

Committee: Health and Wellbeing Board

Date: Tuesday 24th March 2020

Wards: All

Subject: The Carers Strategy 2020-25

Lead officer: John Morgan, Assistant Director, Adult Social Care, Community & Housing

Lead member: Cllr Tobin Byers, Cabinet Member for Adult Social Care and Health

Contact officer: Heather Begg, Business and Process Lead, Adult Social Care

Recommendations:

- A. For the board to consider and approve this strategy, which aims to improve the services available to support carers in Merton.
 - B. For all partners to determine how best their organisations can contribute to the delivery of the priority outcomes of the Carers Strategy and commit to do so.
-

1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

- 1.1. To approve the final draft of the new Merton Carers Strategy (2020-2025), proposed priority outcomes, and next steps.
- 1.2. For board members to consider how they can take action within their organisations on proposed priority outcomes, and contribute to the development of the Carers Strategy Implementation Plan 2020-2021.

2 BACKGROUND

- 2.1. On 6th June 2019, Merton Council's Community and Housing Department approved the development of a co-produced Carers Strategy (the Strategy) and implementation plan for Merton. The project initiation document for the strategy was approved at the Merton Health and Care Together Board on 2nd July 2019.
- 2.2. The Council and its partners currently support informal carers in Merton through the provision or commissioning of a range of information, advice, activities and interventions. The development of the Strategy has provided Merton with an opportunity to bring together all key organisations to explore how carers are supported more widely including health and social care services for children and adults, employment, voluntary sector and wider community and universal services.
- 2.3. As noted above, there are a number of existing services specifically for carers in Merton including:
 - Carers Hub, Carers Support Merton (mainly commissioned by Adult Social Care): Activities, Training, Info and Advice, Peer support

services, Merton Uplift Carers Support, Carers Discretionary grants, Support for Young Carers.

- Merton Mencap Carer Support (Short breaks/respite, Kidsfirst, Adultsfirst, Carer Advisor)
- Carers Assessment and Support Plans (Via ASC, MH Trust, Carers Hub)
- Information and Advice (Voluntary Sector, Social Prescribers)
- Dementia Hub Carers Services (Commissioned by ASC)
- Adult Social Care funded support: Community based and residential respite, one off support, activities for cared for and domestic support to assist with caring role.

- 2.4. There have been a number of changes in legislation that impact the duty of the Local Authority and other public sector organisations to carers. These include The Care Act 2014, The Children and Families Act 2014 and the NHS long Term plan 2019. There is therefore a need for a strategy both to ensure local compliance with the relevant legislation and to capture the priorities of local carers now and for the next 5 years.
- 2.5. Informal carers provide invaluable care, and nationally their contribution is estimated to save the public purse £343.2 million every year (carers UK, 2015).
- 2.6. The agreed aims of this strategy are to improve the services and support on offer to carers; and raise the profile of carers across the borough. Within this, there are four priority areas. These priority areas are aligned with those of the National Carers Strategy 2008-2018:
- Identification, Recognition, and Contribution;
 - Health and Wellbeing of Carers;
 - Realise and Release Potential; and
 - A Life alongside Caring
- 2.7. Coproduction of the strategy has been a priority from the beginning and a task group was brought together at the outset of the process comprising of informal carers and members from across the public and voluntary sector. This group (including Merton CCG leads for primary care, mental health and older people and SWLSTG Mental Health Trust senior management) has met on a monthly basis to help shape the engagement and develop the draft Strategy. For a full list of task group members, please refer to appendix 2 in the Carers Strategy.
- 2.8. In total, 201 carers and approximately 50 professionals from a range of organisations have been part of a significant engagement programme which has shaped the strategy's priorities. This comprised of a survey for carers, a number of focus groups with carers, and engagement with professionals who work with carers.
- 2.9. The development of the strategy has considered a number of other local strategies and plans, including the Health and Wellbeing Strategy (2019 -

2024), the SEND Strategy (2019 -2023), and the Sustainable Communities Plan (2019 - 2025).

- 2.10. The Merton Safeguarding Children Partnership (MSCP) published a 'Merton Young Carers Multi-Agency Strategy' in February 2019. Therefore, Young Carers are not specifically included in the Carers Strategy, but it has been developed with the Young Carers Strategy in mind. The aim is to implement both strategies together to ensure collaboration on shared priorities.
- 2.11. Whilst recognising the positive value of caring, with 70% of carers surveyed agreeing that being a carer is rewarding, there is a disproportionate impact on the health and wellbeing of carers arising from their caring responsibilities. Therefore the Carers Strategy is an important piece of work for shaping improved health and wellbeing outcomes in Merton. Moreover, caring responsibilities cover the whole life course, and need to be considered across the 'start well, live well, age well in a healthy place' life course stages.

