

JOINT COMMISSIONING STRATEGY FOR CARERS

Executive Summary

This report aims to update members about the progress made towards achieving the objectives of the Commissioning Strategy for Carers, which was approved by Cabinet in July 2009.

This items falls within the Social Care and Inclusion portfolio.

1 Background

1.1 In July 2009 Cabinet approved the Joint Commissioning Strategy for Carers, which identified eight key outcomes

1. Carers know how to access advice and information when they need it
2. Carers receive relevant and appropriate information to enable them to make choices and remain independent
3. Carers feel confident that, should anything happen to them in an emergency, the person they care for will be supported.
4. Carers feel appreciated and that their contribution in the caring role is valued and recognised
5. Carers are consulted and involved at a local level in the development and evaluation of services designed to meet their needs, and the needs of people they care for.
6. Carers are able to participate fully and equally as citizens
7. Carers from black and racial minority groups are pro-actively engaged, and supported to access culturally appropriate support services which meet their needs.
8. Carers are supported to remain in employment or participate in training to promote future employment prospects

1.2 To achieve these outcomes, six Sub-groups of the Carer's Development Committee were established on the themes of Access, Support, Information, Services, Training/Development and Income and Employment. These groups have met regularly and report progress against agreed actions into the Carer's Development Committee via a Highlight Reports system.

2 Carers' outcomes

2.1 *Carers know how to access advice and information when they need it –* There is now a register, maintained by WIRED, which is intended to record any Carer who is known to any Wirral service provider.

Carers who are registered receive a regular newsletter containing information and details of how to access information, together with news of forthcoming training and other events of interest to Carers, such as good practice in other areas which could be implemented in Wirral.

WIRED also maintains the Carer's Helpline, which is available weekdays from 9 – 4pm, providing information and advice for Carers.

Wirral has many 'Hidden Carers' (people who are Carers, but don't recognise themselves as such). This is a national issue and was the theme of this year's national Carers Week. In Wirral there was a focus on promoting the use of the Carers Helpline, which is maintained by WIRED and provides confidential information, support and advice.

- 2.2 *Carers receive relevant and appropriate information to enable them to make choices and remain independent* – Every Carer known to the Department is entitled to an assessment of their need for services that will sustain them in their caring role. The Department's National Indicator target is for 20% of 'Carers receiving needs assessment or review and a specific Carer's service, or advice and information as a percentage of people receiving a community based service in the year.' The current projection is to exceed this target, with a figure of 23.36% anticipated.

The Department is participating in a national survey of all Carers devised by the Department of Health. This has involved sending a lengthy survey to 1,000 Carers and, amongst other things, will check their independence and opinion of the relevance and appropriateness of the information that they receive. A local report from this survey will be available after March 2010.

- 2.3 *Carers feel confident that, should anything happen to them in an emergency, the person they care for will be supported* – An Emergency Card scheme is being developed, which would notify emergency services that they are a Carer in the event of something happening to them, and trigger immediate actions to ensure the safety of the person for whom they care. This would be very expensive to operate as a stand-alone service, so ways of linking this to other twenty four hour services including the NHS Fast Response scheme are being explored. In turn we will explore the potential of Assistive Technology to better support carers at all times.

- 2.4 *Carers feel appreciated and that their contribution in the caring role is valued and recognised* – a series of training sessions has been devised and delivered by trainers and Carers to Professional staff, emphasising the value of Carers and recognising their importance. Nine thousand pounds has been awarded by North West Joint Improvement Partnership to increase the training of professionals around Carers' issues.

Under the Personal Budgets scheme, Carers will be entitled to an allocation of their own, which formally recognises their value.

The survey (see 2.2 above) will gauge how effectively Carers feel that their work is recognised and valued.

- 2.5 *Carers are consulted and involved at a local level in the development and evaluation of services designed to meet their needs, and the needs of people they care for* – Carers representatives participate in the Carers Development Committee and in all sub-groups, bringing their unique perspective to the design and delivery of services.

The survey (see 2.2 above) will also form part of the evaluation process, and in particular will ascertain Carers' views on the need for a Carers Centre, as a series of questions relating to this were included at the request of Carers.

