



Wokingham Borough Council Carers' Strategy

2020-25

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FOREWARD

BY THE DIRECTORS OF ADULT SOCIAL CARE AND CHILDREN’S SERVICES.

Adult Social Care values the difference that carers make to the quality of life of many of the most vulnerable people in our community; older people, people with a disability or those with a long term illness.

Wokingham Borough Council wants to ensure that those people who provide unpaid care for others are able to have a quality of life where they are able to have a life outside of caring, they can meet with friends or family, be in employment and take part in recreational activities and interests.

Our population in Wokingham is growing, year on year people are living longer and as a result the number of unpaid carers is growing in our community. This is happening at the same time as we have seen funding reduced.

The Carers Strategy sets out how we will approach these challenges over the next five years, how we will respond to the needs of carers in our community ensuring the most vulnerable receive services and working with our partners in the Voluntary Sector and Health Services to enable carers to have access to information, advice and support so that they may live fulfilled, independent lives.

Matt Pope
Director of Adult Social Care

Childrens Services have developed a shared vision with our partners to enable us to improve outcomes for children and young people across the Borough of Wokingham who having caring responsibilities.

There are many young carers who live in our community providing support in their families, to a parent, grandparent or siblings. This strategy sets out our ambition to ensure these children and young people do not go un-noticed in our community.

The Carers Strategy includes our vision for young carers, so that they are afforded the same opportunities to engage in activities that other children and young people who do not having caring responsibilities have access to. We want them to be able to achieve in education, to be safe and healthy both physically and emotionally, to enjoy social recreation activities, and to make the successful transition into adulthood.

Within our Carers Strategy a number of action points set out how we will support our young carers to enable them to reach their full potential. It builds on our past successes and clearly sets out a direction for our future.

Carol Cammiss
Director of Children’s Services

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Our collective vision is to enable all carers in Wokingham, children, young people and adults, to be able to access the support they need and to be recognised and valued in their community.

Our ambition is for Wokingham Borough to be the best borough for young carers and adult carers to live, a Borough where they feel safe and are well supported, are valued and included as a key part of our community.

The care that people provide within our communities is a valuable asset; according to the [Social Market Foundation](#) (SMF) on average family carers provide 19.5 hours per week of care and there is an estimated 149 million hours of care a week being provided by family carers in the United Kingdom. If these carers were no longer able to provide care, society would need to hire an extra 4 million full time care-givers. Locally 14,000 people in Wokingham Borough identified themselves as a carer in the 2011 census (and this is expected to be higher given that many people do not relate to being carers). Of these 230 were aged 16 or under and 489 were aged 16-24. 3,000 carers are over the age of 65, this is predicted to rise by 35% by 2030 and the number of carers over 80 will rise by 70%.

There are 2,300 people in Wokingham Borough who provide 50 hours or more unpaid care per week. Young carers, on average, provide 25 hours a week of care, this is equivalent to £12,000 per year on a part time carers' wage.

Despite this only 553 carers are known to Wokingham Borough Council (WBC), the Council values the role of carers and acknowledges that if it was not for carers, the impact on the social care would be immeasurable both in terms of staffing and financially. According to a recent report by the Department of Health and ADASS there is a net saving of almost £4.00 to Local Authority social care budgets for every £1.00 that is spent on carers support¹. If the numbers from the SMF were applied, this could equate to 243,000 hours being delivered per week by the 14,000 carers in the borough. Therefore we must ensure that carers have access to the support they need when they need it. The current spend on carers services in the Voluntary and Community Sector (VCS) is £402, 000 and a further £690,000 is spent annually on providing respite. However although this may not be their primary target group the majority of the VCS services provide support to carers too.

The work WBC do for carers is governed by policies and legislation such as The Care Act 2014², Children and Families Act 2014³ and the Carers Action Plan 2018-2020: Supporting carers today⁴. This strategy sets out our vision

¹ADASS (2018) Economic Case for Local Carer Investment https://www.local.gov.uk/search?cx=000243444332556997522%3Aejuacxsewy&cof=FORID%3A11&ie=ISO-8859-1&query=economic+case+for+local+investment+in+carer+support&op=Search&form_build_id=form-MRgDWnjkkuy1GeH8lcEHinlkjoMrUbHPHTZ7iRxWkc&form_id=search_form_input

²HM Gov.UK (2014) Care Act 2014 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>

³HM Gov.UK (2014) Children and families Act 2014 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

⁴DoHSC (2018) Carers Action Plan 2018-2020 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/713781/carers-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf

and strategic priorities for carers and young carers over the next five years. It details our approach to successfully achieving our ambition whilst making sure people realise the desired outcomes that are important and personal to them.

Highlights and key successes

All of our carer services were reviewed in 2017-2018 as part of our VCS review. In the last 12 months WBC has established a working group and carers have been able to have direct input into the design of a new carers' page on our website that has improved their ability to access information.

