that can be done within days, not a promise to “get everything sorted one day”.

For some people the most valuable result may be very small: finding the will, checking whether a power of attorney exists, asking a parent where important information is kept, or deciding who in the family should be involved. Small actions matter because they begin to turn an unspoken future problem into something the family can manage.

2. A simple participant journey

The model works best as a journey rather than a one-off talk. Each part has a different purpose.

Stage	What happens	Benefit to the participant
1. Attend	A short workplace or community session introduces the main issues in plain language.	Awareness without overload. The person sees what may matter to their own family.
2. Check	A simple checklist or The Rehearsal helps the person test what is already in place.	The vague problem becomes a visible list of gaps, strengths and next actions.
3. Learn	Online training and short guides allow the person to explore the relevant topic privately and at their own pace.	They can return when the issue becomes relevant rather than trying to remember one presentation.
4. Talk	The person uses prompts to speak to parents, a partner, children or other family members.	Roles and wishes become clearer before decisions are urgent.
5. Act	The participant organises records, reviews documents or contacts the right professional or public service.	Earlier action and better use of specialist help.
6. Ask for help	A future helpline or appointment service could help when the person is stuck between knowing there is a problem and knowing where to go.	A human route through uncertainty, with clear boundaries and signposting.

3. Personal benefit: from worry to useful action

Many people carry low-level worry about ageing parents for years. They notice changes, but do not know whether they are serious, what they should prepare for, or whether starting the conversation will upset someone. A session can reduce that uncertainty by giving ordinary language to the problem.

- More confidence about what questions to ask.
- Less reliance on assumptions such as “the solicitor will have it” or “the hospital will sort it”.
- Earlier awareness of documents, care routes and family responsibilities.
- A clearer boundary between what the family can organise itself and what needs expert help.
- A sense of progress from taking one or two practical actions.

The programme should not promise that preparation removes grief, illness, family disagreement or problems with the care system. It can, however, reduce avoidable uncertainty. That is a realistic and worthwhile personal outcome.

4. Family benefit: conversations before decisions

The practical problem is often shared across a family, but the knowledge is not. One person knows where the bank paperwork is. Another knows the medical history. Someone assumes a sibling will take charge. Nobody has checked whether that sibling agrees.

A session gives families a reason to talk before they are under pressure. The Rehearsal then turns that conversation into a test: if something happened tomorrow, what would the family actually know, find and be able to do?

- Clearer family roles and contacts.
- Better understanding of a parent or partner's wishes.
- Important information gathered in a place that can be found.
- Fewer assumptions about who has legal authority to act.
- A chance to spot out-of-date arrangements while there is still time to change them.

5. Community benefit: making preparation normal

There is a wider benefit when this education is delivered through places people already trust. A community group session does more than reach one person. It makes ageing, care and family preparation discussable within a group.

That matters because people often learn from one another. One participant asks a question that another person had not thought to ask. Someone who has already dealt with care recognises the problem. A family member realises that their own situation is not unusual. The subject becomes less private and less easy to postpone.

- More people recognise themselves as needing support before reaching crisis point.
- Local organisations gain a practical resource they can refer people to after the event.
- Carers and family organisers may feel less isolated when they see that the problem is common.
- People may reach appropriate local and specialist services earlier and with clearer questions.
- Community organisations can identify recurring local problems and gaps in understanding.

It would be wrong to promise that education alone reduces demand on health or social care services. A more defensible aim is that people arrive at those services better prepared, with clearer information and a better idea of what they need.

6. Workplace benefit: help for employees with ageing parents

For workplaces, the issue is immediate. Many people providing unpaid care are still employed, and the age group most likely to provide informal care is 55 to 64. The evidence is set out in Appendix A, Tables A2 and A5.

An employee may be dealing with a parent's appointments, hospital discharge, care arrangements, money or paperwork while still expected to work normally. A lunchtime or staff session gives an employer a practical way to support that employee without trying to become a care adviser.

- Useful support before an employee reaches a point of acute stress.
- A shared resource that managers can point staff towards.

- Better awareness of the pressures faced by staff with ageing parents.
- Private online follow-up, so employees do not have to discuss personal family details at work.
- A practical wellbeing offer tied to a real life problem rather than a generic message about resilience.

7. Why the online follow-up matters

A single session cannot cover every situation and should not try. The online element gives the programme depth without making the first contact heavy or technical.

- Short modules that explain one issue at a time.
- Checklists and downloadable prompts that can be used with family members.
- The Rehearsal as a guided family exercise.
- Plain explanations of care, documents, money and common decision points.
- Clear signposting to official and specialist sources.
- The ability to return months later when a topic becomes relevant.

This last point is important. A person may attend a session today because it sounds useful, but not need the section on care until two years later. Continuing access means the education remains useful after the event rather than disappearing with the presentation slides.

8. A possible future helpline: the human gap between information and advice

There may also be a case, subject to funding and clear service boundaries, for a helpline or appointment service. Its purpose would not be to give regulated, legal or specialist benefits advice. Its purpose would be to help someone work out what sort of help they need and where to go next.

