

Healthier Communities & Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel

Date: 21 November 2023

Subject: Carers Services and Support

Lead officer: Phil Howell, Interim AD Commissioning, Adult Social Care

Lead member: Councillor Peter McCabe, Cabinet member for Health and Social Care.

Contact officer: Heather Begg, Commissioning Officer, Adult Social Care

Recommendations:

Members of the Healthier Communities and Older People Overview and Scrutiny Panel are asked to:

- A. Consider the services and support currently available for carers in Merton.
 - B. Note the opportunities identified in this paper to improve services and support to make lives better for carers in Merton.
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1 PURPOSE OF REPORT AND EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

1.1. This report provides an overview of services and support for carers in Merton. This report details the national, regional and local picture and the issues and challenges carers face. The report also provides further information on the following initiatives:

- Carers Strategy 2021-2026
- Current Carers Preventative Services
- Commissioning Intentions for Carers Services
- Review of Carers Pathways
- Commitment to Carers Programme
- Hospital Discharge Carers Project
- Carers Cards
- Short Breaks to give carers respite and community based support

2 DETAILS

2.1. Merton Council aims to improve outcomes for carers needing care and support as defined in the Care Act 2014, the Children and Families Act 2014 and the Merton Carers Strategy 2021-2026. Support for carers links to the Merton Council's 3 key priorities of:

- Nurturing Civic Pride to ensure carers in Merton feel proud of the place where they live,

- Building Sustainable Communities by improving carers resilience,
 - Supporting carers to be more active and to improve their wellbeing as part of making Merton a Borough of Sport.
- 2.2. NHS England define a carer as follows: “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 is unpaid”. National (2021) research shows more women are carers than men and the largest group of carers are aged 55-64 (24%) and 45-54 (20%) although 23% of carers are aged over 65.
- 2.3. There are a number of National drivers to improve services and support for carers. This includes the Department of Health and Social Care announcing an investment of up to £25 million to support unpaid carers¹. Work is underway at SWL level to scope potential opportunities for improving carer support. All local authorities are preparing for CQC assurance around carers and a checklist² has been developed highlighting what LAs need to do to prepare for this. Merton are using this to ensure that we are prepared and have a robust plan to ensure we are meeting all the requirements. In addition, NICE published quality standards in 2021 which includes 5 quality statements for organisations to use as a guide to support carers³ and Merton are using these to help improve the quality of services.
- 2.4. Merton has seen a growth in demand for carers and young carers support over the last 10 years and the Covid 19 pandemic has adversely impacted many carers in our communities. The Council recognises the importance of social care working closely with its partners (including health and mental health services) and the community and voluntary sector in responding to the needs of carers to ensure that we are appropriately supporting carers to maintain their health and wellbeing whilst continuing in their caring role.
- 2.5. The caring relationship can be rewarding, give a sense of purpose and increase closeness with a loved one. However, caring can also be challenging with some carers experiencing stress, social isolation, financial hardship, ill health and minimal time for themselves. Building resilience in carers relies on having informal and local support when they need it and knowing where to access help when needed.
- 2.6. Consultation with carers was carried out to inform the Merton Carers Strategy 2021 and this found:
- 70% of carers agreed or strongly agreed that their caring role was often rewarding.

¹ [People at the Heart of Care: adult social care reform - GOV.UK \(www.gov.uk\)](https://www.gov.uk/government/consultations/people-at-the-heart-of-care-adult-social-care-reform)

² [Ten things to do now to prepare for CQC Assurance around unpaid carers | Local Government Association, Unpaid carers and Care Quality Commission assurance | Local Government Association](#)

³ [Overview | Supporting adult carers | Quality standards | NICE](#)

- 70% of carers reported their physical health had deteriorated due to their caring role.
 - 67% of carers reported their emotional wellbeing had deteriorated due to their caring role.
- 2.7. 30% of carers that responded to a national survey reported bad or very bad mental health and 25% reported bad or very bad physical health (2021). Carers are more likely than the general public to have two or more long term conditions, with high blood pressure and physical strain/injury being the most common . Other issues include lack of sleep and impact of lifting a cared for person. Poorer health is also associated with number of hours caring per week and the amount of time being a carer .
- 2.8. According to the Census data in 2021, 7.4% of Merton residents over 5 years old reported providing unpaid care, which is approximately 15,925 carers (using 2021 population estimate of 215,200 people).
- 3.8% provide 19 or less hours unpaid care a week (8,178 people).
 - 1.5% provide 20 to 49 hours unpaid care a week (3,228 people).
 - 2.1% provide 50 or more hours unpaid care a week (4,519 people).

