

ADULT CARE AND WELL BEING OVERVIEW AND SCRUTINY PANEL 5 DECEMBER 2023

HOW THE COUNCIL WORKS WITH CARERS

Summary

1. The Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel has requested an update on how Worcestershire County Council (the Council) works with and supports carers, which is part of the Panel's work programme.
2. The Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care and the Strategic Director and Senior Officers from the Directorate for People have been invited to the meeting to respond to any questions the Panel may have.
3. The Chief Executive of Worcestershire Association of Carers, and carer representatives have also been invited to order to contribute to the discussion and provide feedback.

Background

4. It is estimated that there are around 13.5 million people in the UK with caring responsibilities, providing unpaid care to the value of £132 billion a year.
5. There are 53,000 unpaid carers in Worcestershire, providing 52,740 hours of care each week. This is around 10% of all people in Worcestershire and varies between 9% (Worcester City) and 11% (Wyre Forest) by district.

Unpaid care (per week)	Broms	Malvern Hills	Redd	Worcs City	Wych	Wyre Forest
9 hours or less	3,810	3,142	2,462	3,058	4,595	3,264
10 to 19 hours	1,257	985	1,039	1,093	1,445	1,317
20 to 34 hours	759	617	692	679	991	926
35 to 49 hours	671	612	868	850	1,084	991
50 or more	2,408	1,988	2,376	2,396	3,307	3,058
Total	8,905	7,344	7,437	8,076	11,422	9,556

6. The vision for carers in Worcestershire is for *“All carers including adult, young adult and young carers and parent carers will be recognised and valued by the wider community and statutory agencies in Worcestershire for the support and care they provide to vulnerable adult, children and young people.”* The Council's mission is to ensure that *“everything key partners do is informed by Carers and people with lived experience of care and support.”*

All-Age Carers Strategy

7. The Council led on developing the All-Age Carers Strategy for Worcestershire. The needs and aspirations of carers were sought through co-production and engagement work completed in 2021. This included carers of people with mental health needs, autism, young adults, stroke survivors, dementia and young carers and young adult carers.
8. The All-Age Carers Strategy (link included within background papers section), which includes the Commitment to Carers, was approved by the Health and Wellbeing Board on 15 February 2022. The Strategy is an all-age strategy and encompasses all carers, irrespective of the organisation supporting them. On 23 May 2023, the Health and Wellbeing Board considered the Carer Friendly Worcestershire – All-Age Carers Strategy 2021 – 2026 (link included within background papers section). The report provided overview of progress in delivering actions which are making a difference to carers lives in Worcestershire.
9. The key priorities and tasks included within the All-Age Carers Strategy are:
 - Raising Carer Awareness for the whole community (including harder to reach groups).
 - Recognition and value of carers is everyone's responsibility.
 - A diverse range of personalised support for carers is needed.
 - Registering as a carer. What does this mean and what difference will it make to carers?
 - Having a life of their own. This can be achieved by utilising and growing the carers support network.
 - Support with physical and mental health and wellbeing. A key element of this is to build or rebuild emotional resilience.
 - Maximising life chances: ability to work, be in education or volunteer.
 - Contingency and future planning.
 - Making the vision and aspirational outcomes a reality.
 - To ensure meaningful engagement and co-production.
 - To be signed up to 'Working for Carers' (or similar scheme).
 - To signpost carers to organisations and/or information which helps carers understand the cared for person's condition.
10. The co-production work identified four key outcomes for Carers in Worcestershire. These are:
 - to feel recognised and valued.
 - enabled to have a life of their own.
 - supported with their physical and mental health, and wellbeing.
 - Staying safe.

'You said, we did' - the Action Plan

11. Underpinning the Strategy is a "You said, we did" action plan. Each organisation evaluates how well the commitments are being met. Each organisation has devised an action plan (with carers), which states what will need to happen to fulfil the Commitment to Carers. Progress against the plan is reported to the

Carers Partnership on a quarterly basis and the Council and other key partners have established working groups, including the contracted carer support providers (Youth Support Services and Worcestershire Association of Carers) to implement the All-Age Carers Strategy.

12. The priorities are being implemented through the life of the Strategy. The action plan considers actions for the wider carer cohort within Worcestershire and actions to support staff who may also be carers.

Further understanding carer priorities in Worcestershire

13. The NHS digital survey conducted in October 2021, provides information to support how well the Council, the contracted carer support providers and other key partners are doing.

14. 280 carers responded to the survey and the key findings included:

- 43.8% of those who responded were satisfied or extremely satisfied.
- 6.2% were extremely or very dissatisfied.
- 54.3% reported no financial difficulties.
- 24.8% of carers who responded have as much social contact as they want, with people they like.
- 21.5% reported having little social contact and feeling socially isolated.

15. The Survey of Adult Carers in England, 2023-24 is currently underway and data is to be submitted to NHS England in February 2024 from which progress can be further monitored.

16. The Building Together Board was developed by the Council in 2023 through which the Council is involving people and carers with lived experience as equals in service re-design, policy or processes that affect them.

The Carers Hub

17. To support carers within Worcestershire, the Council has commissioned a Carers Hub which is delivered by Worcestershire Association of Carers (WAC). Research shows the benefits of having a provider which is independent of the Council to provide carer support, encouraging carers to come forward seek support in some circumstances.

18. The Council also delegates the statutory duty of carer assessments to WAC. There is an entitlement for the assessment of carers' needs and to establish how these needs can be met. Carers are at the centre of the carer assessment process, ensuring carers' own skills and strengths are identified and what support is available to them. The carer assessment can help to inform the plan of how to meet the eligible needs of both the carer and the cared for.