That gap is common. A person can have pages of information in front of them and still not know which page matters to their situation. A short human conversation can help them describe the problem, identify the next question and reach the right service.

- Clarify the problem in plain language.
- Help the caller identify what information or documents may be useful.
- Direct detailed benefits questions to Citizens Advice or another suitable specialist.
- Direct legal, regulated financial, health or social care matters to the appropriate professional or service.
- Record recurring questions so future training can address common gaps.

9. Who benefits

Group	Immediate benefit	Longer-term value
People aged 50-64 with ageing parents	A clearer idea of what to ask and what to check.	Better prepared to organise help when a parent's needs change.
Sandwich carers	A simple way to separate urgent issues from jobs that can wait.	Less confusion across competing family responsibilities.
Independent people aged 65-80	A prompt to organise documents, wishes and family roles while able to do so.	More control over how information is left for others.
Older households and older carers	A chance to think about what happens if the current arrangement changes.	Better contingency planning for both the cared-for person and the carer.

Group	Immediate benefit	Longer-term value
Employees	Useful help with a real family problem without having to disclose private details.	A resource they can return to as circumstances change.
Employers	A practical staff support offer.	Better equipped to respond to a growing caring issue in the workforce.
Community groups	Useful education that can be delivered in familiar settings.	A continuing resource to signpost members towards.
Wider local community	More open discussion of ageing and care.	More families preparing earlier and using specialist services with clearer questions.

10. What funding would make possible

Funding would allow the CIC to make the first contact free or low cost, while building the follow-up support that makes the session more than a one-off event.

- A programme of workplace, community, club, faith-group and social-group sessions across West Sussex.
- A structured online learning area that participants can use after a session and return to later.
- Plain printed material for people who do not want to rely on online learning.
- The development and testing of The Rehearsal as a repeatable family exercise.
- A referral and signposting framework with clear boundaries around specialist advice.
- A pilot helpline or booked-support service, if evidence shows that participants need a human next step.
- Evaluation of what people actually do after attending, rather than only how many people attend.

11. What success should look like

The programme should measure behaviour and confidence, not just attendance. The most useful question is whether a session leads to a practical change.

Outcome	Example measure
Better understanding	Participants report greater confidence about the main issues and where to find help.
Gaps identified	Participants identify at least one missing, unclear or out-of-date item.
Family conversation	Participants speak to a parent, partner, child or sibling about future arrangements.
Practical action	A document is found or reviewed, records are organised, contacts are listed or The Rehearsal is completed.
Better navigation	Participants contact the correct specialist, public service or voluntary organisation for their issue.
Continuing engagement	Participants use the online resources after the session and return when circumstances change.

Outcome	Example measure
Community reach	Local organisations continue referring people to the programme after an event.
Helpline value, if piloted	Common questions, referral routes, resolved navigation issues and user confidence are recorded.

12. The wider case

The Last Ten Years is not built on the idea that every family will experience the same crisis. It is built on the simpler fact that almost every family will eventually have to deal with ageing, illness, care, loss of capacity, death or the practical work that follows.

The timing will differ. The amount of help needed will differ. Some families will have good professional support and clear records. Others will start with very little. What is common is that the questions become harder when they are first asked under pressure.

A workplace or community session creates an early point of contact. The online programme creates continuity. A possible future helpline creates a human route for people who are still unsure where to turn. Together, those elements can form a simple layer of practical preparation around ordinary families.

The community benefit is not that every problem disappears. It is that more people meet predictable problems with some knowledge, some preparation and somewhere to go next.

Everyone is going to face this.

Some through their parents. Some through a partner. Some through themselves. Most families will face more than one of those.

The case for funding is therefore not about creating another information service. It is about making useful preparation easier to start, easier to continue and easier to return to when life changes.

Statistical evidence

The detailed figures are kept here so the main case can stay focused on the benefit to people and communities. Figures should be quoted with their source and year.

Table A1. UK ageing and later-life context

Indicator	Figure	Source
UK population, mid-2024	69,281,400	ONS, mid-year population estimates
Age 85+ in mid-2024	1.75 million, 2.5% of UK population	ONS, 2024-based population projections
Age 85+ projected by mid-2049	3.6 million, 4.9% of UK population	ONS, 2024-based population projections
Age 65+ living alone, England and Wales, 2021	3.3 million, 30.1% of older population	ONS, Census 2021
Unpaid carers aged 65+, England and Wales, 2021	Almost 1.2 million	ONS, Census 2021

Table A2. Informal care by age, sex, work and intensity

Care indicator	2024/25 figure	Implication for the CIC
People providing informal care	8%	Large existing need, not a future-only issue.
Female informal carers	10%	Women carry a larger share of caring responsibility.
Male informal carers	7%	Caring is significant across both sexes.
Age 55-64 providing informal care	17%	Prime audience for ageing-parent support.
Women aged 55-64 providing informal care	19%	Strong case for targeted support to mid-life women.
Men aged 55-64 providing informal care	14%	Large male caring population as well.
Adult informal carers in employment	53%	Workplace delivery is justified.
Adult informal carers working full time	36%	Care competes directly with work and family life.
Adult carers providing 35+ hours a week	38%	A substantial group carries a heavy care load.
People aged 85+ receiving care every week	26%	Care need rises sharply in very old age.