3 CARERS STRATEGY 2021-2026

- 3.1. The Merton Carers Strategy launched in 2021 and has a multi-agency Implementation Board to oversee the delivery of the Council’s ambition to make lives better for carers. The Board includes a range of partners including the officers across different departments in the Council, ICB, NHS, MH Trust, VCS and carers to support the delivery of the key priorities highlighted by carers in Merton in accordance with the key themes of the Merton Carers Strategy:
- Identification and Recognition of Carers
 - Health and Wellbeing of Carers
 - Realise and Release Potential of Carers
 - A Life Alongside Caring
- 3.2. Due to resource issues regarding the implementation of the Strategy, a revised implementation plan was developed last Autumn 2022 and identified 5 priority areas to focus resources:
- (i) Review and update of information on Council Website
 - (ii) Review of Young Carer and Parent Carer Pathway (further info in section 6.4)
 - (iii) Review of Adult Carer of Adults Pathway (further info in section 6)
 - (iv) Commitment to Carers Programme (further info in section 7)
 - (v) Development of Carers Cards (further info in section 9)

- 3.3. The Council Website has recently been updated with additional information to support carers and a meeting is being planned to go through the changes with carers and confirm any further improvements required. Carers Information can be accessed via the link: [Merton Carers Information](#)

4 CURRENT CARERS PREVENTATIVE SERVICES

- 4.1. The Council currently funds Carers Support Merton to provide services to prevent, reduce and delay carers needs from increasing. The Carers Hub service supports adult carers (people over 18 caring for another adult) in Merton to access a range of interventions including personalised information and advice, assessments, support plans and reviews (in accordance with the Care Act 2014), carers discretionary grants, support with emergency and future plans, health and wellbeing support, digital skills support and access to information sessions, workshops, events and wider support to assist carers in their caring role.
- 4.2. In addition, the Council delegates some of its statutory duties in regard to Carers Assessments for young carers and carers of adults to Carers Support Merton (and Merton Mencap). Both Adult Social Care (ASC) and Merton's Children, Lifelong Learning and Families department (CLLF) have funding arrangements with Carers Support Merton to provide services to carers.
- 4.3. ASC have a grant agreement with Carers Support Merton for the Carers Hub to the value of £276,219 per annum, who subcontract £21,000 per annum to Merton Mencap for Merton's Carers Hub. This agreement comes to an end in March 2024 and Adult Social Care are working with CLLF to re-commission and procure Carers Services commencing April 2024. (further details in section 5).
- 4.4. CLLF have a contract with Carers Support Merton to support young carers to the value of £75,000pa. The CLLF contract with CSM will come to an end in March 2024 and they intend to re-procure this service via tender at the same value.
- 4.5. The Carers Hub supports Adult Carers (people over 18 caring for another adult) in Merton. There are a number of key preventative functions that the hub supports with detailed below:
- Supports carers to complete carers assessments and support plans where required (654 assessments/reviews completed 2022-2023.)
 - Administer carers discretionary grants (316 distributed in 2022-2023).
 - Support carers with future planning (such as LPA and universal care planning), including development of emergency/contingency plans.
 - Provide general information and advice on welfare benefits, housing, health and social care, wellbeing, learning and development and wider community offer (1600 carers supported in 2022-2023).
 - Provide web-based platform for information and self-referral pathway.
 - Provide social media groups and forums for carers and regular newsletter sent to all registered carers.