3 DETAILS

- 3.1. The task and finish group has developed four priority areas in line with National Carers Strategy. Listed below are highlights of how these priorities interact with health and wellbeing.

- 3.2. **Priority 1: Identification, Recognition, and Contribution;**

(i) As identified in the NHS Long Term Plan, carers are twice as likely to suffer ill health as a result of caring, and earlier, better identification of carers can ensure that they get the support they require. Prevention is therefore a key aim of this priority. As a result we are engaging with clinical leads at Merton CCG, South West London St George's Mental Health Trust (SWLSTG) to consider how to identify and support carers at an earlier stage to improve their health and wellbeing. As an example of work being undertaken under this priority, a plan is being developed in partnership with clinical leads after a positive discussion with the Clinical Oversight Group to ensure that GPs are able to identify and support carers at an earlier stage.

(ii) Carers reported that they would like more opportunities to contribute to the design and monitoring of local services. We aim to create a system where carers feel listened to and, where appropriate, be more involved in the commissioning and procurement of services and support. We would like Health and Wellbeing Board members to consider how this can be achieved for their respective organisations.

- 3.3. **Priority 2: Health and Wellbeing of Carers;**

(i) The results of the Carers Strategy Survey in 2019 found that 70% of carers said their physical health had deteriorated as a result of their caring role, and 67% said the same about their emotional health. Carers stated that their own wellbeing was significantly affected by worrying about the future and what would happen to the person they care for in the event of an emergency. Therefore, this priority focuses on ways in which we can support carers to manage their own health and wellbeing now and in the future; and to make

sure people with caring responsibilities are able to remain as physically and emotionally well as possible through an increased offer of health and wellbeing activities.

(ii) Less depression, anxiety and stress is one of the key outcomes for the MHWS under the 'Live Well' life course stage. The Carers Strategy Survey reported 62.5% of carers told us that caring had caused them significant levels of stress; and 44.5% reported being depressed. In response to this Merton CCG and SWLSTG have employed a Carers Linkworker as part of the Merton Uplift Service. In addition to this, the council has commissioned the Alzheimers Society to run the START Programme for carers of people with Dementia. This works with individual carers to develop coping mechanisms. A review by University College London found that people who participated in this programme had reduced stress and anxiety from caring two years later.

3.4. **Priority 3: Realise and Release Potential;**

(i) 87.5% of those who completed the Carers Strategy Survey said their role as a carer has made career progression more difficult. This priority is about supporting carers to start or maintain employment, volunteering, training, and learning which in turn promotes social connectedness and less depression, anxiety and stress. Carers Support Merton have achieved positive outcomes for their bespoke Computer and Internet Course, with carers stating that this course has been 'life-changing' and 'opened up so many opportunities'.

(ii) Many carers feel being in employment has a positive effect on wellbeing, as well as providing them with a greater sense of identity. However, any job needs to have carer friendly work-practices such as flexible working, home working, and time off to attend appointments with the cared for person. We would like Health and Wellbeing Board members to consider how their workplaces can be supportive for carers and therefore contribute to Merton having healthier workplaces, as part of the Healthy Settings agenda for the Health and Wellbeing Strategy.

3.5. **Priority 4: A Life Alongside Caring**

(i) This priority focuses on ensuring carers are supported to have a family, community, and social life alongside their caring role; this links to the Promoting Mental Health & Wellbeing priority area of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy, which aims to reduce loneliness and increase social connectedness.

(ii) The results of the Carers Strategy Survey in 2019 found that the vast majority of carers surveyed (85%) feel socially isolated as a result of their caring responsibilities.

(iii) The results of the Carers Strategy Survey in 2019 found that some carers surveyed felt dissatisfied with the amount of time they spend with their family (29%) and the majority surveyed were dissatisfied with the amount of time they spent with friends (57%).

(iv) We will work towards making sure support in the community provides a variety of options for carers to have a break from caring and are less socially isolated. As an example of one of our responses to this priority, Public Health are commissioning a pilot befriending service for carers.

3.6. **Alignment with Ways of Working of the Health and Wellbeing Strategy**

3.6.1 The Carers Strategy and wider work with carers is aligned with a number of the principles and ways of working in the Health and Wellbeing strategy. Examples include:

(i) Tackling health inequalities

- A key aim of the Carers Strategy is to tackle health inequalities between carers and the wider population.
- The Council, Clinical Commissioning Group, and Mental Health Trust will work together to make sure that carers are supported to access the universal services they need, in a way that is accessible to them.