Table A3. Who informal carers are caring for

Recipient	Share of informal carers
Parent living outside the carer's household	33%
Parent living inside the carer's household	9%
Someone living inside the carer's household	52%
Someone living outside the carer's household	52%
More than one person	10%

Table A4. Sandwich carers in the UK

Sandwich carers, UK	Figure
Estimated number aged 16-64	1.4 million
Female	61%
Aged 45-64	51%
Caring 20 hours or more each week	26%
Caring for an adult relative outside the home	64%

Table A5. Employment and later-life caring

Employment indicator	Figure
Employment rate, age 50-64, 2024	70.9%
Payrolled employees age 50-64, May 2024	8.2 million
Payrolled employees age 65+, May 2024	1.2 million
Adult informal carers in employment, 2024/25	53%

Table A6. West Sussex population and unpaid care

West Sussex indicator	Figure
Total population, 2024	915,037
Age 65+	212,898

West Sussex indicator	Figure
Share aged 65+	23.3%
Median age	44.7 years
England median age	40.2 years
Residents providing unpaid care, Census 2021	More than 72,800
Providing 50+ hours of unpaid care each week	More than 20,300

Table A7. West Sussex unpaid carers by age and hours of care

Age of West Sussex carer	19 hours or less	20-49 hours	50+ hours	Total carers
35-49	7,715	3,130	4,290	15,135
50-64	17,700	4,500	5,620	27,820
65+	8,455	2,730	8,505	19,690

Evidence notes

The datasets answer slightly different questions and should not be treated as one single count of carers. Census 2021, the Family Resources Survey and Understanding Society use different methods and populations.

The Family Resources Survey covers private households and excludes people living in care homes. Care receipt among older people may therefore be higher than its estimates suggest.

For funding applications, quote each figure with its source and year rather than combining datasets to create a new headline total.

APPENDIX B

Sources and selected quotations

1. Office for National Statistics - Population estimates for the UK, mid-2024

UK population estimated at 69.3 million in mid-2024.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationestimates/bulletins/annualmidyearpopulationestimates/latest>

2. Office for National Statistics - National population projections, 2024-based

1.75 million people aged 85+ in mid-2024; projected to reach 3.6 million by mid-2049.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/populationandmigration/populationprojections/bulletins/nationalpopulationprojections/latest>

3. Department for Work and Pensions - Family Resources Survey 2024/25

Informal care by age, sex, recipient, hours and employment status.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2024-to-2025/family-resources-survey-financial-year-2024-to-2025>

4. Office for National Statistics - Sandwich carers, UK

Estimated 1.4 million sandwich carers aged 16-64; 61% female; 51% aged 45-64.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/socialcare/bulletins/sandwichcarersuk/latest>

5. Department for Work and Pensions - Economic labour market status of individuals aged 50 and over, September 2024

Employment rate and payrolled employee counts for people aged 50-64 and 65+.

<https://www.gov.uk/government/statistics/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over-trends-over-time-september-2024/economic-labour-market-status-of-individuals-aged-50-and-over-trends-over-time-september-2024>

6. Office for National Statistics - Profile of the older population, Census 2021

3.3 million people aged 65+ living alone and almost 1.2 million unpaid carers aged 65+ in England and Wales.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/birthsdeathsandmarriages/ageing/articles/profileoftheolderpopulationlivinginenglandandwalesin2021andchangessince2011/2023-04-03>

7. West Sussex JSNA - 2024 Population Estimates

West Sussex population 915,037; 212,898 aged 65+; median age 44.7.

https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/assets/core/WSX_MYE_Population_2024.pdf

8. West Sussex Joint Strategic Needs Assessment Summary 2024/25

Census 2021 unpaid care data, including more than 72,800 carers and age/hour breakdown.

https://jsna.westsussex.gov.uk/assets/pdf/WS_JSNA_Summary_2024_2025.pdf

9. Office for National Statistics - Unpaid care by age, sex and deprivation, Census 2021

Approximately 4.7 million unpaid carers in England and 310,000 in Wales; higher prevalence in more deprived areas.

<https://www.ons.gov.uk/peoplepopulationandcommunity/healthandsocialcare/socialcare/articles/unpaidcarebyagesexanddeprivationenglandandwales/census2021>

Selected source quotations

“Those aged 55 to 64 years were most likely to be carers.”

DWP, Family Resources Survey 2024/25

“The main recipients of informal care were parents.”

DWP, Family Resources Survey 2024/25

“There were an estimated 1.4 million sandwich carers aged 16 to 64 years in the UK.”

ONS, Sandwich carers, UK

“By mid-2049, this is projected to have doubled to 3.6 million.”

ONS, National population projections, referring to people aged 85+

“Over 72,800 people in West Sussex stated they provided some level of unpaid care each week.”

West Sussex JSNA Summary 2024/25