

**Carers Plan on a Page - Adult Carers,  
Parent Carers and Young Adult Carers**

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**Report of Sarah Burns, Joint Head of Integrated Strategic  
Commissioning / Director of Place, NENC ICB and Durham County  
Council.**

**Electoral division(s) affected:**

Countywide

**Purpose of the Report**

- 1 To advise on the purpose and scope of the 'Carers Plan on a Page' (Appendix 2) and to provide details on how this was co-produced with key partners and unpaid carers in County Durham.
- 2 To inform on how the Carers Plan on a Page relates to Durham County Council's duties to carers under the Care Act 2014, the Children and Families Act 2014 and also how it links to the Council's assurance preparation for the Care Quality Commission (CQC) assessment.

**Executive summary**

- 3 Assessing how local authorities meet their Care Act duties is a new responsibility for CQC. Pilot CQC assessments have been undertaken with Local Authorities (LAs) and learning has been shared, including findings on the evidence of support for unpaid carers.
- 4 The CQC has reported that their findings demonstrate variations across LAs, and across all metrics, on the number of carers accessing timely support and levels of satisfaction with the support received. Additionally, they identified that not all LAs had published a carers strategy.
- 5 Durham County Council does not currently have a formal carers strategy in place as the Government's 'Carer's Action Plan 2018-20' framework was adopted to direct and shape support for carers locally and then more recently, local priorities regarding carers have been captured in the Carers 'OGIM' document. In preparation for the CQC Assurance visit, which could be as early as spring 2024, it was agreed a 'Carers Plan on a Page' would be developed in 2023/24 documenting the strategic work for carers to be undertaken locally.

- 6 A Carers Plan on a Page for adult carers, parent carers and young adult carers has now been developed with carers and those organisations who help to support unpaid carers. The purpose of the plan is to clearly set out local actions needed to support for people with unpaid caring responsibilities in County Durham.
- 7 The Carers Plan on a Page was initiated through the County Durham Adult Carers Strategic Group which includes key stakeholders and partners involved in supporting unpaid carers across County Durham. Partners included colleagues from across the Council including Commissioning, wider Adult and Health Services, Neighbourhoods and Climate Change, Resources. Engagement work has also taken place with NENC Integrated Care Board (ICB), Tees, Esk and Wear Valleys NHS Foundation Trust (TEWV), Alzheimer's Society, representatives from our commissioned carer support services, (Durham County Carers Support and Family Action), and representatives from the Council's Equality and Inclusion team.
- 8 It should be noted that Young Carers (aged 5-17 years) have not been included in the scope of this work, as a separate Plan on a Page already exists for Young Carers and is regularly reviewed through the County Durham Young Carers Steering Group.
- 9 Linked to the local authority assessment work, CQC has issued guidance around unpaid carers and advised that any public facing plan or strategy should be easy to find. Therefore, the Carers Plan on a Page will be added to the Durham Carers InfoPoint webpage (<https://durhamcarers.info/>), which is our key source of information, guidance and advice for local carers.
- 10 This page is also being reviewed to ensure all information is up to date and colleagues in the Council's Support the Provider Market Team and Web Development Team are supporting with improving the flow and navigation around the webpages. Gaps in information have been identified and will also be added to the webpages.

## **Recommendations**

- 11 The Health and Wellbeing Board is recommended to:
  - a) accept this report and Carers Plan on a Page for information.
  - b) accept updates on the work to support unpaid carers in County Durham as required.

## Background

- 12 A carer is anyone, including children and adults who looks after a family member, partner or friend who needs help because of their illness, frailty, disability, a mental health problem or an addiction and cannot cope without their support. The care they give us unpaid' (NHS England).
- 13 In the 2021 census, 52,676 (10.5%) people in County Durham reported that they support someone with providing unpaid care. This equates to a 12% decrease on the 2011 census. This trend was seen nationally and regionally with several explanations offered for this substantial decrease in the number of carers, including a change in the wording of the question in the 2021 census as well as the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic which resulted in shared caring arrangements reducing due to rules around household mixing and isolation guidance.
- 14 Whilst the number of people reporting they have caring responsibilities decreased, the data shows a shift towards carers dedicating more hours of their time in a typical week to unpaid care. In County Durham, over 18,000 carers provide more than 50 hours per week of unpaid care and proportionally, more unpaid carers in County Durham are providing between 35 and 50 hours per week than the regional and national average.
- 15 The figures above include 1214 young carers aged between 5-17 and 15% of young carers in County Durham are providing over 50 hours of care per week. A young adult carer is aged between 16-24 and the census data finds that Co Durham has almost 2,800 young adults providing support for a parent, sibling, grandparent or other family member.
- 16 The Care Act 2014 gives adult carers the right to information, advice and support, which may prevent or delay carer needs from increasing, and to a carers assessment (it is no longer a requirement for carers to request an assessment). Carers may be eligible for support in their own right if they meet the national eligibility criteria. For eligible needs, a carer should be offered a written support plan which outlines specific support needed and should include details of any budget available to pay for services that promote the carer's wellbeing. The Care Act affords carers the same protection from harm as those they care for.
- 17 Similarly, the Children's and Families Act 2014 recognises children with caring responsibilities and their right to an assessment of need. This legislation also recognises parent carers (someone who is over 18 and provides care to a disabled child whom they with parental responsibility) and requires LAs to assess parent carers on the appearance of need or where an assessment is requested by a parent.