- Specific specialist advice on carers rights and entitlements.
 - Support for working carers, or carers wanting to get back into the workplace.
 - Support, activities and events to support carers with their caring role.
 - Support to carers who are digitally excluded to get online, or provide alternative support where required.
 - Awareness raising events, training, workshops and activities.
 - Adopt a whole family approach and refer any young carers to the relevant pathway, including their Young Carers Assessment service.
- 4.6. In addition to the Carers Hub, Cabinet approved a 2½ year extension of Community Dementia Services in March with the Alzheimer’s Society (starting in October 2023-March 2026) so all partners including health and social care can further embed and develop the community focus of the model. The Community Dementia Service provides both hub based and community support and in the last year has helped around 300 carers and 100 people with Dementia. The Alzheimer’s Society also co-ordinate the Dementia Action Alliance and encourage local businesses and organisations to become dementia friendly.
- 4.7. The Alzheimer’s Society provide a range of services and support to carers including information, advice, casework, peer support activities at the Dementia Hub, education programmes including CrISP⁴ and 2 and the START⁵ programme.

5 COMMISSIONING INTENTIONS FOR CARERS SERVICES

- 5.1. Merton Council intends to commission services for adult carers of adults and young carers in Merton and will adopt the key principles and learning from the Merton Carers Strategy and 'Merton Building a Better Merton Together' Plan. Adult Social Care and Childrens departments are proposing to align their commissioning and procurement approach and will follow the same timeline to commence services for Carers in April 2024.
- 5.2. There are two lots, which means two specifications and two contracts. A business case (gateway one report) was approved by Cabinet on the 18 September, and the invitation to tender was published on the 17 October and evaluation planned for December 2023. The contract term for Carers Services for Adult Carers of Adults is for 5 years (April 2024 to March 2029) with an estimated contract value of £1,700,000. The Young Carers Service will also be for a term of 5 years, (April 2024 up to March 2029), with an estimated total contract value of £375,000.
- 5.3. Both contracts will follow similar specifications to existing carers services. However, both services will be expected to input into the social care

⁴ CrISP-Carer Information and Support Programme- <https://www.alzheimers.org.uk/about-us/our-dementia-programmes/carers-information-support-programme>

⁵ START-Strategies for Relatives psychological therapy sessions for carers

information system and follow the revised carers pathways as summarised in section 6.

6 REVIEW OF CARERS PATHWAYS

- 6.1. **Adult Carers:** a review of current and future carers pathways for adult carers of adults is underway and led by the Head of Integrated Learning Disability Service and reports to the Carers Strategy Implementation Board and the Adult Social Care Towards Outstanding Programme (TOP). This review aims to provide clarity on carers support service processes, recording and reporting systems and equality of access to services and support.
- 6.2. The pathway work will look at creative and innovative ways to support carers, including the use of self-referral and self-assessment and developing an integrated approach to recording statutory requirements across partners. The pathway work will develop an appropriate and proportionate approach to ensure more carers receive the type of support that they need.
- 6.3. The work will also include how to ensure young carers/carers have a transition assessment as they approach adulthood and whilst they are in transition.
- 6.4. This work is due to complete prior to the mobilisation period of the new Carers Services being commissioned to commence next April 2024.
- 6.5. **Young Carers:** a review of future young carers pathways is being led by the Childrens Commissioning Team and includes measures to increase identification of Young Carers, to map the assessment and support services pathways across agencies including schools, to develop a health screening tool to be used by GPs and health services to support young carers and to map the pathway to support young carers through transition. These actions will be delivered via the new contract commencing in April 2024.
- 6.6. **Parent Carers (for young people under the age of 18):** The assessment of Parent Carers is a function that is delivered internally via Childrens Services.

7 COMMITMENT TO CARERS PROGRAMME (CTCP)

- 7.1. Part of the NHS Long Term plan includes a commitment to carers (please see appendix 2: NHS Commitment to Carers plan on a page 22/23). A self-assessment tool: NHS Carers Maturity Matrix has been developed and is completed on a biannual basis then submitted to the National Carer Oversight Board. SWL ICB has responsibility to complete the matrix and lead on the programme of work. Progress is also reported to the Carers Implementation Board and is co-produced with key partners. The eight key component themes which are reported against are:
 - Leadership, Planning and Partnerships
 - Use of data and experience for Quality Improvement (QI) and Population Health Management (PHM)
 - Integrating Care/ Collaborative working - Local authority/social care
 - Integrating Care/ Collaborative working - Voluntary sector