We also worked with carers, providers and social workers to design a new on-line assessment form which has been included on our new carers' page. Carers can also request an assessment by phoning the Health Hub for Adult Social Care.

We have developed the online tools that carers are able to access via our Digital Resource for Carers. Carers are able to access advice and information, find out what resources are available to support them in their caring role and online training 24 hours a day.

- Over 500 carers are registered with Wokingham Outreach Service (331 carers are registered with the emergency respite support service)
- There are currently 16 adult carer support groups operating in the Wokingham Borough
- 37.1% of carers reported that they had as much social contact as they would like
- 62.3% of carers find it easy to find information about support
- 70.6% of carers report that they have been included or consulted in discussion about the person they care for

Our Young Carers Service has ensured that children and young people with caring responsibilities are actively involved in service development. A Young Carers Forum has been established that gives young carers a voice and ensures their views are heard.

Young Carers (the commissioned provider) have grown the number of children and young people that they work with by over 700% with over 200 young carers currently registered with this service. They are providing regular groups and activities for young carers, drop in sessions and peer support groups as well as developing

relationships with schools and delivering training to teachers on identifying young carers in both primary and secondary schools. As a result of the service we have seen social isolation and loneliness reduce.

- Young Carers service working in 7 primary schools and 10 secondary schools
- Young Carers Leads established in 2 secondary schools
- Young Carers Schools Award established in 2 secondary schools
- There are currently 2 young carer support groups, a number of drop in sessions and peer support groups and a Young Carers' Forum operating in Wokingham Borough
- There is a 12 month programme for young carers activities

PURPOSE OF STRATEGY

The Carers Strategy will support us in achieving our vision as determined in the Council Plan.

Our vision in Wokingham Borough is to provide people and their carers with: **safe, appropriate, timely and quality support that prevents, reduces or delays the need for ongoing care; and gives people choice and control, makes a positive difference to their lives and maximises their wellbeing and independence in their local community.**

Our priorities are:

- Keep people safe
- Prevent, reduce and delay the need for formal care and support
- Involve people in their care and support
- Work in partnership and commission services that deliver quality and value for money

Our ambition is for Wokingham Borough to be the best borough for young carers and adult carers to live, a Borough where they feel safe and are well supported, are valued and included as a key part of our community.

WBC values the vital contribution that carers make to their local communities and is committed to supporting those who are unable to be self-sufficient in this essential role. The Council want carers to have the support they need. This includes having the right information available at the right time, access to a life outside caring, full access to education and/or employment, leisure activities and being able to keep in touch with friends and family. This strategy sets out our vision and strategic priorities to support carers and identifies the actions we and our partner organisations will take to realise this, whilst acknowledging the context a challenging budgetary position and growing demographic pressures.



This strategy is for all carers, young carers and adult carers living in the Wokingham Borough. The strategy is linked to a number of other WBC strategies and priorities and should be read in conjunction with our Market Position Statement, Learning Disability Strategy and the Voluntary and Community Sector strategy. In addition it is also informed by: Emotional and Well Being Strategy, Health and Well Being Strategy, Children & Young People Plan, JSNA and Wokingham Neglect Strategy.

The strategy and priorities have been developed with carers and carer providers. It builds on our successes in meeting the needs of some of our most vulnerable people in our community and identifying gaps and opportunities to develop services.

Delivering our carers strategy will be a collaborative approach which will involve Adults and Children's Services working together with our Health, VCS and independent care providers.

BACKGROUND

Who is a Carer?

A carer is someone who helps another person who needs support due to illness, age, disability, substance misuse or mental health problems. Adults, Children and Young People can be carers. Carers may support someone with personal care, household tasks, finances or emotional support. This is not the same as someone who is paid to provide care professionally or care from a VCS organisation.



We may all become a carer at any given time, sometimes this is for a short period of time, for example to support a family member recuperate following hospital discharge or we may be a carer on a long term basis. Some carers will care for more than one person, for example an elderly parent and a child with a disability, this is called 'sandwich' caring. There are also complex situations where carers, particularly older couples, care for each other. This can happen, for example when one person may have a physical disability whilst the other needs emotional support, this is called 'mutual caring'.

This strategy has been coproduced by WBC in partnership with local VCS organisations that provide services to both adult and young carers, and in consultation with adult carers and young carers which took place between August and September 2018. Adult and young carers were offered a number of opportunities to take part in this process; they could complete our online survey, they could complete our postal survey, and they could attend a number of drop in sessions that were held both in the daytime and the evening. Additionally, a series of workshops, focus groups and interviews were conducted over a number of months.