- 18 Assessing how local authorities meet their Care Act duties is a new responsibility for the CQC. Durham County Council has been undertaking quality assurance activities in preparation of the upcoming CQC assessment. CQC have clearly communicated that they want to find out what LAs know and share publicly about the needs of unpaid carers and how LAs meet their statutory responsibilities in relation to carers.
- 19 The CQC has reported that their findings from the LA assessment pilots demonstrate variations across LAs in relation to local carer support offers and identified that not all LAs had published a carer's strategy. In response to this, a draft Carers Plan on a Page has been developed for County Durham, documenting the strategic work for carers to be undertaken locally.
- 20 The plan was initially developed using a range of local and national data and information as well as feedback received directly from carers in County Durham. Sources included:
- The results of recent regional and national carer surveys.
  - Feedback gathered from carers during the Carer Strategic Review which took place towards the end of 2022 and early 2023.
  - DCC duties under the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014 legislation.
  - The State of Caring Report 2022, (Carers UK) documents the challenges facing unpaid carers and includes the personal cost of providing unpaid care on the carer's health and wellbeing, finances, employment as well as barriers to people identifying as a carer.
- 21 Focus groups were held with a range of Health and Social Care partners and the plan was taken to multiple carer support groups across County Durham. This resulted in the documented being amended to reflect the findings of the engagement work. The engagement activities can be seen in more detail in Appendix 1.
- 22 In addition, the Council's Carers Staff Network have also had sight of the draft plan and been asked to review the document and provide any comments.
- 23 Progress in the development of the plan was shared as it developed at three County Durham Adult Carer Strategic Group meetings where partners were encouraged to share their thoughts and help shape the plan based on their knowledge and experience of working with local carers.

- 24 Our jointly commissioned carer support service providers, Durham County Carers Support (DCCS) and Family Action, then took the draft plan to community carer groups for engagement with adult carers, parent carers and young adult carers to ensure the document reflected their views.

## Key Messages

- 25 Carers that were part of the engagement work were overall satisfied the Carers Plan on a Page addressed the key issues facing unpaid carers in County Durham. They did however make the following suggestions:
- Include a reference to reaching Black, Asian and Minority Ethnic Carers.
  - Carers said they would like a stronger emphasis on identifying hidden carers including campaigns that use language that might help a carer 'see themselves'. They wanted the plan to address barriers to people identifying as a carer.
  - Carers wanted a clear definition of an unpaid carer and to include this in any communications, marketing and publications.
  - In the 'Be Well and Be Healthy' section, some carers felt this was aspirational and not a reality for carers.
  - Carers wanted 'working carers' to be emphasised in the plan and an acknowledgement of the pressures facing carers in employment due to their caring role outside of work.
  - Multiple comments were made in relation to the availability of respite care and/or taking a break from their caring role.
  - Refer to support for carers who have sensory support issues.
  - To strengthen the objective around advocacy and available services.
- 26 All these suggestions were considered, and amendments were made to the plan to reflect this feedback. An updated copy was sent to DCCS to share with carers, thank them for their input and acknowledged their comments had been heard and actioned.

## Key Areas covered in the Carers Plan on a Page

- 27 The Carers Plan on a Page is centred around 4 key areas:
- **Be Seen** – a focus on identification of carers including typically under-represented groups such as male and working carers.

- **Be Well and Healthy** – a focus on improving physical and mental health and how to take a break from the caring role.
- **Be Connected** – a focus on providing support to enable carers to remain active in their community, reduce social isolation and help to remain in employment.
- **Be Heard** – a focus on advocacy and capturing the ‘carer voice’ to ensure carers are involved in shaping services and care planning.

28 During the strategic review of carer support services earlier this year, discussions with carers identified that when a carer was signposted to carer support services whilst visiting a loved one or upon discharge, their satisfaction scores were higher. It also resulted in identifying carers much earlier in their caring journey. This feedback was also reflected in the ADASS regional survey.

29 In response, DCC has secured grant funding to have specialist carer support workers in University Hospital of North Durham (UHND) for a two-year period to provide up to 4 weeks intensive support to the carer upon the patient’s discharge. CDDFT are supporting the project and are assisting DCC with arranging honorary contracts to allow the carer support workers access to the wards. Support in acute health settings is included in the Plan on a Page. Following shared learning, Darlington Borough Council have also secured funding to deliver a similar service in Darlington Memorial Hospital and Bishop Auckland General Hospital.

30 Similarly, young adult carers told us they needed bespoke support during key times of transition into adulthood, such as moves into education, training and employment. This was reflected in An All-Party Parliamentary Group for Young Carers and Young Adults Inquiry Report, only published in November 23 which identified that ‘Young adult carers are substantially (38%) less likely to achieve a university degree than their peers without a caring role’ and ‘Young adult carers are less likely to be employed than their peers without a caring role, particularly if they are providing significant levels of care’.

