

Carers' Strategy for Middlesbrough 2009-2019

Who are carers?

A carer spends a significant amount of their life providing unpaid support to family or friends. This could be caring for a relative, partner or friend who is ill, frail, disabled or has mental health or substance misuse problems.

The vision set out in the National Carers' Strategy, *Carers at the heart of 21st century families and communities*, is that by 2018:

Carers will be universally recognised and valued as being fundamental to strong families and stable communities. Support will be tailored to meet individuals' needs, enabling carers to maintain a balance between their caring responsibilities and a life outside caring, while enabling the person they support to be a full and equal citizen.

The Carers' Strategy for Middlesbrough will set the vision for the next 10 years, supported by a set of commitments designed to achieve that vision.



Helping carers is one of the best ways of helping people they are caring for. The latest report by Carers UK estimates the economic value of the contribution made by carers in the UK to be £87 billion per year. This shows there is an urgent need for better recognition and support for carers and they should be given a prominent role in family policy.

Demand

- From the 2001 census, there were 30,000 adults in Middlesbrough who reported that they had a limiting long term illness.
- Over 8,000 people between 18 and 64 have a moderate or severe disability.
- Almost 1,500 people have dementia.
- Almost 1,500 people have a long standing health condition caused by a heart attack.
- Over 500 people have a long standing health condition caused by a stroke.
- Over 14,500 adults in Middlesbrough provide unpaid care, almost 11% of the population.
- It is estimated that there are around 2,800 people under the age 18 who provide care for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other relative.
- There are over 2,000 problematic drug users in Middlesbrough, a large number of whom will require support from a carer.

Integrated and personalised services

Our vision is that:

Carers will be respected as expert care partners and will have access to the integrated and personalised services they need to support them in their caring role.

- Professionals should have a greater understanding about the role that carers have.
- Carers should be involved, where appropriate, in care planning and decision-making. In some circumstances, it will also be important that carers have their own individual support plan, to ensure that their needs are identified.
- Direct payments will allow carers and the people they care for the flexibility to purchase services that are tailored around both their needs.
- A key component of the new deal for carers is the provision of an information service. This will enable easy access to the comprehensive range of information for people needing services and their carers, whether or not they are eligible for public funding.
- Caring with Confidence, a training programme for carers, will build on existing training, empowering and enabling carers to enhance their own well-being and that of the people they care for.

A life of their own

Our vision is that:

Carers will be able to have a life of their own alongside their caring role.

- In order to give carers a life outside caring, planned breaks will provide carers with the time to take up the same work, education, leisure and training opportunities as anyone else.
- Telecare can provide carers with peace of mind and a degree of freedom based on the knowledge that the people being cared for still have support in place if they are not there.
- Housing is an essential part of the health and care systems. Having better joined up working will relieve a significant part of the stress on carers and those being supported. It will encourage housing providers to work with other agencies to identify new ways of bringing services together around a common agenda of prevention, personalisation, co-ordination and integration.
- We also want to explore schemes that recognise the contribution carers make to society, such as discount transport and leisure facilities, regardless of whether the carer is accompanied by the person they care for. Discounts can play a big part in allowing carers to take part in the sort of activities that others take for granted, and can help to address carers' isolation.

Income and employment

Our vision is that:

Carers will be supported so that they are not forced into financial hardship by their caring role.

- Carers need to be able to access good advice about the range of benefits and help that is available to support both them and the people they care for. The introduction of the carers' helpline will help to make this information more easily accessible.
- The most reliable and sustainable means of ensuring that carers can enjoy a reasonable level of income is if they, where possible, combine paid employment with their caring role.
- The provision of better services for the person being supported, increased break provision, easier access to training and skills and encouraging more flexible working opportunities, will enable carers, where appropriate, to combine paid work with caring.

Health and well-being

Our vision is that:

Carers will be supported to stay mentally and physically well and be treated with dignity.

Prevention and early intervention measures can make a significant contribution to supporting individuals to manage their own health. NHS Mid-life LifeCheck will assist carers by providing practical advice on where to seek help and the opportunity to improve their lives. Also, everyone between 40 and 74 years old will be invited for a vascular check to assess their risk of vascular disease.

Young Carers

A young carer is anyone under the age of 18 whose life is in some way restricted because of the need to take responsibility for the care of someone who is ill, has a disability, is experiencing mental distress, or is affected by substance misuse.

Our vision is that:

Children and young people will be protected from inappropriate caring and have the support they need to learn, develop and thrive, to enjoy positive childhoods and to achieve against all the Every Child Matters outcomes.

In addition to our commitment to supporting all young carers, we recognise that children and young people in families affected by substance misuse face particular challenges. To ensure that the welfare of these children is protected and that they are able to access appropriate support:

- Carers services need to proactively engage carers in families affected by substance misuse.
- Substance misuse services must recognise the importance of whole family working and take account of the need to protect children from inappropriate caring and levels of responsibility.
- Mainstream children's services need to be equipped to spot the symptoms of substance misuse in a child's family.