A survey was sent to 563 carers. Young carers received details of the survey via a newsletter and were

encouraged and supported to complete it. The survey was promoted widely through provider groups and newsletters as well as being sent directly to all carers who are registered with WBC. We received 197 completed carer's surveys, in addition to this 20 people attended our public consultation sessions; we had an overall response rate of 35%. Of these respondents 49% of carers reported being retired, whilst 51% of carers reported being in employment or education. 61% of carers reported providing over 50 hours of care per week. The services used mostly by carers is information and advice, followed by support groups. (Appendix 1. Wokingham Borough Population Profile)

OUR VISION

The council values the role of carers within our community and wants carers to have the support they need. This includes having the right information available at the right time, access to a life outside caring, education, employment and leisure activities and being able to keep in touch with friends and family.

OUR VISION IS TO ENABLE ALL CARERS IN WOKINGHAM TO BE ABLE TO ACCESS THE SUPPORT THEY NEED AND TO BE RECOGNISED AND VALUED IN THEIR COMMUNITY

OUR PRIORITIES

A number of key themes emerged during the consultation process; we have analysed these responses in the context of local need as well as national and local strategies. These have been examined in light of our statutory responsibilities as determined in the Care Act 2014 and Children and Families Act 2014. A number of priorities were agreed after consulting widely with carers, VCS organisations and health and social care professionals. These priorities will form the key tenets on which our 'Carers Offer' will be developed and reflect some of the key themes inherent in the *Carers Action Plan 2018-2020: Supporting carers today* (Department of Health & Social Care, June 2018).

- Identifying & recognising carers including seldom heard carers (military, travellers, LGBT, young carers, working carers, BAMER, mental health, substance abuse)
- Supporting Young Carers
- Working carers – empowering working age carers
- Enabling carers to have a life outside of caring (recreation, health & well-being, learning & education)

Our aim is to work in partnership to develop services and systems that work for carers. Working in partnership with VCS organisations, and key health and social care professionals will ensure the success of this strategy. We will continue to listen to carers and work with them to make sure our systems work for them.

NATIONAL CONTEXT: ADULTS

In 2016 the government put out a call for evidence, *How can we improve support for carers?*⁵. The most frequently mentioned support reported to be helpful for adult carers included: regular respite, sitting service or day care, financial support (e.g. direct payments/personal budgets) advice and information about how to be a carer and the support available, and mental health support or counselling. This was not dissimilar to the support mentioned by young carers: regular respite to allow time for study and other activities, peer support, forums and regular group activities with other young carers to help share experiences, network and have fun. As well as mental health support/counselling, raising awareness amongst teachers and schools about young carers and help to be identified as a young carer. The intelligence gathered informed the Government's *National Carers Action Plan 2018 -2020: Supporting carers today*⁶.

This Action Plan builds on the National Carers Strategy 2008 which has been adopted by successive governments with reference to the legislation on carers' rights as determined in the Care Act 2014⁷ which states all carers are entitled to a needs assessment in their own right. This right was also extended to young carers in the Children and Families Act 2014⁸.

The Action Plan has been developed with a view to: increasing the number of employers who are aware of responsibilities of caring and the impact this has on their workforce; support health and social care professionals to be better at identifying, valuing and working with carers; improve access to appropriate support for carers, including respite care and carers breaks; improve the evidence base to inform future policy and decisions; ensure that the needs of carers are recognised in relevant government strategies such as *Fuller Working Lives*⁹ and *Improving Lives: the Future of Work, Health and Disability*

⁵ DoHSC (2018) How can we improve support for carers? https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/713695/response-to-carers-call-for-evidence.pdf

⁶ DoHSC (2018) Carers Action Plan 2018-2020 https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/713781/carers-action-plan-2018-2020.pdf

⁷ HM Gov.UK (2014) Care Act 2014 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/23/contents/enacted>

⁸ HM Gov.UK (2014) Children and families Act 2014 <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/contents/enacted>

⁹ HM Gov. UK (2017) Fuller Working Lives: a partnership approach <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/fuller-working-lives-a-partnership-approach>

¹⁰ HM Gov.UK (2017) Improving Lives: the future of Work, Health and disability https://assets.publishing.service.gov.uk/government/uploads/system/uploads/attachment_data/file/663399/improving-lives-the-future-of-work-health-and-disability.PDF

¹¹ Carersweek.org (2018) Supporting Carers to be Healthy and Connected https://www.carersweek.org/images/Resources/CW18_Research_Report.pdf

The action plan will be at 'the heart of' the forthcoming social work green paper and is based around 5 key themes:

- *Services and systems that work for carers*
- *Employment and financial well - being*
- *Supporting young carers*
- *Recognising and supporting carers in the wider community and society*
- *Building research and evidence to improve outcomes for carers*

It is generally recognised that the health of carers is not as good as someone of a similar age who does not have a caring role. This is reflected in the physical and mental health of both adult and young carers, with those aged 18-24 most likely to say they have suffered from mental health problems and carers in paid work suffering from stress, anxiety and depression. Carers struggling to make ends meet were most likely to report a negative impact on their physical health together with those caring around the clock. Supporting Carers to be Healthy and Connected: Research Summary for Carers Week 2018¹¹ found:

