

Carers Strategy 2017-19

Report by Allister Short, Joint Director Health and Care

1 Purpose of Report

The report seeks agreement to the refreshed Midlothian Carers' Strategy intended to provide support to the very many unpaid carers including young carers who fulfil a vital role in caring for their relatives and friends.

2 Background

- 2.1** It is difficult to be precise about the number of carers as many people undertake a caring role without regarding themselves as a "carer". The 2011 census estimated that 9.9% of the population in Midlothian are carers while the 2015 Scottish Survey Core Questions found that 14.4% of respondents considered themselves to be carers.
- 2.2** The level of care they provide clearly varies with 43% of carers undertaking 20 hours or more each week. Growing numbers of older people are carers; in Midlothian it is estimated that 10% of unpaid carers are over 65yrs.
- 2.3** The increasing emphasis in recent years on supporting people longer in their own homes means it is increasingly important to proactively reach out to carers and ensure they are supported through information, advice and access to a break when they need it. Local voluntary organisations, in particular VOCAL, provide invaluable advice and information to unpaid carers.
- 2.4** The crucial role played by local carers was reflected by a Council decision in August 2012 to appoint an elected member as a Carers Champion. This role is currently undertaken by Councillor Margot Russell.
- 2.5** At a national level there have been renewed efforts to strengthen the support to carers. The Carers (Scotland) Act 2016 is a key piece of new legislation that promises to 'promote, defend and extend the rights' (Scot Gov.) of adult and young (unpaid) carers across Scotland. The Act aims to "ensure better and more consistent support for carers and young carers so that they can continue to care, if they so wish, in better health and to have a life alongside caring" (Scot Gov.). This legislation has implications for Adult Services and both Education and Children's Services. A report on the implications of the carers Act was considered by Council in June 2017
- 2.6** Following the publication of the national carers' strategy *Caring Together; Carers Strategy 2010-15* a programme of consultation was undertaken to develop a local Carers Strategy. This strategy has been reviewed and

updated and is presented to both the Council and the Integration Joint Board for formal approval.

3 Report Implications

3.1 Resource

Expenditure on support for carers is difficult to quantify. Support services are commissioned from voluntary organisations including VOCAL, Alzheimer Scotland and Children First. The Carers Information Strategy fund which is allocated directly to NHS Boards provides approximately £64,000 additional funding to Midlothian but the future of this fund is unclear. A range of respite services are provided including residential provision for older people and people with disabilities and more flexible breaks arranged through the Wee Breaks Service or directly by service users through Self Directed Support.

3.2 Risk

As a result of the increasing ageing population there is an increased demand on services and supports and a reliance on informal unpaid carers to support people at home for longer. Developing a strategy and action plan is essential to ensure the projected demographic increase of people requiring community care services are planned and delivered effectively and efficiently.

3.3 Policy

Strategy

The national importance attached to supporting carers is reflected in a range of policy documents over the past 20 years including *Strategy for Carers in Scotland* (1999), *The future of unpaid care in Scotland* (2005) *Building a Health Service fit for the Future* (2005) and *Changing Lives* (2006), which contain a number of common themes including working with carers as partners in providing care; shifting the balance of care towards preventative support; and enabling and encouraging self-directed care. Local strategies for community care groups including children affected by disability all have as their central theme the importance of providing more effective supports to enable people to remain at home longer within their own communities. There is a shared recognition that this shift is dependent on supporting carers more effectively. This involves ensuring sufficient and appropriate services including advice, support and access to respite care is available.

Consultation

The attached strategy details the consultation undertaken throughout the preparation of the strategy including unpaid carers and a wide range of voluntary and statutory agencies that have a role to play in supporting unpaid carers

Equalities

An Integrated Impact Assessment has been undertaken and concluded that while there are a number of positive impacts there are no negative impacts associated with this report. The strategy itself makes explicit reference to addressing inequalities and seeking to identify hidden carers in areas of deprivation.

Sustainability

There are no sustainability issues associated with this report

3.4 IT Issues

There are no IT issues associated with this report.

4 Summary

The care system has always been heavily dependent on the input of family and informal carers. This reliance will increase as the move to care in the community accelerates and as the elderly proportion of the population increases. The implementation of the attached strategy is intended to strengthen local support services for unpaid carers.

5 Recommendations

Council is asked to:
Approve the 2017-19 Midlothian Carers Strategy

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