31 In response, funding has been secured for 2 years to deliver a young adult carer support service offering tailored and person-centred support to young adult carers aged between 16-24. This service is being delivered by our existing young carer commissioned service provider, Family Action.

32 Attention has been given to feedback in regional and national surveys. The Survey of Adult Carers in England (SACE) 2021-22 reports on five measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework (ASCOF) and results show that Durham has performed significantly better than

the national results in all five key measures from the Adult Social Care Outcomes Framework, including the Quality of Life outcome as seen below. However, the survey also highlighted that more carers feel they have not been included or consulted in discussions about the person they care for than in previous year. Due to this an objective has been included on the Plan on a Page regarding this issue.

- 33 The North-East ADASS Carers network agreed to carry out a region wide, diverse local carers survey between April and May 2021 to support improvements to service provision. The network agreed to target a wider range of carers and questions were varied to obtain diverse feedback recognising the limitations of the SACE/ASCOF survey.
- 34 A total of 822 responses were received from carers in County Durham with carers highlighting the following as areas that would benefit them the most. All have been referenced in the Carers Plan on a Page with the exception of 'Ability to talk to the same person/organisation'.



## Conclusion

- 35 A Carers Plan on a Page has been written together with carers and those providing support to carers.
- 36 The Carers Plan on a Page will assist with evidence gathering for the CQC assessment and demonstrate that engagement and consultation has been undertaken with people with lived experience as carers. It also provides a framework for targeting and developing support to carers in County Durham.
- 37 The Carers Plan on a Page addresses areas highlighted in the recent strategic review of carer support as needing focused support or attention, such as young adult carers, male carers and working age carers.
- 38 The Carers Plan on a Page will be published on the Durham Carers Infopoint [www.durhamcarers.info](http://www.durhamcarers.info) which provides a range of information, advice and guidance to unpaid carers.
- 39 Following engagement and consultation with carers, two new carer projects have commenced: the first offering carer support in UHND

hospital and the second, supporting young adult carers during key times of transition into adulthood.

### **Background papers**

- None

### **Other useful documents**

- Carers Plan on a Page for Adult Carers, Parent Carers and Young Adult Carers.

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## **Appendix 1: Implications**

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### **Legal Implications**

None identified.

### **Finance**

Work to be undertaken within existing staff resource and budgets.

### **Consultation**

Engagement document included as appendix 2 detailing stakeholders.

### **Equality and Diversity / Public Sector Equality Duty**

None identified.

### **Climate Change**

None identified.

### **Human Rights**

None identified.

### **Crime and Disorder**

None identified.

### **Staffing**

Work to be undertaken within existing staff resource.

### **Accommodation**

None identified.

### **Risk**

None identified.

### **Procurement**

N/A

## Appendix 2: Engagement

Target Group	Method				Who is organising this?	Timeframe
	Survey	Workshop/ Focus Group	Meeting	Other e.g. briefing/ email		Insert date range or specific dates if you know them
Adult and Parent Carers		X			DCCS	<p><b>Sept/Oct/Nov 23</b></p> <p>Carers Plan on a Page was taken to 7 carer community groups.</p> <p>Multiple changes, additions and suggested wording received. All considered and incorporated into the plan. Feedback sent to DCCS confirming the carer views had been heard and the plan updated accordingly.</p>
Young Adult Carers			X		Family Action – 1-1 meetings with young adult carers.	<p><b>Sept/Oct/Nov 23</b></p>
Durham County Carers Support – Commissioned Carer Support Service			X		Integrated Commissioning – structured meeting took place.	<p><b>13<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b></p>
Family Action – Commissioned Carers			X		Integrated Commissioning –	<p><b>12<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b></p>

Support Service for Young Adult Carers					structured meeting took place.	
Alzheimer's Society			X		Integrated Commissioning – structured meeting took place.	<b>13<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b>  Suggested additional comments should be included around people caring for someone with a dementia. Also referenced Dementia training
AHS Locality Team Manager			X		Integrated Commissioning – structured meeting took place.	<b>10<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b>
Integrated Care Board			X		Integrated Commissioning – structured meeting took place.	<b>27<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b>
Adult Strategic Carers Group			X		Integrated Commissioning Team – 3 meetings were held where partners were given an update and asked for views, comments to help shape the plan.	<b>25<sup>th</sup> April 2023</b>  <b>25<sup>th</sup> July 2023</b>  <b>11<sup>th</sup> Oct 2023</b>  including representation from: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Cllr Alan Shield</li> <li>• Adult and Health Services</li> <li>• Comms and Marketing</li> <li>• Alzheimer's Society</li> <li>• Healthwatch Co Durham</li> </ul>

						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Social Care Direct</li> <li>• Integrated Commissioning</li> <li>• Neighbourhoods &amp; Climate Change</li> </ul>
TEWV					Email	TEWV reviewed the plan and sent comments and suggested amendments which were actioned/incorporated.
Survey of Adult Carers England (SACE)	X					Completed December 21. Results published by DCC Resources Team in July 22.
ADASS Regional Survey	X					Completed April 21. Results published Sept 21.