- 72% of carers said they had suffered poor mental health as a result of caring
- 61% of carers said they had suffered physical ill health as a result of caring
- 57% of carers expect their mental health to get worse in the next 2 years
- 58% expect their physical health to get worse in the next 2 years
- 35% of carers anticipate that they will be able to provide less or no care in the future because of poor mental health
- 43% of carers expect that they will be able to provide less or no care in the future because of poor physical health

The Care Act 2014 put in place significant new rights for carers in England including:

- A focus on promoting wellbeing.
- A duty on local councils to prevent, reduce and delay need for support, including the needs of carers.
- A right to a [carer's assessment](#) based on the appearance of need.
- A right for carers' eligible needs to be met.
- A duty on local councils to provide information and advice to carers in relation to their caring role and their own needs.
- A duty on NHS bodies (NHS England, clinical commissioning groups, NHS trusts and NHS foundation trusts) to co-operate with local authorities in delivering the Care Act functions.

NATIONAL CONTEXT: YOUNG CARERS

The Children and Families Act 2014 amended the Children Act to make it easier for young carers to get an assessment of their needs and to introduce 'whole family' approaches to assessment and support. Local authorities must offer an assessment where it appears that a child is involved in providing care. A 'young carer' is defined as 'a person under 18 who provides or intends to provide care for another person'¹².

On a national level, in recent years there has been a significant drive to raise the profile of young carers within our communities. Recognition of the value and importance of the caring role has been reflected in government legislation and policies. WBC draws upon the national context to inform its' own strategic policies.

The lives of young carers in England (Department for Education: January 2017¹³) research report builds on previous reports on young carers aged 5 – 17 years of age which have identified the long term impact that caring can have on a young person's transition to adulthood and their overall life chances.

The study evaluated data provided by parents of young carers in comparison to, wherever possible, data provided directly by the young carer themselves and a control group (children/young people who are not carers). The report was commissioned by the DfE to measure the impact that recent legislative changes have had on the lives of young carers across the country, the findings suggest:

- 64% were receiving no support, whether informal or formal
- 19% of young carers aged 11-17 reported having trouble making friends (compared to 12% in the comparison survey)
- 16% were more likely to be bullied (compared to 3% in the comparison survey)
- 74% of young carers had been absent from school at least a few times in the last 12 months compared to 49% in the comparison group
- There were notable effects for some young carers in terms of physical and emotional well-being. There were positive impacts of caring in terms of happiness, whilst feelings of anger on a more regular basis in comparison to their peers who were not carers.
- Where schools were providing support to young carers who were being bullied this was seen as effective, however only one in ten young carers were being helped in this way

In 2016 the Children's Commissioner issued a survey to all local authorities in England to request data on referrals relating to children and young people providing care. Data was received from 86% of local authorities. The report notes¹⁴.

- It is estimated that 4 out of 5 young carers may not be receiving support from their local authority
- Identification of young carers is still a concern. Professionals such as G.P's and teachers are often unaware of the challenges young carers face.
- Providers commissioned by local authorities of young carers' services reported that a focus on delivering assessments had stretched their capacity to provide support activities.
- Young carers want to enjoy their childhood and for services to listen to them and respect their views.
- It is estimated that only 32% of young carers are identified and supported across the South East of England

LOCAL CONTEXT

Our ASC Strategy details the people who are receiving services, whilst they have an eligible care need and receive formal support, in many cases this will be supplemented and enhanced by a carer and from the VCS

to stop people from deteriorating. It is important to note:

- In 2018/19 1,860 people received care and support provided by WBC throughout the year
- most people (1,320) received care and support in their own home with around 540 people receiving care via residential and nursing facilities
- 57% of all people were aged 65 and over, and this has been lower than in recent years (58% in 2017/18 and 59% in 2016/17)
- There has been a significant increase in 18-64 year olds supported in the community
- For 18-64 year olds the majority have a learning disability support need and for 65 and over the majority require physical support

The number of carers however in Wokingham Borough are significantly higher. 14,000 people identified themselves as a carer in the 2011 census providing unpaid care to a partner, family member or friend/neighbour. This is an increase on the 2001 census figures of 8.2% (this is 1,142 additional carers) and shows that unpaid care has increase at a faster pace than population growth over the last decade. This reflects the picture nationally.