- Integrating Care/ Collaborative working - Primary Care Networks/ Social prescribing link workers/ GP Practices
- Tackling unequal health outcomes and access to services/support
- Supporting broader social & economic development/ Use of resources/ Employment & Education
- Training, development, communications, engagement and support

7.2. Current work within this programme includes:

- A new dashboard that has been established to develop understanding of the health needs of unpaid carers using primary care data.
- ICB working closely with GPs to ensure that they are able to identify carers, register someone as a carer and using the specific SNOMED codes within the GP system, to record key information and provide advice and signposting to local support and services as required. A letter has been drafted by the CTCP for carers to send to their GPs requesting specific information is recorded against their record, including contingency plans and reasonable adjustments required.
- [Universal Care Plans](#), which are a mechanism to share with everybody who cares for a person what matters to them in the event of an emergency. This includes the ambulance service, GPs, hospitals or at home and there are plans to include a section for carers contingencies. Merton ICB is working hard to include a section for carers within this tool for roll-out across London.
- The GP Premium Specification being updated for 24/25 to encourage GP Practices to adopt the [GP Quality Markers](#) which provide a framework for improving how General Practice can identify and support carers, including how the practice can use its carer's register to support holistic carer health and wellbeing needs. This is being promoted and monitored via the Practice leads network and the ICB. The GP Patient Survey London ICS Carer insight report is now available on the Future NHS Collaboration Commitment to Carers platform.
- A specific health questionnaire for carers has been designed and piloted, with the aim that this could be rolled out to other practices.

8 HOSPITAL DISCHARGE CARERS PROJECT

- 8.1. One of the more recent developments is to support carers with hospital discharge and prevention of admission in accordance with the [Health and Social Care Act 2022](#) using the new [Hospital Discharge Toolkit](#). Our Current Carers Hub has been a key partner in a 6-month pilot project. An evaluation of this pilot has been received and the Council and the ICB are reviewing to help inform future support for carers.
- 8.2. A different pilot approach of carers support at Kingston Hospital has led to very positive outcomes, which generates 15 referrals a day for local carers services. We know that the majority of referrals to the Carers Hub come from Health partners, so this service plays a key role in supporting with the health and wellbeing of carers. However, in order for local services to have the

capacity to respond to this significant increase in referrals needs careful consideration.

- 8.3. St Georges Hospital has established a steering group looking at how to implement the Hospital Discharge Toolkit and reviewing their current systems to ensure that carers are recorded and their needs considered whilst their cared for is in hospital and involved in the discharge process.

9 CARERS CARDS

- 9.1. Since the launch of the Merton Carers Strategy, there has been an ambition to implement carers cards in Merton. A project to explore options was presented to the Implementation Board in June 2023 and an online demo was arranged in October where 55 people including 33 carers and 22 partners and officers attended to view potential providers. To support carers in Merton, a budget has been identified to fund a provider to develop and launch carers cards in Merton. There are 3 key strands to a carers card:

- Recognition: confirming status as a carer who is providing support.
- Discounts: for the carer from local businesses and services.
- Contingency: who to contact for support in the event of an emergency, which will include where to access a plan to support the cared for.

- 9.1 The aim is for Carers Cards to be available for carers free of charge from the 1 April, by procuring one of the 3 providers that demonstrated their product.

10 SHORT BREAKS TO GIVE CARERS RESPITE AND COMMUNITY BASED SUPPORT

- 10.1. Short breaks allow carers to have some respite from their caring role. It gives a carer time out to look after themselves and help people from becoming exhausted. There are a number of options to give carers a short break. They range from getting a volunteer to sit with the cared for person for a few hours, to a short stay in a care home so that the carer can go on holiday, or a paid carer to support them at home.

- 10.2. Many carers in Merton organise short breaks within their own circle of support, however for some people where their needs are greater, this can be organised via Adult Social Care. If people require support for the cared for person on a regular basis in their own home, a carers assessment will identify this need and a support plan will be developed with the carer and a carer's service can be arranged such as a direct payment or a brokered service. This type of service in the community is not financially assessed.

