

West Sussex Health and Wellbeing Board

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Joint Carer Strategy 2021-2026

Report by: Mark Greening, Commissioning Manager, Carers

Summary

Carers are twice as likely to suffer from poor health compared to the general population, primarily due to a lack of information and support, finance concerns, stress and social isolation (NHS England).

Through supporting carers, many of whom are themselves older people living with long-term conditions, improvements are sought for both carer wellbeing and good health outcomes for those that they care for.

Across the county, significant progress has been made in recent years in terms of reaching, assessing and supporting more carers than ever before. This progress has been achieved due to a whole system approach that has seen:

- Carer identification and signposting as everyone's responsibility
- Carer wellbeing as being affected as much by their day to day experience of the health and social care system as the support they directly receive.

The joint commissioning of carers support has been a long standing and successful arrangement. Through contracting and partnership initiatives over 30,000 known carers across the county are being supported. This very important work is keeping a lot of 'referral traffic' away from busy primary care and social work teams when demands on statutory care have arguably never been greater. The Covid Vaccination Programme for carers being one very recent example.

We are beginning to better value and involve carers. Nevertheless there is more to do and practice can be patchy. A rejuvenated strategic commitment and partnership approach to deliver the 'carers agenda' has huge preventative value and sets a clear message to wider partners that carer support is still very much a joint strategic priority.

Recommendation(s) to the Board

The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to: -

- (1) Review, comment on and endorse the ambitions and aims within the new Joint Carer Strategy
- (2) Monitor progress against the strategy and champion the goals and objectives.

Relevance to [Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy](#)

There are unpaid carers of all ages therefore this work impacts on all HWB priority areas, Starting Well, Living and Working Well and Ageing Well.

Carer support not only helps to address the health inequality experienced by many carers but good care by family and friends carers also helps to promote the health and wellbeing of so many of our residents and communities.

The new strategy has reset goals and objectives that will help target resources effectively and encourage all stakeholders to work more cohesively together. It will also interface other key strategies, such as the new Joint Dementia Strategy, published last autumn, and the developing Strategy for Adult Social Care.

1 Background and context

- 1.1 The 120,000 plus family and friend carers in West Sussex make a critical contribution not only to their loved ones, but also to the NHS and social care systems who rely heavily on them.
- 1.2 2015, West Sussex County Council in partnership with its Clinical Commissioning Group partners launched its first joint strategy for carers. '*The West Sussex joint commitment to family and friend carers 2015-2020*' stated the main priority areas for health and social care in the identification and support of carers.
- 1.3 West Sussex led the way in publishing it's joint approach as subsequently, in May 2016, NHS England suggested that all partners on the local Health and Wellbeing Board sign a Memorandum of Understanding in order to demonstrate commitment to the duties of co-operation and promotion of wellbeing, as well as the wider commitment to identifying, recognising, assessing and supporting carers.
- 1.4 Supporting and reporting progress on our joint commitment priorities has been the role of the Carers Strategic Partnership Group, chaired by the Joint Commissioner for Carers. It is a robust partnership, which includes charitable sector partners, and has representations from carers, through 'Carer Voice' channels.
- 1.5 The key strategic objectives and outcomes required from carer support are: -
 - Meeting of statutory duties on local authority and NHS organizations brought about by the Care Act 2014 and the Children and Families Act 2014.
 - Promoting resilience to enable carers to carry on caring, through reducing risk factors and increasing carer knowledge and skill.
 - Improved health and wellbeing of the carer and, through enabling safe and better caring, improved health of the cared for.
 - Improved independence for both carers and cared for.
- 1.6 In March 2020, The Health and Wellbeing Board agreed for a review and refresh of the carer strategy. The objective being, to: -
 - Provide a clear shared vision and strategic priorities for the delivery of support for carers for a further 5 years.
 - Enforce the identification and support of carers as everyone's responsibility with a whole system approach.
 - Improve the co-ordination of resources and joint working of organisations supporting carers across West Sussex

2 Proposal details

2.1 The Health and Wellbeing Board is asked to: -

- Review, comment on and endorse the ambitions and aims within the second Joint Carer Strategy
- In turn, monitor progress against the strategy and be a champion for the ambitions and aims set out.

3 Consultation, engagement and advice

3.1 Every strategy is a journey. Upon receiving permission from the Health and Wellbeing Board for a strategy review and relaunch, the first step in the review was to undertake carer and wider stakeholder engagement, a task made difficult due to the national lockdown. Nevertheless over 1,000 carers and young carers contributed to surveys (on-line and postal) and/or attended virtual focus group sessions. Over 200 professional stakeholders also contributed their views.

3.2 Carer and professional engagement in relation to carer strategy is telling us that valued services are being delivered, which do make a positive difference, however there are gaps.

3.3 Carers in West Sussex are calling for: -

- Carers to be identified and valued
- Supporting early identification of the caring role in order to recognise and value carer involvement as part of the solution in the planning process of the cared-for.
- Greater Choice and Control to Help Maintain a Balanced Life and Care Well.
- Carers and stakeholder surveyed called for better choice and control in how they as carers receive and access local services, which should include affordable respite options. Whilst carers from the focus groups emphasized the importance of being equipped with the right tools (learning and training) to care well.
- Improved social opportunities for Young Carers
- Stakeholders surveyed identified the main issue affecting Young Carers was missing out on socialising because of caring responsibilities.
- Carers to be supported at each stage of the Caring Journey and have access to advocacy.
- Carers and wider stakeholders wanted professionals (GP's, NHS staff, educational staff etc.) and network partners to work together, to better support carers from the initial point of identification as a carer to life after caring.
- Better engagement with seldom heard carer communities
- The need to address service anxiety for some carers in certain minority group/s and achieve higher engagement rates with more carers from all communities.
- To be connected
- Helping to connect carers through peer to peer support (individual and in groups) is a key priority for all those surveyed, as was digital inclusion. Provision of emotional wellbeing services (i.e. counselling) and practical

support (i.e. equipment) was also mentioned as a way of helping carers feel less isolated.

- Reduced financial hardship
- Carers want to be supported with information and benefits guidance to ensure they are receiving the benefits they are entitled to (i.e. Carers Allowance, PIP).
- Support for working carers
- The pandemic has plunged an unprecedented number of people into a new caring role, many of whom are juggling this with paid work.

3.4 The engagement material has been combined with analysis of national research findings, all relevant national documentation (e.g. the NHS Long Term Plan) and best practice considerations. The revised strategy has set out to answer the question, In light of all this knowledge, what then should be done?

3.5 The strategy is high level and the priorities within it apply whatever the financial envelope available and no growth in NHS or local authority funding is assumed. There is an expectation that all of our partners develop their own action plans and milestones and feedback progress via the Carers Strategic Partnership Group, which has a mix of statutory and voluntary sector membership.

3.6 The new strategy has reset goals and objectives that will help target resources effectively and encourage all stakeholders to work more cohesively together. It will also interface other key strategies, such as the new Joint Dementia Strategy, published last autumn, and the developing Strategy for Adult Social Care.

3.7 The aim is for publication, in Nov/Dec with an associated event that will: -

- Signal that carers are still very much a joint strategic priority.
- Speed up progress around development of a shared understanding, language and approach to carers by a range of partners.

3.8 Following on from the publication the next piece of work, under the development of health and social care project workstream, will be to further understand the 'vision of a good life' for carers and their cared for.

The Health and wellbeing Board is asked to support the strategy and its ambitions and aims.

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Appendices

1. Carers Strategy 2021-2026
2. Presentation