Of the 14,000 carers in Wokingham Borough:

- 10, 500 carers are of working age, 8,200 are in some form of employment
- 2,300 people provide 50 hours or more unpaid care per week
- 553 people are registered as an unpaid carer with WBC, 425 have a carers assessment.
- Month on month a significant amount of carers refuse an assessment. This ranges from a refusal rate of 79% - 21%
- 3,000 carers are over the age of 65. This is predicted to rise by 35% by 2030 and over 80's to rise by 70%
- 230 carers are aged 16 or below, 489 are aged 16-24. These figures are recognised as being extremely conservative. This is because young carers do not provide the information themselves and are dependent on parents providing this information in the census.
- 11% of young carers we currently work with have been referred to statutory services suffering with mental health issues

The future design of carer services must take into account the likely needs of the residents that will be cared for and supported by carers. The [Wokingham Joint Strategic Needs Assessment](#) (JSNA) highlights the main indicators of

health needs amongst the boroughs population. Our ASC Strategy 2020-25 also sets out the key health and social care issues likely to be experienced in the Wokingham Borough.

For example within the next five years the number of people aged 65 and over living in the borough will increase by approximately 3,800, particularly those who are aged 90 and above. The evidence suggests that social isolation and loneliness will be an issue amongst these groups and therefore we must look at different ways of addressing this including the use of technology. We are likely to see an increase in people with conditions that include support with learning disability, dementia, stroke and obesity. It is crucial that carers are supported to be able to provide appropriate care and support, whilst at the same time ensuring that their health does not suffer.

The Survey of Adult Carers in England (SACE) is sent out by local authorities every other year to all adult carers of 18 years and over. The survey seeks the opinions of carers aged 18 or over, caring for a person aged 18 or over, on a number of topics that are considered to be indicative of a balanced life alongside their unpaid caring role.

In 2016-17, 57.6% of known carers in Wokingham Borough responded to this survey, 67.3% were female and 32.7% were male.

Each respondent is assigned a score based on their answers to six questions. The higher the overall score the better the average social care related Quality of Life (QoL). The maximum score is 12.

	16-17UK	16-17SE	16-17WBC
Quality of life	7.7	7.6	7.9

The overall QoL score for Wokingham Borough was 7.9 this is higher than the overall score for the South East (7.6) and for England (7.7).

For carers who reported that they cared for someone with dementia the QoL score was 7.7, this compares favourably with the 7.5 overall score by both England and the South East Region.

Dementia	16-17UK	16-17SE	16-17WBC
Quality of life	7.5	7.5	7.7

The highest QoL score was for those who care for someone with a learning disability (8.6) whilst those who care for someone with a long standing illness, or problems connected with ageing have the lowest score (7.0)

A detailed analysis of the social and health care needs of our residents can be found in Appendix 1. Wokingham

¹² Children Act (1989) [inserted in Children and Families Act 2014] <http://www.legislation.gov.uk/ukpga/2014/6/section/96/enacted>

¹³ DfE (2017) The Lives of Young Carers <https://www.gov.uk/government/publications/the-lives-of-young-carers-in-england>

¹⁴ HM Gov.UK (2016) The Support Provided to Young Carers in England <https://www.childrenscommissioner.gov.uk/publication/the-support-provided-to-young-carers-in-england/>

Borough Population Profile and through the Wokingham JSNA.

FUNDING AND CARERS' SERVICES IN WOKINGHAM BOROUGH

WBC commission a range of support services for carers. We currently commission or provide grants for 16 carers' services from 12 different providers. Supporting carers by investing in carers services reduces the demand in social care.

The services currently commissioned fall largely into four categories: information and advice, young carers, carers support groups and respite.

WBC currently spends £402,000 per year on carers' services under the following broad area of needs:

Area of need	Collective spend £
Support for carers of people with dementia	99,500
Information and advice	72,000
Young Carers	60,000
Learning disabilities	47,000
Support for carers of stroke survivors	46,000
Sitting services (emergency respite)	42,000
Carers Support Groups	2,750
Health & Well Being	2,000

Carers are able to access advice and information from Wokingham Outreach Service, this includes information on benefits, and carers support groups and how to access a carer's assessment. Carers who are registered with our Emergency Respite and Support Service regularly reported that knowing they had a contingency plan in place for if something happened to them had significantly reduced their stress and promoted their well-being.

In addition there is a Community Navigators scheme to signpost local residents to appropriate sources of social care support. This scheme has been located within the Royal Berkshire Hospital and Wokingham Hospital. Patients are directed to a community navigator on discharge. All carers within the borough are able to have a free flu jab and this is promoted widely.

There are a broad variety of services including support groups for people and their carers. Amongst these are 'Singing for the Brain' a singing group that provides support for people with Alzheimer's, 'Mencap' who provide activities for carers of people with learning disabilities and their families, 'Young People with Dementia' who provide education workshops for carers of people with early onset dementia, an 'Emergency

Respite and Support Service' service which provides short term care in situations where the primary carer cannot (for example if a carer has their own health related appointment) and a 'Flexible Sitting Service for Carers' to enable them to have a short break from their 24 hour a day caring responsibilities, enabling them to continue to care for their loved ones at home for longer. The Emergency Respite and Support Service and Flexible Sitting Service are almost 100% accessed by older people. Carers are also able to access a 'Gym & Swim' pass that enables them to access a number of our leisure centres at a nominal cost and there are free guided walks that both the carer, and if practical the cared for, can take part in. Carers with eligible needs may be entitled to statutory support services to help them in their caring role, carers can be eligible for support in their own right.