Commissioning Priorities

These are the services we need to purchase to meet the needs of carers. The following commissioning priorities and methods of improving the commissioning process are proposed:

Integrated and personalised services

Short term

- Training and awareness raising for key workers across health and social care and the third sector.
- Raise the profile of carers and their achievements across all agencies and have carer champions in each organisation.
- Improve early identification of hidden carers, including different age groups, BME community, young carers and those supporting people with specific conditions, e.g. mental health, dementia and learning disabilities.
- Improve engagement with service users and carers and their involvement in the planning, delivery and evaluation of services.
- Establish a carers' information helpline and website and provide informal and flexible support to access information.
- Establish a rolling programme of Carer Support Training: Caring with Confidence.
- Provide carers' support and advice workers in GP surgeries and on acute wards.
- Improve the capacity and reach of third sector services.
- Adopt a whole family approach in terms of assessment, budgets and support.
- Provide outreach support to areas of high deprivation.
- Provide 24/7 emergency respite for carers.
- Provide crisis services for carers of people with sudden onset or rapidly deteriorating conditions.

Longer term

- Ensure carers are able to access specialist carers' services in every community.
- Extend the flexibility of the way personal budgets and direct payments can be used.
- Where appropriate, provide a lead professional to help carers access services and to ensure early intervention when circumstances change.

A life of their own

Short term

- Increase funding for breaks for carers and increase the capacity and provide appropriate quality respite and sitting services.
- Explore innovative approaches to the provision of breaks, e.g. allotment, greenhouse, gym membership, internet access, football season ticket.
- Provide access to leisure and education services for carers.
- Enable carers to use their skills to befriend and mentor other carers.
- Explore the use of telecare in providing support and respite.
- Share best practice in supporting carers across local authorities.
- Provide housing information on the range of options available, advice on tenancy, repairs and adaptations to the home.
- Provide more low-level 'handyman' and domestic cleaning services.
- Improve peer support and carers' networks.

Longer term

- Consider further increases in break provision, taking account of evidence about quality and outcomes.
- Share models of best practice on quality and innovative approaches to break provision.
- Use the expertise of the third sector and carer-led organisations to provide carers with greater choice and control over the way in which services are provided to them.
- Examine how best to utilise the Carers' Grant to the benefit of carers.

Income and employment

Short term

- Review the flexible working definition of a carer.
- Provide an awareness-raising campaign for employers around the right to request flexible working.
- Produce a good practice guide for employers around supporting carers and integrating them into the workforce.
- Improve the support offered to carers by Jobcentre Plus by:
 - improving information about flexible job vacancies in Jobcentre Plus job banks;
 - introducing care partnership managers in every Jobcentre Plus district;
 - introducing specialist training for Jobcentre Plus advisers who work with carers;
 - funding replacement care for those who are participating in approved training;
 - ensuring carers have access to appropriate employment programmes;
 - providing return to work support through third sector organisations.

- Ensure that skills training is provided in a flexible manner so it is accessible for carers.
- Encourage large public sector employers to lead by example in supporting carers to remain in or return to work: promote Middlesbrough Council Working Carers Group across partner agencies.
- Improve links between carers' assessments and Jobcentre Plus.
- Provide specialist welfare rights and advocacy services to help carers access benefits.

Longer term

- Review the benefits available to carers in the context of wider benefit reform and the review of the care and support system.

Health and well-being

Short term

- Pilot health checks for carers.
- Provide GP training pilots.
- Increase the emotional support and befriending schemes offered by third sector organisations to carers.
- Promote the development of GP carers' registers.
- Promote the use of self-assessments and ways in which carers can be involved in thinking about their own health and well-being, including on line assessments.

Longer term

- Develop a full training package for all GPs.
- Consider providing carers with annual health checks.
- Consider providing replacement care for carers to attend hospital appointments and screenings.
- Discuss with GPs and other health professionals the measures which can be taken that will give a sharper focus to the distinct needs of carers.
- Work to establish the legislative or other requirements needed to enable carers to receive appropriate information, especially in cases where mental capacity is an issue.

Young Carers

Short term

- Provide funding to embed support and guidance for young carers through the healthy schools programme and ensure tailored and up-to date resources are available for staff to draw upon as part of their Social and Emotional Aspects of Learning (SEAL) and Personal, Social, Health and Economic (PSHE) programmes.
- Provide funding to support broader awareness-raising across schools and other children's settings on caring in families and the issues this raises.
- Provide tailored training materials to be used with GPs and hospital discharge teams to build awareness and skills in dealing with young carers.

- Increase the amount of high quality targeted support for young carers.
- Provide whole family and group breaks.
- Ensure that the learning we draw from existing young carers projects and other forms of support feeds into, and helps shape, the planning of provision in the future.
- Provide support for the transition from childhood to adulthood services.
- Prevent children from falling into harmful levels of caring: build effective joined-up support around the family and the person cared for and shift systems of support towards active prevention.
- Expand the programme of local and regional training on whole-family working for staff in local services.
- Promote a multi-agency protocol for supporting young carers.
- Support young carers into training and employment.
- Empower parents to obtain appropriate support through direct payments.
- Promote young carers' networks.

Longer term

- Ensure protections for young carers are fully embedded: consider further measures in the light of research findings over the next two years.

If you have any comments on this document, please send them to the following address:

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