19. The assessment identifies which areas of a carer's life are being significantly impacted because of the necessary care they provide, and the best way to meet those areas of need. Universal services direct support to the cared for and support for the carer (via the Carers Hub) and will collectively meet the carer needs. However, for some carers there may be other unmet needs. A Personal

Budget can be allocated to meet eligible needs, which is provided by Adult Social Care and is often taken as a Carer Direct Payment.

20. Carers also informed the Council that they like the variety of options Worcestershire County Council offer including domiciliary care and personal assistants both at home and away from the home.

21. The Council spends £617,000 on The Carers Hub annually.

Replacement Care

22. Replacement care enables unpaid carers to have a break from time to time to enable them to recharge, which was a real issue to achieve during the Covid pandemic. This type of provision contributes to reducing carer breakdown, enables the carer to have a life of their own and time to look after their own physical and mental health and wellbeing.

23. The Council supports replacement care to enable carer breaks which is not just within care homes but is within the individual's home. Domiciliary care agencies and personal assistants provide this care. Care can also be provided outside the usual residence. Care can be paid for and organised by adult social care, or the individual can organise it via a direct payment. The direct payment recipient can manage their own personal care budget.

24. The Council has commissioned replacement care capacity. A framework with care home providers, which will be the focus of sustained development during 2023/24, is intended to ensure individuals and their carers have access to local, bed-based replacement care, which through working in partnership with providers, develops to meet the needs of older people and their families. The framework is to the value of just over £1.5m per year and includes replacement care for people with physical disabilities and sensory impairment and some specific dementia replacement care beds (with providers who are registered to support these needs). Replacement care for people with a learning disability, mental health or autism is still on a block contract basis, however, this is being reviewed.

25. Carers informed the Council that the way replacement care is provided can be a restrictive option. This is because not all carers want or need a full week or 2-week break at one time. In response to this feedback, a change was made to the service specification to enable carers to book several days, rather than a full week or two weeks. Providers are given a minimum payment for very short stays to make this a financially viable option for them.

Main Challenges for Carers

26. The issues set out for the Panel to consider have been identified by Carers and WAC. The Council has added further detail to support the Panel.

27. **Health and Wellbeing of Carers:** 82% of carers said the impact of caring on their physical and mental health would be a challenge over the coming year¹.

¹ State of Caring 2023, Carers UK

20% of the Council's employees are carers and as an organisation, the Council has signed up to Commitment to Carers in 2022 and furthermore become part of Carers Friendly Employers Network. The Council have also launched a new online programme which will provide public sector employees with essential information and advice to support them in their caring role and peer support with other carers. This offer includes seven carer focussed sessions between November 2023 and September 2024.

28. **Replacement Care:** The availability and responsiveness of replacement care is sometimes an issue for carers. The Council can help support carers with a break (sometimes known as replacement care or respite) and it spends £3.6m annually to facilitate the breaks. The Council also has two short breaks units, based in Pershore and Stourport on Severn which provide respite care for individuals with mental health and physical disabilities.
29. **Assessments:** Delays in completing assessments can lead to carer breakdown. Accessing 'cared for' assessments in a timely manner ensures support for the carer in their own caring role. The Council is developing further reporting capabilities to ensure performance in this area is maintained and wherever possible improved.
30. **Funding.** The process of determining whether a person's care needs are paid for using Continuing Health Care funds and/or Council funds can have an impact on Carers, who are sometimes caught in the middle. The Council is working closely with the Continuing Health Care team to ensure any delays are minimised wherever possible.
31. **Hospital discharge:** 60% of carers disagreed they were asked about their ability and willingness to care during the hospital discharge of the person they cared for². Social Workers in the Acute and Community Hospitals include Carers as part of Discharge Planning process. In the Community Hospitals, Carers are invited to the Discharge Planning Meetings held on the wards with Health Colleagues as part of the Multi – Disciplinary Discharge Process. The Team also invite WAC representatives where appropriate and have an identified Carers Lead within the team to further develop the focus on carers.
32. **The cost-of-living crisis:** 75% of unpaid carers receiving Carer's allowance are struggling with cost-of-living pressures³ and carers are finding it increasingly difficult to access support and advice about benefits as there is often a waiting list. The Council has recently re-commissioned the Information and Advice service where Carers are identified as a priority group and therefore particular focus must be given to their needs through the service delivery model. Carers are also a priority for the Household Support Fund which is administered by the Council.

Purpose of the Meeting

33. The Panel is asked to:

² State of Caring Survey 2023 - The impact of caring on: health (November 2023)

³ State of Caring Survey 2023 - The impact of caring on: finances (October 2023)

- hear from carers and Worcestershire Association of Carers as to how the Council works with Carers;
- consider and comment on the information provided on how the Council works with carers;
- agree any comments to highlight to the Cabinet Member with Responsibility for Adult Social Care; and
- determine whether any further information or scrutiny on a particular topic is required.

Contact Points

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Background Papers

In the opinion of the proper officer (in this case the Assistant Director for Legal and Governance), the following are the background papers relating to the subject matter of this report:

- [All Age Carers Strategy | Worcestershire County Council](#)
- [Weblink to Agenda and Minutes of Adult Care and Well Being Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 29 September 2021](#)
- [Agenda for Health and Wellbeing Board on Tuesday, 15th February, 2022, 2.00 pm - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
- [Weblink to Health and Wellbeing Board on Tuesday, 23rd May, 2023, 2.00 pm - Worcestershire County Council \(moderngov.co.uk\)](#)
- [Weblink to Agenda and Minutes of Children and Families Overview and Scrutiny Panel on 6 July 2023](#)
- [All agendas and minutes are available on the Council's website here.](#)