Our Young Carers Service provides support groups and activities to young carers to enable access to opportunities that their peers who are not in a caring role have access to, and so that they are able to take a break from their caring roles. Caring can have a significant impact on the emotional health and well-being of young carers leading to mental health issues. A significant amount of the young carers we work with have reported suffering from severe anxiety and other mental health problems.

Identification and support for young carers has increased significantly and has had a considerable impact on the lives of the young carers receiving support. There is a good uptake of young carers' to events and activities. Some adult carers support groups are underutilised and there is a lack of appetite for carers' week events and carers rights day events aimed at adult carers.

We also provide residential respite for carers. The table shows the number of people receiving respite, not the number of times they have had respite. People with learning disabilities accessed short term respite the most with 73 people receiving respite. This was followed by older people with 33 individuals accessing respite, 16 people with physical disabilities and 5 people with mental health issues having accessed respite in the last 12 months:

1 April 2018 – 28 Feb 2019	Number of individuals receiving respite	Cost
Learning disability	73	502,378
Mental Health	5	10,305
Older People	33	125,922
Physical disability	16	51,615

A VCS review concluded that all of the carers' services that we currently commission offered good governance and

were supported by qualified and professional staff. There was evidence of effective partnership working and across the board providers scored well in customer satisfaction surveys. Some services are being better utilised than others however. Whilst a large number of carers accessed a range of support services there was a significant number who did not use any carers' services at all. This was predominantly because: they self-fund services that they need, they are working carers who cannot access services due to them taking place when they are primarily at work, or they did not know about these services.

There is a good uptake with carers registering with our information and advice services and emergency respite service. However, there are some disparity in access to some services and which will be addressed as part of any future procurement.

PRIORITIES

IDENTIFYING & RECOGNISING CARERS INCLUDING SELDOM HEARD CARERS (MILITARY, TRAVELLERS, LGBT, YOUNG CARERS, WORKING CARERS, BAME, MENTAL HEALTH, SUBSTANCE ABUSE)

Identifying as a carer

In order to support carers it is essential that carers are identified at the earliest opportunity. Almost 14 000 people identified themselves as carers in the 2011 census; there are currently 553 who are registered with WBC. It is important to work with a cross section of health, social work professionals, VCS providers and the community in increasing identification.

Many people consulted with did not identify themselves as a carer. For instance people who cared for their partner whose health had deteriorated did not recognise that attending to their loved ones' personal needs, administering medication, doing the housework, shopping and other domestic chores was anything other than something they would expect to do given the circumstances. This was particularly the case where paid professional help was involved such as domiciliary care at some point during each day as they considered that it was the professional who was the carer, or if they were in receipt of carers' allowance.

Recognising Carers

It is important to offer support to carers from groups that may not traditionally identify members of their communities as carers, as well as with carers from underrepresented groups. This is key to ensuring that the first point of contact with carers from these groups is not when they are at crisis point. During the process

of gathering information to inform the strategy we uncovered inconsistencies and gaps in how we recorded this data. 6% of carers that are known to WBC were from a BAME group, this does not reflect the demographics of Wokingham borough which at the census of 2011 was 12%. However less than 50% of carers known to WBC had their ethnicity recorded, and we do not currently record certain protected characteristics e.g. sexual orientation. This type of information can help us plan for the future to ensure we provide services to meet the needs of all our carers. We have updated our internal policies to support capturing this data more effectively.

Our independent care providers who provide care in peoples own homes and in the community reach carers that statutory services may not be able to. It is essential that we work closely with them, to enable them to be able to recognise carers and signpost them to appropriate sources of support including the Council and the VCS.

Information and advice

We asked carers to rate their experience of using our services, 70% of carers rated the services they use as being satisfactory or above with 66% of these rating them good or excellent. As well as being one of the most utilised services, having access to information and advice was a recurring theme. Information & advice is key to ensuring people recognise themselves as carers and in terms of ongoing support for them. Our ASC strategy details the support we will provide everyone with regards to information and advice, and it is essential that carers are also able to access this.

Carers stressed the importance of having advice and information readily available in places where they may find themselves in their day to day lives, e.g. library, G.P. surgery, and supermarket. This was particularly relevant for working carers who could not attend support groups during the day. In the Survey of Adult Carers 2016 – 17, 62% of carers identified it as being easy to find information about services. 73% of carers who engaged with the Carers' Strategy Survey rated our information and advice service as either satisfactory or above. (Appendix 1. Wokingham Borough Population Profile).

"The advice and support received from Wokingham Borough Council throughout my husbands' illness was absolutely marvellous and I will always be grateful for the very personal and sympathetic service that we received."