- 10.3. Whilst not specifically a carers service, day services and community opportunities can also provide carers with a break from their caring role, such as the Eastway Centre for Older People and Jan Malinowski Centre for People with a Learning Disability .

- 10.4. For other people, in particular people with a learning disability or people with Dementia or disabilities where the need is greater, a care home environment can be a preferred option for a short break. This type of support can be

arranged privately directly with a provider or is assessed via the customer social care assessment and detailed in the person's care and support plan and is based on the individual needs and outcomes of the person. As adult social care services are means-tested, the cared for person may have to contribute towards the cost following a financial assessment.

- 10.5. Adult Social Care currently commissions a specific respite service for people with a learning disability and this service works well. Once an allocated amount of units is confirmed as part of a customer's care and support plan, the family can arrange the respite direct with the provider. Carers also are part of the monitoring of this service, ensuring that it responds to the needs of carers.
- 10.6. Young carers/parent carer short breaks are currently being reviewed and outcomes from the review will lead to the commissioning of short breaks services.
- 10.7. There are no specific respite contract arrangements for older people and people with a physical disability, as it is not a cost effective or person-centred model to hold placements for respite. This is arranged individually with the family and appropriate services brokered when a need arises. For some people with very complex physical disabilities, long standing arrangements with specialised providers are in place to give carers a break.
- 10.8. The Carers Hub currently supports the distribution of Carers Discretionary grants. This is a discretionary payment of up to of up to £200 per annum (or more if the carer is in financial difficulty) for carers to support their caring role. £60,000 pa is allocated for Carers Discretionary grants per annum, which are distributed via the Carers Hub.
- 10.9. Carers Discretionary Grants have again proved very beneficial to carers this year and the allocated £60,000 budget for the financial year 2023/24 has recently been exhausted, showing how popular a support the grants are. Grants are currently distributed via the Carers Hub, hosted by Carers Support Merton. Unfortunately, this means, the Carers Hub will not be taking any referrals for the grant from this point onwards.
- 10.10. Adult Social Care remain committed to providing Carers Discretionary Grant in future financial years. We will provide further communication on the subject to carers, stakeholders, and staff about future Carers Discretionary Grants rounds, when they will become available and how to refer a carer.

11 ALTERNATIVE OPTIONS

- 11.1. This report is for noting and discussing only, so alternative options are not being presented.

12 CONSULTATION UNDERTAKEN OR PROPOSED

- 12.1. There has been extensive consultation and engagement with carers on the development and implementation of the Carers Strategy. As part of the commissioning plan for carers services, proposals on carers services have been discussed and feedback has been received from carer peer support

groups including those at Carers Support Merton, Merton Mencap, Alzheimer's Society and other stakeholders that support carers to help inform the specification for Carers Services.

- 12.2. Market warming events for carers services were organised for potential providers and were well attended. The demo for Carers Cards was very well attended, with 33 carers present.
- 12.3. The Carers Strategy Implementation Board has carers on the Board and regularly works with carers to co-produce the priority outcomes detailed in the strategy implementation plan.
- 12.4. The Learning Disability Stakeholder Reference Group includes carers who help to inform and shape the work within the Learning Disability Transformation Programme.

13 TIMETABLE

The body of the report includes details on a range of planned deliverables.

14 FINANCIAL, RESOURCE AND PROPERTY IMPLICATIONS

- 14.1. As detailed in section 5, £1,700,000 has been allocated for the next 5 years for Carers Services. In addition, a budget of up to £20,000 per annum has been allocated for carers cards and a budget of £60,000 per annum has been allocated for carers discretionary grants for the next 5 years (April 24-March 29). This is all funded by existing grant funding within the core budget and additional funding via the Clinical Extremely Vulnerable Government Grant and the ASC Hospital Discharge fund. A break clause will be added to the 5-year contract for carers services for adults after 2 years to review funding, as the hospital discharge fund is allocated for the next 2 years (24/25 and 25/26).

