

## **County Council – 15 July 2022**

### **Item 13(b) – Notice of Motion by Cllr O’Kelly**

#### **Support for Carers – Briefing Note**

##### **Support and services available for Carers in West Sussex**

The Countywide Carer Information, Advice, Assessment and Support Service is provided by our contracted partner and charity, Carer Support West Sussex. Key service areas include, but are not limited to:

- information and advice
- statutory carer assessments
- generic and specialist carer support
- targeted carer support in hospital settings
- carer training/up-skilling
- carer health and wellbeing fund payments
- Carer equipment and Technology Enabled Care
- Carer counselling and emotional support via a quick response ring-back service.

In addition to the above, there are other services including:

- Carer direct payments
- The Carer Health Team
- Carer Respite at home - one to one support (planned and Emergency)
- Carer respite way from home (a range of different group models provided by a range of commissioned partners)
- Young onset dementia weekends for carers and their partner
- Carer Bereavement Support via our partners CRUSE
- Support for carers back into training or into work (paid or voluntary).

There is a good local offer for carers, particularly specialist information and advice to carers of all age groups and support, often without the need for a statutory assessment. All areas of the county provide respite options for the carers of frail elderly and or living with dementia. There is a commitment to support carers at every stage of their caring journey. From:

- becoming a carer for the first time;
- offering specialist clinical input if health is affected;
- providing benefits advice and emergency payments in the case of hardship.

Through to:

- bereavement support; and
- support in employment or to return to work.

At the end of May 2022, Carers Support West Sussex had registered on their database just under 33,000 carers. It is not possible to have a definitive figure of the numbers of family and friend carers in the county, as not everyone will recognise/identify as such.

## **Financial support for carers delivered in last financial year**

Funding from the Department of Work & Pensions Household Support Fund, passported by the County Council's Communities Directorate, complemented by other funding streams enabled Carers Support West Sussex to provide £521,000 in wellbeing and hardship grants to 1,702 carers last financial year.

These grants (£500 maximum) were offered to carers that were at risk of breaking down in their caring role. Due to financial pressures some carers cannot, for example, meet their basic needs, access equipment/support to help them manage their caring responsibilities.

Examples of spend include:

- Basic living essentials – utilities and food
- Household items (white goods)
- Work or education related expenses (interview clothes, travel)
- Contribution towards rent arrears where there is a clear and obvious risk of homelessness

These payments have often usefully been used as a 'bridge' to support the carer with essentials whilst other processes are put in place (Carer Assessment/Direct Payments/Grants or completing claims e.g. Carers Allowance, which may take eight weeks). 95% of carers say the funds have helped them feel less anxious or stressed about their caring situation; and 94% say they have helped improve their health and wellbeing.

In addition, supermarket vouchers, funded from Household Support Fund and generated by the County Council Community Hub, worth £50 each, have been issued to 6,870 carefully chosen carers to help with essentials during a time of rising costs.

The criteria applied are as follows:

- Contact date range 01/04/21 to 18/03/22
- Carers who have had two or more activities
- **Or** are of higher concern/risk
- **Or** who have had a carer assessment
- **Or** who have received a fund award

(Carers who received a locally managed Carers Support West Sussex wellbeing and hardship award were excluded from this scheme)

## **Carer's Allowance**

Based on 2018 data from the Office of National Statistics, 7,140 carers in West Sussex were accessing Carer's Allowance from the Department for Work and Pensions. It should be noted that not all carers are eligible for Carer's Allowance, especially those over 65 years and claiming a State Pension. The Carer's Allowance is currently £69.70 per week.

Since May 2021, a Welfare Benefits Worker has been in post dedicated to supporting carers and over the past 12 months 860 carers have been supported with 1:1 advice and review of their circumstances. The service has allowed these

carers (who were often unaware of their entitlements to claim benefits) to claim £1,616,545 in additional annual benefit.

The Welfare Benefits Worker offers Carer Benefits Surgeries four days each week, monthly Welfare Benefits training sessions for carers delivered through Carer Support Groups and monthly Q&A sessions for staff.

The most common benefits discussed with carers are Carer's Allowance, Attendance Allowance, Universal Credit and Pension Credit. However, carers' entitlements to Council Tax Reduction, New-Style Employment Support Allowance and Housing Benefits are also covered. The Carer Benefits appointments are now regularly booked between three and four weeks ahead as demand is increasing.

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Director of Adults and Health