Carers' responses identified that many carers were not aware of the support that was available to them. They felt that when they had first registered as a carer there was a lot of information to take in so at that point they may not always have known what their future needs may be. Carers who were in receipt of information and advice cited this as being their key priority in supporting them to care.

We asked carers if the carers services they have access to were the right type of services and if there was anything else that they felt would support them in their caring role, the majority of carers felt that they were. However even though carers support groups were the most utilised after information and advice services there were still a significant number of carers who didn't access them and carers identified as feeling isolated and needing someone to talk to. Reducing isolation is a corporate priority as outlined in the Adult Social Care Strategy, VCS Strategy, Joint Health and Wellbeing Strategy 2018-21 and also the Wokingham Leisure Strategy 2020-25.

Actions

- To develop a local offer for carers so that they are better informed on what support they have access to.
- To actively promote identification of carers, and pathways to assessments in order to reduce the number of carers whose first point of contact with services is when they are in crisis.
- To develop strategies for publicising carers support services increasing the visibility of carers advice, support and information services so that carers can make informed choices.
- To review the assessment pathway including the process of self-assessment to ensure an efficient digital pathway to services.
- To develop our on line Care Act training for all staff to improve identification and recognition of carers
- To improve joined up working therefore reducing the delay of carers getting linked in to services quickly and ensure they get access to the right support at the right time:
 - across departments
 - with multi-agency
 - with the VCS
- To develop systems and processes for engaging with a broader spectrum of carers within our communities in order to enable equitable access to support:
 - Mental health issues
 - Substance misuse issues
 - LGBTQ+ community
 - Traveller community

- Ex- military
- Children and Young people
- To work collaboratively with partners in promoting services within BAMER communities to enable equitable access to support and foster broader representation on carers forums.
- To co-produce services that we commission with carers from a broad spectrum of the community, including those from underrepresented groups ensuring wider representation enabling us to develop services that will be more inclusive of carers who live in our community.
- To work with our independent care providers in identifying and signposting carers

SUPPORTING YOUNG CARERS

Having someone to talk to

There are currently in excess of 205 young carers registered with our Young Carers' Service.

Having someone to talk to is particularly acute amongst young carers who often found themselves isolated from their peers and making friends often proved difficult when they were not afforded the opportunity to engage with social activities because of their caring responsibilities. Young carers' views were under represented in this consultation with only 8 responses. However, children and young people did access the young carers support groups and young carers' forum to informally feedback their views.

"I would like having someone to talk to when I feel down, or going to places that I can't go like the zoo or the beach, or making friends"
(Young Carer aged 12)

Young carers are more likely to suffer mental health issues compared to their peers who do not have caring responsibilities (see page 10). In Wokingham 11% of young carers we currently work with have been referred to statutory services with mental health issues.

The opportunity to be children and young people

Young carers often take on roles and tasks that other children their age would not be expected to do. For example shopping, domestic chores, taking on responsibility for supporting a parent or a sibling and ensuring their needs are met. This can often leave them without the opportunity to play, socialise and get involved with activities which would be of interest to someone of their age. Young carers often have difficulty in accessing social activities due to a lack of transport available to them e.g. no driver in the family. Young carers who were able to access the young carers groups and activities appreciated these enormously.

Caring can have a significant impact on young carers' education and a number of our young carers have had attendance issues, or have been consistently late due to caring responsibilities. Our young carers' service has been working collaboratively with schools and we have seen a significant improvement in attendance.

Many young carers go unidentified even though ASC may already be working with their family. 3% of referrals come from ASC when they have carried out an assessment on their parents. 46% of referrals come from the Early Help Hub and 15% from the Duty Triage and Assessment Team in Childrens services. This is a significant difference in referral rate however, this can partially be explained as 57% of our adults who have care and support needs are over 65 (see page 11) and may not have young children.

However, when completing an assessment our young carers' service often discovers that the adult family member is already known to our ASC team yet a referral has not been made to our young carers' service for the child. This is also a contributing factor to the difference in referral numbers. Currently, there is not a system wide approach to identifying and referring young carers.

Our young carers' service works with children and young people up to the age of 18, at this point they transition into adult services. This does not always happen in a planned, supported way. We have a new transitions team in place who are working to address this to ensure that this process begins much earlier on.

Action

- To develop a 'whole family approach' with clear pathways for assessment between Adult and Children's Social Care Teams. This will ensure that young carers have their needs assessed as part of a wider systems approach
- To continue to promote Young Carers Services in schools and in the wider community; ensuring young carers have access to support will improve outcomes for young carers

- To increase the number of young carers identified at WBC front door reducing the delay in them getting access to services
- To improve emotional well-being for young carers, improving mental health and reducing the need for statutory services
- To provide regular group activities and events throughout the year for young carers, in both school term time and in school holidays fostering a community of support and providing opportunities for them to have access to activities that other children and young people who are not carers may have
- To work with schools and VCS organisations in establishing drop in sessions and peer to peer support reducing social isolation and improving emotional health and well-being
- To undertake a review of the transport issues and services that prevent young carers accessing opportunities to engage in recreational and social opportunities and get the support they need
- To establish a young carers' forum, ensuring the voice of young carers' is heard enabling young carers to influence decisions that affect their lives and to support their active contribute to the carers' strategic group
- To work with schools to improve the transition between primary, secondary schools and colleges ensuring young carers have the support and understanding they need to be able to maximise their learning and achievement
- To establish a seamless pathway for transition from Childrens' to Adult services ensuring assessments reflect future aspirations for adult life.