An independent Forum for Carers, the Carers Association, has been established, facilitated by staff from the Department and WIRED and will play an important part in evaluating services and suggesting developments.

- 2.6 *Carers are able to participate fully and equally as citizens* – This outcome recognises that taking on a caring role can often lead to a reduction in income and social interactions coupled with a forced subjugation of personal needs.

Increased flexibility around short breaks will enable Carers to organise support for the person for whom they care in line with their needs, and Health checks and effective use of the 'Choose and Book' system will ensure that their own health needs are not neglected.

Increasing use of Assistive Technology is proving very successful in enabling Carers to have reassurance about leaving the person for whom they care for periods in which they can pursue their own activities

- 2.7 *Carers from black and racial minority groups are pro-actively engaged, and supported to access culturally appropriate support services which meet their needs.* -

As part of the full Equality Impact Assessment of the Carers Strategy a series of consultations took place with Carers from seldom heard groups (Chinese Elders, people from the African Caribbean community, older Carers,) and as a result of this, regular meetings have been arranged to ensure that the maximum number of Carers can become involved in developing services that meet their needs and evaluating their effectiveness.

- 2.8 *Carers are supported to remain in employment or participate in training to promote future employment prospects* –

A tool kit for employers is being developed which will help them to identify Carers in their workforce, increase their knowledge about the employment rights of Carers and look at ways of supporting them to retain their jobs. Statistically within the Council's workforce there will be about 1,600 Carers, and the Income and Employment Sub-group is about to devise a project to ensure that the Carers who work for the Council are fully supported in retaining their employment.

Although employment is highly valuable, the Income and Employment Sub-group recognises that, particularly during a recession when employment is harder to find, household income needs to be maximised. Via the Newsletter (see 2.1 above) Carers have received updates about any Benefits to which they are entitled, and any changes to those Benefits. On Carers Rights Day (December 4th) Carers were invited to have their Benefit entitlements checked with Welfare Rights specialists.

Overall there has been considerable progress in achieving some desired outcomes, but some plans are still in the developmental stages and expect to achieve outcomes in 2010.

There is some cross-over between the six Sub-groups and also participation in so many groups has at times put a strain on carer's time,

and as a result, there is a proposal to merge some of the groups to form three new subgroups, with revised Action Plans :

- Access and Information
- Services and Support
- Income, Employment and Training

3 Financial Implications

A co-ordinated approach to commissioning carer services across all agencies ensures that available funds are directed where they are most needed, and that maximum external funding opportunities are identified.

The Joint Commissioner has run workshops for Carers to enable them to fully understand how services are commissioned.

4 Staffing Implications

Training for staff across Health and Social Care needs to continue to highlight the needs of carers.

Given that there is likely to be a considerable number of staff within the Council who are Carers, good practices (and statutory obligations) around flexible working may need to be reinforced.

5 Equal Opportunities Implications/Health Impact Assessment

5.1 The national strategy highlights the obligation to promote equal rights of carers in employment, education and training.

5.2 Link to Carers Strategy Equality Impact Assessment

<http://10.107.1.50/departments/socialservices/documents/health/Carers/Carers%20Strategy%20EIA%20Final.doc>

6 Community Safety Implications

None.

7 Local Agenda 21 Implications

None.

8 Planning Implications

None.

9 Anti Poverty Implications

Caring responsibilities often have a negative impact on the income of the carer.

10 Social Inclusion Implications

The local strategy emphasises the need for carers to be able to participate actively in their local communities.

11 Local Member Support Implications

Carer issues are Wirral-wide.

12 Health Implications

National studies indicate that carers as a group are at disproportionate risk of experiencing health inequalities compared to those in a non caring role. Carers are more likely than non-carers to report high levels of psychological distress, which can include anxiety, loss of confidence and self-esteem. The demands of caring often mean carers do not have enough time to take care of their own health and well-being.

13 Background Papers

Carers at the heart of 21st-century families and communities
Our health, our care, our say
Putting People first

14 Recommendations

That:

Members comment of the achievements to date

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Date 22.12.09