15 LEGAL AND STATUTORY IMPLICATIONS

- 15.1. Adult Social Care (ASC) has a duty under section 10 of the Care Act 2014 to undertake an assessment of any carer who appears to have any level of need for support.
- 15.2. The Care Act 2014 describes the local authority duty in relation to prevention as follows: 'a local authority must provide or arrange for services, facilities or resources, which would prevent, delay or reduce an individuals' need for care and support or the need for support of carers'.
- 15.3. Children, Lifelong Learning and Families (CLLF) has a duty under section 96 of the Children and Families Act 2014 to ensure young carers and their families are identified and their needs for support are assessed. All young carers are entitled to an assessment of their needs from the local authority.
- 15.4. CLLF and ASC have a joint responsibility to ensure that young carers/carers have a transition assessment as they approach adulthood and whilst they are in transition.

16 HUMAN RIGHTS, EQUALITIES AND COMMUNITY COHESION IMPLICATIONS

16.1. None immediately arising beyond those covered in the body of this report.

17 CRIME AND DISORDER IMPLICATIONS

17.1. None specific to this report. The proposals in this report do not have a direct crime and disorder impact; however, they will contribute to an inclusive and cohesive society and improve the resilience of vulnerable residents, specifically carers.

18 RISK MANAGEMENT AND HEALTH AND SAFETY IMPLICATIONS

18.1. A robust process for monitoring delivery of the Carers Strategy priority outcomes to better support carers is in place and the procurement timeline for Carers Services is being monitored to minimise the risk of non-delivery.

19 APPENDICES

19.1. Appendix 1: Commitment to Carers Programme one page plan 22/23

20 BACKGROUND PAPERS

20.1. [Cabinet Report Carers Services](#)

Appendix 1: Commitment to Carers Programme plan on a page 2022/2023

NHSE London Region Carers Work Programme – Plan on a page 2022/23								
“We become successful together”								
	GP Carer Quality Markers	Secondary Care	Personalisation	Carer Contingency Planning	Young Carers	Hospital Discharge	Workforce Carers	Mental Health
<p><u>Carer Health Inequalities</u></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ✓ Mind the Gap ✓ Carer Flu Jabs ✓ Carer Health Checks ✓ Covid 19 Legacy ✓ Covid 19 Vaccination ✓ Ethnic Minorities ✓ Armed Forces ✓ LGBTQI+ ✓ YAC 	<p>Relaunch of GP Quality Markers at system/PCN level</p>	<p>Establish Hospital Carers & Action Plan</p> <p>Relaunch Johns Campaign and Carers Passport</p>	<p>Carer Personal Health Budgets</p> <p>Social prescribing for Carers</p>	<p>Develop system carer contingency planning (CCP)</p>	<p>Develop Young Carer Friendly</p> <p>Health Guidance including GP Top Tips Young Carers</p>	<p>Develop D2A Carer friendly practice</p>	<p>All NHS Trusts to implement national Carers Passport and Carers Resource</p>	<p>Relaunch Triangle of Care including Young Carers TOC and Dementia TOC</p>
	<p><u>Indicator</u></p> <p>Number of Carers Registered</p> <p>Number of practices completed QJM self assessment</p>	<p><u>Indicator</u></p> <p>Number of acute trusts with carer policy and action plan</p> <p>Number of Carers identified</p>	<p><u>Indicator</u></p> <p>Systems which offer Carer PHBs</p> <p>Number of Carer PHBs</p> <p>Number of Carers social prescriptions</p>	<p><u>Indicator</u></p> <p>Number of systems offering CCP</p> <p>Number of CCPs registered using SNOMED Code</p>	<p><u>Indicator</u></p> <p>Young Carers Pledge</p> <p>Number of YC GP Registration</p> <p>Number of YC referrals to YC services</p>	<p><u>Indicator</u></p> <p>Host regional D2A carers project event</p> <p>Codesign a HD carers checklist</p> <p>Implement resource</p>	<p><u>Indicator</u></p> <p>Number of trust registered for EfCS</p> <p>Number of Trust registered for Digital resource</p> <p>Carer Confident Accreditation</p>	<p><u>Indicator</u></p> <p>Number of MH Trust implementing TOC models and</p>
								<p><u>NICE NG150 Carer Quality Statements</u></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1. Identification 2. Decision Making and care planning 3. Carers Assessments 4. Carer Breaks 5. Carer friendly employment practice
<p>Staff Carer Awareness Training/ Comms and Engagement</p>								

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