WORKING CARERS –EMPOWERING WORKING AGE CARERS

Support for working carers

There are 8,200 carers in employment within Wokingham Borough. It is important that they are afforded opportunities to access support, leisure and recreation and respite at times that are appropriate to meet their needs.

Working carers consistently reported not being able to access support groups or information and advice because they were working. They also noted that nearly all of the 'fun' activities intended to give carers some leisure time took part during the day. 47% of carers who responded to our survey were either in part-time or full time employment.

We recently refreshed our internal policies to be clear about our commitment to supporting carers who work at the Council. It is our intention to become affiliated to the Employment for Carers Scheme, which can support local authorities in becoming carer friendly places to work by offering training and advice on policies. This can then be rolled out to our providers and VCS, who can also become affiliated under our umbrella.

Actions

- To create opportunities for working carers to access support, advice, and information and training in a variety of ways that fit in with their lifestyle, supporting them to care whilst remaining in employment
- To work with Supported Employment Services (SES) in helping carers who chose to access or remain in employment, enabling them to remain independent and reducing social isolation
- To affiliate to the Employers for Carers scheme to enable WBC to become a carer friendly work place
- To work with partners in developing opportunities for working carers to engage in social activities outside of the working day, supporting them to maintain their health and well-being and fostering peer support.

ENABLING CARERS TO HAVE A LIFE OUTSIDE OF CARING (RECREATION, HEALTH & WELL-BEING, LEARNING & EDUCATION)

Improving the health of carers

Carers frequently state that being able to pursue an interest outside of caring is important in helping to maintain their health and well-being. Carers often neglect their own health needs and consequently have poorer health than people of the same age group who do not have caring responsibilities.

Adult carers cited visiting services and respite for the cared for as being the service they most valued.

Taking a break

Having a break from caring is often cited as the number one priority for carers.– carers regularly reported that having a break from their caring role enables them to continue to care. Carers often reported feeling tired and needing time out to take care of their own physical and mental health and maintain their own friendships.

“I just seem to be too exhausted to think. Having a sitting service gives me ‘me’ time”
(Carer aged 65-74)

Assistive technology can support carers in being able to take short breaks, this is something that is currently not used frequently and is generally directed at meeting the needs of the cared for.

Working carers stated that they need respite at appropriate times e.g. when they are not working.

Actions

- To increase preventative measures to ensure carers can take a break including making better use of assistive technology (AT), and respite for the cared for
- To work collaboratively with partners to actively promote where free health checks/flu jabs are available throughout the borough, this will improve the health of carers
- To improve the uptake of carers engaging in activities outside of their caring role enabling carers opportunities for leisure activities and time away from their caring responsibilities to enhance their sense of well-being and reducing social isolation
- To support carers in developing strategies to enable them to feel able to take a break, or to have time for themselves, helping them to continue to care.

HOW WE WILL MEASURE SUCCESS

We are planning to review how we commission some of our carers’ services over the next five years so that they reflect the current and future need that carers have within the community. The information we have received from carers and other stakeholders will help inform the type of services we commission.

In order to effectively monitor the strategy a detailed action plan will be developed which will run alongside it. This action plan will reflect the priorities which have been identified and determine: how these will be met, and agreed timescales and responsibilities for ensuring actions have been achieved. The action plan will be monitored by the Carers Strategic Group who evaluate the impact that it has had on the lives of carers in our communities. This group will be made up of representatives who directly work with carers in the community including social workers, health professionals and VCS organisations and

will meet quarterly. Carers will be able to feed into the strategic group through a number of mechanisms:

- Carers support groups –carers will be able to share their views with providers on how they feel the strategy is working. The providers can feed this information directly into the strategic group
- Carers Forum – carers will reflect on the strategy quarterly to determine if they can see changes that it has made to the services that they use and feed this back to providers to share with the wider group
- Young Carers Forum – young carers will input quarterly into how they feel the strategy is working to improve lives for young carers. The young carers worker will report this information directly into the carers strategic group

We will use the information we receive to develop and improve our support for carers. The Adult Social Care and Childrens Leadership Team’s will have respective governance of the strategy. This will be delivered by a quarterly report to both Leadership Teams, this will ensure oversight of the delivery of the respective aspects of the wider collective strategy.

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