(ii) Prevention and early intervention

- Through the Carers Strategy we will aim to identify carers at the earliest possible stage in their caring journey; this means working with partners, to identify and support carers at the earliest possible opportunity. Partners in primary care will be instrumental in the delivery of this priority.

(iii) Community engagement and empowerment

- There has been comprehensive engagement for the Carers Strategy, with carers and professionals. It has also been coproduced by a multi-agency group, including carers.
- The Dementia Action Alliance is a key group that ensures the voice of carers of those with dementia is heard and the Learning Disability Forum plays a similar role for carers of people with learning disability.

(iv) Think Family

- A key tenet of the Carers Strategy is the appropriate support being offered and signposted for Parent Carers, and carer needs being considered in professional interactions with both child and parent.
- 81.6% of carers live with the person they care for. It is important to consider the whole family and household, even if the cared for person is over the age of 25. We aim to ensure adult and children's services work together and take a 'whole family approach' in identifying and supporting carers.

4 HOW WE WORK WITH HEALTH AND WELLBEING PARTNERS

4.1. In line with the recommendations, we will be contacting Health and Wellbeing Board members to consider how best partners can contribute to take the strategy's priority outcomes (outlined at 4.4) forward.

4.2. **Next Steps**

- 4.3. As this is a five year strategy, in the first year we will aim to have achieved improvements that will impact as large a number of carers as possible. These will be in prevention, and improved information and advice. The long term goals will be more ambitious and require development with partners, for example in employers buy in to making work places accommodating for carers in order to support their life alongside caring.
- 4.4. The Carers Strategy Task Group proposes the following ten priorities for 2020-2021. If agreed, these Priority outcomes will form the basis of the Strategy implementation plan:
1. Identify carers
 2. Carers assessment
 3. Information and advice
 4. Carers emergency plans
 5. Council processes and carers
 6. Health and wellbeing activities for carers
 7. Digital skills for carers
 8. Learning and development for carers
 9. A quality service for both cared for and carer
 10. A break from caring
- 4.5. An action plan will be developed for the life of the Strategy and reviewed annually. This sets out timescales and leads for implementing actions and expected benefits and outcomes. A time limited, multi-agency Carers Strategy Steering Group will be established to oversee the strategy and implementation of an action plan.
- 4.6. The Carers Strategy will align with the priorities of the Young Carers Multi-Agency Strategy 2019-22, and the Steering Group will jointly implement them.
- 4.7. The Steering Group will monitor progress against the action plan, and report to the Strategic Improvement Delivery Board and provide an annual report to the Merton Health and Wellbeing Board.

5 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 5.1. N/A

6 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 6.1. Substantive consultation was carried out with carers to inform our understanding of the issues facing carers, including a survey and focus groups (as outlined at 2.4 and 2.5). No further consultation is proposed.

7 TIMETABLE

- 7.1. To go through all required governance boards and be published by June 2020:
- Health and Wellbeing Board 24 March 2020
 - Integrated Children and Young People Group 30 March 2020
 - Confirm Priority Actions and associated delivery plans with Health and Wellbeing Board members by 31st May 2020.
 - Carers Celebration Events and Launch 8-14 June 2020

8 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 8.1. All work identified as part of the Carers Strategy work will be delivered within the existing resource envelope. The delivery of the Strategy is based on working collaboratively in partnership to use resources within the system more effectively. Where possible, the steering group will seek additional funding opportunities to widen the local offer to carers in order to achieve the vision of the Carers Strategy.

9 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

The Care Act 2014, the Children and Families Act 2014, the National Carers Strategy 2008-2018, the Carers Action Plan 2018-2020 and the NHS Long Term Plan 2019 all make a significant shift in the approach to how carers are supported, acknowledging the important contribution they make and placing them on the same footing as the person they care for when it comes to accessing services they may need. This Strategy has been developed in response to the needs of carers in Merton and the statutory requirements.

10 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

- 10.1. It is anticipated that the Strategy will have a positive impact in terms of human rights, equalities and community cohesion. As part of the Carers Strategy work, an Equalities Analysis is being completed to determine the potential positive and negative impact of the Merton's Carers Strategy on the protected characteristics.

11 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

- 11.1. N/A

12 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

- 12.1. N/A

13 **APPENDICES – THE FOLLOWING DOCUMENTS
ARE TO BE PUBLISHED WITH THIS REPORT AND FORM PART OF THE
REPORT**

13.1. Appendix 1 – Carers Strategy 2020-2025

14 **BACKGROUND PAPERS – N/A**